

SANCTIFICATION
"Radical Integrity"
(Lecture #2)

Mankind has now come to a time of fruition. Man is coming to realize that to be man is to be man-in-charge-of-history. It is an exciting moment to be in, also probably one of the most painful moments of history that has ever been. In past times when resurgence has taken place there was only a small band of people in a village who realized that they had to decide the patterns and mores and customs all over again. Or maybe it happened in only a segment of the world--a city or perhaps a nation. But never before has there been a global consciousness. Mankind is, in fact, deciding what kind of life style, what kind of customs, what kind of laws, what kind of basic understanding of humanness will be common around the globe. That is why this course is called "Holy Living" and why we have to push ourselves through such a course. We are dealing with the bedrock of humanness; we are dealing with what finally you can describe as a human being. What does it mean to say, "That is a human being who is living as a human being"? We are not concerned to make any kind of moral judgment (and yet it is moral), but simply to articulate for ourselves what we mean when we say "That is humanness."

We begin by looking over the area that we dealt with in justification under the rubric of God the Father. We dealt with that as Universal Benevolence. That is simply the other side of dealing with life in its limits, life in its contingency, and life lived before Final Mystery. When you start to use the category of Mystery to deal with the characteristics of God, you have already begun to think in the area of sanctification. When you are dealing with the Bultmann paper in RS-I, you know that to ask, "Now what is it that Bultmann says you are finally up against in life?" is to raise the question of the sanctification of man. What does man look like when he stands before utter or final Mystery? We stand before the outgoingness of life and before the Mystery. If you stand before the Mystery you cannot draw life into yourself. You cannot make life secure because life cannot be nailed down; you cannot get life to give you the kind of comforts and love you want, because that is not the way life comes when you live before the Mystery. You can live before those realities, but those realities do not last. We have already dealt with Universal Benevolence, but now we articulate it directly through the category of sanctification.

In the category of justification we went on to deal with man's radical lucidity or with the intrusion of consciousness, the bursting of awareness on a man's being. It happens when he stumps his toe on a table; or it happens when some character walks into his life and says, "Your problem is that you have a long neck; no, that's not your problem. Your problem is that you refuse to have the long neck you have." That kind of bursting of awareness is an aspect of justification. When you flip that over and begin to look at sanctification, you find it already present when the long-neck girl sees the fact of who she is and what her possibilities for humanness are. We are now raising the question of what would it mean for her to really be her being, the question of sanctification. To be your being is to have "Profound Integrity" standing before the Mystery. I am that mysterious, unique, warped, and glorious human being. That is our topic in this lecture.

But in justification you also went on to deal with freedom. Radical, total, unconditional freedom is the lifestyle that flows out of that awareness or lucidity that happened to me in the train of life. The lifestyle of freedom considered under the rubric of sanctification is the fulfilled life or the full life or the endlessly happy life. Perhaps we will be able once again to recover the meaning of

happiness and see how it meant the completion of life. Happiness is the totality of life before God.

In the last lecture we will come back to look at the whole thing and raise the question of the sociological manifestation of the people who live the sanctified life. We will be dealing with sanctification through the People of God in History. What is that awe-full League that has been in history from the beginning? And what will be its form in the future?

I want to read to you something that talks about Profound Integrity. I want to read first of all from the scriptures of another culture. It is difficult for us to deal with the scriptures of another culture. It is also difficult for those cultures to deal with their own scriptures, just as it is for us to deal with our own scriptures. This comes from the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu:

A man's work, however finished it seem,
Continues as long as he live;
A man, however perfect he seem,
Is needed as long as he live:
As long as truth appears falsity,
The seer a fool,
The prophet a dumb lout,
If you want to keep warm keep stirring about,
Keep still if you want to keep cool,
And in all the world one day no doubt
Your way shall be the rule.

I think if you wanted one scripture passage to hold in being this part of sanctification (other than the book of 1st John), I think you would go to the book of Hebrews. If you put Romans over against Hebrews, you would have justification over against sanctification. I want to read a short passage:

Hebrews 12:12-24: Aim at peace with all men and a holy life, for without that no one will see the Lord. Look to it that there is no one among you who forfeits the grace of God, no bitter, noxious weed growing up to poison the whole, no immoral person, no one worldly-minded like Esau. He sold his birthright for a single meal, and you know that although he wanted afterwards to claim the blessing, he was rejected; though he begged for it to the point of tears, he found no way open for second thoughts.

Remember where you stand: not before the palpable, blazing fire of Sinai, with the darkness gloom, and whirlwind, the trumpet-blast and the oracular voice, which they heard and begged to hear no more; for they could not bear the command, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." So appalling was the sight, that Moses said, "I shudder with fear."

No, you stand before Mount Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, before myriads of angels, the full concourse and assembly of the first-born citizens of heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of good men made perfect, and

Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, whose sprinkled blood has better things to tell than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse to hear the voice that speaks...for our God is a devouring fire.

We ought to thank some of our Sunday School teachers for that.

Even to try to articulate what radical and profound integrity is all about is awesome; for you know that the moment you say it, then it is exactly what can be expected of you. This is a familiar experience: you cannot give a lecture on "You Are Accepted" without acceptance being expected of you. But there is something about Profound Integrity, living the sanctified life that is the embodiment of the Word, that puts shudders of fear in everyman's soul. And so I find myself reluctant to get started on this lecture. The only way I know to begin is to be bold enough to articulate everything I know about what it means to live as a full human being. (Not everything I know, but enough so that you know everything you know about what it means to live as a full human being.)

It goes something like this: Sometime in your life when you are riding along on your high horse having a great time, suddenly you turn your head to the side and you see a house burning. Somehow the burning of that house opens up to you whole caverns of the world, and you begin to see that man is a frail, weak, contingent creature that has no way whatsoever to justify his existence. Maybe it does not happen with a burning house. Maybe it happens when you are watching t.v. You see the president of your country or some great politician or some great actress and just for a flash of a second all of their insecurity seeps out. You see the frailty of what it means to be a human being, and you know that all you had stored up in the image of humanness they were portraying is a kind of French Chimera. The masks we wear as the great human beings that we imagine human beings ought to be are very thin, and sometimes we can see through them. Sometimes we see just an inkling beyond where humanness is and see its frailty. Actually, I call this discovery a kind of dead pigeon that every man has at some point in his life. He is walking along a sunny beach one day having a great time and he stumbles on a dead pigeon lying on the sand. That dead pigeon throws him over against his own frailty--maybe not just his own but the frailty of the universe. He begins to understand that that is where humanness is found.

I do not know what that kind of event was for you. Maybe it was waking up one morning and walking down the street and seeing a woman without her makeup or a man without his necktie. I do not know what it was, but something breaks through the false picture of life that you and I have. Humanness begins there. I liken it to the poetry we have been using in discussing songs: a burning coal comes in and the paper browns and turns into one ball of fire and disappears. Someone told me about watching a movie and the film burned through. They could not even unplug the machine for five minutes because the film was burning up. Somehow you begin to see through to the raw contingency of life and you know that that is life--not all the frills and masks we try to put on it. You see the really real, and you see that the tragic life is the only life there is. Humanness and creation with all its glories and wonders is finally frail and weak and not likely to last.

But it is deeper than that: It is not just seeing the contingency and finality; it is also seeing that and knowing that it is you. It is experiencing the shuddering awareness that frailty, contingency, and rawness of life is your election to live. This is not something different from Universal Benevolence and the 100-ton crane of

history but it is moving a step beyond that to see that humanness is there in the midst of the raw frailty and the contingency of all history. It is a time of ontological shock that rips through your being, by which you know your election to be human. You know the impetus to live your life in care. In one sense this whole course is about nothing but care.

Human beings care, they just care. You and I usually beat our colleagues over the head because they do not care. But they CARE. In fact they probably would not be worth beating over the head if they did not care. They may not care in the same direction as you but they care.

The election to humanness is there, and this comes to people who think they are beyond being shocked. Most of the time I feel that I am beyond being shocked. We have grown up in an age of lucidity about death and suffering. The kind of war-torn era that we have lived in has calloused us. But a shudder runs through my being when I see the contingency, and frailty, wariness that is humanness and which therefore cannot really be hidden. It is one thing to be a man of unfaith and be carrying your illusion: "I control life because I control my family, or "I can control my life because I take care of my children." It is another thing for a man of faith to say "I'm creating a new society." "Maybe I can't do great things, but at least I can be a loyal man, or I can be true, I can be honest." Maybe you use integrity... "I can be a honest man, a man of integrity." But the hole burns through even those great ideals of the man of faith. That is where the ontological shudder comes: to see that even my great qualities cannot protect me from the contingency of life itself. It is that kind of shock that leads beyond the mere tragedies of life to the tragedy of life itself.

That is where I move beyond myself to look into the future and see that God is a Mysterious power that is arbitrary in whom he selects and whom he elects. Some of the most unlikely people are chosen to do this deed, to do that deed, to solve that need. Some of the most unlikely people become pedagogues the most unlikely people become community reformulators. Not only is it arbitrariness, but there is no partiality, utter impartiality in the way the Mystery operates among human beings. There is no criterion you can finally set down for who will live a full human life. At that point the great offense breaks through again.

Offense comes with the Christ Word; the kind of shudder in your being that takes place when you have to come to terms with your life being accepted. But there is another great offense that comes with sanctification. It comes like this for me: I am going along through life and find that contingency breaks through, exposing to me the frailty of life. The tragedy of life comes through to me. I see that all my great intellectual power will not solve the universe. In fact I see the futility of trying to understand. Suddenly a shudder goes through my being. The offense is that the Word keeps sustaining me in being even though my theology will not. That is a fantastic offense: nothing will sustain me in being. I really ought not be in being. Some of you read Report to Greco where Samuel keeps shouting back to God, "Kill me, Kill me, kill me. Don't send me out there to anoint a new king, I got a King for you once. I'm going to stick by the king I got: Kill me, kill me, kill me." He was answered by silence. All he had to deal with was his life.

That is the one great humiliation all human beings have to undergo: not only are they frail, weak and contingent, but God sustains them for no reason. You have heard people talking about building a time in your day to collapse; well, I wish I could collapse. I wish I could. That would be an easy way to get out of this outfit. But that is not possible because every time I collapse, the Word is there to sustain me in being. This is a double offense, a great humiliation. All I have known, all I have done, all I have ever been has been ripped from me in the great humiliation. Authentic humanness, profound integrity is found only there.

You can not say that humbly enough. My wormhood is humanness and is sustained in being day in and day out. Not only that, not only is it sustained in being, but I am utterly unable to do anything about it. Sometimes you hear the Word, "You're the greatest," and you think it means you can pick up your life and live it in the sense of striving forward to be something. That is not what "being your greatness" means; "being your greatness" means showing forth through that very wormhood that you are, and daring to stand as a frail, contingent, unjustified life. I do not know how to learn that kind of humility again. It is certainly not the kind of thing you imagined it was yesterday. Even most of my best efforts to do something about my frailty and my weakness turn against me. I set out to solve this weakness that I have about not being very sociable. I am not very sociable. I like to be by myself most of the time. Sometimes I set out to solve that weakness, and I find out that I turn off even more people. Shame and weakness in your life is where you shine forth in humanness. That is where profound integrity comes.

But there is more. I found that I hate life. I hate my colleagues. I hate God for bringing us into being as these shameful, weak, humiliated people that we are. I do not know how your hatred manifests itself. Mine manifests itself in two ways. One is beating someone else over the head, and I can be mean. The other way is to turn in on myself and just let it eat my insides out. That tendency is deep in us. And you have no choice about it as though there were some virtue in hating or not hating. Hatred of the shameful and weakness of being human is present at the moment when the depths of life are exposed. To live the sanctified life, to live before this offense is to decide to go on with that hatred day in and day out.

Once this has happened to you, you know that hatred is there, and you know you are going to show up tomorrow hating. Then all you have the rest of your life is a continual increase of intense suffering over your being. But it is not just an anguish over your own being, for when you saw that pigeon on the beach the whole universe of frail contingent life was disclosed. Similarly, your hatred is not just of yourself but of all civilization. Unless that hatred is consciously molded over, you will not make yourself over. Unless this is what shines through, as scripture says, there is no way of relating people to God, of being that Profound Integrity embodying the Christ Word. I call this "peace of suffering."

Mankind is continually getting the medicine ball treatment. A medicine ball is a big leather ball that is used in physical education. When you are a little fat they give you the medicine ball treatment. They throw the medicine ball at you from 10 feet across the room, and it knocks you down. We humans get a lot of medicine ball treatments. Day in and day out we just get beat to the ground. We have many ways of pretending it does not happen and many ways of salving it over: romantic music, loud music, friendship, kinds of fellowship among human beings--these are all great ways. But we are

always getting the medicine ball treatment. Life is ceaseless suffering. It goes on and on and on.

There comes a time when you have to respond to that offense or that contingency and humiliation in your life. They go on and on until finally they cannot be overlooked any longer. Nor can they be escaped. They must be embraced. But the decision to embrace that life has nothing to do with the orthodoxy of belief. I will be human if I will embrace that, but the embracing of it comes when you are wiped out. You are fighting God, and if you are not fighting God then you know what it means to be knocked out. The embracement of it means you are utterly flat on your back. As long as you have one little thing that you can reduce life down to and say that it makes the suffering that you go through worthwhile--as long as you have just one little thing, then you do not live Profound Integrity. For as long as I can say, " My family, my theology, my children, my job, my own morality, my own honesty, ANYTHING. between me and raw reality, then I have not totally embraced the actual offence, the actual life that is there.

This embracing is a surrender. Talk about embracing your life, grabbing hold of your life has a proud kind of brave robustness about it. I do not mean that kind of embracing. Profound Integrity comes when you are flat on your back and you have no choice but to absorb the pain and to live that kind of contingent life. I am sure the long-necked girl lived that the rest of her life if she lived as a full human being and did not try to cop out on life. To submit to that humiliation and to surrender to it after fighting God is the only thing you can do. As long as you have any one thing to hang onto, do you know what happens to you? You turn to stone, If you have one thing that stands between you and the utter Mystery, you turn to stone, that is you are not any longer a responsive, alive human being because of the things you hang onto.

We know about our secondary universes. No second hand universe can hold our life. Profound Integrity is embodying the Word about life that cannot be contained in a second hand universe. The lifestyle required is one of secondary integrity. As long as I can keep my integrity relative to my values, the things that I hold onto, then I am not living the profound integrity. I am living the first integrity, I am living the immediate integrity. I am living the one that you can measure and was hammered out by the civilization of yesterday. You can say that I am living a full human life by someone else's standards. Secondary integrity is beyond any morality that man can know. This is what enables a man to break through the walls in his community reformualtion or to break through the walls in his teaching or to transform the lives of people that he bumps into. He lives this life of secondary integrity. Anything finally is possible.

In that area of secondary integrity, I begin to feel phoney. You always feel phoney when you are out in the future. What does it mean to be profoundly a man of integrity and feel phoney? You not only feel phoney, You are phoney, phoney according to interior psychological feelings which were conditioned by yesterday, or phoney measured by what humanness was 50 years ago. The man who lives profound integrity is a man who senses himself as phoney. I suspect one of the reasons we cop out on life one way or another is because we wake up to our phoneyess. We insist that we ought not be our phoneyess and therefore we turn into stone. This secondary integrity is a crucial part of the decision to respond to the offense of being a contingent human being.

But finally what it means to respond is to be your freedom. The only kind of response you can make when you are flat on your back and have nothing whatsoever to make your life sure or justified, is to be your freedom. It is not that you have freedom or are owned by freedom. Have you noticed what happens when you try to own your freedom? You end up in a box, either somebody else's box, such as a jail, or your own box. But freedom is just what you are. The problem when I am called upon to be my freedom without anything whatsoever to rely upon, is that freedom has to be spent, like a quarter spent in a grocery store. Once it is spent, it is spent. Freedom just goes, and once you have spent your freedom you have nothing left whatsoever except another hunk of freedom. No wonder you are tempted to depend on things, the family, child, the job or whatever it is. At least that would be something you could spend your freedom for. In profound integrity, I spend my freedom for utterly nothing. In the midst of my own givenness as the contingent, weak human being that can do nothing about his life but live it and receive it, I decide that I am going to have that freedom, if it is freedom, and let it go for nothing and so I live as a man of final accountability.

It is a good point that you can dare to be impudent before God. You are lying on your back before God and embracing the utter absurdity and tragedy of your own life and being the freedom that you are. You are saying to God, "Now, here I am, here I am, a final accountability." In Western movies there is often a tragic element in the hero. He works like the devil to get his town straightened out, and then at the end of the movie the whole town turns against him. Then he has to decide whether to leave through the back door and try to forget that he ever lived in that town, or to walk down main street and risk getting shot. That is the final accountability of the man who spends his freedom in profound integrity. Or he spends it and says before God, "I stand upon my knowing, I stand upon my being, I stand upon the very being that I am and that is who I am. There is my final accountability. Final accountability is "surrendering the deed." in Bonhoeffer's categories. How do you live the kind of life that is always rendering up the deed? My being is always screaming, "At least I ought to be able to bask a little while in the success I had yesterday, or at least I ought to be able to flounder a little while longer in the pains that I had yesterday." But that is not the way of profound integrity. Profound integrity is rendering up the deed, letting it go. That is my final accountability before God. And I think that is probably what it means to go to heaven. You have rendered up every deed, every bit of knowing you have ever known everything you have ever done, every bit of being you have ever been.

You have to have a language to talk about the life style of a man of profound integrity, and I do not think any kind of language that you and I could think up would be adequate. Finally you have to create for yourself or recreate for yourself a concrete word that will hold for you what it means to be a man of profound integrity. You could go into other cultures and picture the African shaman. The African shaman is a man of profound integrity. Or you could go into the culture of China and get the Confucian scholar and say "Now there's a man transparently being his being without any excuse whatsoever, with nothing to found his life upon save the being that he is." But for me the story is the story of Jesus. I do not know how you learn to say, "Jesus" all over again; but for me we must if we are going to talk about sanctification and have an adequate story to hold it. Otherwise it sounds like abstract idealism.

What is the cosmic story? Jesus is the one who is the sanctified one personified. He is the one who is untouchable. You just could not get to him at all. You remember in the Gospel of Saint Matthew he was in the midst of a crowd and his brother came stumbling through the crowd to take him home because he thought he was crazy. He got close enough to pass the word that his mother was there, and Jesus turned around and said, "Who is my mother and my brothers? These are my mother and my brothers who do the will of my father." He was untouched even by those close human affections. I like the picture in the book of Hebrews of his being in continuous succession with Melchizedek. How the writer got the nerve to talk about Melchizedek as the epitome of righteousness, I will never know. There are only two verses in the Old Testament about Melchizedek. All it says is that one day he wandered out of the desert and ordained Abraham and left. That is the kind of sanctified one that Jesus was. He came on the scene, ministered for three years and left. And that is the order of Melchizedek, the sanctified ones. He made Himself of no reputation and thus was the sanctified one. No one knew where he came from or where he was going, so therefore he must not have been born, and he must not have died. This is the kind of priestly function of the sanctified one. Some story about that has to be told.

Our story presents Jesus as the baptized one. He was immersed in the water of life itself and was told that he was the Elected One. How did that happen? The scripture says that he was wandering down the road one day, not sure where he was going and a character by the name of John the Baptist said, "Hey, that's the one." So far as I know that was the first time Jesus knew he was the one. Can you imagine the shock that went through his being when he discovered that? That Baptism was astounding! "You are my beloved son...YOU ARE MY BELOVED SON." Hebrews picked up on that and said, "You know that no angel ever had that said to him." Only a man, only Jesus had that said to him, and he was a frail, weak, scared creature. The only thing I know that needs to be a part of the story is ; that is the way it happens to me.

The scripture talks about Jesus as the suffering one, over and over again. We have been wandering around the 20th century trying to be practical scientific men, but one day we discovered that there is another dimension of life. There is more to life than simply the practical, everyday, scientific, logical world. There is the Other World, and you begin to be fascinated with how to recover the Other World. Then suddenly the next thing that is required of you as you become a creature of the Other World is that you go back to that scientific technological mundane world as a man of the Other World. I think that is the kind of Baptized one you and I are going to have to stand before as the epitome of what it means to be human. At that point you have to decide again whether or not you really want the election. Something like that seems to have happened with Jesus.

Jesus later on becomes the transfigured one. Here you begin to approach the closest imagery to sanctification in the story. In the transfiguration Jesus appears as the sanctified one. You've seen that happen as one in your midst stands off for a moment, and you see that if the universe had to have someone to run it, he is the person you would want to do the job. Or you suddenly stand in the presence of one of your colleagues and you see that the whole meditative council of the universe is back there behind him. That is what happened in the transfiguration. You see the Mystery through some crummy, warped weak creature. You see the Mystery through the words of those songs and that becomes the transfiguration. To live in integrity is finally to be the one who not only sees through but is seen through. You become one through whom people see life, and that is profound integrity. How we tell a story about that in the transfiguration is very

crucial. I think it is at that point that you become the son of NO thing whatsoever. Most of our lives we live as the sons of our mothers and dads or the sons of our nation, or our city, or our state or something else. But at the point of transfiguration you become the son of no thing whatsoever.

Then finally the story of Jesus has to be told anew about the resurrected one. We have dealt with the resurrection many times under the rubric of justification, but then you look at it through the rubric of sanctification you see the same thing in its deeper meaning. Resurrection does not mean waking up to some rosy day. It does not mean suddenly waking up to be powerful in some great way. That is not resurrection. Resurrection, if you recall, is what happens to a cadaver after he has had nails in his hand and a stab in his side. He gets out of the tomb, and if anyone ever wanted to go back into the tomb, that is when he ought to want to go back. He has to walk with the scars in his hands and the rip in his side and the thorns in his head. The resurrected man is the man who lives the pain-filled life. It is painful because the resurrected man carries with him all that was there before the death and the resurrection. He carries all that memory and guilt about what he has done in the past, the resurrected life style as the sanctified man is the willingness to embrace that.

The character in One Flew Over The Cuckoos Nest holds an image of what I am talking about. Old Mac lived the life of the resurrected man. Finally instead of just going to shake up the nurse, he had to give himself totally, and they laid him out there. You can even see him on a cross in your imagination. They walked by there and looked at him and said "That's not Mac at all. Mac was a big hunk of a man, and that is just a frail, weak, reduced creature lying there." But that is living as the resurrected man. That is living as the man who has not thought for himself for anything but just lived the life he was given. That is the resurrected life. What Mac did demonstrated to everyone in that hospital that they too could live a resurrected life. They had thought that only some strong he-man with a particular kind of psychological warping could upset demonic nurses and expose them. Only certain people could be resurrected men. But when they saw him all laid out, the sued shell of a man, they then saw the possibility for any man: every man has the possibility of living his profound integrity.

--David McCleskey--

