

On your placemats is a picture of some images that have to do with our future we will lead, and you will be happy to know this is not a lecture, but a context for our spirit life this weekend which has to do with the prophetic. And I think prophetic is more ~~appropriate~~ <sup>appropriate</sup> than prophet in terms of what we are dealing with. I'm from Cleveland, Ohio, as some of you know, that's not particularly important, but my first encounter with someone I thought was a prophet was a guy who used to stand out on Yukewood (sp?) Avenue and Public Square in Cleveland and he had a fiery red beard, big character, sort of intense looking. He would stand outside as people came out of their offices for coffee breaks, or for lunch, or people with their children going shopping. And they would walking normally by, calmly down the street going about their business, reaching into their pockets to light up a cigarette, and he would scream, "You put that cigarette out, you cigarette sucker, you! You're going straight to hell if you light that up!" And for the longest, that is my only image of what the prophetic was. And its not that. Neither is it crystal-ballism. Or sensationalism. Or books made available at cheap prices under the rubric of scandalism. Or astrologyism. Or subjectivism. Or imperitivism. Or personal opinions. Or personal indignation. It is none of those. ~~And~~ So looking at what the classical wisdom is, classical images of the prophet, several things have become clear. One is, the prophetic is not always present in society. It is <sup>always</sup> not needed. And therefore it emerges at particular moments throughout the journey of civilization. And the kind of moment it emerges in is a moment

of Kairos, is a moment in which transitions, great transitions are taking place. A man by the name of Burbidge, whose book on <sup>the</sup> prophetic we've been looking at as one resource, says that the prophetic <sup>only</sup> emerges in the midst of the millen<sup>n</sup>ium, and the struggle of a civilization to leap into a whole new grasp fo what it means to be human, and the prophet emerges in the center of that dynamic to enable that great transition to take place. The prophetic ~~takes place~~ <sup>emerges</sup> when society has lost its capacity to articulate the historical necessity. When nothing is clear there ~~is~~ <sup>are</sup> no longer any rules, any order, that there is a consensus about it ~~is~~ <sup>are</sup> those moments in history that the prophetic emerges. Or the prophetic is only concerned with declaring the contentless word. The word that is, Life can be lived in its totality, in its depth, out of all of its foundations, and it can be lived toward the future. So whether it is a time that the audience is screaming doom, everything is collapsing and falling apart, the prophet speaks back with the possibility that life is in the midst of that. Or if people are floating off into abstract idealism about the way life is, taking it for granted, the prophetic intrudes with the harsh announcement that life cannot be taken for granted and the future is coming after you no matter what you are doing. That kind of presense out of classical wisdom. The other thing that struck is that it seems that the prophetic has merged out of the middle-eastern ur, if you

will, and in terms of that ur's grasp after participation in history you can begin to see how the prophetic, in terms of where it would break loose, it would break loose in that kind of situation. An image that has been helpful to me in this arena is: Who is the prophet? Well, you and I remember, some years ago when we looked at the psalmist, we stood at the center of consciousness itself, and articulated that experience. And it's like the prophet is the psalmist turned inside out. There are some of the common images of the prophetic, you see in the movies and things, the prophet had always been to the mountaintop and between there and getting back, something happened and was crazy in terms of this world's grasp of how you could decide and live that way. That is the prophet is grounded in the image of the journey to the center and the return, and I believe the prophetic is the operating image, one who has been to the center is forced upon, forced to take, in the midst of the return and encounter with the world. And so I started to do some comparisons here between the psalmist and the prophet that might be helpful. The psalmist operated in the coliseum. That was the operating space of the psalmist. The prophet operates, one image that we have had, is chained to the city gate, which is a little bit different than operating in the coliseum. The prophet shows up at Pharaoh's court to get some things clear, at the temple. The prophet shows up in this world in dialogue with this world, in the midst of history. The psalmist was concerned with profound consciousness, with solitary consciousness awareness about states of being that life is. The prophet is concerned with historical activity, is concerned with the center of history, as

opposed to the center of consciousness. Or the psalmist is more a private character, a private artist, and the prophet is a public figure, in the midst of society. The psalmist is in dialogue with being itself, and articulates that dialogue on behalf of that society's experience of being itself, and the prophet is in dialogue with creation itself, and articulates society's experience, the indicative of that creation. Or the psalmist is concerned with the indicative of the other world, and the prophet is concerned with the indicative of this world. The psalmist had to live the burden of solitary consciousness, and the prophet has to live the burden of public presence. Or at the center, the psalmist is every human being, and in the world, the prophet is the nobody. We are trying to get a hold of what<sup>is</sup> the social function, what<sup>is</sup> the social-  
 ogical role of the prophetic? Four things emerge, that I will point to quickly. One is the prophetic is the public presence of the transesta-  
 blishment, that's there in history, enabling the dialogue for the  
 establishment and the disestablishment to move toward the future, to transcend the tension, and as Eichrodt puts it, to enable society to move beyond simply trying to forcibly simplify the new order, or from  
 a totalitarian<sup>?</sup> point of view, bring the new order into being. It is the prophetic that calls forth the radical creativity, that calls people beyond their ideologies, to a decision. Whether they are going to invest



in the future that is at hand. Or the prophetic is the intruding declaration of profound indicative. It cuts over against doomism and it cuts over against abstract idealism. It bursts collective illusions about what life is, and its sort of a transparent contradiction analysis, is what the prophetic is about, and puts that in the images that enables resolve about the future. The prophetic articulates the consensus that is sitting under society, that is in society's awareness, that society can say yes to or no to once it's articulated. That kind of release in terms of the indicative of history. Some of the things we have read said, "When times are in doubt, and there is no certainty, no rules, nobody's clear on what humanness is anymore, the prophetic takes a stand." Now this is for me an image shift, and I think for us in a way, that is to say, in one sense, the fast movement of the mass character that nobody can recognize, and says who is that, is over. What history is requiring is for somebody to stand and say "Here I am, and this is the way it is" That in terms of care for the world releasing society to be the newness that is emerging within it, that kind of presense is what the prophetic is all about. It is the new humanness that people can see, and encounter and at the same time, it is the vehicle for that new humanness to come into being in social form. It is about finalizing the context out of which people live, taking the immediate experience of any society's

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life and putting it in the context of the future. One of the most shocking things we discovered in looking, is that the prophetic is the key to the mass movement. The prophetic makes the difference between whether there is a bunch of diverse interesting activity going on in society, or whether or not there is a context a context that releases a singular effort toward the future is articulated, and in so a key to the mass movement. Not in terms of organization, but in terms of a context that is articulated that enables those who care to move it in unity or in unification, if you will, versus organization. Or ~~the~~ another image. The prophetic releases society to its unlimited motivity. Without the presense of the prophetic in a time of transition, when everything that everybody has known, counted on, has already defined their humanness is present, society has no way to move creatively into tomorrow. It calls society to attention to life, attention to the depths, and attention to the future. The prophetic embodies the possiblity of courage in the midst of society, that releases society to grasp its courage, whether that courage is the courage to say yes, or the courage to say no. Courage becomes on society's hands. And then I ask myself the question what is the profound function of the prophetic? Four images came. One is the prophet is the poet of being in this world everywhere we looked, everybody agrees about one thing on the prophet. The prophet is spoken through. Therefore the shock that you can imagine an audience is experiencing that same shock is happening to the prophet precisely at the same moment. And you've had that happen, I'll bet, before

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in a Town Meeting talk, Global Women's Forum, you have been up to do your 4 x 4, and being took over, and halfway through, you did not know who was supposed to be being addressed, you or the people who were supposed to be the audience. Being speaks through those have returned from the center in service, and only those. And that is a frightening experience, because you disappear, that is the experienced of <sup>and</sup> being <sup>there</sup> as you have known yourself any longer. You have become a sort of a crude image, "being-mouth". You would think there is one thing you could hold onto it would be your mouth, but that does not seem to be the way that being works. The context of the ultimate is recreated through the prophetic. That is the prophetic declares that the mystery is still in covenant with history. That covenant is eternal. That being is faithful to history itself. Faithful in such that if the whole universe is falling apart, being itself will bring the new universe into being. Or if you are extremely comfortable in a new universe, being itself will take that out of you, so that a new universe that is more adequate might come into being. Because of that, history is changed, whether anybody says yes or no. Because the context out of which life is being lived is recreated, so in one sense once the prophetic declaration is made, whether a yes or a no is said in response, yes is the only possibility because being will always win. The way life is, is the way life is, quite apart from how you or I respond to it, in one sense. The other thing about the prophetic in its profound role, is it posits ethical presence. It shoves an ethical style into history. It is like the prophet who, I can identify with the current assignments we have had, where everybody is leaving town to go somewhere else because the situation is falling apart, and the prophetic goes

by to buy a piece of land, that everybody else is running from. Where the prophetic takes his life and sees the contradiction, and shoves his existence, ethically speaking, into history's flow to occasion a brand new resolve. It seeds social mode. The prophetic are usually unorthodox, and that unorthodoxy is part of the effectivity. I read an interesting book not long ago about a 100 great thinkers that listed 100 great people in the world who were foundational in creating designs, modes, models, and as far as I could tell, over 60 of them had been killed before anybody said yes. I mean, you can go from Socrates and on and on... But you do not get away from what being is doing. That is the message of the prophet. It's the body on the line. It's I am standing here, and you take a relationship to where I am standing. That kind of posture releases a new kind of style in society. Or really, I guess the prophetic is only the declaration of hope beyond hope. It enables society to participate in being victory. Most people do not consider what is going on in the world right now, the opportunity to participate in being victory. That is what the prophetic declares. It enables social forms to be recreated and born anew out of a radical consciousness of the fact that the spirit and the social are one. Prophetic enables that to take place. It enables society to grasp in



every move, the mystery, depth and greatness that life is, whether in tragedy or in greatness. And even calls all to participate in eternal life, which is the perpetual participation in being victory, which is the constant recreation of all that is. its the return of hope that the prophet occasions, because the prophet takes a stand, therefore forces society to make a decision..... and that stands is the return of hope. To enable society to bet their life on a model. That they know is temporal. That they know the Lord is going to call out of being again, and enables that resolve to take place. Now the interesting implication, I think there is a lot more work to do here, one is, I think this prophetic has to do with the pedagogical mode of popular preaching in terms of our future. I had a visit with Andrew Young this year, which really began to shove me up against this whole thing, and my question became, "Now what images do I operate out of to deal with this character?" and then I met somebody else. This agency, this social structure. What image do we operate out of the deal with the dialogue that the world is forcing us into. And when you are forced to be your being in the world, I believe, the only way to deal with integrity is to stand in the shoes of the prophetic, less the establishment suck you up without your knowing it. The Symposium

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has to do with enabling society to grasp this dimension, and to release those who care to take this posture before life. And what we are going to be doing this weekend is very minor compared to everything I have been saying, but we are going to doing some conversations. And they are really more exercises, than it is a conversation. You are not out to solve a problem, or anything like that. But you are out to wrestle with what it means for you and I to articulate the profound indicative, the social-spirit indicatives that enable society to move into the future in the midst of this uncertainty, in the midst of this doubt, in the midst of this chaos. Another way to say that is, the prophetic is concerned with getting a gigantic bullshit said to skepticism, synicism, and futilism, which can all be substanually grounding beyond any logical capacity to grasp what I just said. That is hope beyond hope. That is the declaration the prophetic is concerned with. And so this weekend we are going to be experimenting with one small way to posture ourselves. in the posture of the prophetic as those who have total responsibility for the entire future.      Clapping