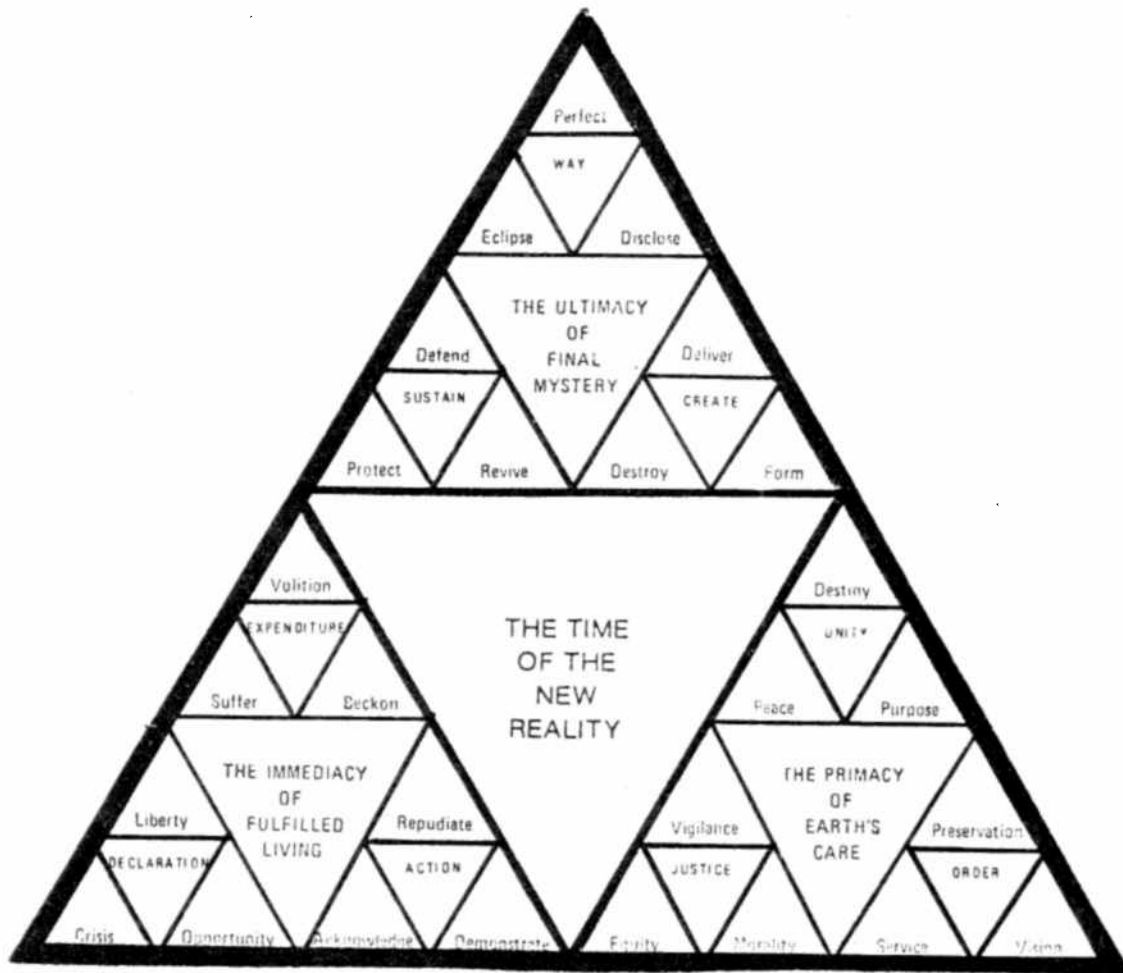


THE PRIMACY OF EARTH'S CARE

In these times of radical change, where the designs of the Mystery converge with the active will of the obedient people, there is a disclosure of The New Reality. In such a time, the vocated ones dramatize creativity, and decide the meaning of being obedient to the disclosure of the Mystery.



The Time of The New Reality: THE PRIMACY OF EARTH'S CARE				
The Presuppositions of Care			The Indicatives of Care	
Times of Radical Change	ORDER	UNITY	JUSTICE	Warnings of Utopiaism
	VISIBILITY	CONSISTENCY	COMMONALITY	

THE PRIMACY OF EARTH'S CARE

Every speech I have heard made by someone in this outfit has always begun in some fashion with, "These are times of radical change." We still begin that way. So I begin with the rather standard preface, these are times of radical change. I'm trying to say that matter-of-factly, as an objective way of getting at it. The objective fact is that these are times of radical change. We used to come down on the non-being pole when we made that kind of statement. When we talked about times of radical change, time after time our illustrations were about how everything was passing out of being. Even in doing the "Question of God" lecture, when we were talking about both non-being and being, we still left our audiences with the impression of finality, because usually we would spend three-fourths of our time talking about non-being. But somehow today, as we acknowledge that there still remain the dual realities of both destruction and creation, we are in a time of dramatizing creativity.

We are in times when both threat and promise confront us, and in these times we have decided somehow to dramatize the promise rather than the threat. These are times, as are all times, when there is a breaking up of the old in order to give form to the creation of the new. I will begin by starting with some presuppositions.

Presuppositions

There's nothing new about New Reality. Whatever we are pointing to with that phrase, it has been there since man-minus-one. However, there are times in the history of mankind when the presence of the New Reality becomes glaringly visible. We have described those times, quite often, in terms of resurgence: the time of building the pyramids, the time of the Renaissance. Any time that civilization is being built is a time of New Reality. But there's nothing new about the New Reality. What is being disclosed has been there all along for those who have eyes to see, but this is a time when it is being disclosed anew. We are moving from the eclipse of our vision of New Reality to a time when that which has always been is being fully disclosed. However, in every time of new disclosure, new aspects of the New Reality are revealed.

Our wisdom from past experience included the insight that our journey has involved standing in this world, falling through the New Social Vehicle into the other world, and then clawing our way back to this world. At any time in our journey we could locate ourselves on the way to the center, or having reached the center, and then pulling ourselves back to the surface again. It seems we are not back at the center. We have discovered that all things have been made new, and that they all point to the New Reality.

We once talked about visits to "The Other World." One day someone announced, "I'm not going to visit the Other World again, because I've discovered that I live in that world all the time." Although we had always known the Other World is in the midst of This World, we began to articulate more clearly that the journey to the center of being is a journey in which you do not go anywhere! It is a journey in consciousness. We live at the center of being

in the New Social Vehicle all the time! Whatever we see has always been there, but suddenly we have the eyes to see what we see and know what has always been there. It now looks like something we had never seen before. The New Reality, which we point to in this time of the disclosure can only be seen in the midst of the earth. Bonhoeffer's paper on "The Kingdom of God" includes ... "Behold, there is a new heaven and a new earth," and then added the post-script, "But really, it's a new earth." That description is the first presupposition.

The second presupposition is that the New Reality itself cannot be equated with social structures, social justice, or with any other thing that might be created by human efforts. In the time of New Reality, disclosure can be seen in everything for those who have the eyes to see it. One of the questions that has been raised is "Why do some see it, while others do not?"

A few days before this Council began, some of us were working on these lectures and we were not quite sure if we would be asked to recommend who should give them. We didn't quite know what the criteria would be. People began to come by the door and we would invite them into the room. We would say, "Go over and look out the window." Some of them would. Then we would say, "Now tell us what you see." There were a variety of answers. We were not sure, even then, what kind of answers we were looking for to tell us whom we might recommend to give the lectures. One person said, "angels". That answer was a little spooky, so we disqualified that one. Someone else said, "a pile". We thought that probable, but that was not the one. Someone else came in and they did not even see the window. Other people came in and they saw three or four windows. (I believe there were really only two windows). You can be relieved that the decision concerning who should give the lectures was taken out of our hands. The point is that for those who have the eyes to see, the New Reality can be seen in everything, although it cannot be considered to be synonymous with anything. Or, to say this another way, you can look at life as though it were useless and everything you see will verify that it is indeed useless; or, if you can look at life as a New Reality, you can point to the same things and it will verify that there is a New Reality.

Now let us look at the triangles of the Time of the New Reality. We have not put a lot of emphasis on them (See the cover page.) They are a valuable holding chart, but undoubtedly, there is a lot more work yet to be done on them. Hopefully, that work will be done during the coming year. But I want to emphasize again that these triangles are "Being" triangles. These triangles have to do with being those who stand in the tension between Earth's Care and Fulfilled Living in the face of Final Mystery.

What are these talks about? They are about dealing more specifically with standing in that tension. One of these talks will deal with the tension between the ultimacy of Final Mystery and The Primacy of Earth's Care. You can talk about that spin as having to do with the signification of society. Another talk will be about the tension between Earth's Care and Fulfilled Living. That talk will be about the catalysis of social exemplification. Still another talk will be concerned with maintaining the tension between Fulfilled Living and Final Mystery; it will be about the Profundity of Corporate Vocation.

Finally, we have decided that all of these talks, the triangles, in as much as it relates to the creation of a new mythology, has to do with "being", period. The question raised in standing where we are pointing is, "What does it mean to be engaged?" This talk has to do with standing in being, engaged in the Primacy of Earth's Care.

Today, to whatever level or degree one goes in exploring being on these triangles, one will find we stand at the right-hand side. Try talking about the whole of being or the whole triangle. Then we probably stand on the pole of the Primacy of Earth's Care. Stand in the Immediacy of Fulfilled Living, and we probably stand at the pole of action. Now in the creation triangle up at the top, we find ourselves standing at the pole of formation. We do not stand at that pole to the exclusion of the other two, but it is from that perspective that we interject, we participate in and observe the dynamics and interrelation of the other two. We know that then we are giving our whole consciousness to the Earth's Care, but the result of that effort is that we bump into Fulfilled Living and the Ultimacy of Final Mystery.

Now, to talk some about the Primacy of Earth's Care. In looking up the word "Primacy", I found it meant "prime". I found that definition helpful; it means first, or the first priority. As those who care, the primary claim on our lives is to care for the earth. From one perspective that is all we have ever done, and all we are doing now, and all we will ever do. Beyond that, the point I make here is that the earth is cared for either through our efforts, or in spite of our efforts, or in total disregard of our, or anybody else's efforts. The fact that the earth is cared for is an indicative reality that we stand before. The point is not that the earth ought to be cared for. Neither is it that anything that we are doing is caring for the earth. It is just that the earth is cared for. We used to tell each other when we gathered here for Council, "It's obvious that you have been taking care of yourself, because here you are." (Is it not that same obviousness for the earth, for here it is?)

Some of us, it is reported, talk or used to talk to trees. I recall that when I used to talk to trees, I was, in fact, talking before my own scarred life. The particular tree always said to me in the midst of its own scarred, broken, poured-out sap, "Look at you; you are sustained." Now the tree is carrying on a different conversation with all of us. As we approach the tree, we do not say, "Look what bad shape I'm in," but, "Look at the innocent suffering of the world," And the tree says, "Yes, but the earth is sustained." Then we say, "Yes, but the wars, and the terrorism, and the disparity between the fifteen and the eighty-five percent." The tree says again, "Yes, but the earth is sustained. Look at it; here it is." Even those aspects of the earth that we find ourselves raising questions about are sustained. How could that aspect of this particular culture, or that particular culture, continue to survive? How can the dictatorial or totalitarian ways of that particular government continue to survive? How can that form of racism and this form of economic imperialism continue to exist? The point of all this is that, for whatever reason, the mystery, the beyond reason, the supra-mundane beyond, has kept and sustained them in being. As a whole, the earth itself is sustained. Oh, Mystery of Mystery, Thou art the Wonder of Mystery!

The Ground

Now, I want to hold up three points that I think begin to ground the fact of the Primacy of Earth's Care in this time of the New Reality, and I want to relate these briefly to the three poles on that triangle: Order, Unity and Justice.

Order: The first point we wish to ground concerns the nearly universally acknowledged fact that all the earth belongs to all the people. The strangeness in that fact lies in that this is truth now but, it is yet to come. Further, almost everyone acknowledges that the dominant force at work which gives form to the indicative reality that the earth belongs to all, is the resurgence of local communities. I want to relate this fact to the Order triangle because, as a manifestation of the way it is, it is at the same time our vision of the future. The fact that all the earth, all the goods, all the decisions, and all the gifts of all the people belong to all the people, is the vision that has spurred us. Yet, at the same time that has been our vision of the future, it has been the truth we have declared in every act we have done and in every word we have spoken. The task before us now is to give form to that reality so that it can be seen for what it is; and, having been seen that way, can be sustained in being.

I experienced the reality of Earth's Care in the midst of this world this year in some rather earth-shaking events; specifically in relation to being coaxed by my friends to visit the Third World. I won't describe trying to get through the ticket line at the Lagos Airport; it's too much like nothing you've ever seen to aptly describe to you what I had seen. There are other events I would like to describe as illustrations of my point, but they would also take too long. The one I will hold up is about riding a city bus in Cairo.

When colleagues tell you that you cannot really expect to say you have experienced the Third World if you have not ridden on one of it's city buses, then believe them. First, it's the buses themselves. I did not encounter them as capable of going anyplace. This particular bus was at the end of the line and virtually empty. Well, I thought I'd risk it, and boarded with the rest of my colleagues. By the time we got to the center of the city, it was obvious to me that there would be some radical maneuvering in order to get off the bus before it got to the end of the line. Now, observing my size overagainst the size of most Egyptians you would think that deboarding would not be such a big problem, except there were so many, many, many of them. They were everywhere. There were no doors, no windows, no seats, no ceiling and no running boards. There were only Egyptians in doors, windows, seats, the ceiling and the running boards. The bus finally approached the place we were to get off, and it was full. It was going to slow down and anybody who wanted off could take their chances. Well, I decided that I'd better take my chances. Head down, University of Texas fullback-style, full burst of energy, running place for about half a minute, I burst through the line and came out in the open, minus one shoe. Well, here it was, eleven o'clock at night, in the middle of Cairo, Egypt, three thousand miles from my other pair of shoes. There are barefoot people in Cairo, and other people with two shoes on in Cairo, but I was the only one in Egypt with one shoe on and one shoe off. At the last possible

moment, before the bus really started to roll, someone shouted, "Does this belong to anybody?" (My, what you might call, other shoe.) But the point of the story is that what I experienced there was a terrifying power. I was in the hands of local men and women and I was very, very clear that it was a power that was not being properly channeled, but the task before me, or us, was not one of seeking to control the kind of creativity bubbling in human community. The task was in seeking to give it new form, so that it's full creative tension can be realized.

I believe that has to do both with visibility and with consistency. I choose to equate those two words in Bonhoeffer's paper: I choose to equate visibility with the word "miracle," and consistency with the word "order", or, call it preservation.

Let us illustrate what we have been saying with the terms visibility and consistency. Tony MacMillan is one of the village leaders in Tairgwaith. We were talking with him about the possibility of doing a project there. He said, "This is a great community, What we need is something to happen here that will make this community look as good as it really is." We knew that once visibility was accomplished, there had to be something that would maintain the visibility in order that it could be a constant sign to everyone who came that way.

One of the impacting statements I've heard this year was something like this, "The HDP's are not, in the first instance, out to change the lives of the people who live in them. They are primarily out to change the lives of everybody who comes from the outside to see them." Obviously one cannot do that without changing the lives of the people within them, but I recall in a couple of village visits that the impact about visibility was not finally the structure. In Bayad it was not the water tower or the brick factory or the well. It was the people. Visibility shows up in the faces of people.

I believe that consistency has not to do so much with what we do, but that we do it on time. I believe that one of the keys to the completion of the projects is doing what we say we will do, when we say we will do it. Rhythm, regularity and ordered space are the secret to this. It has to do with giving form to the resurgence of local communities. One of the exciting reports from Maliwada, India, included as a key factor, that the "House" there is kept spotlessly clean and ordered day in and day out. That has been the glue, among other things, for that community.

You recall that in the Old Testament, Moses went to Pharoah and said something like, "...My people are free, now let my people go..." The striking thing is that when the people were let go, when the manifestation of their freedom which was already indicatively theirs, was given to them, when the structures were formed that allowed them to live the manifestation of their freedom, they launched into forty years...forty years of a scanty diet and wandering through an arid desert, finally to collect their inheritance of a land filled with milk, honey and giants.

Today, I think of the liberation of the new African nations and the manifestation of the New Reality that has come through decolonization and withdrawal of the Western powers in order to allow those nations to be the freedom they are. But, I also realize that the form of the New Reality, as it has manifest itself in those African nations, often takes the mask of economic depression, political ineptitude and social depravity. I have a great wonder as I look at our projects and criteria that we are thinking about, as to when we should let go and exactly what it is that we anticipate. I wonder. I wonder, what will give us permission to leave and let the form which holds and nurtures the New Reality, be present?

Unity: The second grounding of the indicative of Care for the Earth is that it is commonly acknowledged that the disparity between the 15% and the 85% is, indeed, the moral issue of our time. It is the moral issue because if it is not dealt with, not only will there not be any answer, there won't even be any questions. It is not only the threat of the moral issue that we stand before these days; perhaps, even more precisely, it is the promise. None of us have ever experienced ourselves more compelled to creative expenditure and sheer excitement than in these times of standing before the moral issue. It is the moral issue, as it compels all our creative energy to be thrown into one melting pot in which we pour and forge that which is revealed already new in our midst. Somebody said that at the Research Assembly and during the Global Priors' Council this year, they found themselves either totally vital and alive or half dead. There is nothing in-between. Dealing with the moral issue is that kind of compelling situation. All the earth and the fullness thereof, belongs to all the people. Those who care, those who have eyes to see, stand before this moral issue, rallied by and reunited in common destiny.

I am reminded of Abdul Amid in Bayad. When the people wouldn't come out and dig ditches for the water pipes, he decided to run the water off until everyone remembered what it was to live without water. One night we were invited to dinner at Abdul Amid's house. It was a fantastic experience to dip into a common pot. We didn't know what we were eating, didn't ask and we paid the price for three weeks after that. We experienced tremendous commonness even through a translator. We began to sense that he knew that we both had something at stake in Bayad, something far beyond the fact that he lived there and we were visiting, or that we had put Bayad on public display before the world. We began to see that our history had started at a common point.

We wanted to pinpoint that common starting point. We began that night, "Abdul Amid, how long has this village been here?" He said that it was a relatively new village, about 200 years old, and that his family had been around those parts for half or three-quarters of that time. We asked him to tell us something about the origins and beginnings of this village. He said, "Well, the brick factory and the water well." We said, "Oh, no, we want to hear about the early days." And he said, "Well, the brick factory and the water well." Try as we would, we could not get that man to remember back to a point before there had been something else. Our minds began reflecting

back to our own history--a bunch of red and black grids on trash cans in Fifth City, or some of the other moments of creative expenditure in our early days, but we all had a common beginning. In both these illustrations, whether we come to the earth as the 15% or the 85%, we come to see that something gets done in creating the forms which reveal presence of the New Reality in our midst. The excitement of creative expenditure is allowing us to see new aspects of Unity in the time of the New Reality.

There also has been in our time, a new kind of social confession. Both the 15% and the 85% are being released from the guilt of having been perpetrators of the disparity. We are being allowed to join hands to move forward together. It is not that we have social confession as the result of our efforts; it is that we are allowed to see it in its' actual going-onness. Take the decision of Anwar Sadat, for example: 6000 years of history is transcended in going to the Kinneset. I find myself asking, "Why now?" In the movie "Coming Home", it just laid out, for those who have eyes to see, the confession of the U.S.'s participation in that particular war. My wife, Barbara, works at the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Brussels. One of the officers, a colonel in the Army, told her that he had been to see the movie. He had been one of the front line lieutenants in the Viet Nam War; one of the men who led the charges. This career officer confessed that he had cried all the way through that movie. There was no sentimentality in that statement. The earth-shaking fact is that there is that kind of social confession going on which points to the fact that the earth is being cared for, and that the 15% and the 85% are together shaking off their shackles in order to move forward; riding the crest as one into the future.

Justice: The third grounding of the fact that the earth is being cared for is, again, the near universal acknowledgement that we are living in a radical state of global interdependence. Whether we call it "space ship earth" or, "global village", whether you talk of the collapse of governments, or economic inflation as a global phenomenon; it's obvious to all who have eyes to see that we all drink together or none of us will drink at all. That's Justice. And like Order and Unity, it's not anything anyone conjured up, it's just there! Those multi-national corporations and others whose mode of operation has been determined by their own vested interestes are now seeing that there is no vested interest. No vested interest that is to the detriment of the well-being of the rest of the world on which it depends. These, and others like it, point to the foundations of a new world in the disclosure of the New Reality.

Now, let me make this emphatically clear: The vested interests of the one will not run counter to the vested interests of the many! My family down in Texas had been rather excited about the election of Carter as President of the United States of America, and from their perspective, he was the first Southerner to make it to the White House; Lyndon Johnson did not quite make it, for he had been in Washington, D.C., too long. After President Carter submitted his energy proposal to the Congress, I wrote them a letter asking

them how they thought he was doing? They answered, "We just can't understand what has happened to Jimmy." We talked some more last summer. Their response was, "You can't tell me that there is not gas and oil enough down there to keep living the way we have been used to living! Not for the rest of our lives?" As we thought about it, that is right; there probably is enough gas and oil down there for the 15% to keep living the way we are accustomed for the rest of our lives, but that is assuming that the 85% are going to continue to live the way they have been for the rest of their lives. That is not an assumption I would want to stake my life on at this particular point in time.

With that point in mind, I will issue some warnings; the first has to do with some Utopia. To rehearse again, the New Reality is not synonymous with social justice or any such thing. The New Reality cannot be described in sociological forms. We can substantially point to it by its evidence in the social structures. It dawned on me in the midst of the Bonhoeffer paper why we are not dealing with The Time of the New Reality or The Kingdom of God in sociological terms. To describe it in sociological terms would be to say that there are some social conditions in which the New Reality is present and there are some in which it is not. It would say that if people like ourselves, could create the right set of social circumstances, then we would have brought into being the New Reality. Neither is true! Be, therefore warned that there is a New World in the midst of this one and there is a New Human Being here in our midst also, and neither of the two is a product of anything other than new aspects of new disclosure in the time of the New Reality.

To hold that statement in balance, I would warn against any kind of social mysticism. Remember now, that our wisdom has told us that the Achilles heel of mysticism is believing that "THE MYSTERY" is mediated through something other than mundanity. I remind us that whereas we build or create nothing, the New Reality is perceived only by those who are engaged in caring for this earth. It does not behoove us at this time to stand back and say that the Time of The New Reality is always present, and therefore nothing is demanded of us. I am now bold to say that the New Reality or the Kingdom of God is entered into only by those who put their hands to the plow and do not look back. If this talk would be on the emergence of Paravocation in our time, I would still begin with standing in being, engaged in the Earth's Care.

Before I end, I want to say a quick word about urgency. Call it primal urgency, if you wish. We do not really know, in this moment of disclosure, if we have come from the dark side of the moon, or if this is just a break in the clouds, which at this or any moment, could close up again. Neither do we know what might be the occasion of that closing. It might be the tragedy of another war of global proportions, or the tragedy of a natural catastrophe of a major scale due to lack of environmental control, or something else. We do not know! We do know that we are not in charge of this time of the disclosure. We could return to the eclipse at any moment. Therefore, we operate factually as well as mythologically, before a limited time frame, before a supra-mundane moment, before the activity of that which we call "God".

We, as a people, are a people...of obedient will. We are those who are vocationed to Mystery, and have given ourselves to an historical destiny. We are paravocationed. The crisis we experience these days which seeks to leave us paralyzed, is not the crisis in vocation; i.e., what will I do with the rest of my life. It is not a crisis in terms of obedience; the decision to be obedient has been made. No! But the crisis which we face today is found in the question, "Given that we are vocationed and given that we have decided to live our lives as the vocationed ones in obedience to the Mystery, is this what it means to be obedient to The Mystery?" Are we not being paravocationed, whether or not?

This is a time of a new convergence, one beyond a paradigm shift, which we still have to articulate. We are where the designs of The Mystery converge with the active will of an obedient people. There is a time of the New Disclosure of The New Reality, and such a time, in such a time, The Primacy of Earth's Care is dramatized. Really, it's dramatized!