

Preaching Jesus, “*Sic et Non*” and Reading Scriptures, *in Context*

The dialog joining faith and reason is a continuous process of self-reflective consciousness, of faith challenging reason, reason challenging faith; the continuing tensions conflict and confuse, but also illuminate and refresh. Yes, consciousness at work may be bothersome but it is necessary. We best get used to it and flow with the tide.

If reading Scriptures “in context” is about anything, it’s about making Jesus relevant to the times even as writers did for their times — for us that means being open to change in consciousness and moving beyond the closed perspectives of static-centrist thinking to the open insights of evolving ideas. If neural and genetic activities are about anything, they’re about evolution’s business.

1. Mediating Polarity, avoiding dead ends

In the Lutheran Theological publication WORD&WORLD there is a section called “*Face to Face*”. It is an exercise in dialectics. A question is raised and opposing answers are given. In the Spring 2009 issue “JESUS”, the question is: “Must Every Christian Sermon Name the Name of Jesus?” Gracia Grindal argues “Yes” (*Sic*), and Frederick J. Gaiser argues “*Non*”. What matters is the sermon’s message, no? What matters is the source of the message, yes?

This *Face-to-Face* dialectic might also ask this urgent question: “Must Christian confession claim or deny evolution?” The ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) to its credit has put the question to itself in the Winter 2009 issue of WORD&WORLD, “FAITH AFTER DARWIN”. Their conclusion seems to be that Christians should engage evolution; most denominational Christians have not to my knowledge considered evolution so forthrightly; at best they’ve been ambiguous, at worst they reject evolution out of hand.

As a rule of thumb, the best way of dealing with knotty issues, whether in matters of personal relationships or political/ religious issues, is to be open to the best reasoning on both sides. Complex questions generally have sensible considerations at both extremes of the spectrum. We lose credibility and violate our own intelligence when we enclose ourselves in fixed conclusions at one or the other extreme.

Interpreting scriptures and understanding Jesus in the context of his times and in ours are matters over which there has been much controversy and dissent. With a modicum of sensitivity and sense the parties in opposition better serve truth, God and themselves. It is precisely the Christian Gospel teaching that we love one another and that we remain open to one another, and that we accommodate as faith and reason require.

Systemic injustice in institutional Christianity and in personally held prejudices cannot be denied. Prejudice and injustice are as ancient and persistent as human nature — the struggle between ego-interests and other-interests. In WORD&WORLD, “JESUS”, Volume 29, No. 2, Spring 2009, “*Learning Our Place: The Agrarian Perspective of the Bible*”, pp 118-119, Ellen F. Davis writes:

“Sadly, some Christians still cling to the notion that we can knowingly act in ways that severely damage cultural order, possibly hastening the end of the world as we know it, and yet not be judged harshly for it. However, that view stands in direct opposition to the prophetic tradition, as a growing number of evangelical leaders have clearly stated.

Maybe the most concise and potent expression of this conviction that we will be judged for our treatment of the created order is in the book of Revelation, when the twenty-four elders fall before the throne of God and say: ‘The time has come for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants the prophets, the saints and all who fear your name..., *and for destroying those who destroy earth*’ (Rev 11:18, emphasis added). Perhaps only now we can appreciate the full import of the prophetic visions, twenty centuries and more after they were recorded...

“INTIMACY WITH OUR PLACE ON EARTH What should be apparent from this brief agrarian survey of the Bible is that the Israelites learned about God in and from the land they knew so well. Intimacy with land may be the single most important *religious* difference between the biblical writers and ourselves, since so many of us have been formed by an urbanized culture that treats the earth as an abstraction and therefore imagines that God has only ‘spiritual’ concerns. (ID: 118, 119).

Urban/ rural upbringings are two very different contexts, very different experiences and mindsets. The spiritual experience of agrarian life is very different from the spiritual experience of urban life; the theological formation of a farm boy (girl) is rooted in a different experience and ethic and therefore grounded differently than a city boy (girl). The spirituality of the city person is more abstracted from earth-experience and less focused on the ethics/ spirituality of the land, which plays out in personal, moral decisions.

Covenant morality is about “agrarian” theology, that is, awareness that all gifts are from nature, from sustainable ecologies, and that self-reflective humanity is obliged to use of nature’s gifts within limits of eco-life, even as eco-life provides for all interdependent species and humankind. Thanks in no small part to Land Grant Universities and the entry of pharmaceutical/petrochemical companies into agribusiness, American agriculture has converted from Covenantal morality to mercantile, whose gods are money and competitive corporate advantage. Agriculture’s soul is now mortally imperiled, as is nature’s.

Farmer sensitivity (spirituality) is trashed by urban/ corporate insensitivity for corporate business is about procuring food from farmers, and selling farmers machines and chemicals of insensitive design. Agribusiness lacks a conscionable understanding of natural sensitivity. Agribusiness sees land and natural life as commodities for business exploitation — no morality in that, only the drive for profit. Excesses of petrochemical farming burn up the biotic bases of life and intervene natural rhythms, for example, insect pollination, and imperil useful insects (honeybees).

Farmer sensitivity toward life (spirituality) and cultural conscience in preserving the biological bases of interdependent life are of a kind with the Old Testament consciousness of the God/ Land/ Human Covenant. Urban/ corporate interests compete with farmer/ ecological interest for urban living relies on the industry of farmers and the produce of nature. The “theologies” of the farm/ urban cultures confront each other. Farm-spirituality honors land’s natural limits and sensitivity; urban-spirituality pushes farmers to exploit land resources in the interest of corporate capitalism, not just for needs, but for greed.

World needs already strain Earth-life capabilities to their limits without the added aggravation of corporate greed. The mercantile theology of corporate overreach threatens the collapse of natural ecologies. The appetites of greed, need to be restrained; personal/ corporate conscience is necessarily the same morality as that of *agrarian spirituality*. The leaves of the *green grass revolution* are withering and dying off (in India and Africa) for want of water and for poisoning of land and water with petrochemicals and salting from irrigation. The end of the future for

energy-intensive agriculture may be now. In its brief lifetime it is proving to be economically and biologically unsustainable, even terminally threatening.

The reality is that waste of life threatens farm and city folks alike. All must discover nature's common spirituality, sensitivity. Everyone is called to take hands-on responsibility right where they are. All need to experience what it means to culture life, to produce food, to prize life with sensitivity. Urban dwellers need to become farmers even at the small garden scale, if they would develop a sense of what farmer spirituality and sensitivity are about. Everyone, everywhere, profits from the experience of putting his/ her hands to the soil, even in small ways of culturing life and growing food.

http://www.americamagazine.org:80/content/article.cfm?article_id=11601

http://www.americamagazine.org:80/content/article.cfm?article_id=11604

2. What is *Consciousness*? What is *Real*?

[Adapted from James N. Studer, OSB, "*Consciousness and Reality: Our Entry into Reality*", CROSSCURRENTS, "The Matter of MATTER", *Spring 1998, Vol. 48, No. 1, ISSN 0011-1953, College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY 10805-2339, pp. 15-32*]

The disjunction between ideas and reality troubles us personally and does mischief to us. Much disorder and harm come from consciousness disconnected from reality. The wholesome reconnection of consciousness to reality can prevent disease and be a source of healing. Wholesome consciousness comes from the healthy collaboration of faith and reason. The development of mind (consciousness) is an inheritance that is valued by each generation, by every endeavor of reflective consciousness in accommodating faith to reason and reason to faith. The mind of ancients didn't understand this in the way that we do today.

We know that subatomic particles and wave energy make the mind function. Atomic/ molecular science is about the working of atoms in forming molecules by way of electron mediation, and the structuring of molecules into organic systems. Electrons create things and they are free to deviate and do unpredictable things. The uncertainty of electrons opens to good outcomes and bad, e.g., as in gene mutations. Failure of electrons can cause disease, and outside circumstances can cause deviant electron activities.

Deep down at the least particle levels, the stuff of our bodies, of all things, is more space than substance, more motion than structure. Things are not "absolute" as ancients understood them. Neither the energy nor the substance of things is unchanging, both undergo constant change and exchange with cosmic energy/ particles.

Now come the questions: is the underlying principle that guided and empowered cultures in the past no longer valid? Is the work of consciousness *a response of consciousness understanding itself* and engaging itself to act? If so, then the function of consciousness is made effective by self-development. If effective living depends on the effective self-development of consciousness, where does consciousness come from and how do we go about developing it?

Consciousness roots in the common power of sub-atomic activity specifically associated with electro-chemical activity. By means of anesthetics, consciousness, the awareness of sensation, can be turned on and off electro-chemically. Consciousness is bonded electro-chemically to brain protein at incomprehensible speed and numbers; the continuity and speed of flow of the process bonding of proteins physically characterizes what consciousness is. The electron acts as both

particle and wave *necessarily* and simultaneously according to a “complementarity” that is integral to the foundation of quantum mechanics (ID, 20).

So, what is “real”? “How do we describe the relationship between the process by which sub-atomic activity (*indeterminate*) *builds* the universe and the result of the universe itself?” “The activity is the result.” If every result (everything is activity/ result in process) then the result is always indeterminate. Indeterminacy as process “constitutes the fullness of physicality, and physicality constitutes indeterminacy as process. Indeterminate energy produces the material universe “in a combination of two levels of physicality — our material bodies *and* our consciousness.” (ID, 21)

The concept of *being* is an indeterminate process of *becoming* what is “an indefinite emergence” whose process flows seamlessly. If indeterminacy characterizes *reality in process* then a new definition (understanding) of “real” is needed. “Becoming real means becoming present to and possessing Self, as living and knowing in the same act of involving one’s world and communities ...the self-reflective creature/ community (wherever in the universe) encompasses the universe. We obviously do not make the ‘stuff’ of our bodies. Yet, reality...must come to focus in this new self-reflective Community/ Universe... we integrate ourselves as creators of the meaning and as judges of what is real of all this visible creation.” (ID, 21, 22)

Our best expression of “*subjective* judgment of reality becomes *objective* reality” which suggests to us “who we are” in the judgment of value. We are “the explanation of the universe.” Personal growth in consciousness increases the reality of the universe and the reality of the self-reflective person.

This understanding gives us a new theory of humanity. Until now theories have not been able “to get beyond a foundational split between mind and matter. This could be the source of a common epistemology for the sciences and humanities and for the elimination of the ‘god of the gaps’ that...cleaves them apart.”

In an evolutionary universe, “this metaphysics of ‘becoming’ [replaces] outworn metaphysics ... [the] space between individual and community is no longer an absolute distance” (23). The pursuit of higher consciousness is from the natural to the divine, not the other way around as is advanced in tradition. “For Abraham ‘prophecy was a natural expression of philosophical excellence’... our experience is by nature free and operates in reciprocal causality with the religious experience of divine presence. Imagination and reason work in tandem with faith... The evolutionary view urges release from the Moses-on-the-mountain literal divine command... and urges response instead to the divine lure of God within”.

Evolution opens the reinterpretation of religious experience; three aspects of religious experience are: **covenant** of the natural/ divine is with the human self-reflective person; **empowerment** to suppress animalian hostility [dominion] in favor of community; and **hope** for after-death transformation of “Beatitudes beyond imagining” (28).

A new concept and belief in the Communion of Saints “is no longer blind and unconnected to this universe... God does not ‘deign to create from on high’ and then merely associate with us... We are God’s love affair, and our immortality is divine poetry... when we lose ourselves in the divine we become most truly found... the divine hope for creation becomes our own” (31)

3. What is *Spirituality*?

Intentional focus on God (*what spirituality is*) motivates right living, right order; lesser focus, lesser intention diminishes living, diminishes order. “Seek to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.” *Perfection is the process of daily discovering goodness in life and emulating divine goodness in the changing events of life; perfection is what perfection does: imitates Christ, lives Christ-like.*

[Adapted from Arvind Sharma, “Hindu Spirituality”, CROSSCURRENTS, “The Matter of MATTER”, *Spring 1998, Vol. 48, No. 1, ISSN 0011-1953, College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY 10805-2339, pp.83-88*]

Physicality and mentality are subject/ object of physical, mental consciousness — what directly pertain to personal self-awareness. Conscious physicality, mentality is understood to be precisely personal in the female/male composed person.

Spirituality is bigger than personal consciousness; it’s the personal/ social energetic “aura”, a presence that inhabits communal consciousness. Chardin speaks of the *noosphere*, the consciousness-inducing *milieu* that characterizes embodiment and awareness derived from and dependent on common energy/ substance, i.e., all earth-life habitation.

One might understand spirituality as *universal consciousness*, specifically, as it comes to be owned, personally and collectively. Personal spirituality supposes *noosphere spirituality* even as *noosphere spirituality* supposes personal spirituality. Spirituality takes on many forms. Hindu spirituality, for example, conceives of God as *impersonal principle* (absolutist spirituality) and as *personal being* — embracing both personal consciousness and all consciousness.

Absolutist spirituality “reduces the plurality of things to one non-dual spiritual reality.” (ID, 84) God is “imminent in the world as well as transcendent.” The revelation (manifestation) of theism (belief in God) has many elements in universal spirituality. Focus on being, as in yoga, detaches the spiritual self from the distractions of manifestations other than the universal self.

Mental health is a state of mind produced by rightly ordered living, a precondition to entering into self-understanding undistracted by physical, mental encumbrances. Right ordering supposes right knowledge of order; ignorance of right order doesn’t dispose one to live rightly ordered. Thus, ignorance can obstruct even physical/ mental health, and by association, spirituality and entry into self-understanding. When the human mind “has become concentrate”, rightly disposed physically and mentally, it can be directed inwardly to God. Modes of relationships can be doors in approaching God. “[I]n Christianity, the chief mode...is with the mind-set with which a child approaches the parents.” (ID, 86) The individual soul merges with God psychologically as the approach gives entrance to God. The culture of spirituality is the culture of ever greater entering into oneness with God.

“The first principle of all that is external is exactly the same as the first principle of all that is internal. He who knows what he is [“that you are”] essentially knows the nature of everything [that is Reality] **Tat tvam asi — that you are.**”

Joseph Campbell interprets the mythologies of the world for Christian understanding. [*Joseph Campbell, “Thou Art That”, © 2001 by the Joseph Campbell Foundation, New World Library, 14 Pamaron Way Novato CA 94949.*]

“Joseph Campbell’s message for the twenty-first century is not apocalyptic. It is hopeful, because it roots us once more in the foundations of Judeo-Christian tradition, and in the task of conquering the desire and fear that alone exile us from the garden in which, far from viewing each other in shame, we embrace the humanity with which we are signed. Tat tvan asi. Thou art that.” Eugene Kennedy, Editor.

Campbell’s wisdom speaks directly to “our central confusion [that] lies between literal and metaphorical interpretations of religious stories”. As a Catholic Christian, Campbell explores Christian symbols as approaches to God and keys to spiritual understanding and mystical revelation.

Our distractive and destructive habit of seeing things *either/or* rather than *both/and* defies bridging, defies apprehension and conciliation — which has been the judgmental mentality of Western culture. Knowledge, for example, is **both sin and grace**; dominion is sin, communion is grace. Just as we have failed to understand matter as qualified energy, so we fail to understand the unity and continuity of spirituality/ materiality, soul/ body. As creatures of nature we are essentially alike in energy/ substance and differentiated in spiritual/ material, soul/ body complexity.

As energy is primary to matter, so spirituality is primary to materiality. We deceive ourselves to think that the spiritual (religious, moral) realm is distinct and separate from the secular, social/ physical realm. Cultural history’s habits of disconnection, separating the spiritual/ physical, the supernatural/ natural is freighted with mistaken conclusions and presumptions as to how we developed God-consciousness and how we have rationalized the human person in the scheme of presumptions about God/ nature/ humankind.

The spiritual, the supernatural we attribute as belonging to God and outside the realm of the natural; the material, the secular we somehow rationalize as disconnected from the supernatural, from God, and belonging to man. What a tragic blunder. The order of nature in which we have our being is a gift bigger than ourselves and under Someone’s control whose pay-grade is above ours.

4. DOMINION: the “*Sin of Knowledge*”

In simplest terms, *spirituality* is singular focus on God in consciousness and intentional living. True spirituality harbors no motives of phoniness or ulterior purposes. The temptation of knowledge is to use it for one’s personal advantage and to the disadvantage of others. The “sin of knowledge” is giving in to temptation by privileging oneself and disadvantaging others; involved in this is obsession to control and profit from nature and others.

At the beginning of his public life and at the end of his forty-day fast, this very temptation was put before Jesus. But Jesus pushed Satan away and rejected the temptation. Unlike Adam in the Garden, Jesus knew better than fall for the deceits of knowledge and self-adulation.

Humankind quite generally succumbs to the temptation. Corporate, mercantile self-advantage and the exploitation of resources is the way of global culture. Cultural abuses of knowledge continue even after the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden. Nor are Christian Churches free of guilt in the sinful abuse of knowledge to dominate. Habitual abuse has a way of glossing over conscience so that its whisperings go unheard. This moral hazard is pervasive.

Dominion over people persists also in the culture of religious institutions, specifically, as to the way institutions are modeled after male presumptive understandings that divine action operates in a controlling manner from the top down. Patriarchal theology/ politics since Old Testament times projects its maleness into Godhead understanding and claims exclusive privilege in bringing the divine graces of Sacrament to others not institutionally ordained. In the male privileged order, females are subordinately ordered, as symbolized in their creation from the rib of Adam. In the mythology of Original Sin, females are discredited for succumbing to Satan's temptation and inducing Adam to eat the forbidden *fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil*. Christian male culture has imposed obedient submission on women, giving rise to habituating her in quiet acceptance and prizing most highly her silent acquiescence.

The work of personal silence is disproportionately the work of woman, of finding a way through the culturally clumsy impositions of male dominion, his sins of presumptive knowledge. "We are luckier than Adam and Eve because we have gotten used to our ongoing hallucination and disorientation... As we become rooted in silence...we begin to engage...creation with something greater than original [hallucination]... Jesus is our model ... We might think of him as the Undistracted, for he is the paradigm and parable of silence." [Maggie Ross, "Jesus in the Balance: Interpretation in the Twenty-First Century", WORD&WORLD, "JESUS", Volume 29, No. 2, Spring 2009, pp 152-161]

The tension between male hierarchy to control and the silence of the people awaiting liberation is played out in the Original Sin myth. The mystery of silence and redemption links to Jesus and to never letting our gaze to be distracted from focus "on the face of God" — what is obedience to conscience rather than surrender to institutional politics and dominion culture.

In the lay Church there has been a history of cultural silence, an interior kenosis seeking understanding and support under the suppression of clerical guardians of tradition. The conflict is between those intent on acquiring (maintaining) institutional power for themselves and those in "the kenotic process of silence...meeting the Word who is silence (ID: 153) The outpouring soul of the people seeking mutual support has always been "subversive to hierarchies and claims." When Christianity was appropriated as a Roman imperial tool of state/ church, the people were driven to seek escape in order to preserve the integrity of their persons. What happened in Church history carries on today in ways unique to today, e.g., public anger and reaction to disclosures of clerical sexual abuses, and episcopal willfulness in covering up for the guilty.

The provocation for reform is "in part by the mental feedback loops that take over when the language of faith no longer refers to the silence from which it arises and to which it returns." (ID: 155) It is the silence of synthesis, at work in every age that seeks reconciliation of the old with the new, of faith and reason, in the contexts of changing times. [The "work of silence (is) the process of arriving at interior stillness at the deepest level of our core...especially receptivity to what transpires out of sight of the observing...self-consciousness... The process takes us beyond the level of everyday noise and self-consciousness...it is here that the content of our lives is transformed...and given back to us a new creation." (ID: 156-157) This processing of a new creation is the same work called for by Vatican II in recognition of a common understanding of evolution in bringing about a new "analysis and synthesis," what is a matter "as important as can be." (Const. IV, *Gaudium et spes*, Intro #5)

Sacred Scriptures are more rightly understood when they are read in perspective of the writer's time and place of writing. "[R]eligions have always offered a comprehensive interpretation of the world; they assign human beings their place in the universe of things. Only with the loss of their

competence to provide a world view in modern times did a tendency develop to understand religion as “feeling” or as a call for “decision.” (ID: 152, Gerd Theissen)

Writings in specific times and settings can't help but show through in different ways the context of these. Reading in the context of the times enlightens the writer's (reader's) intentions as well as give a sense of time and place. One can acquire knowledge and at the same time preserve singular focus on God. The need to sustain life is a “distraction” to spirituality, particularly when distraction comes from places where understanding is expected. Evolution, unlike patriarchal culture, is more about communion than dominion, more about understanding than confounding.

5. COMMUNION: the “Grace of Knowledge”

[Adapted from Mary Jo Weaver, “Rooted Hearts/Playful Minds: Catholic Intellectual Life at its Best”, CROSSCURRENTS, “The Matter of MATTER”, Spring 1998, Vol. 48, No. 1, ISSN 0011–1953, College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY 10805-2339, pp.61-74

Common wisdom and moral experience concur in the understanding that *knowledge is power*. Power (knowledge) can be used for worthy purposes (good) or for hurtful purposes (evil). Abuse of power is the *sin of knowledge*. The lessons of history can help us sort out what purposes are good, and, evil. Another saying also helps us: *by their fruits you shall know them*. And what do “fruits” tell us as to good and evil purposes? The *signs of the times* are billboards that project to the public both good and evil. The purpose of knowledge is to give us an informed basis against which to sort out good and evil, and what causes each.

While *the signs of the times* reveal the *sin of knowledge*, they also reveal the *grace of knowledge*. The evolved complexities of life, of cultures, require a knowledge base if one is to find accommodation for personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of all other. How have prayer and practice, and faith and reason grown apart and grown together over history? By the *signs of the times* and by the “fruits” of cultural connection and disconnection we can discern differences, meanings.

In our pursuit of knowledge, prayer and practice must suit each other as must faith and reason. The disconnection of prayer and practice is as telling as the disconnection of faith and reason. In our life experience there are two scriptures that speak to us: the intuitional scripture of nature and the timely accounting of sacred and profane writings. Always, unless the texts of the sacred and profane are read against the context of nature they cannot give credence to personal living. All scriptures need to be harmonized with nature's scripture.

Tertullian (c160-225 AD), that all-around educated man, who was also a remarkable writer, came to the personal sense that knowledge was not the greatest virtue; in spite of himself he has had a considerable intellectual impact. “His status as founder of Western theology is totally indebted to his background and training: his brilliance lay in his ability to make distinctions, to use the logic and reason he learned from classical pagan philosophies” (ID: 63)

The pursuit of knowledge, when rightly ordered, is the pursuit of *grace*. The pursuit of knowledge is a harmonic process of interactive communication, consciousness and conscience. Consciousness is necessarily drawn to knowledge as a moth is drawn to fire. Electromagnetism at the Earth's core pulls on the heme-center of the cytochrome-c molecule even as the love of God tugs at the center of consciousness.

<http://www.evolution101.org/PRINTBK4a.pdf> (5. “Heavy Metal Harmony” at page 45)

Tertullian's "secular view of the Church got left behind," but self-reflective consciousness is challenged to this day by his question, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?" [What does faith have to do with reason?] We must ask ourselves, what good comes from ignorance? What are the consequences of keeping one's mind closed to understanding the consequences of our actions? The era of fideism (letting others determine what one believes) is surely in part an era of enforced ignorance, of intentional political control over the mind and hearts of people.

The evolution of praying/thinking/ruling developed in the course of Church history and is seen in the writings of Anselm, Abelard, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. Anselm (1033-1109) described theology as the process of *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding); asking what reason can give to faith. Peter Abelard added to the *theological project* of Anselm and saw faith not as a closed subject but a subject always open to question; personal belief is a subject of discernment with yes/ no sides to it, thus the title of his famous scholastic text "*Sic et Non.*" Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) reacted vigorously to Abelard and succeeded in having his writings condemned by the Church. "Bernard and Abelard embody the classic conflict between the contemplative monk and the university professor: on the one hand, the silence of the cloister or the desert and on the other hand, the loquacity of the lecture hall or the city. If monks, perhaps, talk too little, intellectuals may talk too much. Bernard was deeply scandalized by activist clerics more preoccupied with intellectual virtues than moral ones." (ID: 67) [Shades of the present day split between Vatican I Catholics and Vatican II Catholics.] Bonaventure (1221-1274) was a Franciscan friar who succeeded Abelard in the position of chief theologian at the University of Paris. His lesson from Abelard and Bernard was his preference for mysticism; he recognized the pitfalls of the *theological project*.

Anselm, Abelard and Bonaventure represent "three different approaches to the highest form of Catholic intellectual life in the middle ages... three ways of doing theology," **crafting** cogent explanations, **arguing** through contradictions, and **finding** the way to God through mystical prayer. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) embodied the mysticism of Bonaventure and the fearless intellect of Abelard in bringing together faith and reason. Thomas Aquinas refused to let himself be trapped in the either/ or divide between faith and reason, between mysticism and intelligence. Aquinas "was a both/and thinker who knew how to stress intellectual values when doing theology and when defending faith... but he knew from his monastic experience that speculative knowledge of divinity was relatively worthless when compared to the theology of mystical experience brought about by faithful attendance in choir, private insistent prayer, and, above all, by the gift of the Holy Spirit to the devout soul."

Thomas Aquinas knew the value of theory and practice in the ongoing doing of theology. He was grounded in Church sources of theological thought; he immersed himself in the controversies of his age; and dedicated himself to scriptural studies and regular monastic participation. He consistently combined faith and work, theory and practice. (ID: 69)

Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) wrote his very popular *Imitation of Christ* in the context of the crushing experience of papal corruption and church mercantilism (the de Medici banker/merchant popes and Renaissance culture). John Henry Newman described the life of the church in his *Via Media* as "a dialectical interplay among theological, devotional, and hierarchical elements... The Catholic Church then is comprised of those who pray, those who think, and those who rule, functions that are by no means exclusive, but which have a particular dynamic attached to them." The dynamic of these should be the resonance of communication, consciousness and conscience; whose resonance is at the core of personal/ communal harmony, of praying, thinking and ruling.

“The ability to combine belief and intellectual work is one of the hallmarks of the Christian intellectual.” Faith and reason together can approach any subject without fear; notwithstanding, Church is slow to open to evolution, to Modernity. Chardin’s synthesis of science (the new cosmology) and theology “horrified the institutional church in the 1940s and 1950s.” In the light of quantum mechanics and chaos theory, many see Chardin as prophetic, even though the Church doesn’t. We can well believe that faith and reason are indispensable coefficients of intelligence. “Rooted in faith we can take on the problems of the world. Just because the institutional church may not like what we do, it doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t do it. We should.” ID: 74 http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=11600

This is the “Way of the Grace of Knowledge”: *Communication vitalizes community by way of acquiring and sharing knowledge. Communal vitalization is a Trinitarian Process of harmonization, of consciousness-raising and conscionable living. Trustful communication stimulates FAITH; informed consciousness enlivens HOPE; the exercise of intentional conscience in community deepens the bonds of LOVE.*

Family, Community, harmonized in Faith/Hope/Love actualizes Godhead likeness on Earth. The communal process of Trimorphic Resonance is the way of Intentional Symbiosis, of Sustainable Evolution and Church Reconciliation.
<http://www.secondenlightenment.org/trimorphicresonance.pdf>

6. Marking History

There is the matter how history notices Earth/ human affairs and the growth of consciousness. Names are given to epochs, eras and events based on marker convergences in times and places. The flow of convergences is for the most part seamless and so is the unfolding of consciousness.

Naming eras and epochs links them specifically to events happening within them; for example, events of cultural shifts, of religion, politics, etc., as in medieval times, in modern times. This is true also of geologic epochs. Thomas Berry makes the case that we are now experiencing the end of the Cenozoic Era and entering the “Ecozoic.” The Cenozoic Era saw the co-evolution and explosion of diversified forms of floral and faunal life, in which plants and animals depended intimately on each other for survival and still do today. Cultural insensitivity and exploitation are destroying species and their environments at unprecedented rates and bringing about extinctions that surely threaten human existence.

Conscious life in the Ecozoic Era is compelled to concern itself with stopping the destruction of species and environments and to take upon itself the urgent task of cleaning up environments and safeguarding the species that remain.

Naming eras and epochs can create misunderstandings depending on the slant of the writer; the urgencies of change and of moral necessity may get lost in greater attention to immediate concerns and in blindness to lessons of the past as they relate to problems of the day. It may well serve us to take some accounting here of named times for our times may be blind to the linkages of problems, crises and shifts occurring within them and as these relate to the present time.

No attempt is made to itemize and characterize all divisions, but some are given that are purposeful in helping us get a fix on the present. Here are some: axial/ post-axial; foundational (textual)/ post-foundational (contextual); enlightenment/ post-enlightenment (1st & 2nd); modernity/ post-modernity; reformational/ counter-reformational.

In axial times there was an underlying culture of dualisms, philosophically and theologically, that is, between energy/ matter, soul/ body, spirituality/ secularity. In the axial, foundational, pre-enlightenment, counter-reformational, pre-modern ages, there was the belief that real and distinct divisions existed between energy/ matter, soul/ body, spirituality/ secularity, etc, that is, a true “objectivity” separated them. Whereas, in the post-axial, post-foundational, enlightenment/post-enlightenment the cultured fixations in dualistic thinking are challenged, especially in the light quantum science, the evidence of evolution and the common origin of all matter in first energy. The publication of Einstein’s General and Special Theories of relativity is certainly a marker event in the shift away from the *objective dualisms* of past cultures.

The conscious linkages of quantum cosmology, quantum philosophy and quantum theology to non-dualistic evolutionary science compels new analyses and syntheses away from the dualisms that continue to divide and alienate, to the consternation of all life. The old dichotomies and divisions are clearly not just irrelevant to post-modern sense but are clearly linked to causes of eco-social wrongdoing, including the ongoing frustration of faith and reason.

<http://www.evolution101.org/The%20POETREE%20Trilogies.pdf>

Confronting all humanity today, but especially scientists and religionists, is the task of teaching the need of reversing eco-social history and of coming to a practical sense of understanding the unity and continuity of nature and life, and recognizing that in large part the crises of nature and humanity lay in common causes and histories, and that they have common solutions. Let us enter the Ecozoic Era lustily, knowing that our zeal and passion on behalf of nature’s restoration and preservation must be greater than the zeal and passion that have wasted nature.

GOOD FRIDAY 2009

**I planted potatoes today
left-over tubers from last year
shriveling
showing mortality
sprouting nevertheless.**

**I am a potato
shriveling
showing mortality
sprouting nevertheless.**

**My plight is whither or whether
my sprouts might weather or wither.**

Sylvester L. Steffen

Easter Week 2009

[Source citations conform to fair-use practice]