

PRIORS' COUNCIL
CONTINENTAL PRESIDIUUM

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Rough Draft

REPORT OF RESEARCH WORK ON SANCTIFICATION

O God, who hast given us the grace to be the instruments of love in its work of healing and judgement, who has commissioned us to proclaim forgiveness and condemnation, deliverance to the captive and captivity to the proud: Give us the patience of those who understand, and the impatience of those who love, that the might of thy gentleness may work through us, and the mercy of thy wrath may speak through us, in the name of Jesus Christ, and for his sake. Amen.

I want to talk about Sanctification in terms of context, process, experience, and implications.

This quarter we have pulled together an extraordinarily rich, tasty, and nourishing mix that has not yet jelled enough to slice up into a 44-hour serving.

THE CONTEXT

First of all, in the context of the demands of our time, you and I showed up in a time of resurgence. It is as if the human vitality has broken loose all around the globe. It is not that people are sitting back wallowing in despair any longer. It is, instead, as though they have picked up the life given and are thrusting it out with a new kind of vitality and creativity. We have gone past the point of the down-swing of mood and are into the new upsurge.

This has come very concretely to me fairly recently. I was in Calcutta last summer on the Global Odyssey. You have all heard the stories of Calcutta as being the city that did not make it, where three generations live in the train station because when they arrived from the countryside they found no place to go. That is true, it is all there, but there is something else going on in Calcutta now that is amazing. There is a new kind of surging vitality. We watched in that city the incredible overcrowdedness. I counted fourteen people hanging on the spare tire of the back of the city bus while others were running up to grab on. They saw us in our chartered bus and came over. You saw all these faces coming at you, and the first response was sheer terror--just cringing from that sea of faces coming at you. Then what happened was that they did not take over our bus. Do you understand that was probably more terrifying than if they had; because if they had I would have had the category to comprehend it. But what does it mean to have the self-hood, the vitality, the motivation, to be able to say, "I don't need your damn bus! I am about something much more important than that; I am about the creation of a new culture!" We talked to Harry Wainwright over there and he claims that Calcutta is a resurrected city. The whole of India has undergone a mood shift since the war to free Bangladesh. Now it is no longer sheer misery and despair; it is a new kind of vitality and determination to build the earth.

The time of human resurgence is also a time of crisis for civilization. You do not herald resurgence naively, for when the dams of human vitality and creativity are broken open, there is a surge of human energy which can either be a magnificent force for renewal or it can set civilization back a thousand years. I was impacted a few weeks ago with a Newsweek picture of a Ugandan rebel before and after the firing squad. He was not defeated. His eyes had the intensity of purpose I had associated with Nathan Hale. It became clear to me that those fellows mean business. When that vitality bubbles up, history is going to change, and it is not at all certain the change is for the better.

When we talk about massive human resurgence, we are talking about an extremely dangerous time. It has always been that way. The eleventh and twelfth century Crusades were magnificent expressions of adventure and vitality, but they devastated the Byzantine Empire and split the Eastern and Western Church until today. In the seventeenth century, energy let loose by the Reformation decimated Europe. In this century the vitality of Germany cost two World Wars. Today, local man's vitality in the Middle East--the only thing finally letting Arabs and Israelis survive in that geography--has the world nervously on tip-toe.

The critical issue at this point of history is something like, "What is authentic life all about, because I am going after it?" Or perhaps it begins with people sitting around in despair and victimism and cynicism; there is a rustling of the spirit and all around you hear, "I am going to live my life!" And then later, "What does it mean to live my life, anyway?"

Something like that is the issue before us in dealing with Sanctification, the general rubric under which our Fathers have spelled out the authentic human life of standing the Christ Word. The task of getting that wisdom out is to serve the suffering world.

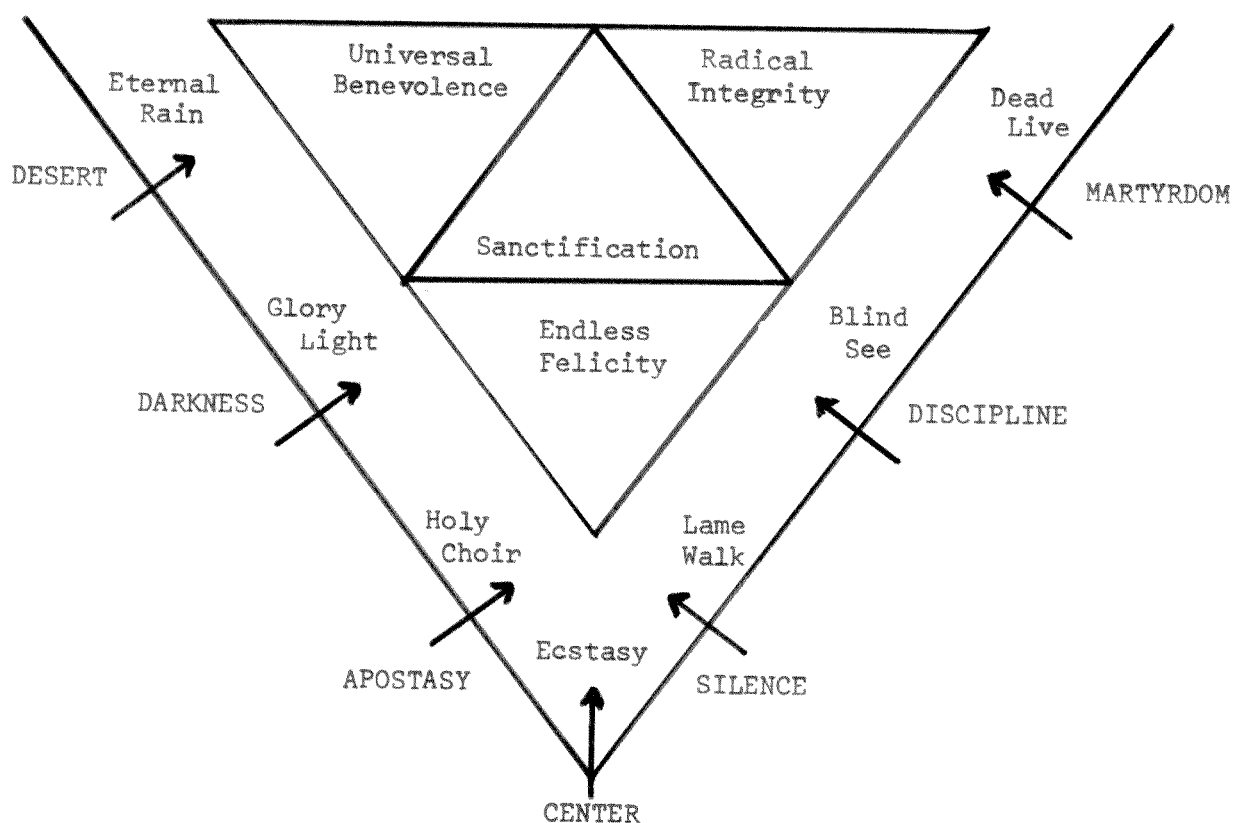
SANCTIFICATION AS A PROCESS

Sanctification is a process within all the relationships which define oneself, transforming them from extrangement to reunion. The theological poetry for that has been "divinization." In the South, we have road signs which say: "Get Right with God." Sanctification is first, however, a process.

We have been very gifted in our ways of doing dynamical analyses. When you look at a set of triangles you are aware it is not speaking of static structure but a sort of whirl of dynamic. Yet, there is a sense in which time has been factored out of this analysis. It is as if we had done a cross-section of the historic process and are looking at the end view of the pipe. How do you get at the dimension of process? How is it that we are clear Sanctification is not a state you reach and know you have arrived, but is an on-going process?

George Holcombe reminded us that Christian perfection is like pitching a no-hit game. When you are in the fourth inning, you have not arrived yet, but the issue is whether or not you are on the way. How do we get clear on that about Sanctification?

Joseph Slicker shared with us a way of talking about the process as a journey in terms of the descent to the center and the ascent. These are basic movements in the human journey. On the side of the descent you have the phases of Desert, Darkness, Apostasy, and at the center there is something like Ecstasy. In terms of the ascent you have the Silence, Discipline, and finally, Martyrdom.



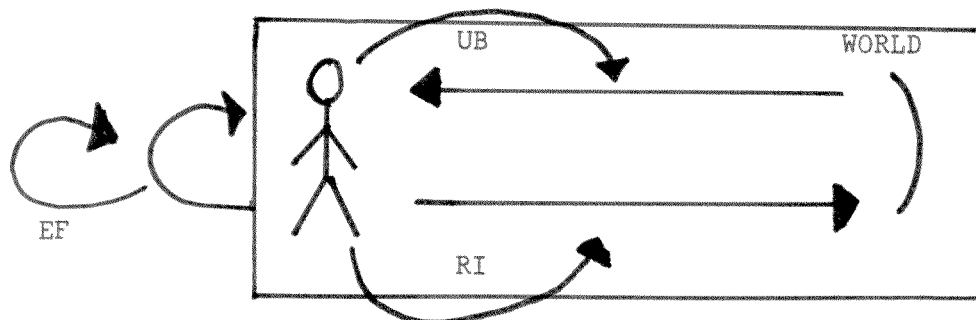
In the midst of laying out that model he reminds us this is not Sanctification, but rather, it is the human journey; that Sanctification is a process which transforms this movement at every stage.

In using the image of the Desert as Sanctification we begin to see it as the place of Eternal Rain. (Do not worry here if the poetry is ungrounded, that is some of the task which remains to be done.) The Darkness becomes the Holy Light. The Apostasy is something like the Holy Choir or the Silence--that experience of finding oneself crippled and helpless. Transformed Silence or Sanctified Silence has to do with the Lame Walking. Discipline has to do with the Blind Seeing. Martyrdom has to do with the Dead Living. Something like that allows you, at least, to get a feel after where in the midst of humanness the process of Sanctification takes place and what it is cutting over against. It is not as if you find yourself with some sort of spiritual superiority over anybody else. It is just that you are in a different phase on the life journey. And the issue of Sanctification is still very much alive, because that has to do with the transformation of whatever state you find yourself in.

I heard another colleague talk about the process of Sanctification as the process of having the Christ event break in on you more and more often. Have you heard Gene Marshall's great image about the man of faith being one who will run fifty miles to get his life addressed? In Sanctification you set out, run your fifty miles, and you get your life addressed. The second time you set out, and about mile 23 you are thinking, "I have a way to go," and wham! It comes at you. Pretty soon it is every two miles and then three feet and pretty soon you cannot sit still without having your life addressed. Somebody else spoke about Sanctification as that process of having the Justification happenings happen more and more frequently until finally your life becomes a spin, a whirl of Christ events.

SANCTIFICATION AS TRANSFORMATION

Another way we have talked about Sanctification is that it has to do with a transformation which takes place within your basic human relatedness. I am standing over against all of reality. The one thing absolutely certain is that I know reality impacts me and I impact reality. Somehow I am conscious of that fact and that is just the way it is; that is just the ontological relatedness of every man. Sanctification, then, has to do with the process of transformation within each of his given ontological relationships.



I sense that something significant has happened to the way we hear the news these days. What we used to shut out from our consciousness by just ignoring cannot be ignored anymore. You have to make a deliberate effort to get up and turn off the television. Our care has been let loose for the whole world, and what we experience as apathy these days is not apathy, it is not the not-caring. It is, instead, caring so much that since we do not have a way to act it out, we have to deliberately block off the world from ourselves. I think what has happened is that when we saw the shot of the earth from the moon, it gave us the whole world. It just dumped all of great and glorious and beautiful reality in our laps, and what that did was unloose the weight of our care. You and I are people carefilled for all of reality. We have experienced Universal Benevolence.

When that happens your relationship back to all of reality is transformed in the dynamic of Radical Integrity, or the acting out of one's passion. I think this has to do not so much with getting rid of your demons as with taming them. It came to me on a trip I was assigned to do for Development some time ago. Being a developer by decision, not by practice, I found myself in the midst of a meeting of colleagues. The momentum was slowing down. I looked around for the major contradiction and discovered I was it! My immediate thought was, "How

do I change? How do I get over being the 'jackass' here?" That is the Justification question. The Sanctification question would be: "Where is it that this situation demands a 'jackass'?" I discovered that where that situation demanded a jackass was out buying a pack of cigarettes somewhere else and letting the momentum go. How is it you take the only life you have on your hands and use it for the mission? You quit trying to change and decide that what you have on your hands is your life and that is the life to be given in care for the world. Something like that is Radical Integrity.

Usually I stand back and think it is just lousy to be caught in that kind of two-way trap. Endless Felicity has to do with looking at that situation and understanding it as happiness. That is happiness. It is not that happiness is something I hope will come out of living in that situation, but that my life defines what happiness is.

Knowing	Doing	Being	Community
Disillusionm't → Revaluation	Imperative → Indicative	Hero → Transparent	Battlefield → Communion of Saints

What does it mean to live out the Christ work, to be transformed? One of our studies has been to look at history and see what the historical fathers had to say about Sanctification. What we discovered was that all of them talked about it at length. That dumped a load of history on our hands; so instead of picking one or two key writers, we had to do a gestalt. It came out that Sanctification is the transformation in human Knowing, Doing, and Being, and Community. The first three have to do with the human journey and the fourth with community, the corporate embodiment of the journey.

I think, historically, those who have pointed to the transformation in Knowing have been the scholastics, the orthodox, or those who would fight over a creed. That seems a little strange to us, until we are reminded of the cruciality of the images out of which a person works. Sanctification has to do with the transforming of one's basic operating images and values; that is, a transformation from disillusionment to revaluation. There was a time in your life when you thought marriage was bliss; and then there came a time of disillusionment when you found marriage to be blistering. Something like that is the process of Justification. Sanctification is transforming that lucidity or that disillusionment. You take your understanding that your married life is never going to be the way you wanted it to be. It is going to be a continuing forty-year struggle, if it lasts that long. You ground that in the depth of your being and then you forget about it forever. Once you get that ground into your deeps, you just act out the dance of the happily married man. It is that sort of revaluation which goes on in the Knowing. Life the

way it is, really is good.

When you look at Doing and you begin to think about the Puritans, or the liberals--all those who were concerned with the right acting out of life or the right responsibility for the neighbor, the shift which takes place in your action is the transformation from the imperative to the indicative. In one stage of life you live out of the law, you live out of the "ought." I ought to do this or that. In the indicative stage you live out of the "what is." All you have to do is see the newspaper and your whole life agenda is written. You look at reality and the demands are laid on you. You do not need a law. Paul told us that the law is our teacher, until the Word comes along, then you do not need it any longer, though you do not get rid of it. At last you see what it was the law was trying to point to.

In the realm of Being, I recall reading of the ascetic and the Ecstatic, and the mystics--these strange people who were doing things like whipping themselves, or living for forty years wrestling with demons, or having strange ecstatic experiences. I think a way to talk about that today would be the transformation from the style of the hero to the transparent. The helpful image for me here comes in terms of the sexual revolution or struggle with roles going on in our day. What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be a man? The first step in that is to establish oneself as the hero, or as the beautiful one, moving beyond self-depreciation to the hero. But there is another stage. When Betty Friedan spoke in Houston the other day, the bane of the male chauvinists announced: "Ladies, we have won, we do not have to worry about being beautiful, fulfilled human beings any longer. Now it is time to help the men along with their revolution, and release the creativity there." That was shocking, for me anyway. You begin to see that there is another stage, or that Sanctification is going beyond establishing yourself as a hero. You get over worrying about succeeding all the time, or about being the great one. Your concern is to bring off the other. In the sexual revolution, my concern is not to be the hero. Whether I come off as fool or bully, the issue is whether or not every woman I encounter sees herself as Dulcinea afterwards. It is that sort of image we would be pointing to with the transformation.

Historically, the reformers came down hard on the pole of Community. The image for us would be the transformation of the community from a battlefield of bastards to a communion of saints. The Bonhoeffer "community" paper has to do with the first stage, where you get clear that your wish-dream is gone and that what you have on your hands are colleagues, not friends. The transformation from that to the communion of saints is a wild thing. You remember the scene in Patton when he is sitting down with the Russians to drink. The Russian general invites him to drink a toast and he sends back through an interpreter, "Tell him I will not drink with any Russian-son-of-a-bitch!" The interpreter first refuses, but finally is persuaded to translate. The Russian general then turns back and says, "Tell him I think he is a son-of-a-bitch, too!" The interpreter does, and Patton replies, "I'll drink to that!" It is that sort of transformation of community you would be pointing to here.

Now there are demons attending Sanctification in this realm. In the Knowing dimension the demon is gnosticism and the notion that you have some

kind of special insight. That tempts us in the Movement in very subtle and demonic ways. Now do you stay on the tightrope of revolutionary discretion, not falling off into either unhelpful "blabber" or holding secret knowledge? How do you avoid that sort of temptation and still talk about a transformed Knowing? I think perhaps the Knowing which is transformed is simply that you know Jesus Christ and him crucified. Or that all you know is the Word, all you know is that life is good.

I think the demon in the Doing dimension is moralism. It has undergone a shift in our time. The deepest moralism I have seen lately is that which says you ought not to feel guilty. People go to incredible lengths to act out of that moralism. You ought not to be responsible. How is it you hold up the fact that transformation of Doing is being responsible for all that is?

I think in the Being dimension the demon is occultism. You see that in the drug culture, in the outbreak of pornography, and the skin flicks everywhere--the sensuality. There is greatness in being able to bring off another, or to sense yourself as transparent to the Mystery, or finding others transformed in your presence. But what happens in the perversion is the illusion that pushing into that experience alone is what is valuable, or seeking after the unlimited ecstatic.

The demon in Community has to do with institutionalism, being set apart, or self-righteousness.

Sanctification is the process of transformation which goes on in those dimensions. It is not as if you ever reach an end point. This was John Wesley's great insight. Sanctification is a life-long journey. The important thing is whether or not you are on the journey, not in what stage you are. There is no spirit superiority here. Wherever you are on your journey the question is, "Is it being sanctified or is it not?"

SANCTIFICATION AS EXPERIENCE

One of the experiential levels of Sanctification is that of Universal Benevolence. The dominant experience is not, in the first instance, the weight of the world crashing in on you, but the next step. In a House Church witness Gene Marshall said recently that the man of faith is not called on to be glum about bearing the weight of the world. Anybody can do that. The trick is to dance with the weight of the world on your shoulder. Perhaps you have seen something of that dance break out from time to time.

I recall a story of a man who was walking along a rocky path and happened to see Atlas standing there holding the world. Atlas said, "I would like a drink of water. Could you hold this a minute?" The man was intrigued, and being a nice fellow took it from Atlas. The last thing he saw of Atlas was him running down the road saying, "Give it to the next person who comes along." You are familiar with that myth as descriptive of our experience. It does not matter how you got to that rocky path, just as long as the world gets dumped on you. It is intriguing, however, to reflect on that for a minute. Who says that guy is unfortunate, or trapped? He saw a vision of human possibility which he touched and the first thing he knew he had the

weight of the world on him and he was holding up the whole thing. It is incredibly difficult but it is glorious! That is the thing worth doing--holding the weight of the world, spiritizing every situation. You experience yourself as a catalyst of compassion, a Midas of meaning. It is a phenomenal possibility hard to put down.

I saw a play some years ago called "Pantacles," which had a character who sleepily oozing through life, wakes up one morning, yawns and says "Gee, it's a great day." It turns out that statement was the code word to start the revolution. So he goes around and tells people "Gee, it's a great day." They start shooting, all chaos breaks loose, and social change happens. Pretty soon people are coming and asking Pantacles, "Where do I go?" He tells them to go here and go there and the revolution is on. Social change is happening and it is just a glorious whirl of activity, this business of bearing the weight of the world. And it does not in the first instance matter how you got there. That is Universal Benevolence. It is beyond the sheer weight. It is the dance and the glory that goes along with bearing the weight.

Radical Integrity comes somewhere in the midst of the dance. The dominant experience, I think, is that of mounting fury. It is the 100-ton crane you are bearing coming alive. It chooses to dig at you every once in a while. It is as if you are standing there at the crevice of the right "whistle point." You have your tune and are all puckered up to whistle, when everybody around you starts stuffing peanutbutter in your mouth. It is just infuriating. Everywhere you turn men, circumstances, and principles are out to impede that glorious activity you know is possible because you have done it before. You are not out to find personal significance--that quest died long ago. Nor are you seeking an easy way. Rather, that outburst of spirit you are about to generate is exactly the thing which is going to enable civilization to come along---but, you are just impeded at every turn. It is not that it is anybody's fault. That is part of the frustration. It is just the way it happens. Picture Lawrence of Arabia as he goes back to pick up his man in the desert. You experience it as going out with that extra outburst of spirit energy to rescue him; but he is armed to the teeth and out to kill you rather than be rescued. Or you experience it like a tragic "Catch 22," which is no longer funny because too much is at stake. You get up at three o'clock in the morning to do a surprise decor job which is going to transform your community into one of global perspectiveness. It is going to really bring off the spirit outbreak you know is necessary--and there is no masking tape. It happens in the utterly mundane. You are running to a great speaking engagement already late, and you trip and fall in the mud. Or you get the report ready which will transform the whole thrust of the day; the person ahead of you on the program exerts his selfhood, and you wind up with five minutes to give the report. It is in those kinds of just trivial, nitty-gritty things that you experience yourself bursting with rage.

The damnedness of it all wakes in upon you and you find yourself just lashing out, outraged, and furious. But you cannot quit. That is not an option anymore. Your care has burst loose and you have seen the urgency, and so quitting is not an option. You try to think back on a time when life was not so outrageous, but you find that the damnedness has inflicted your memory.

Even when you remember those so-called happy times, all you can see there is the damnedness of it all. Everyone is out to get you everywhere. That is what has inflicted you, and you are just outraged at every moment.

The issue, then, is not how to get rid of the fury. It is, how does that rage become sanctified? It is clear that what you have on your hands is a war, but it is no longer just a war with the enemy without; it is a war with the enemy without and within and all around. Those who you thought were your colleagues are your enemies. The issue is not to get out of it or win some great victory. The issue is whether or not this is going to be a holy war, or saturation bombing. Whether the enemy is going to be the world, the flesh, and the devil, to speak poetically, or whether you and I are going to use that rage outrageously, to attack everything in sight. This is a dangerous stage in Sanctification. We are subtle in our saturation bombing. The man who is struggling with Radical Integrity has moved a long way on the journey. He has spirit insights and weaponry that are incredibly accurate and destructive. The issue is how to make that a holy war against Satan. Radical Integrity, then, in the midst of your rage is focusing the thrust on the one thing necessary--the loving of God or the breaking loose of humanness, of spirit.

The experiential level of Endless Felicity has something to do with certainty. Perhaps the best way to talk about it is with an image. We have a resident ornithologist around here who tells us about the "osprey." The osprey is a bird that fishes, and occasionally it latches onto a fish a little bit larger than he is able to fly away with easily. Some versions of the story talk about Sanctification as this little bird soaring away to the clouds with a whale under its talons, but our ornithologist tells us a more realistic story. What happens when the bird comes down and grabs the fish is that its talons lock. It cannot let go. It is biologically impossible. So what happens is that there is this frantic flurry of feathers, and then a few ripples on the water's surface. Our ornithologist is also an imaginal educator who stops the action at the moment of impact, so you get the picture of this bird who had just been gracefully practicing his 8-point slow rolls, coming in at a 47-degree dive at 180 miles an hour. He reaches down and locks in, and wham! He is pulled up short. You see his eyes get big and his mouth open and his whole future is laid out clearly before him. One thing about his future is certain; it is incredibly interesting! That future is not boring. You see the prospect of a frantic flapping, a few fading ripples on the surface, and a feather or two floating around. Then you take a step further and look below the surface and what you have is this large fish swimming around the rest of his life with a bird glued into his back. The fish now has wings. You begin to get an image of what it is like to sense ourselves on the verge of impacting the church and the world. The prospects of the future are laid out rather clearly when you start thinking about the progress of the Local Church Experiment or the Ecumenical Parish, or the Whistle Points. We are in the dive with the talons extended for that moment of impact. The issues at that point has to do with fulfillment. That bird's life as a fisher is filled full. He has the big one that did not get away. It is what he has been after all his life. Right here. Now, obviously when you get a little clarity on that point, what enables you to continue on the dive, toward that kind of impact, is simply the startling

word in Jesus Christ that "to die is to live." Something like that would be the experience of Endless Felicity.

A word or two about the implications: In terms of the serious turn of the Movement, toward evangelism, you and I must be serious about pointing out the real human possibility. Paul did will preaching forgiveness to the Hebrews for they understood themselves to be guilty under the law. But when he went to the Gentiles they did not have any law to be guilty under. Now, how do you forgive somebody who does not know he is guilty? In speaking of the law as a teacher, Paul's view was that the first stage is to preach the law, and then you preach the gospel.

Something like that is analogous to our situation. How can you and I proclaim the fantastic word of Justification without the context of the human possibility? How do we hold up to someone the real human possibility of Sanctification? It is not an abstract idea or wishdream. A person begins to see the difference between himself and that possibility, which drives him to Justification, which, when acted out, leads to Sanctification which when held up, drives you to Justification and back to Sanctification. Those two dynamics stay in tension.

Our study of Sanctification is going to be a key in the spirit life of Summer '73. I do not know yet what practical forms this will take, or what particular exercises. The way we have experienced research in this arena is like Pandora's box. You hold up one of these images in front of a group and it is good for two hours of head-on significant discussion. There is a dimension of life and fire which is going to be critical for our sustenance.

The Sanctification work has also been extremely valuable in recovering some of the symbols of the church, symbols of the sacraments as exercises which take up a portion of one's life journey and hold up the significance of that and sanctify it. The images of heaven, walking the streets of gold, endlessness, and purgatory begin to allow a reappropriation of those kinds of things. What would it mean to understand purgatory as that process of Sanctification, or doing battle effectively with the internal demons?

QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE STRUGGLE

Arenas of unclarity we need to continue to struggle with:

1) One has to do with what categories we decide to use to talk about Sanctification. We have discovered at least five different sets of categories which point to this area of experience, and it is very difficult to sort them out into an intelligible way of talking. We are clear about the realities to which we are pointing, but it is the intellectual issue of how they are sorted out. There are the categories of the triangles the priors did in December. In the Tillich paper,* we studied in Ecclesiola he uses the categories of Increasing Awareness, Freedom, Relatedness, and Transcendence. And, how do the Journey categories fit here? The church fathers have talked about Sanctification as transformation under these arenas of Belief, Morality, Style,

*Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol. III (pp. 228-237)

and Community. What has that all to do with what we are doing? Then you realize that somehow Sanctification has to do with an exterior look, an interior feel, and the relationship between the two.

2) Another arena of unclarity has to do with the historic background. We need to work a good deal more on the historical research. What are the papers you could use in a course to break open Sanctification?

3) How is it that you talk about the phenomena of Sanctification sociologically, and not just individually? How do you point to that process as a sociological happening?

4) How do you talk about Grace and Sanctification so you are not talking about some sort of human achievement, or something you can be proud of being involved in, but as a grace happening.

5) I think perhaps another has to do with sharpening the address of the wisdom we already have in the area of Sanctification. One way of raising that issue is: What is the question to which Sanctification is the answer? Where is it people are raising concretely, practically, day-to-day the issue of Sanctification? How does that need to be addressed in our time?

6) Another arena is: What demons attend to this arena? What are the heresies? What is it that we need to be on guard for?

Perhaps this holds some of the direction of our research this quarter. We might end by saying that the stew is indeed very rich and very tasty and it has come to us as very nourishing. We want to be about the continuing of the clarification of this arena of human experience.

-John Epps