

The first one does not sound much like a Doing. It's what I call bracketing the insoluble. Now that is a weird kind of Doing, and yet it is a very active kind of Doing. The second one is intensifying the complexity, and the third one is letting the mission do the healing.

I would say that, in our time, as we have done a turn to the world, priorship is defined primarily by Doing. The old maxim can be translated into, "A prior is as a prior does." Priorship is something that you do, not something that you are, in the first instance. I know that my own propensity is to identify priorship by certain kinds of interior qualities. Yet, when you stop and look, you do not identify those interior qualities, save by looking through a person's doing. Through the Doing that you see going on, you discern certain qualities. You do not set out to build priorship by instilling certain kinds of qualities that will then result in certain kinds of Doing. You enable a person to engage his life out of which the interior qualities emerge. A colleague once made the statement that you do not look at the inside of a marriage to see if it is healthy, but you look at whether or not the individuals of that marriage have their lives engaged in creating the future."

If you were to ask me to give an example of a man who embodies the qualities of priorship, I would point to a colleague of ours who, whenever you talk to him, always seems to have some problem that has to be dealt with. Yet, when you look at what he's doing you are just astounded. In the last two quarters he has had two PLC's in his region, some great RS-I's, and many interns coming into the House. When you look at his life, you see that it is radically and effectively engaged.

On the other side of that, you look at the interior and there are the qualities of priorship you did not see in the first instance. Remember the story of John the Baptist, who when he was in prison had some doubts about Jesus? He sent a messenger off to ask if Jesus was the Messiah, or if he ought to wait around for somebody else. This always sounded like a rather stupid statement, because I do not think he had much time to wait, but then on the other hand, he didn't have anything else to do. You remember Jesus' reply to him. He did not send a messenger back, saying, look how strong I am. He said, "Go back and tell John what you see me doing: that the blind are seeing, the deaf are hearing, the lame are walking. You identify priorship not by an interior quality, but by engagement in society.

The basis of that, for me, is a kind of a trust: that is, living out of trusting that what you have is adequate. It is living out of trusting the Mystery to know what it is that he is doing. That is, you never wait around to get the interior qualities you think are required for adequate priorship. You go ahead and launch into the job of priorship, always in the midst of a kind of uncertainty. A very powerful member of my meditative council is Thomas a Kempis. In one of his books he says a certain man went into the chapel to pray, and he prayed over and over again

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that he might know that what he was doing was the right thing. One day, after repeating his prayer many times, he heard a voice say, "Just do what you would do if you knew you were doing the right thing." For me, that is really what it means to be a prior; you trust the given to be adequate and go ahead and engage your life in the necessary deed.

Now, I want to talk about bracketing the insoluble, which is one of the most difficult things there is to do. It's a strange kind of action, in that it is not a "doing nothing;" it is, instead, a very active bracketing of that which is insoluble. Several years ago, when we were struggling over what seemed like a huge problem, I remember saying, with a kind of intensity, "Well, we have just got to get this dealt with before we can move on!" Joe Mathews' response to that was, "Well, I know it's a problem, but I don't know how to solve it!" And you discovered you no longer had to deal with that issue.

There are certain things you know are just insoluble at the moment, and that is not where you can put your energy. One example of that has been in terms of operating with the principle that everybody ought to be in an RS-I every quarter. This past winter quarter I figured out that we have 800 Order adults on the North American continent, including Centrum. We had sixty-six RS-I courses during the Winter Quarter. A little simple division, and you can see that you would have had to have 13 teachers for every RS-I to have every one of us in RS-I last quarter. That is an insoluble problem. That is, anyway you go, it is undesirable; therefore, that is not where you pour your energy.

Now, what that does, when you bracket the insoluble, is force you to look, not at the problem, but at the contradiction. What you see underneath that is the contradiction---that penetration has somehow got to be turned loose again. The contradiction relative to everybody teaching is not an assignment contradiction; it is getting a systematic, rational kind of penetration going on across the continent. You do not just ignore that kind of problem. In wrestling it through to discern the contradiction, what you discover is that you have to deal in a whole new way with Order training. Not dealing directly with that which is insoluble forces you to look in new directions. The comprehensiveness screen that we used this past quarter, has been particularly helpful there. You have a way of holding all your concerns, everything that you sense is a demand upon your life, in a category which allows you to bracket certain things that are currently insoluble, and move on to deal with others.

The second doing of priorship is intensifying the complexity. I have this propensity of always trying to force chaos into a container, rather than ordering the chaos so that creativity breaks loose. I build a model which will hold all the chaos currently going on, and then any time some new chaos shows up, I force it into the old model. I like to have things neatly ordered. I experience some new breakloose of chaos, or

or new demand as an enemy that has got to be wrestled to the ground and forced into my old model. What that does is stifle creativity. The faith stance is when a man orders the chaos and every time a new bit of chaos intrudes, or a new kind of demand, he redoes his model to include all of the current chaos. It is continually revising one's models to include all the new complexity that is constantly breaking loose in life. What you know underneath that is, finally, the chaos is not going to be contained. The doing of priorship is intensifying the complexity that allows one to stand present to every dimension of life as it breaks loose in new ways.

In Operations Centrum, I like to get on top of everything that is going on. That is a wild kind of thing to do, in a Centrum where you deal with Order Finance, the Religious Houses around the world, the Academy, the Student House, the Emerging Generation, Internal Life, and Centrum Relations which handles all of the Order data. Looking at the arenas in Operations Centrum, I find myself wanting to get everything into a model so that I can understand everything going on. I suspect if that were ever to happen, it would be because I had forced everything into some reduced kind of model.

I was disturbed a couple of weeks ago when I looked at the complexity of the phoning; Academy, Summer Recruitment and Order Finance all make calls to the houses and my office makes calls to the houses to deal with courses. Looking at all that complexity, I thought, "We really ought to be able to simplify this phoning into one call." Then it dawned on me that that would be rather demonic. Forcing everything into a simple model would probably kill summer recruitment, as well as a lot of other things.

Priorship is that which stands before everything that is going on, and intensifies the complexity rather than forcing it into one simple model. That has to do with polity, or how you maintain autonomy at every level. Autonomy is not something you are after for the sake of autonomy, but for the sake of breaking loose wisdom and creativity. Expanding your models to order the chaos rather than stuffing the chaos into your existing model is that which allows creativity to break loose. You have commonness of vision and methods, and yet within that, great diversity in terms of what goes on in every post or station.

An example of our wisdom relative to intensifying the chaos or the complexity, is Indicative Battleplanning. I used to be able to sit down and start with what had been accomplished the previous quarter, and what had been left undone and what was still to be done this quarter, and put it on a timeline---a very simple kind of model-building process. With that process, I was taking the new quarter and stuffing it into the old quarter's timeline. There was not really anything new. In Indicative Battleplanning, by taking your data and polar gestalting and swirling it, gapping, and cross-gestalting, you break through every previous rational

gestalt that you have been able to force the data into. That is, it intensifies the complexity so that you literally cannot get your mind around everything that you have on your hands and you are forced to create a new model to hold what it is that is demanded of your doing.

In the fall quarter when I tried to figure out how you launched courses every week, across this continent, with approximately two-thirds of the people we have done it with in the past, I found the task impossible. The first two or three weeks we got people out of bed with assignments at four o'clock Friday morning to catch a plane at 5:30. That may be exaggerating a little, but not much. The third or fourth week of the quarter, I went to the General Assembly of our church in Cincinnati. While sitting in the Lange Convention Hall, it dawned on me you had to have some kind of movable data system. So, in about ten minutes time, I had described what later became all those cards and slots and colors in the penetration office. The complexity which you experience, not knowing how to get the job done, is that which breaks through to creativity and allows the new to emerge.

Not only does priorship, in terms of its Doing, bracket the insoluble and intensify the complexity, but it also lets the mission do the healing. If I were going to name the spirit disrelationship that is the spirit contradiction of our times, I would call it stupidity. Last week, for example, I went into the kitchen to get some coffee. It was a little weak, but drinkable, and it was about two inches up in the glass tube in the coffee urn. I went back, a little bit later to get another cup of coffee, and it was a little weaker and four inches high on the glass tube. The next time I went for a cup of coffee, it looked like weak tea, and the glass tube was clear full. What I discovered was that somebody had just left open the knob so that it kept putting fresh water into the old coffee as the water got hotter. Well, you know that was a stupid thing to do. Anybody who turns on a knob making coffee that lets water into that coffee knows that you have to turn that knob off or it just keeps getting weaker and weaker.

The problem there was not a lack of intelligence. Bonhoeffer talks about stupidity as a spirit disease that does not have anything to do with intelligence or the intellect. It actually has to do with the person's disrelationship from radical engagement, or from using his rationality to engage himself adequately in what he is doing. Another example: I taught a PLC in Cleveland the second week of the quarter. We had had only one RS-I course up to that time, so in order to save money, we had rented only one film. That film had gone to Garden City in Week One, so in order to avoid spending money to rent another film, we simply called Garden City and told them to put that film on REA for Cleveland: "hold at the airport." When we sent somebody out to the airport that afternoon to pick it up, it was not there. A tracer was put on it through REA, but they could not find it. We called Garden City back, and they said they had sent it by REA the day before. So we called REA back. By this time it

was getting to be about 6:00 in the evening, and they said they still could not find it. So we called Garden City again and said, "Where did you put it into the REA system?" We found out they had done it at the downtown office. By 8:00 we located it flying somewhere over eastern Pennsylvania and managed to show it about 9:00 that evening. Well, it was a stupid thing to do to stick a film into a downtown office. What was equally stupid was we did not tell them to take it to the airport.

In-kind got these great new bath mats, and I had the water just going for about ten minutes when it dawned on me my feet felt strange. When I looked down, there it was right around my ankles. I opened the curtain and sure enough, it had just overflowed the shower stall and was all over the shower room. That was a stupid thing to do, you know, and I wondered how I could have been so stupid. I should have watched what I was doing. That's the way I experience life.

In a time of engagement, stupidity is a "way out." If I do things stupidly, then, obviously I cannot be trusted with the mission. Therefore, I allow myself to slip into a stupid kind of doing that gets me out of responsibility.

Bonhoeffer said that you cannot deal with stupidity by addressing the Word. Telling someone how stupid something was will not really help. One's response already is acute awareness of the depth of one's own humiliation and weakness. The only way that you can release a person from operating out of the spirit-disrelation of stupidity, Bonhoeffer says, is to deal with it structurally. A sign in the bath room that says, "The bath mat clogs the drain. Be careful," is a structure. Corporate Doing releases one to avoid the pitfalls of stupidity, for it is the kind of accountability we have in terms of functioning as a team that allows us to get ourselves engaged. When I operate simply as an individual I wind up living out of stupidity, rather than out of radical engagement. A method like indicative battleplanning is a structure which releases us from the demon of stupidity.

What we are after, then, is releasing engagement; or, the primary function in our time is the function of releasing people to radically engage their lives. The engaged life is the fulfilled life. Health is expenditure. It is dying your death in creating history. There is no other kind of health I know of. Priorship is focused on releasing people structurally to decide to radically engage their lives in forging out the future. I think Jesus was saying the same thing when he said, "Give, and it shall be given to you." You release a person to expend his life, and the way he experiences his life is, fulfilled.

As we move into the summer then, the question for me is, "How does everyone be a prior?" "How does everyone participate in releasing radical expenditure in other people?" For priorship is not, in the first instance, some sort of interior quality, but rather it is the Doing that releases people to radically engage their life in forging the future.