



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 solitaries and the journeys, which are the style categories of the solitaries 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 solitaries 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.

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 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

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 spaciously 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.

