

Letter from John P. Cobb  
May 3, 2020

I saw myself in a poor light, not an addiction sort-of-thing, just as someone in whom belief had disappeared. Accompanying these feelings were bleak world views, isolation, and periods of excruciating tests. One never really thinks there is another side to these things, and there didn't seem to be at the time.

But in this state a person is capable of seeking great change, and even blindly reaching out, even to seek for the smallest kernel of what truth might be. These things are best done alone, and the deep winter of PA in 1978 offered me a chance to sort through that abyss.

Another artist friend of mine gave me good council and continuity, to try and set me on the outside of my self for a bit. I walked up the hill to Frank's house one day and asked him if I could paint the inside of the Chapel. "What are you going to charge?" he said. Thus began our highly unnatural inclination to come together on something. He was a tough bird and it was just what I needed. "A dollar" I said.

Many of our differences stemmed from our attitudes about war (it really was a war within me). Mine was the post Vietnam debacle, his the good war and the great society. And, it is quite possible to come to terms with issues so widely disparate in this place, two beings that join together, two rough-clad individuals, two sides of a coin. I kinda' hope that PA does not become lulled into not examining its character, I have not known it to be otherwise. Some perhaps lapse into mere pleasure seeking.

Following all this, the actual working out of this Chapel is just a natural flow, now. All the physical things; the paints, the surfaces, the preliminary sketches, all are just gravy. It was a very memorable time in my little corner in Frank's house over the next few winters, though. It didn't just happen suddenly, stars were assembled, themes digested, revisions, but mainly there was one important thing.... this was going to be about the Lamb of God, may he build and restore.

Frank and I knew something about this struggle, and it was not he nor I, it was about the battle that didn't distinguish personalities, or exact payment, or put on airs, or stand for much guff. There wasn't any time for anything but the thing at hand. And, we were going to try and get to the other side.

One remarkable incident reminiscent of this overcoming, was the time when Frank came to my aid with his baseball bat. I had taken to the habit of simply working til the light gave out and then just falling asleep in a ball near the altar. Well, this poor young drunk came busting in and christened the ship with a beer bottle and then began to feel a longing just to beat the tar out of me. I suppose there is an innate desire to obliterate belief. Can't say there is any reason to try and find someone to blame it on, want nothing to do with that ancient enemy.

Without fighting back I just hunkered down and walked towards Frank's house, while this miscreant rode on my back clobbering with no real effect. Frank heard the commotion (no real image has ever been created of that face enraged). His later addition of dentures certainly modified that fearsome apparition to a degree. Well, next day, I ambled up to Turnbull's bakery/cafe to get a cup and a loaf...and there was the perpetrator himself. He saw me and ran like hell.

Please enjoy this work, it is the delight in having been made free.  
John Patrick Cobb