

The Pattern and Process for Change for 2020

1 John 1: 5-7; Acts 26:16-18; James 4:6-10

Perhaps our world as a whole will have to find grace in the dungeon. As a world we are suffering from self-inflicted pain and self-chosen bondages. We are in dungeons of our own making. Perhaps we shall find grace in our dungeons.

As I have mentioned previously, Dr. Sorokin, head of the sociology department at Harvard, says that the world crisis is the result of the breakdown of a sensate order—an order that believed the only reality was that which comes to us through our senses. That idea has exhausted itself. It is not able to take us any further. Life must form around another idea. He says that idea is the Sermon on the Mount.

In order to make this transition, Sorokin says that society must go through five stages: (1) Crisis. (2) Ordeal. (3) Catharsis. (4) Charisma. (5) Resurrection. This is an interesting and startling conclusion, for Christianity teaches that these are the very steps through which the individual or society must go.

(1) Crisis. As the old order goes to pieces, the person or society is confronted with a choice of going down with the old or choosing a new way. The Chinese have a word for crisis made up of two characters: danger and opportunity. Those two things are in every crisis.

(2) Ordeal. There is the consequent suffering of having to change. This is the ordeal of repentance and reversal. Roots have to be torn up. The suffering may be acute.

(3) Catharsis —the cleansing from old ideas and old ways—especially old ideas that led to this bankruptcy. Repentance is metanoia— literally, “change of mind,” of outlook.

(4) Charisma —grace. Sorokin used the New Testament Greek word, for it is God’s grace we have to get—an empowering to live in new ways.

(5) Resurrection. Life is reborn, individually, and collectively. Grace has been found in the dungeon. Life had to get worse before it would get better.

Perhaps you as an individual will have to pass through these five steps to Resurrection.

“Oh God, my Father, Thou dost make us go through dungeons to open doors. How it must wring Thy heart to have to stand aside and let us fail! But Thou dost love us too much to let us succeed on low planes. Precipitate the crisis that we may go through the catharsis to the Resurrection. For we must the new at any price. Amen.”

Taken from: E. Stanley Jones, Abundant Life – “THE FIVE STEPS OUT OF THE DUNGEON”