

The cover art is a detail of a hanging by Adelaide Winstead, a fabric artist living in Middleburg, Virginia. The work was designed for Sarah's Circle, an intergenerational community, described in this book. In addition to large churches Adelaide Winstead's work hangs in a number of the small institutions that have come into being through the Church of The Saviour's emphasis on Call.

Cover design by Brenda M. Palley

ELIZABETH O'CONNOR

CRY PAIN, CRY HOPE

Thresholds to Purpose



individual stories—the history of their particular households and regions of the country. An important emphasis will be the neglected area of defining and understanding the developmental stages of elderhood.

Basic to the concept of Sarah's Circle is the conviction that the generations need each other. So often growth is stunted for lack of the gifts that only different ages can give to each other. The very old person and the very young person need the touch and the sight of one another. One is the Alpha, the other the Omega that every circle requires for completeness. As a gift to itself, the neighborhood, and the city, Sarah's Circle will offer classes in child development, parenting, and grandparenting. Children, residents, staff, and neighborhood will be nurtured in the concept of life as pilgrimage, intended to be from beginning to end a walk toward liberation, toward the freedom to love and to care.

The vision of Sarah's Circle embraces the inward journey where persons come to know themselves, and the outward journey where they participate in building the earth. Instructors and guides for the two journeys will be drawn from The Church of The Saviour community, local universities and seminaries, and will include some of the residents themselves. From time to time we hope to have a scholar or researcher in residence. Sarah's Circle will not be a place where visitors entertain the old, but a place where people go for enlightenment.

Because Sarah's Circle sees itself as an educational center, the dining room will be designed to serve as a lecture hall and theater. Drama and seminars will be presented, and three or four times a year outstanding authorities will be invited to speak on child care, aging, community and world concerns. After the presentation the audience will sit around the tables breaking bread while they exchange thoughts and ideas. On these occasions the residents will be the hosts and hostesses. The expectation is that Sarah's Circle will become

known as an intellectual center and the birthing place of the new.

Let the unbelieving consider the words that Sarah spoke:

Who would have told Abraham
that Sarah would nurse children!
Yet I have borne him a child in his old age.
Genesis 21:7

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Two Worlds

Today Kwasi came to see me. Two weeks ago he returned from a visit to his home country of Ghana, and he wanted someone with whom to share his agony about the sufferings of his people.

He said, "You can cross the land of Ghana and not find soap. Our currency is cedis, but it is worthless in other countries, so there is a black market on dollars. The exchange rate is four cedis for one dollar, but on the black market they give sixty cedis, because across the boarder with one dollar you can buy four cakes of soap." The wonder of soap. I have always taken it for granted. Water and soap, a clean body, clean hair, clean clothes. Only once before have I marveled over the miracle gift of soap and water and that was when I was in a refugee camp on the Thai border. Soap was given out sparingly with one bucket of water a day to each person. With that bucket the family did its cooking, its laundry, and its bathing.

"When I was home last time," Kwasi said, "I took many things with me. This time my aunt had died and I did not have time to make adequate preparation for a trip. I was visiting my

country with very little money, and because I did not have enough I could see the depth of the misery of my people. I had to live the old life. I had forgotten how bad it was, and now it had become worse.

"When I went to my own family, I had been away so long I was a special guest. They had half of a fish and they served it to me. The children two to seven years old were not allowed to come close to the table because this was special food for a special person. It would make you very sad. A little portion of food the size of a tennis ball, and six children scratching each other to get at it.

"When I went to a neighboring country (Nigeria) and came back my mother wept the whole day because I had a can of corned beef. She feels I would not have a can of beef, if I had not been looting. At home a little can of sardines is a luxury. A whole family of eight will eat it. When you eat sardines in America no one thinks that you are a rich man.

"The people in my country look to America for help. I say, 'Yes, we have food in America. Everyone can have a chicken and a place to live, if they work hard, but you are afraid to go into the street. Even your neighbor might kill you.' 'What does that matter,' they say. 'If you have food to eat and a little wine to sip, you can stay in your room. Why do you have to go out?' All the time I was in Ghana there was not a single robbery or any crime.

"The taxis there are ten to twelve years old. The doors have no glass, and they do not close. When the taxis break down there are no parts. If you need brake fluid or engine oil you have to wait until someone brings it to you from another country.

"Transportation is a large problem. You stand in the scorching sun for three or four hours and there is no sign of transportation. Imagine how that must be for a man and woman with children. One day I waited half the day for a taxi. When the taxi came and I got on, too many people got on with me. That is always the way. One foot was in and one foot hanging out. My shoe falls from the foot hanging out. Never mind that,

but the foot is still outside. When I call, the driver stops and lets me off to get the shoe, but when I return with the shoe someone has my place.

"The papers for my return were difficult to process, so I had to stay for many months. I had to live the old life. It was very hard, and now when I think of my family there is a great pain in me."

Kwasi is paid four dollars an hour for hotel work. On this he supports himself, goes to school, and saves money to send back home. Like the Vietnamese, Salvadorans, and many others in this city he cannot forget the abject misery of his kinfolk.

Like Kwasi, I, too, live in two worlds. Only yesterday I returned once more from visiting with Richard. Until I make the trip again, I will with each passing day gain emotional distance from him. The pain will recede and his suffering life will not intrude upon my thoughts so often. But today he is scarcely out of mind. Long ago schizophrenia, that most dreaded of all mental illnesses, shattered his thoughts and robbed him of words to say what is happening to him. All I know is that in this life he is out of the reach of human warmth and comfort, condemned to listening to voices that no one else hears—to a world of distortion and sometimes terror that must be what hell is like. And yet, one still sees in countless flashes the whole person, as though that person were some place, all intact.

I have struggled to overcome my identification with this brother of mine as though the sadness in me were a betrayal of the joy of Christ. The warfare has been of a losing kind—a battle I will never win, especially at the Christmas season. A part of me is engaged in festive parties and holiday dinners and prayers of praise to God the Mother, God the Father, who came to us in Jesus Christ, while another part of me lives in the bare halls of mental institutions and on the streets of a thousand cities—alone, ill-clothed, ill-fed, confused, and afraid. I know now that the peace of Christmas is found in bringing these two worlds together. He came to bring "peace to you

who were far off and peace to those who were near . . ." (Eph. 2:17, RSV).

The One whose birthday we celebrate is the One who was so identified with the broken and the hurt that he could say ". . . I was naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me" (Matt. 25:36-37). Surely this is an extreme kind of identification with the afflicted. Though some would label it pathological, what he was trying to teach was an at-oneness with himself and with the poor, ". . . in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me" (Matt. 25:45). He wanted us to know that he was bread and wine—that His life could flow into us. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21, RSV).

A friend once said to me, "I do not help someone in a pit by climbing down into the pit with him." It sounded wise at the time. But on reflection I know that no one ever knows what it is like in the pit except by climbing down into it. "When it says, 'he ascended,' what can it mean if not that he descended right down to the lower regions of the earth?" (Eph. 4:9). The real feat is not to lose one's separateness so that one can ascend again and throw to the other whatever kind of rope is needed. That is the important achievement.

The life of Moses was forever altered because one day he wandered down from the palace to watch his kinfolk at their hard labor. Even in a new land whenever he returned to the deeps of himself he found waiting there for him another kind of world full of long-suffering. He had the task of healing the split within himself—of bringing his two worlds together. I have that same task as have Kwasi and all the refugees who jam our cities and countrysides. I suspect that many who carry pain in their hearts have that same work of bringing two worlds together.

We stand at a pivotal point in world history. If we will but listen to the cries of the alienated and despairing among us, we may be able to journey down from protected places of pride and prejudice, look at the divisions within ourselves, and find

the oppressive structures that afflict us whether they are in the inner fabric of our lives, in our family household, or in the larger society. This is where we can join God's liberation movement. This is where we can yoke ourselves with the Stranger who lives within us.

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On Hearing Call

Thinking about the homeless of the world and about Kwasi and the call he feels upon his life, I find myself pondering the whole subject of call. It is such a rich topic that my thoughts fall over one another. So much I would like to say and yet so much eludes me. I feel as though I am contemplating mystery. Time was when I thought that the all-important subject was gifts, and that, if only we could identify our gifts, and begin using them, our lives would burst with creativity and the world would be restored. Now I am not so sure. A talent may be so great that it propels a person forever down one path, as is the case with some artists. But even for these extraordinary folk, call determines whether and how they use their gifts. A writer can produce advertising copy, history, propaganda, poetry, contracts and proposals, political speeches, or sermons.

If one day I should be called to bring into being a residential center for some of the city's homeless—and some days I think this is my call—then I might never write again, not because writing had ceased to be an important gift or to make claims upon me, but because other gifts more needed in the fulfillment of the new call would be evoked and take precedence. To be deeply nurturing and to carry one's life into the future, the use of a gift must be related to what one is called to do. An authentic call is hard to discern in today's world, a fact that

makes difficult the naming and using of our gifts. Gifts evolve in response to call, and we may not yet have heard a call.

Difficulty in hearing and understanding the nature of call arises from the fact that we give it so little attention. I grew up in the cold and hungry depression years before World War II when the main goal in life was to find a job. It did not matter much what the job was. The essential thing was to have work that one went to in the morning and returned from at night. This is still true for vast numbers today. Where a choice is possible it is not exercised. The individual is not inner directed but influenced by salary, prestige, future opportunities, the chance leading of friends, not to mention the conscious and unconscious wishes of parents, so that even people who appear to be privileged are rarely doing work that is related to call.

Finding a job is quite different from finding one's vocation, a word having its origin in the Latin infinitive *vocare*, to call, from which comes *vocatio*, meaning a bidding or invitation. It implies a summoning voice which comes from above one, and at the same time sounds deep within one's being. The uninitiated need more help in discerning that voice than most modern guides offer. Can it be said today as it was said in the days of Samuel, God rarely speaks and visions are uncommon (1 Sam. 3:1)? Samuel was fortunate in that there was someone available to give him proper instructions. To begin with he was "lying in the sanctuary of Yahweh where the ark of God was, when Yahweh called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' He answered, 'Here I am.' Then he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you called me.' Eli said, 'I did not call. Go back and lie down.' So he went and lay down. Once again Yahweh called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you called me.' Eli then understood that it was Yahweh who was calling the boy, and he said to Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if someone calls say, 'Speak, Yahweh, your servant is listening.' So Samuel went and lay down in his place" (1 Sam. 3:3-9).

When the Lord called again, Samuel answered, "Speak, Yahweh, your servant is listening." Yahweh spoke then and Samuel caught a vision of the future.

To hear and discern the voice of God, one has to be in a state of attention with one's ear turned inward. The difficulty is that we are not often in a receptive posture. The only time I ever lay down in a sanctuary was that night at the Luther Place Memorial Church where the street women slept in dorm-like rooms behind the sanctuary. Once during the night the volunteers go into the dark sanctuary for an hour and stretch out beneath the tall stained glass windows. If I were to spend enough time lying in the immense quiet of that room I believe that I, too, might hear a voice calling. I might even one day respond, "Speak, Yahweh, your servant is listening."

Although call is a dominant note in Scriptures, we rarely give it serious consideration, so that for many the whole subject has an esoteric sound. As a result, call is seldom discussed in this society. We sometimes ask small children what they want to be when they grow up, but we rarely take their answers seriously, or help them to elaborate on and to enter into their images—essential preparation for the nurturing of imagination and the hearing of call. By using one's imaginative power one is able to behold what is not seen by ordinary sight, and to hear words which usually fall to the ground. This is why William Blake equated imagination with salvation. "This world of imagination is the world of Eternity."²⁹

If imagination were to be exercised and visions were to become more common, we would hear much talk about call. As it is now, even in the church, it is not normal for people to speak about it. As a rule the church recognizes one call—the call to the professional ministry. Whereas, if the church were true to herself, she would help all her people to discern and be faithful to call. In such an effort, however, institutions probably recognize a threat to their own structures. When individuals become autonomous persons, in touch with resources of latent energy deep within themselves, they can no longer be

contained within neat boundaries. If church people begin listening to call, those we count on most will likely be off on some wild adventures of their own. Some of the tasks that we have depended on lay persons to do may not get done. Similar fears come up in marriages. One friend said, "The more I had my own projects, the less time I had for my husband's projects. I began to fear that he would find someone else."

Call more often than not is bound up with economic risks, and often does not seem very prudent to those looking on. A journey is also involved. Call asks that we set out from a place that is familiar and relatively secure for a destination that can be only dimly perceived, and that we cannot be at all certain of reaching, so many are the obstacles that will loom along the way. One of the ways to test the authenticity of call is to determine whether it requires a journey. This journey is not necessarily geographical although, as in the case of Abraham and Moses, it is not at all unusual for it to involve leaving one's work and home. Whether or not the call includes an outward journey, it always requires an inward one. We need to be delivered from all that binds and keeps the real self from breaking into music and becoming joy to the world.

The first stretch of the inward journey is touching in some vital way our own deepest feelings. To see visions or to hear call without being faithful to one's most ardent yearnings is utterly impossible. Our strongest feelings revolve around our wants and desires, and we have been taught since our first summer to give these only slight attention, so that when we think about drawing close to our real longings we have feelings of guilt and shame. It is as though our deepest wishes were unworthy and, if pursued, would get us into all kinds of trouble, and at the very least cause us to feel or be called selfish. The opposite, of course, is true.

When we succeed in ignoring our wants they either find expression in destructive ways or cause us all kinds of ills and problems that make us self-centered and self-serving—the very end we are so anxious to avoid. The outcome, however, is not

usually this dramatic. Out of touch with the life-giving energy of our wants and desires, we are more apt to become flat and uninteresting people. Imperceptibly disintegration goes on at the very core of life. The calm and expressionless face reflects not peace at the center, but a dying going on within.

For these passionless selves the words were spoken, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Eph. 5:14, RSV).

Could the way back to that "long long ago, when wishing still could lead to something,"³⁰ be to move into the pain that each of us carries inside? So much of life is spent in trying to keep up, or keep going rather than in experiencing and reflecting on what is happening within and around us. As soon as we become ill we reach for, and are given medicine that will keep us functioning. Only a rare doctor ever asks a patient to reflect on what might be causing the illness. In like manner we handle our psychic aches—avoiding any honest encounter with them by finding other occupations to fill our day. This may be good economy of resources in the matter of small griefs and problems. Time seems to heal them as the proverb says.

The larger sorrows do not so readily go away, and may be intricately related to the work we are to do. I find this teaching in the biographies I read. Alexander Bell, so concerned that the human voice be heard around the world, had a deaf mother and a deaf wife. Thomas Edison, when asked if he had any fears, replied "I fear the dark."

Sigmund Freud, who uncovered the Oedipus complex, had a constricting relationship with a dominating mother, while Carl Jung, who introduced a fresh spirituality into psychoanalysis as well as into religion, struggled against being smothered by the church's rules and theological teachings represented in his own household by his father, a rigid Presbyterian minister. Many of the counselors I know grew up in troubled households and turned to therapy to resolve their own conflict.

David, a twelve-year-old boy who lived all but the last two weeks of his life in a germ-free bubble because he was born

without immunity to disease, had a keen interest in medicine and space. Thomas Jarman, considered by many to have been the world's greatest legal expert on wills, died without one. We sometimes teach the things we need to learn. Or is it that we heal others in the way we either need to be healed, or have been healed?

Henry Kaplan, whose pioneering research in radiation treatment prolonged life for thousands of cancer victims, and changed Hodgkin's disease from hopeless to curable, died of lung cancer. At the age of fifteen, when his father died of lung cancer, he set forth on his path as a cancer specialist.

Although my research is limited and not at all scientific, for me it is conclusive evidence that, at the center of our pain, we glimpse a fairer world and hear a call. When we are able to keep company with our own fears and sorrows, we are shown the way to go; our own parched lives are watered and the earth becomes a greener place.

The relationship between pain and vocation first became clear to me when I was reading books on child development. In one book an author stated matter-of-factly that play is to a child what work is to an adult. In a very different book on play therapy another author explained how, in arranging dolls and toy furniture, the child expresses her inner conflicts and her struggle to work them out. Is it possible that the adult, when working at what he wants to do, is also engaged in the same process? For such an adult his work becomes his play. Through that work not only is he healed, but he becomes a healer. It might be said that in finding vocation one discovers how to be at play in the world.

At first it seems odd that the things that grieve us may hold God's address to us. On deeper consideration, however, it almost has to be that way. On the ground of our most grievous ache, where we feel powerless to free or heal ourselves, we cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" That is the place of meeting with Christ who is Lord and Savior. There we are given a new vision to reach toward.

Then I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, "You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his *home among them; they shall be his people*, and he will be their God; his name is *God-with-them*. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone" (Rev. 21:1-4).

Hope begins to grow and we are summoned to the work that will give us a feeling of wellness, and make possible that which we envision.

If it is true that each of us has a work to do which will make us feel well when we are doing it, then there is nothing more important than finding that work. Attention to call becomes urgent. Moreover, preventing another from following what he is sighing after becomes a grievous sin. Frustration, impotence, and rage fill the heart that cannot be about its real business, which is always the Father's business. Call, like imagination, is the same as salvation.

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Resistance and Surrender to Call

Sigmund Freud, in one of his writings, said:

Every great man must overcome three kinds of difficulties: first, the resistance in himself; second, the friction and fight with his contemporaries; and third, the difficulties arising from the work itself.

Freud might have said every creator, great or small, meets with those difficulties. This is always my experience with writing. Though my mind may be cluttered with the things in me that cry out to be heard, when I think about committing them to paper the resistance at the outset is terrible to encounter. I have never been able to fathom what underlies that resistance, though I can identify parts of it. Foremost is a feeling of inadequacy before the imagined work. Who am I to think that I can bring something out of nothing? God did that when the world was made and when each of us came into being, but, after all, creation is God's work. One would have to believe that she was made in the image of the great Artificer to be so bold as to think that she was a creator. To give lip service to such a belief is always easier than to act upon it. What difference does it make if once upon a time one produced a book, or a painting, or a house, and saw that it was good? That is no guarantee that one can breathe life again into words or mortar or whatever one chooses. Creation, which is never repetition, always confronts anew the formless void in one's self.

Side by side with feelings of inadequacy I find in me a strong reluctance to withdraw myself from the social life going on around me. Every creative work requires that lonely act of withdrawal which triggers a full-scale battle within myself. I don't want to cut off all those little conversations that fill my week and give me a place in the society of my friends, my church, my neighborhood, and my world. I remember reading that the poet Rainer Rilke would not take the time to go to his daughter's wedding, and finally gave his dog away because he was too much of a distraction. Though most of us struggle with the claims of a much lesser talent than his, our efforts at creation still require drawing upon powers deep within the self where the attention can then be caught in inextricable bonds. What I fiercely resist in the beginning carries me off as its quarry once the surrender is made. Afterwards, wherever I go I take with me another world that is more real than the world in which I try to live. Though I have put the work

aside, a part of me remains behind as a nurturing, hovering presence.

Then there is anger. More than any other emotion anger blocks creativity. To create is to give one's self. Creativeness, always generous, is a way of loving. The world, far from recognizing this, seldom honors or rewards its artists by encouragement or makes their work easier. Rather, artistic pursuits are often viewed as egocentric, fine if they succeed, but how often does that happen? Better leave art for weekends, and use one's energies for grinding out something utilitarian that can be used to promote whatever the current fad or cause happens to be. In such a climate the creator in us is afraid to take or ask for himself time for the godly work of brooding. The risk is too great. Even though the request is granted, the chances are that one will lose one's place, become poor and isolated—angrier still. That anger becomes fuel for one's battle with one's contemporaries. When I am angry I want to withhold myself. I resist the giving of my gifts. I have to struggle to drag into the open that part of me that is holding out and lecture it on how creating, like loving, is hard only when we expect something in return. Creating, I tell my lonely, complaining self, has to be its own reward. Like loving it is a way of pouring one's life into the world, of experiencing the divinity in ourselves. Loving and creating hold a cross to be stretched upon because they are the way we become eternal.

I lift up the experience of the artist only because he presents a blown-up picture of the creator in each of us. We all long to create. We all know what it is to have the self denied by someone else, to be left lonely and helpless with one's anger, struggling with the temptation to hug one's self to one's self. Some days on Columbia Road I feel in the atmosphere the impotent rage of the young and the immense sorrow of the old who are denied the opportunity of loving and creating the earth. When we have touched that pain in ourselves we can touch it in others whether we find it in well-appointed living rooms or on ghetto streets.

But greater than these resistances is one I cannot name, and which I succeed in conquering only by a sheer, desperate act of the will. Gordon Cosby on occasion has reinforced the part of me that wanted to write by charging me ten dollars for each day that I did not give two hours to writing. I never had to produce in those two hours, but I had to stay at the typewriter and try. That penance worked in the days when I was young and poor, and would agree to it. The years have gone by since then, and it is no longer possible for either Gordon or for me to be serious about that penance, so, of course, it would not work. For lack of another in its place I am left unaided to struggle with the mysterious opposing forces in myself. The strength of them is so great that I have come to wonder whether every creative work does not have to wrest its very being from the unconscious, which is always wide and deep and reluctant to give over any of its knowledge. Darkness is always over the deep and requires a hovering spirit for there to be light. Some call that spirit the Muse. I find myself turning inward to hear a still, small voice.

In thinking about becoming a group therapist I was up against a resisting force that I had not encountered as a writer. One of my many selves still felt like a child in the world. That small and powerless self thought it ludicrous that it should be asked to assume the responsibility of leading groups when it was not capable of taking care of itself. It did not even want to try. Knowing no small fright at the thought of becoming a healer and a teacher, it wanted to go on being the child, or at least a patient or a student. Despite the suffering involved in the dependent position, that stance served a secret fantasy that had its own rewards. This Peter Pan self caused no end of conflict in me, but in the end it lost out to other stronger selves with eyes on other goals. Reluctantly, it grew up and became integrated into my inner household of grownups. A sure and quiet strength began to flow in me. For the first time in my life I felt fully adult. I understood better what it meant to be a free person as well as how easy it is to forsake the painful road to

freedom. That experience also helped me to understand how response to call helps to complete something in oneself.

I find other resistances rising up in me when I think of Sarah's Circle. If I say yes to it, I say no to more idyllic dreams. I had planned to create gourmet meals in my own old age, and entertain my friends before the fireplace—pursuits my commitments have never allowed. These activities are also call. I see them as filling gaps in myself—of making me more human, more available to others. In the long winter evenings my friends and I might talk about revolutions and revolutionaries, but that is quite different from being in a revolution and being a revolutionary, and that is really what Sarah's Circle is about. It is about leading a small segment of the elderly out of their abysmal poverty into clean, safe space where food, and health care, and shelter, and work, and self-esteem are everybody's right. Sarah's Circle is about restoring the years that the locusts have eaten and empowering the old for the continuing work of creation. It is about calling America's attention to the poverty of the elderly in her midst. It is about helping each of us to face our own fears of aging, which keep us from receiving the gifts and wisdom of an older population, and cherishing ourselves as aging persons. Perhaps most of all, Sarah's Circle is about changing all the ageist stereotypes that fill us with foreboding once we become thirty and sap our sweet strength with each succeeding decade. It is about overturning the greeting card racks in all the cities and hamlets of the nation and making confetti of those millions and millions of cards that give us on our birthdays the disguised message that aging is not good. Sarah's Circle will call to account a culture based on "the obsolescence not only of things, but also of people." All of which is fine language to fire the brain, but in reality means the sweat of labor that robs the winter afternoons of idle talk and the nights of the careless sleep of the uninvolved. Freud is right—my first resistance to call is in myself. I am stuck in the materialism of our age and part of me cannot believe that my own interests are served in so large an undertaking as Sarah's

Circle. To make this commitment means letting go of all the good things to which I feel I have a right in order to begin the arduous work of communicating what is now only a vision. It means asking others to believe in what belongs to another region in order that it can become part of the common landscape.

Once one has achieved unity in one's own internal household and can move with the purity of heart that every vision demands, one is up against the second difficulty that Freud cites: the friction and fight with one's contemporaries. In his extraordinary book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell presents the hard task:

. . . How to communicate to people who insist on the exclusive evidence of their senses the message of the all-generating void? . . . Why re-enter such a world? Why attempt to make plausible, or even interesting, to men and women consumed with passion, the experience of transcendental bliss? As dreams that were momentous by night may seem simply silly in the light of day, so the poet and the prophet can discover themselves playing the idiot before a jury of sober eyes. The easy thing is to commit the whole community to the devil and retire again into the heavenly rock-dwelling, close the door, and make it fast. But if some spiritual obstetrician has meanwhile drawn the *shime-nawa* across the retreat, then the work of representing eternity in time, and perceiving in time eternity, cannot be avoided.³¹

The struggle with one's contemporaries, while hard to endure, is easy to understand. When we are dissatisfied with things as they are, or suffer and know pain, we begin to imagine what the world would be like if things were different—if there were no hunger or thirst and all tears were wiped away (Rev. 7:14). Creative imagination reaches toward God, and glimpses a new heaven and a new earth. The new reality has nothing to do with the present order. In fact, the one who responds to call seeks to put something more beautiful in the place of what she sees. This is where the friction and fight begin. Martin Luther

King was not killed because he had a dream. Dreamers are easily dismissed. He was killed because he sought to introduce into the political arena what he saw with his heart and mind. The same was true of Ghandi and of our Lord. As Jesus made clear his solidarity with the poor and his vocation to engage them in a liberating process, he came into confrontation with entrenched political and religious powers. As suspicion of him turned to resistance and then to hatred and fury, he began to prepare his disciples for what he would have to suffer. Peter immediately took Jesus aside to protest his continuing on what was surely a collision course. His plea might have even caused Jesus to waiver momentarily in his intent. Why else the painful cry: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's" (Matt. 16:23). Perhaps in that brief scene we have a glimpse of Jesus battling resistance not only in society and in his small intimate circle, but in himself.

Those who say yes to the perilous vocation of implementing vision at each stage will find new resistances emerging in themselves as well as in the society. Opposition to the new is very natural and should not cause any of us to be taken by surprise. The best way to understand it in one's contemporaries is to have named and owned it in one's self. That process is also some protection against the self-righteousness that plagues too many reformers as well as the pious. The work of creativity is to unify the opposites in one's self. We know with our heads that this is our true vocation, but we need the poets to understand it with our hearts. William Blake helps me with a single line addressed to a Tyger—"Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"³²

The war between the opposites and reconciliation between them are the great themes of Scripture often presented under the heading of temptation. The Jesus who walks through the gospels is not above the struggle to wed the contraries in himself. The Scriptures make that clear again and again. They emphasize the humanness of Jesus so that we can trust him to

know our human struggle. "For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself *descent from Abraham*. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins" (Heb. 2:16). When the humanness of Jesus is missing from God's religion we cannot understand the revolutionary implication of those statements that the mystics make concerning our vocation to be Christ.

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is,
Since he was what I am.³³

Freud said that the third difficulty of the great man is found in the work itself. He does not elaborate on this statement any more than he elaborated on the first two. My guess is that he had in mind the sheer labor of a Michelangelo who for four years spent his working days lying on his back on scaffolding suspended beneath a dome no one had ever heard of; or perhaps he was thinking of the sculptor who labors to free the forms hidden in stone, or the writer trying to make words correspond with an inner reality, or the legislator engaging in the hundreds of little conversations that might make possible the passing of a new law.

The creator must be sustained by the vision that first quickened his spirit. In all the secret stages of a work's development one must believe in the promise:

... the child in my womb leaped for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Luke 1:44-45

Helpers and Guides along the Way

Everything I write about call has been borne out in my own life, in the books that are stacked up around me and in all those that I reach for on the shelves of libraries. I have struggled with three calls in my life: the call to be a writer, the call to be a therapist, and the call to build an institution of caring for a segment of the world which has "no place."

My call to writing came to me as a teenager. I read John Steinbeck's story of migrant workers in *Grapes of Wrath*,³⁴ and lived the agony of the sharecroppers in their search for food and work. In a scene toward the end of the book a nursing mother offered her breast to a starving old man. I wanted a world with that kind of caring in it. The author had opened my heart to a greater love, and I thought I might be able to use words to do the same thing for others. I fervently believed then as I do now that if we each knew how the other felt inside we would know how to be parents to one another, or priests.

Today a letter from a friend gave me another view of the world I caught a vision of that day so long ago. She wrote:

I had a beautiful sign from nature this morning. I was writing and I looked out my window, saw a wonderful group of cedar wax-wings gathered in a tree. I rarely see them. They pass through at this time of year to gather the red berries off the evergreen bushes. Why was I seeing them? I then remembered what an ornithologist told me about cedar wax-wings: They will line up in a row, and the first bird will take a red berry and pass it along to the end of the row where the last bird is allowed to eat the berry.

Joseph Campbell writes that those who do not refuse the call are given supernatural aid: