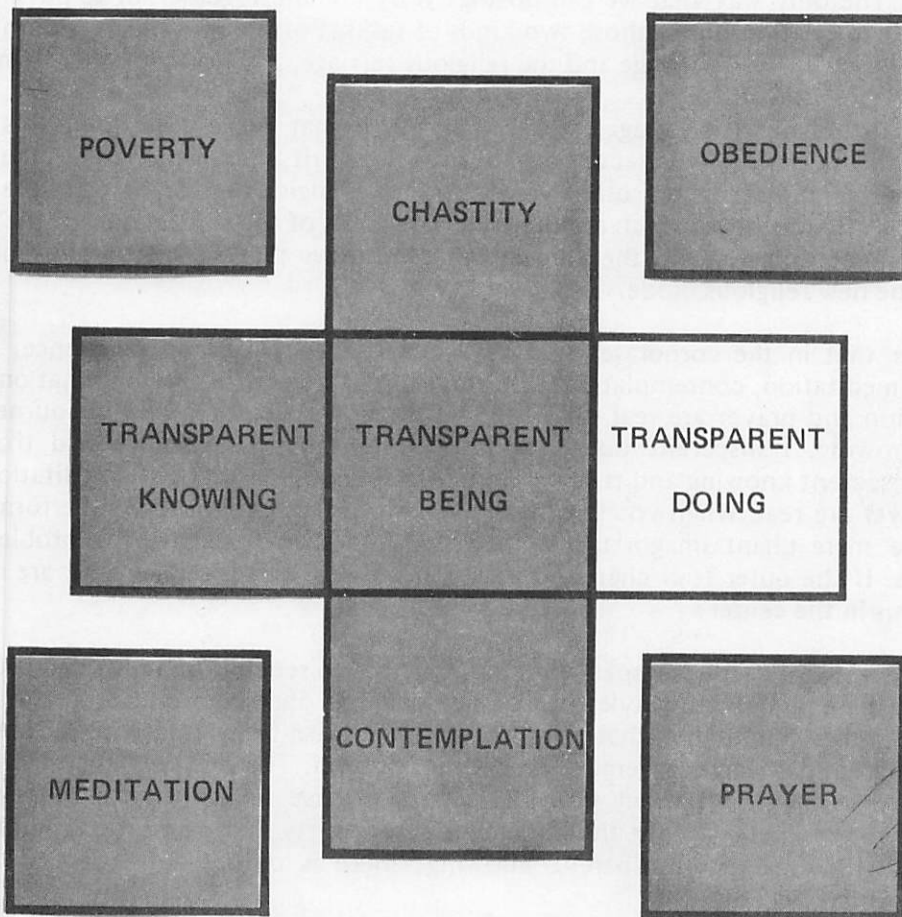




TRANSPARENT DOING

In one of the first plenary reporting sessions in working on the local church tactical model, someone in the midst of their report said something like this, "You can tell an auxiliary by what he does, does, does, does." And I got frightened. I got frightened for a couple of reasons. First of all, I got frightened about *doing* all of that. More importantly, I got frightened because I have lived all of my life seeing only the inauthenticity of doing. To put that another way, I've lived almost all of my life doing that which did not relate me to life finally, but only took up my time. And so that scared me.

In working on the Local Church tactics we've been spending our time building the doing that the auxiliary will do. This will be authentic doing if we've done our job. Next summer we'll probably come together to work on the new social vehicle, as we call it, or perhaps better the new civil carriage, if I can use that language. We've seen the beginning of the new religious carriage in working on the local church model. The only way that we can do that is by coming together, or to put that another way, that we be style in relationship to those two kinds of tasks. For the movement is nothing but the style category in between the civil carriage and the religious carriage, and nothing other than that.

If you take that and put it over against our image that what we've been doing this summer is weaving the warp and the woof of the tactics over against the spirit, then if the warp is the new social vehicle and the woof coming across the other way is the new religious mode, here are the corporates and the solitaires and the journeys, which are the style categories of the solitaires or of the spirit or of the new religious mode. And it's with the journeys that we move this week to begin looking at the style categories in the new religious mode.

You remember that in the corporates you have poverty, chastity, and obedience. And in the solitaires you have meditation, contemplation, and prayer. And we've said all along that only poverty, obedience, meditation and prayer are real, that the rest of these are not real. In the journeys we have the transparent knowing, transparent doing, and transparent being. We have said that chastity, contemplation, transparent knowing and transparent doing are not real, that only meditation, poverty, obedience, and prayer are real. When you say that, you have to say, well, no, only the former are real. The latter four are mere phantasmagoria or something. And then you have the problem of what transparent being is. If the outer four charts are real and not real and the inner four are real and not real, then what is this in the center?

We want to work today with transparent doing. One has to see that there isn't any such thing as transparent doing. There is only the style that is manifested in obedience and prayer as they are in tension with one another. Or to put that another way, there isn't any transparent doing, only the manifesting of being amid sheer engagement and sheer freedom. There is only the manifestation of being in that moment. Similarly, when you say that, you have to say there is no such thing as transparent knowing, but there is only the style between poverty and meditation. Another way of saying that is that there is no transparent knowing; there is only the imaging of knowing in detachment and sociality.

As I've been working on this area, I've found a weird kind of relationship between doing and chastity, and doing and contemplation. I would have expected it to be between doing and poverty, and doing and meditation. But after I got into it, I discovered that it was with chastity and contemplation, and that's as it should be. The deep four inner categories are where the inner relationships come, once you move out of the relationship between obedience and prayer. Perhaps that will become clearer as we go on.

I want to read some poetry to you. I must admit that for some three agonizing days I contemplated only reading poetry to you this morning. How do you talk about what doesn't exist?

Only the poet seems to do that well, so listen to this little bit of poetry.

Then up came Jairus, who was president of the synagogue, and fell at Jesus' feet begging him to come into his house, for his daughter and only child, about twelve years old, was dying. But as he went, the crowd nearly suffocated him. Among them was a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years. She had derived no benefit from anybody's treatment. She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak, with the result that her hemorrhage stopped at once. "Who was that that touched me?" said Jesus. When everybody denied it, Peter remonstrated him, "Master, the crowds are all around you and are pressing you on all sides. A thousand people must have touched you." Jesus said, "Somebody touched me, for I felt the power went out from me." When the woman realized that she had not escaped notice, she came forth, trembling, and fell at his feet and admitted before everybody why she had had to touch him and how she had been instantaneously cured. "Daughter," said Jesus, "it is your faith that has healed you. Go in peace."

I want to suggest that that is what I mean by transparent doing. There was one who was walking down the road as utterly intensified obedience, utterly intensified prayer. He was going under utter necessity, out of utter creativity. And in the midst of that kind of transparent doing, one touched him, and discovered that merely to touch him was to be immediately at one with Being itself. That is, a miracle occurs as the in-breaking of sheer humanness through the contact with intensified doing.

I want to use four categories to try to say that much more complicatedly and long-handedly than that poetry did. I want to suggest that transparent doing is first of all sheer role; and that secondly it is radical integrity; thirdly, it is final commitment; and lastly, transfigured authenticity.

Transparent doing is first of all sheer role. Humanness itself is sheer role. That's all humanness is—a role. It's only being a role. I show a multitude of roles. I am a hundred roles most of my existence. And yet in the midst of being a hundred roles I have the possibility of deciding and choosing to be one role in history. No, not deciding and choosing: *inventing* one role in history. That I invent the role that I am. That's sheer invention. It comes no other way. I am that role, and if you change that role then you change who I am and I am no longer; I am something else. I am sheer role, and that is sheer invention.

I think of that movie, *He Who Must Die*. You think of that man. He had two roles that he played. One he came upon—it was sort of given to him. The other he invented. You ask yourself which of those roles invented humanness in that man. I'd want to suggest that the role that invents humanness, that invents the relationship to the wholly other, is the sheer role I mean to point to as transparent doing.

Secondly, it's the sheer role of utter selfhood. It's audacious self-affirmation which can only happen in the Word, otherwise you're in a horrible situation. Most of my life has been a weird kind of self-depreciation. It's not the outward kind that you often see when people cower over in a corner somewhere and refuse to do anything. Those of you that know me know that I've never been that kind. I get whatever it is out there on the table for everybody to see. But there's a weird kind of self-depreciation that often inhibits that. It's the kind of self-depreciation that says I can't do it, but what I can do is muddle in there and make somebody else who's responsible do what I want to do. I often come off like a ready reference system. If anybody says anything significant, I can immediately find a reference that will document what he says and gain my self-significance from his having said that. It's a kind of self-depreciation that doesn't risk itself, but when somebody else has risked himself, it will work out all the details. In the midst of a summer program like this, we might decide that all five hundred of us should risk ourselves and go to Woodlawn to church. If somebody decides that, I can call the CTA and get all the trains there on time. That's the kind of self-depreciation that doesn't risk creativity. It only works out little surface details of somebody else's existence.

The role of sheer selfhood is that role that takes creativity and thrusts it into history. It takes responsibility for the whole of life that one faces. It's the courage to be the whole, it's the courage to take upon yourself the responsibility for the whole battle. That's the sheer role that I mean when I talk about doing Beingness. It's the role of utter selfhood.

But then you begin to grasp that that isn't something that just happens. Something has to occur to you to allow that to happen. I think of one little phrase in that movie again: "They had a need. There was a need." That calls forth selfhood from you, I'd like to suggest, and in a weird kind of way.

This Assembly has been the mediating of that kind of a Word to me. Seven or eight months ago I made the mistake of saying to one of my colleagues that there is a need to do something about the Local Church. He'd been saying it to himself for a long time, and a number of people had been saying it to themselves for a long time, and I got rooked into working with this other group of people. I first thought that I could play my self-same role, you know, just working out the details after they'd made the decisions. It soon became clear that that wasn't to be. There was a need for sheer creativity that called forth selfhood. In that weird kind of way this whole Local Church work has been a kind of invisible priesting to me—communicating the Word that has demanded my selfhood, that demanded creativity. Transparent doing is the sheer role of selfhood.

But then, it's also the sheer role of utter sainthood. What I mean by that is that it's the role of one who has discovered the delusion of selfhood. That is to say he understands that selfhood is not being something in and of itself, unrelated to anything else in history (that's one of our fathers-in-the-faith's definition of sin, by the way). Rather it is being something in relationship to the totality of reality itself. And that's what Luther discovered when he tried to be that perfect monk for years in that monk cell. He never became a saint. But only when he got his own creativity into history, in another kind of role, did he discover sainthood. It's the inventing of that role; it's the courage to not be, or rather the courage to be a part, or the courage to submit oneself that I mean to point to as that kind of a role.

This morning we sang that old hymn that has an absurd verse, I guess. It was interesting. We were unwilling to go over that third verse. We sang the first two, and then there was a long pause before somebody risked himself in the last verse that starts, "Perfect submission, all is at rest." How do you grasp the transparent doing that is the doing of rest, that is the doing of submission?

And finally, it is the sheer invention of not just *a* role, but *the* role in history. For a grasp of the invention of selfhood and sainthood is that the role to be invented is *the* role. The only reality is the transparent role. It's the role of Jesus himself. I think of Paul who said in one of his letters "If I am doing anything at all, it's because Christ is working in me." I think that that was probably a pedagogical statement. I think that anybody that knew Paul knew that it was Christ working in him at every moment. And he was just saying something to make it self-conscious to everybody what was already apparent. But then he goes on and does that little flip and says that where I am not doing what needs to be done, then it is obvious that it is sin working in me. And do you grasp what he was getting at? Where he was embodying the role of Christ, then he was doing transparent doing. Where he was not embodying that role—that is what sin was. Sin is to not embody the role of the Jesus Christ. Transparent doing is the sheer role of being the perfect one, of being the keeper of the keys, who grasps that in his doing he unlocks or locks the gates to heaven for mankind. It is to play the role of Jesus himself.

Secondly, transparent doing is radical integrity. It is the radical integrity of one focused thrust into history. And I mean a radical integrity, not a social integrity. I don't mean the kind of integrity where you do the same things every day and people can get to count on you showing up at the 7:34. That's not the kind of integrity I mean. It's the radical integrity that has only one thrust out of itself. It focuses like the giant mirrored lens of a telescope that can pull the whole of the universe down into one spot. And its capacity to do that is dependent entirely upon its integrity. If there is one fault in

the lens, it does not do that. Transparent doing is the radical integrity that can focus all of life into one spot.

Or it can strip away, if you will, everything that is unnecessary to the doing that is at hand. That telescope has the capacity to focus on one star and blot out every other star so that only the light of that one star can be seen, and thus can be magnified and intensified. Radical doing is the focused thrust, even if there are thousands of ambiguities still in the midst of that doing. But in the midst of all of that doing, and all of the ambiguities, there is a focus, there is a oneness to that thrust.

And it's the integrity of doing all of history. In the doing that is transparent doing all of history is done. It's not just some one part. It's that which holds history together, if you will, past and future in the present. That's what radical integrity is. It holds all of history. It's like the steel in the ship's hull. As long as that steel has integrity, the ship stays together. When that steel loses integrity, the ship breaks up and sinks. So also it is with human personality. When a man's integrity and his personality disappear, when he shows up a different person every day, there's no way to relate to him. His doing is no longer transparent.

It's the integrity of doing all of history, of doing all of the past. It's doing Hosea, it's doing Paul, it's doing Columbus. I think of Neil Armstrong here as he went to the moon. What was so fascinating about the doing of Neil Armstrong going to the moon was that he was summing up in that trip all of the searching after the knowable unknown that man in his whole lifetime had been doing, summed up in that one journey; and in that, behind that, revealing all of the searching after the unknowable unknowable that mankind has always been about.

It's the integrity of doing all of the past and doing all of the future and doing every part of life for the next four years, for the next forty years, for the next thousand years.

Listen to this one short snatch from *Dune*:

"When will we solve it?" the Fremen asked. "When will we see Arrakis as a paradise?" In the manner of a teacher answering a child who has asked the sum of two plus two, Kynes told them, "From three hundred to five hundred years." A lesser folk might have howled in dismay. But the Fremen had learned patience with men with whips. It was a bit longer than they had anticipated, but they could all see that the blessed day was coming. They tightened their sashes and went back to work. Somehow, the disappointment made the prospect of paradise more real.

That's the doing of the entire future. That's the radical integrity that I mean to point to. It's the deed that stays at the present looking backward at the blood-spattered trail of being itself which has brought all of history to this point, and looking forward to the direction in which that blood-spattered trail may go. Doing the deed that does both of those trails is the radical integrity of doing all of history, or doing all of the globe, doing the entire globe, doing every culture, and radically doing your own culture, for you cannot do every culture unless you radically do your own culture.

I get rather tired of people that talk of building the tactical models for the local congregation who say, "I don't understand why we spend so much of our time putting everything in neat little boxes, you know, getting utterly rational. We ought to be just a little more spontaneous and respond to the moment as it comes to us. As we go out with all these little boxes of rationality organizing our year, nothing will ever happen." You almost want to say that without rationally organizing the year, nothing will happen. But then you also hear the perversion, "My God, if we ever tried to do one of those little boxes, it'd be terrible."

But how do we grasp that the only way you and I can move is to utterly, utterly take our rationality and force it to the bottom? There will never be a universal global deed done through watering down everybody's diversity until we get to the lowest common denominator. I think it was

Chardin that broke in on me to make that point a few years ago where he pushed that the only way that you move to the universal stage, which he sees as the next stage, is through the intensification of diversity, through the intensification of each individual uniqueness. And only through the implosion of diversity will the universal man be doing the transparent doing, as the radical integrity of the universal deed.

Now, the man who doesn't do the universal deed doesn't display transparency, if you can display transparency. I think of Falstaff: there was a man who never did a universal deed, it seemed. Every time you about got your attention on what was really happening in that story in terms of the broad scope of history and how history itself was being changed, Falstaff fell off his horse and lay there and couldn't get up with all his armor on. I mean, he was always directing attention back at himself. He became the obvious. He was never the transparent. Only the one who can do the universal deed is the transparent.

And then, transparent doing is the radical integrity of the given life. For only the given life finally has radical integrity. Only the life laid down has integrity. I think of Martin Luther King. There was a man whose doing was transparent doing, for in everything that he did you grasped that his life was on the line, that he never held it back. And it was almost like when he got shot in Memphis, you knew. It was like you knew and you said to yourself, "That's the way it has to be." Ten years ago you knew in the bottom of your being that he would get shot in Memphis on that balcony, because his life was one doing, one life laid down. A life that is held back is not transparent. It is obvious. Only the life that is laid down is a life of radical integrity. And that life recreated humanness itself. Why else would a million people flock to that movie shown on the anniversary of his death this year? Because they knew that seeing that movie, seeing that radical integrity once more, would recreate their own humanness.

Transparent doing is final commitment. It's final commitment to the way it is. It's commitment to the ontological and not to the moral. It's commitment to the is-ness of life itself, and not to the ought-ness. It's commitment to the way it is. This is where I would want to part ground with Immanuel Kant when he suggests that what it really means to deal with the holy is to deal with the morally perfect. I want to say, "No, no, Immanuel. No to your ancestor Pelagius. I don't want that. That's not where transparent doing is done." Doing is done there, and significant doing. And thank God for those who do out of that, for they bring about a new earth at times. But that's not what I mean by transparent doing.

I want to go back to my friend Augustine. Oh, wouldn't you like to have a name like that? Augustine. The early Church used the word from which that name came, and it refused to use it in the way that others around them were using it. They restricted it to point to the experience of the fear of God, the fear of Yahweh as it broke in upon you. I don't know how you get that said. I started to use the word awe. That doesn't do it. There's a dread, maybe, that's in that name, Augustine. The august one. Wouldn't you like to have been named Augustine? Or Benedict? I think I'd rather be named Benedict, "the one who speaks good." Well, Augustine was the one for me who pointed out that not dealing with Being as it is is what it means to be in sin. The man who does not relate his doing to Being as it is the one who is not transparent, who has cut himself off, who tried to be a self without God. That is what it means to be in original sin, to be a self out of relationship to Being Itself.

And he goes on to point out that that is its own punishment. Punishment isn't some kind of a thing you get slapped with because you did something nasty. Punishment is your sin. It is being out of relationship to Being Itself. The one who is finally committed to the way it is is the one who does the transparent deed.

Transparent doing reveals a man who is committed to the earth. He's committed to the goodness of creation itself. He's the one who adjusts his doing to the doing of being as it comes along with doing itself. That's transparent doing, where one's doing shows forth the goodness of creation. I think one day, and maybe this day, we'll begin to recover the principle of the sacramentality of nature itself. The transparent deed is the one that is done in final commitment to the earth.

And that leads to the particularity of a human being's own particular is-ness. One of the things that I miss about this summer is work days. In other summers, when you were doing the training program, one of the things you thought you needed to do was change the pattern, so you injected a work day. I have since discovered that that wasn't what we were doing at all. We were doing another kind of training in which we got clarity on who it was that was doing transparent doing in their lives. For as you look at two people working, it becomes very clear who are the ones who are doing the transparent deed and who are the ones who are simply filling up the time. The one who is doing the transparent deed is the one whose life is finally committed to that deed he's doing. He puts his entire existence into that particular washing of a section of wall. The one who holds his life out of that is not finally committed to that particularity. His deed becomes the filling up of time and points only to the wasting away of time.

The transparent deed is the deed that unites man with the death wish and with life itself, and releases in life that very consciousness of the death wish itself. To put that another way, it is final commitment to the eternal, at the same time that it is commitment to the earth. As Kazantzakis puts it, it is turning matter into spirit. That's the transparent deed. It's taking that little hunk of wall and bleeding it of every bit of meaning that that little bit of wall washing can have in one's life, bleeding it of the entire meaning of life expended on behalf of other men, of a life put forward, of a life handed out. I think of Lawrence: "Even if it's only in the whiteness of a washed pocket handkerchief," it's the transmitting of life into that moment.

I think if I had known this a few years ago, I wouldn't have been taken in by the moralistic liberal arts college that I went to where they taught me that when you come across space age expressions you would translate them into something like getting a long perspective on things. But you would never grasp that it had something to do with draining the meaning for your own particular existence out of that moment. Then you see that taking the view of the eternal does not mean standing down the road thirty years or looking back, though that may be helpful in doing what you're out to do. It means taking the entire meaning of your own personal existence out of that moment and draining it of that moment. Transparent doing is draining of that meaning for every man that sees you in the doing of that deed. It's taking the profane and turning it into the utterly sacred.

Paul wrote to some of his friends on that issue—remember in Romans he wrote, "If you guys want to eat the meat that's been sacrificed for the idols, fine, that's all right. You can eat anything you want to eat. But if your eating of that meat causes some to lose faith, that's not transparent doing." He didn't put it that way; he said don't do it. In everything you're doing you're out to relate the profane to the sacred and show the sacred within.

I think that's what Luther was pointing to when he said that the natural man does not fear God purposely, that the one who operates out of moralism is never able to bleed the utter significance of Being Itself out of that moment. He can never do that. The transparent deed is the deed done in final commitment to the eternal Final Commitment—that means commitment unto death.

We meet here on Pentecost, spending time talking about transparent doing. For Pentecost is the time of the giving of the spirit and has always been one of the key times of the giving of the spirit. And this baptism is above all things the sign of the giving of the death. It is the death to the entire past that one has been that is the sign in baptism. And what one discovers is that in the timing of that death it is the giving of the spirit, it is the giving of life, it is the giving of utter significance, that opens all of life. It's the commitment unto death that is the doing the deed from the graveside view. It's looking at one's entire existence in all his doing from the perspective of the grave, and seeing in that the finality of every deed that he does: the utter finality of it and the utter nothingness of it. I think of Armstrong again. On the anniversary of his landing on the moon he was complaining on the radio that he had hoped that surely the space program would go further ahead than it has in this year since he landed on the moon. In that year I think he had begun to grasp the nothingness of the doing that

has been his being, and in that sense perhaps he has begun to be transparent doing. If H. H. had begun *The Journey to the East* grasping that statuette of himself and Leo where one began flowing into the other, he'd have begun with the final commitment unto the death. It's the life-long commitment.

I think that's where the critical issue of vocation is today: men cannot grasp that their doing that is significant doing is doing that is for life. I mean that if one has decided to be a teacher, he doesn't teach for five years. He is a teacher for life, or he is not a teacher at all. He is just putting in time teaching. Or if one decides to be a carpenter, he saws for life, or he doesn't saw at all, he just puts in time. It's life-long doing, the transparent doing is.

And it's doing under radical assignment—that's the sign of life-long death commitment. It's always by assignment, first of all from God and then from man. Again the film, *He Who Must Die*, comes to my mind. In that film each main character had a natural role that they played in their life in the village, until one day they were assigned key roles in the Passion play. You remember that they protested their new assignments at first. They said, "Now wait a minute, I don't want to play this role that you guys have assigned me." The answer to them was, "No! You've been assigned by God to play that role." And forever after, their doing was radically changed, never again to be the same.

And when they didn't do the doing that they now were assigned to do—it became tragedy. That was when the young shepherd boy, assigned to play the Jesus role, refused to help up the crippled old man because he was told not to. He would never have given help in defiance of orders when he was a shepherd boy, but in his Jesus role his behavior was tragic. But when he later defied the orders and left town to help the others, that became transparent doing, or the doing of radical assignment.

Lastly, transparent doing is transfigured authenticity. It's the doing that molds the face of God. It's deciding the will of God. Shall we rehearse the "Freedom" section from Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* where he talks about observing, judging, weighing up, deciding, and acting? It's the one who does the free venture. Doing all of his doing manifests the mystery itself, but the mystery itself has grown more savage, and the manifestation of transparent doing is more savage in our time.

And it is doing that is never taught. You cannot teach awe; you cannot teach transparent doing; you can only awaken it; you can only admit it. This is why RS-I is an eliciting of self-conscious contact with the Holy. It can only be awakened and not taught.

Transparent doing is the transfigured authenticity which creates fascination in all who see it. I mean it illuminates the darkness and brings the darkness to light. The Old Testament talks about it as being a light unto the Gentiles. I think of NASA and the role they play in our society, just the power of corporateness that is there. Think of the kind of doing that has been done in that role. Then you have to think that that was done only because they brought 120 Germans over to this young culture, only two hundred years old, and injected them in. That kind of injecting in of the doing brought light to the darkness of our individualism. That was, in that instance, for me, transparent doing. It's the doing that brings to be what never was before.

Have you been fascinated by the doing these past two weeks? I mean I found myself utterly fascinated by the work that all my colleagues are doing. I sat there and looked and I said, "Procedures have never been done before." Then I was out one day on a work structure and was sick, and when I came back, to my wonder, the procedures had been done! I was fascinated. That was the transparent doing.

Or the fascination of John Wesley on that ship as he came across the Atlantic and got caught in the great storm. They all thought that the ship was going to sink, but when he looked at the Moravians, they were calm. There was order on the chaos which was their lives. They had given form to the whirlwind that was stirring them up. And Wesley was fascinated by their calm, not by their praying, by their calm. It was their praying that allowed that to happen. And you can trace that

through prayer and obedience if you will, and see the transparent doing that was there. It was the doing that created fascination that ordered the chaos that controls the whirlwind and allows the dance of freedom to take place. The Zorba dance has everything of knowing and doing to laugh—the fascination to see one who can dance in the midst of that. Transfigured authenticity is that which creates fascination and elicits dread of being over against that which is un-understandable, that which is unapproachable, that being which is incommensurable with any other being.

The casting out of demons—I think of Jesus in the land of the Gerasenes where he met the man who had demons, thousands of demons. And he cast them all out, and then everybody drove Jesus out of town. I mean the dread that comes to every man who harbors demons in his life and makes them at home there. In the casting out of demons is the dread elicited by the requirement of humanness in responsibility. There is a dread that is experienced when a deed discloses the eternal insecurity which is your life, when it doesn't just show up as that poor insecure me but shows up as insecurity of mankind itself. When that is communicated, dread is elicited, and that's transparent doing. It is the doing of the suffering servant who makes clear in his suffering that that is the role of humanness for every man and the dread of every man as he thinks about picking up the role of suffering. It is the deed that I mean to point to by transfigured authenticity, the deed which is the awful victory.

I used to go to a Methodist Youth Fellowship camp when I was in about the tenth grade. I remember one minister who was in the camp I went to. His name was Sam. I don't remember his last name, but he always smiled. No matter what happened, he smiled. When the heat got up to 102, he smiled. If his table didn't get served dinner, he smiled. That would be hard for some of us. Whatever happened, Sam smiled. Now you sense, when you get a little older, there was a falseness in that smile, but whether or not, the address of that smile on my life was a final victory that was victorious over everything that occurred.

The awful victory, with the dread added to that, is what I mean to point to by the transparent deed—the deed of the awful victory, which is every deed that you can do and accomplish, but is always the deed which is a gift to you. It is the gift of Moses who stood on the mountain and just by seeing the rear end of God had his face seared so that it shone and he had to keep a veil over his face. They could not look even at Moses' face because his face had seen God. That's the awful victory. That's the doing of the crucifixion and the doing of the resurrection, the radical repentance and the living forgiveness.

I want to close by reading to you poetry from Kazantzakis' *Saviors of God*:

1. The ultimate most holy form of theory is action.
2. Not to look on passively while the spark leaps from generation to generation, but to leap and to burn with it!
3. Action is the widest gate of deliverance. It alone can answer the questionings of the heart. Amid the labyrinthine complexities of the mind it finds the shortest route. No, it does not "find"—it creates its way, hewing to right and left through resistances of logic and matter.
4. Why did you struggle behind phenomena to track down the Invisible? What was the purpose of all your warlike, your erotic march through flesh, race, man, plants, and animals? Why the mystic marriage beyond these labors, the perfect embracement, the bacchic and raging contact in darkness and in light?
5. That you might reach the point from which you began—the ephemeral, palpitating, mysterious point of your existence—with new eyes, with new ears, with a new sense of taste, smell, touch, with new brains.
6. Our profound human duty is not to interpret or to cast light on the rhythm of God's march, but to adjust, as much as we can, the rhythm of our small and fleeting life to his.
7. Only thus may we mortals succeed in achieving something immortal, because then we collaborate with One who is Deathless.
8. Only thus may we conquer mortal sin, the concentration on details, the narrowness of our brains; only thus may we transubstantiate into freedom the slavery of earthen matter given us to mold.

9. Amid all these things, beyond all these things every man and nation, every plant and animal, every god and demon, charges upward like an army inflamed by an incomprehensible, unconquerable Spirit.

10. We struggle to make this Spirit visible, to give it a face, to encase it in words, in allegories and thoughts and incantations, that it may not escape us.

11. But it cannot be contained in the twenty-six letters of an alphabet which we string out in rows; we know that all these words, these allegories, these thoughts, and these incantations are, once more, but a new mask with which to conceal the Abyss.

12. Yet only in this manner, by confining immensity, may we labor within the newly incised circle of humanity.

13. What do we mean by "labor"? To fill up this circle with desires, with anxieties, and with deeds; to spread out and reach frontiers until, no longer able to contain us, they crack and collapse. By thus working with appearances, we widen and increase the essence.

14. For this reason our return to appearances, after our contact with essence, possesses an incalculable worth.

15. We have seen the highest circle of spiraling powers. We have named this circle God. We might have given it any other name we wished: Abyss, Mystery, Absolute Darkness, Absolute Light, Matter, Spirit, Ultimate Hope, Ultimate Despair, Silence.

16. But we have named it God because only this name, for primordial reasons, can stir our hearts profoundly. And this deeply felt emotion is indispensable if we are to touch, body with body, the dread essence beyond logic.

17. Within this gigantic circle of divinity we are in duty bound to separate and perceive clearly the small, burning arc of our epoch.

18. On this barely perceptible flaming curve, feeling the onrush of the entire circle profoundly and mystically, we travel in harmony with the Universe, we gain impetus and dash into battle.

19. Thus, by consciously following the onrush of the Universe, our ephemeral action does not die with us.

20. It does not become lost in a mystical and passive contemplation of the entire circle; it does not scorn holy, humble, and daily necessity.

21. Within its narrow and blood-drenched ditch it stoops and labors steadfastly, conquering easily both space and time within a small point of space and time—for this point follows the divine onrush of the entire circle.

22. I do not care what face other ages and other people have given to the enormous, faceless essence. They have crammed it with human virtues, with rewards and punishments, with certainties. They have given a face to their hopes and fears, they have submitted their anarchy to a rhythm, they have found a higher justification by which to live and labor. They have fulfilled their duty.

23. But today we have gone beyond these needs; we have shattered this particular mask of the Abyss; our God no longer fits under the old features.

24. Our hearts have overbrimmed with new agonies, with new luster and silence. The mystery has grown savage, and God has grown greater. The dark powers ascend, for they have also grown greater, and the entire human island quakes.

25. Let us stoop down to our hearts and confront the Abyss valiantly. Let us try to mold once more, with our flesh and blood, the new, contemporary face of God.

26. For our God is not an abstract thought, a logical necessity, a high and harmonious structure made of deductions and speculations.

27. He is not an immaculate, neutral, odorless, distilled product of our brains, neither male nor female.

28. He is both man and woman, mortal and immortal, dung and spirit. He gives birth, fecundates, slaughters—death and eros in one—and then he begets and slays once more, dancing spaciouly beyond the boundaries of a logic which cannot contain the antinomies.

29. My God is not Almighty. He struggles, for he is in peril every moment; he trembles and stumbles in every living thing, and he cries out. He is defeated incessantly, but rises again, full of blood and earth, to throw himself into battle once more.

30. He is full of wounds, his eyes are filled with fear and stubbornness, his jawbones and temples are splintered. But he does not surrender, he ascends; he ascends with his feet, with his hands, biting his lips, undaunted.

31. My God is not All-holy. He is full of cruelty and savage justice, and he chooses the best mercilessly. He is without compassion; he does not trouble himself about men or animals; nor does he care for virtues and ideas. He loves all these things for a moment, then smashes them eternally and passes on.

32. He is a power that contains all things, that begets all things. He begets them, loves them, and destroys them. And if we say, "Our God is an erotic wind and shatters all bodies that he may drive on," and if we remember that eros always works through blood and tears, destroying every individual without mercy—then we shall approach his dread face a little closer.

33. My God is not All-knowing. His brain is a tangled skein of light and darkness which he strives to unravel in the labyrinth of the flesh.

34. He stumbles and fumbles. He gropes to the right and turns back; swings to the left and sniffs the air. He struggles above chaos in anguish. Crawling, straining, groping for unnumbered centuries, he feels the muddy coils of his brain being slowly suffused with light.

35. On the surface of his heavy, pitch-black head he begins with an indescribable struggle to create eyes by which to see, ears by which to hear.

36. My God struggles on without certainty. Will he conquer? Will he be conquered? Nothing in the Universe is certain. He flings himself into uncertainty; he gambles all his destiny at every moment.

37. He clings to warm bodies; he has no other bulwark. He shouts for help; he proclaims a mobilization throughout the Universe.

38. It is our duty, on hearing his Cry, to run under his flag, to fight by his side, to be lost or to be saved with him.

39. God is imperiled. He is not almighty, that we may cross our hands, waiting for certain victory. He is not all-holy, that we may wait trustingly for him to pity and to save us.

40. Within the province of our ephemeral flesh all of God is imperiled. He cannot be saved unless we save him with our own struggles; nor can we be saved unless he is saved.

41. We are one. From the blind worm in the depths of the ocean to the endless arena of the Galaxy, only one person struggles and is imperiled: You. And within your small and earthen breast only one thing struggles and is imperiled: the Universe.