

THE ISSUE: Life As We Know It

I. The Future of Humankind

The essential continuity of global life is now radically disrupted by human intervention—by excess exploitation and environmental pollution. Earth's Eco Systems are at mortal risk of irrevocable disequilibrium and collapse, an immediate threat also to humankind.

An Underlying Understanding: The problem outlined includes everyone and therefore needs everyone to deal with it. **The Question:** How to participate positively in dealing with it? **The Answer:** Proposed here is an answer that will become clear as it unfolds. It doesn't give answers to problems in the specific but it gives a proven approach toward resolving problems, a method that is paradigmatically encoded in nature and which is accessible to everyone by virtue of belonging to symbiotic nature.

A Way to Approach All Challenges

The "pattern" is the "plan", for the way forward is intelligibly patterned in the genetic make-up of the human body. Pattern and plan are intelligent texts which empower self-reflective consciousness to deal with changing contexts. But, "pattern and plan" cannot be intentionally effective except they are reflectively grasped for what they are—purposeful designs of organic life dealing with ad hoc challenges.

The way forward is informed in the encoded memory of designs proven by trial-and-error success, evolution's way of natural selection and fitness. The challenges of today call for a special kind of fitness, namely, intellectual, that is, self-reflective recognition of causes and effects, and discovery of correctives needed to sustain web-life and humanity.

Daunting as the global challenges are, humankind still has an effective niche in which to work to accommodate ongoing prevision in symbiotic evolution; humankind can ignore its prospective role, deny it, and go down the road of self-disintegration or it can join with nature in the purposeful application of means that stay and even reverse degradation.

"Minerva's owl flies only when daylight dies" GWF Hegel
<http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.jsp?memberId=14883&articleId=281474977151124&nav=MyGather>

Can We Save Ourselves?

It is insanity to expect God to rescue us from the folly of our mindless behavior. We have to deal with the consequences of our own mindlessness, with the crises that are of our making. Mindful symbiosis is a gift imprinted in nature that made us who we are; nature has done her part, now we have to do our part in using the tools we possess.

In every fluid and fiber of our being we carry in our soul/ body the practiced successes of paradigmatic nature, of symbiotic evolution. We carry in us all the prior practiced wisdom of symbiotic consciousness, if only we can break through the ego-passions of dominion and obsession and open up to other-concern.

There is no other way of dealing with the here-and-now predicaments than in the here-and-now, and in combining wit with wisdom. Except we tune our intuitions to deep nature, to the innerness of word enlightening the outer-ness of work, we will continue our arrogant instincts and mindless attitudes toward nature and others.

I don't know if we can save ourselves from ourselves, but what is proposed here, and what is programmed in the *Joined Faith/Evolution Syllabus*, is perhaps the best and only approach we have to save ourselves. What the Syllabus can do is help us discover, practice, and own the symbiotic tools we need to move mindfully forward together. The Christic sense of cosmic otherness needs to become the milieu of our awareness, and this can happen by exercise of the **trimorphic resonances** of paradigmatic nature, of symbiotic evolution.

By owning the consciousness of Cosmic Christology, we acquire a mind of self-esteem beyond the culture of distrust and putdown, of irreligion and incivility. The culture of symbiotic mindfulness is the culture of life, of religion and civility practiced in trust, what is the Culture of Hope, by which we are saved. Yes, we can.

II. The PATTERN is the PLAN

A philosophical/ cultural term much in vogue is *post-modernity*, which implies, whatever it is, that it comes after *modernity*. The term "modernity" generally includes the time of the "enlightenment", which took upon itself the deconstruction of presumptions based on magic, myth, outmoded worldviews, and theologies premised on them. In this post-modern time, after centuries of acquisitions of new knowledge, after the deconstruction of age-old traditions, beliefs and practices, human consciousness is confused, unsettled, even schizophrenic and unsure of itself, and of its religion and science.

To many it seems that chaos reigns in our time. In science, an acentric cosmology has replaced the ancient Earth/ Sun-centered cosmologies, which long bolstered religion and culture in their presumptions of centrism, staticism and absolutism. It is modernity's sense of the universe that there is no single center of gravity, but that gravity has been diffused and spread throughout the universe where the cosmic center is shared and diffusion continues to expand. By analogy, religion also no longer controls the static center of gravity, which means to say that "religion" does not reside in some elite, professional, theological group, insight or institution.

The elitist centrism of professed religion is not more authentic than the distributed sense of common humanity; as a matter of fact, even theological authority relies on the "sensus communis". What is the public to think now? For after all, it has been the professionals who have constructed the past and prevailing worldviews, and also who deconstructed the cultural presumptions that have brought humankind to its present condition of dissolution. Who will make sense of this chaos we are heir to?

Human psychology has wrestled in the past and wrestles now with, for example, star connections to human psychic sense. Modern science has determined that all of life's chemistry originates in supernovae events, and that vital body substance is from stars.

To the extent that materiality derives from and is interactive with energy (spirituality), so is self-reflective consciousness. There are faith implications to human/ star connections.

Back when astronomers/ theologians wrestled with Earth-centrism and Sun-centrism, they also wrestled with psychic connections (astrology). Today we are compelled to consider the extent to which religion and science are divided over the cultured dualisms of Cartesian presumptions separating soul and body, spirit and matter, science and religion (physics/ metaphysics), which divide people and fuel wars justified in different beliefs.

The Dominican Friar Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake (1600) because Roman Catholic authority insisted on its worldview of cosmological and theological centrism. Theologians and astronomers of the time couldn't stray far from the worldview because the Church was very touchy about science dissenting from theology.

[Ramon G Mendoza, *The ACENTRIC LABYRINTH, Giordano Bruno's Prelude to Contemporary Cosmology* © 1995 Element Books Limited, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP78BP <http://www.hereticpress.com/Dogstar/Religion/Bruno.html>]

The matter of religious absolutism has to do with *fixations*, with obsessive holding on to literalist beliefs rooted in old misinformation and misunderstandings. Erroneous faith obsessions are fixations called *fideism*. Fixations are beliefs that refuse to change even in the face of facts that make clear their falsity. Fideism is about fixation in spiritual and material matters, good and evil. Centrism, staticism, and absolutism are examples of fixations associated with *religious* belief and practice that still dog consciousness.

A problem of the present time is that a new, evolutionary, transformational worldview has replaced the long held static-centrist worldview, and that this new reality has theological implications. Human consciousness resides in the unitary mind/ body venue, common to humanity; spiritual/ material connections are cosmic realities, mysteries from which humanity arises and which define the human self-mystery. *The Mystery of Conscious Reality is within the Cosmic Pattern. This Reality, this Consciousness, because of its priority place in space/ time ascendancy, anticipates later subjectivities, which, though true to original forms, move beyond the fixed boundaries of earlier understandings. The method of transformation, of escape, is evolution, is "intelligent design".*

In her book "MONA LISA'S MOUSTACHE, Making Sense of a Dissolving World", Mary Settegast quotes what Dame Rebecca West considers to be the "dominant mood" of our time. In her view the dominant mood is a quest, "a desperate search for a pattern". (Phanes Press, 2001, An Alexandria Book, P.O. Box 6114, Grand Rapids, MI 49516)

Given the human penchant for dividing, dissecting, disconnecting and dissolving things, it is no wonder that human consciousness finds itself schizophrenically disjointed from its understandings of origins, and that it is in a "desperate" mood. If the human search is for "a pattern", then it seems eminently sensible to go back in time and connect with the enduring patterns of evolutionary experience, to the extent that they can be mentally captured and understood.

In evolution, every new beginning is associated with the ending of something previous. The ending of the age called Modernity and its dissolutions provide beginnings and opportunities for Postmodernity. "[W]hat we are referring to as the dissolution of form may actually be the disintegration of an outworn mode of human consciousness. ...the

destruction of familiar realities and the multiplying of perspectives in our time are caused not by our position at the end or beginning of a cycle of time, but by the impact of an emergent mode of awareness...**the integral structure of consciousness.**" [Emphasis added]. (ID. "The World is Evolving", pg 107).

While few may deny that the world is evolving, more than a few might disagree with the observation that *modernity* is "...actually... the disintegration of an outworn mode of human consciousness". Many are so invested in habits of thinking that they refuse to admit that they (habits) have become "outworn". As a Pisces person expecting Aquarian openness, I believe that fixations in staticism, centrism, elitism and absolutism are indeed "outworn modes", and that if we can admit their irrelevance to the times we can motivate cultures beyond dead ends to more open and fruitful insights of evolution and transformation.

There is yet, however, an anciently recognizable process (Trinitarian), which works as a root process of transformation and openness, that might be characterized as a "cosmic pattern", and by which, the prosaic, the outworn, the dead absolutes can be resurrected from their pessimisms and moved forward into renewable modes of fresh insight.

Human consciousness is now only at the threshold of Postmodern insight and may yet be able to lift this dark hour of humanity from its pessimism. Resurrection consciousness evolves by way of the ever renewing patterns of cosmic transformation, patterns that are resonantly attenuated in harmonies of trimorphic change. Consciousness is a renewing process of insight, which is energized and amplified in/ by insights of joined communication/ conscience; conscience is an ever renewing conviction shared by person-to-person communication; and communication is an ever renewing dialog, empowered and amplified in the resonance of consciousness and conscience.

Self-generated faith, hope and love are intelligent motivations construed on trustful communication, informed in consciousness and confirmed by conscience, and except for the communal joining and cultivation of these virtues, self-aware vitality, whether civil or religious, cannot thrive. [See QUANTUM RELIGION, pp 20-24]

III. HUMAN::DIVINE ALTRUISM

Whether one prefers approaching altruism from the perspective of religion or civility, altruism is a religious/ civil virtue that respects all life and recognizes that we thrive together but separately, die. Authentic civility and religion are about equal regard for self and other.

Altruism, the Intuition of Other-Concern

Altruism is a grace of nature, as are religious sensitivity, civil sense, symbiotic wisdom and Christic consciousness. Religion and faith mean different things to different people. The personal/ social advantage of altruism should be evident regardless of religious or non-religious affiliations. Whether one belongs to organized religion or not, the obligation of altruism (civility) applies to everyone, not mere obedience to law, but also affirmative symbiotic living, that is, obedient to "other-concern".

Our appeal here is to reason and to religion, not to suggest that they are in conflict with each other, but that one can come to altruism by convictions of reason as well as of faith. No one is left out in the appeal because everyone is in with nature even if not in with the faith ideology emphasized in some or other religion. Altruism has broader umbrella coverage than denominational religions, for common humanity and web-life sustainability depend on the universal symbiotic motivation of altruism.

The cultural nurture of intuitional altruism pushes the instinct for symbiosis to the level of self-reflective purpose and intention. Instincts in dialogue with self-reflectivity become intuitional impulses that motivate consciousness to choose altruistic actions over merely self-serving ones. When instincts rise to the intuitional, rational level they enter the realm of religion, of intentional relationships that regard self and other equally. The sense of religion, of an organized faith system, is a social complexity advanced beyond intuitions of egoism and selfishness. Such advanced consciousness is a prerequisite of civil social sense even as it is of religious sense.

Faith ideologies can be misdirected in interests of power and control, and when they are they put people in over-lording and dependent relationships. The Constantinean imperial culture has created just such injustice in its ecclesial structures. For reasons of conflicted faith ideologies, religions get in each other's face, cause people to lose faith, and put people in violent relationships with each other. Common decency, civility, demands of personal conscience not to be trapped in faith ideologies that condone overreach and do violence to people personally and to social relationships.

Complete Christ, Incomplete Cosmos

The theology of Christic completeness and cosmic incompleteness comes from a line of Christian thinkers, including Sts. Paul, Bonaventure, and Francis, and more recently Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. The evolution of the cosmos and of consciousness is universally accepted, except it has not yet entered the thought of Western culture habituated in static-centrist thinking. It is becoming clearer, however, that the frustration of evolving consciousness is also the frustration of Christic (divine) consciousness, of ecological sensitivity, of civil sense, social wellbeing, and of personal, psychic health.

Fixation in the Original Sin Story of Genesis has led to ecclesiological fixation after the manner of the "Priestly" strand of theology in the Old Testament, in the belief that the transmission of grace (forgiveness) proceeds linearly in church (hierarchically) from the top down. In Augustinian tradition, this strand has been hyped in church ecclesiology to the point of effectively nullifying the "Yahwist" strand of theology that deals with the Parent God who believes in the goodness of creation and lovingly cares for it.

The Yahwist strand of theology emphasizes the self-investment of God in caring for and loving the people, earth and all life, held together in common in the covenantal bond of faithfulness to symbiotic relationships. In the Priestly strand of divinity consciousness guilt and fear prevail to the frustration of hope and participation in the spiritual goodness of creation as envisioned by the Parent Creator.

Both strands exist in Abrahamic tradition. But the Yahwist strand has politically lost out to the Priestly. The Old Testament tradition of Priestly preference prevails in Roman

Catholic ecclesiology since the time of Constantine, and the theology/ ecclesiology of sin/ redemption has all but disenfranchised the Cosmic Christ and Yahwist sensitivity.

Worldview and world politics have now shifted away from the outworn culture of Constantinian imperialism. Communitarian thinking, politically and ecologically, finds favor in evolutionary consciousness; static-centrist theology/ ecclesiology no longer function effectively in cosmic, evolutionary consciousness. Staticism is not satisfying or credible and church fixated in it loses credibility and following. The open sense of conscious divinity is more satisfactory, more credible.

In the Franciscan tradition of cosmic consciousness, of Cosmic Christology, hope and joy abound in understanding the purpose and intention of diversified grace symbiotically embodied in the continuity consciousness of the Cosmic Christ, the "total" Christ. It has been the sense of Franciscan theology that except cosmic evolution has completed its work, the work of love, the work of the "cosmic Christ" is incomplete. [Two recent books develop understandings of cosmic evolution and the transformation of the Cosmic [total] Christ in personal consciousness/ conscience.

1. Ilia Delio, OSF, "Christ in Evolution", © 2008, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY
2. Louis M Savary, "Teilhard de Chardin, The Divine Milieu Explained", © 2007, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ.]

Franciscan Cosmic Christology

[Excerpts below are from Delio's "Christ in Evolution", and are quoted with permission.]
<http://www.maryknollsocietymall.org/description.cfm?ISBN=978-1-57075-777-8>

"I use the term 'evolution' not only as a scientific explanation of life in the universe (a position I maintain) but in its broader meaning of the dynamic change and self-transcendence in creation. One would be hard pressed not to notice an "inner pressure" within creation to move forward toward greater diversity and more complex unions... Evolution best describes this movement.

"I must admit, however, that I find a place for intelligent design within the context of evolution as well; that is, evolution is not entirely blind or driven by chance alone. Rather, the underlying laws of evolution that cooperate with chance reflect an overarching purpose or direction in the whole evolutionary process. (ID 3).

"I use the concept design...not as a scientific account of creation but as a metaphysical term (the underlying principle of created reality) and a teleological term (the goal of the universe). The intelligent design of the universe, in my view, does not refer to the complexity of the universe but to the purpose of the universe; hence, to its 'design'. (ID 3) ...Darwinian evolution challenges the Catholic doctrine of the soul and its immediate creation by God, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, and the connection between sin and death. (ID 2).

"To profess Jesus as the "Christ" for early Christians was to envision a new humanity, a new creation. Christ liberated the whole creation from sin and death. In Christ the whole cosmos is renewed (ID 47)... The notion of cosmic Christology, rooted in scripture, attained a flowering of thought in many early Christian writers, from Irenaeus to Maximus the Confessor (ID 47). ..According to Moltmann, with the development of modern Western European theology, which looked upon cosmic Christology of Ephesians and

Colossians as mythology, cosmic Christology fell out of favor in the middle ages. (ID 49-50)...Cosmic Christ terminology (James Lyons states) is a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (ID 50)...The modern discussion of cosmic Christology was initiated by the Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler in 1961 at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi...he spoke...on the unity of the world, basing his discussion on the cosmic Christ hymn in Col I: 15-20...said Sittler, 'From Augustine onwards...Western Christendom has been marked by the inability to connect the realm of grace with that of nature'. (ID 50)...Moltmann claims that, in the light of Sittler's address, we must confront the 'threat to nature' with a 'Christology of nature' in which the power of redemption does not stop short of the hearts of men and women but extends to all of nature.' (ID 51).

"While sin was the focus of medieval Christology, there was another position that emerged...that is...the doctrine of the primacy of Christ found among the Greek fathers...This doctrine did not view the incarnation as an event due to sin; rather, it maintained that Christ is first in God's intention to love and create; the principal reason for the incarnation is love, not sin. (ID 54-55)

"[In] the Franciscan school, beginning with Alexander of Hales...grounded the incarnation in the possibility of God to create and hence to become incarnate... Jesus Christ...became a *theological* question integrally related to...what kind of God could create and become incarnate. ..The incarnation is a central entryway to faith in a credible God. Christocentrism and theocentrism are two sides of the same coin". (ID 55). ...the Franciscan philosopher Duns Scotus (d. 1309) claimed that God is absolutely free to chose and create this world precisely as it is to reveal his love...the mutuality between God and human persons realized in the incarnation is grounded the very nature of God as love. (ID 56).

"The Franciscan theologian Bonaventure, a contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, also maintained that the incarnation could not be willed because of sin, which is the lesser good [but] must be willed by God as the greater good, the noble perfection of God's love (ID 57) ..The humanity of Jesus is the fullest and most perfect external Word that gives expression to the inner, eternal Word as its perfect content. Thus, the Word holds a middle place between the Father and the world... The created universe [the external expression of the inner Word] possesses in its inner constitution a relation to the uncreated Word...the expression of the inner trinitarian structure of God...an expression [that] bears the imprint of the Trinity. (ID 59).

"The beauty of Franciscan theology lies in the sacramentality of creation that emanates from God the spoken Word of love. This Word transforms what is nothing into something that lovingly reflects the heart of God. Just as the eternal, divine Word is the inner self-expression of God, the created order is the external expression of the inner Word. (ID 60).

"The inner positive relation between the world and the Word by which the world is the external expression of God means that we know the world through the Word of God, and we know the Word of God through the world... Christ is the key to the truth of creation—Christ is the Word of God. (ID 61).

"[Bonaventure:] From all we have said, we may gather that the created world is a kind of book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker, the Trinity, at the different levels

of expression: as vestige, as an image, and as a likeness...Through these successive levels, comparable to steps, the human intellect is designed to ascend gradually to the supreme Principle, which is God' (ID 61).

"The Franciscan view of incarnation as a mystery of orderly love uncouples the primary reason for the incarnation from sin and proclaims it as a work of love. An understanding of the incarnation as an act of love rather than a condition of sin may be more fitting to an evolutionary universe where the understanding of human original sin is under revision. (ID 168).

"The belief that Christ signifies a new relationship to God in the world is a fundamental one. For too long, the Christian confession of Christ has rendered Christ a static figure who looms in judgment over the world. Christ has become less a way of life than a law of life. (ID 173).

"Through a labyrinth of Greek cosmology, terminology, ecumenical councils, and political battles, we have locked the mystery of God in a single, individual human person, Jesus of Nazareth, so that Jesus Christ has become a single, individual superhero and we are mere spectators to the divine drama (ID 173)... It is difficult to really grasp the significance of Jesus Christ for our faith if our confession of faith is governed by a medieval cosmology and a fixed place for fallen humanity. The evolutionary worldview, however, has opened up for us a whole new meaning of humanity and, within humanity, the emergence of Jesus Christ. (ID 174).

"Rather than fixing our attention on a lonely, static figure of Jesus Christ, we can now locate Christ at the heart of the whole evolutionary process: from cosmic evolution to biological evolution to the evolution of human consciousness and culture. Within the evolution of human consciousness, Jesus emerges as the Christ, the fullness of God's self-communication in history and the absolute expression of that self-communication in love. (ID 174)

"Christ is more than Jesus. Christ is the Word incarnate, the one through whom all things are created, and in whom all things find their fulfillment in God. Every person and the whole universe find meaning in Christ, who bears a distinct and unique relationship with every being; everything is related to Christ. (ID 174).

"The meaning of Christ must move from the altar of the church to the altar of the world. Participation in the world...is participation in Christ, insofar as belief in Christ empowers a new vision of the world which can unfold only in and through us. (ID 176).

"We have been warned by Jesus in the Gospels not to believe in any appearance of the coming Messiah here or there. Rather, we are co-workers with God and stewards of creation. The second coming of Christ is the emergence of Christ in us, the human community, when we become reflective not only individually but collectively, and live in the spirit of crucified love. (ID 157). Christ is in evolution because we, human and nonhuman creation, are in evolution. (ID 158). ..The new science...portrays reality not as individual, mechanistic parts but as an interrelated whole...a wholistic worldview [that] recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views human beings as one particular strand in the web of life. [Fritjof Capra] (ID 158).

“The major task for the believing community is to *be* community, to discover and uncover its own reality as the people of God. (ID 163)...The theologian (Hefner) says that evolution itself has been designed to enable a self-transcending system of reality... [Hefner asks] When...we are universal in the drive for transcendence, are we thereby sharing in the ultimate depths of reality that we can call God? In Teilhard’s view, to immerse ourselves in creativity, and thus the drive for transcendence, is to immerse ourselves in Christ, *if faith in the world is faith in God*. That is, if we believe that the incarnation means God’s involvement in the world, then we must also believe in God’s fidelity to the world, which means letting the world become itself through its own creative processes.” (ID 164).

“In view of the meaning of Christ, we can say that Christ is the symbol of what is intended for created reality, that is, the divinization of creation which, on the level of human experience, reaches its culmination in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is not the great exception to terrestrial life but its fulfillment...Jesus the man is truly God and true divinization of our humanity; in him we attain full humanization. However, Christ is more than Jesus. Christ, the Word incarnate, is the one in whom created reality is transformed in the personal love of God. To speak of Christ on the level of terrestrial life, therefore, is not to restrict the discussion to Jesus alone, but to see Christ as the icon of created reality. Christ is the divinization of created reality in whatever way the divine Word can fully enter into that reality... In short, Christ, through a self-giving act of love, completes every possible world order by entering into that order through an incarnate or Word-embodiment. The Word-character of all possible worlds renders each of them a spiritual potency for union with the divine. (ID 171).

The crux of the immediate issue (how I relate personally to Christ in the predicament of the sacrilege of nature) needs to be addressed; not just personally but also collectively. Can we save ourselves from ourselves? Yes we can if we commit to the conscionable work of love, that is, to the authentic agency of divine intention in the cosmic Christ. This involves a worldview change and a role change in the world. We are instructed by Jesus to do as he has done, to continue the work of love, of Christology. We are equipped by nature, by grace, to rise to the challenge of human::divine altruism

The Vernacular Theologian

Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, introduces the reader to three kinds of theologians; two are of the professional sort, “monastic” and “scholastic”, while the third is an everyday sort, like Joe-the-plumber, the kind of person who is occupied in mundane things for the most part, but in his own way is also a thinker about things that are important in life, like God. This third kind is called the “vernacular” theologian, the off-the-street, back-road fellow, who talks the language of common people.

I consider myself the vernacular type, an everyday worker who cultivated in his leisure a deeper side along with the work-a-day side. This type isn’t bad company to be in because it was this kind that Jesus chose to be his disciples, his theologians.

The authenticity of the “street” or “roadside” theologian roots more in common sense practicality than in studied professionalism. Dedicated professionalism is fine but it sometimes gets carried away in directions that befuddle the everyday type. The person

practiced in real life also develops a wisdom from his/ her personal experience of doing good-life relationships with others—an alternate way of doing theology.

Everyday doers of theology are often also readers and hearers of scriptures. In their practical living they reconcile their moral sense with a practiced ability to distinguish between good choices and bad choices, and good actions and bad actions. They have families, and they are serious for the wellbeing of their spouses and children, rather like the "Parent" God Yahweh who is concerned for all creation.

In today's world of mass communication, everybody is virtually in touch with what's going on everywhere in the world. This worldly exercise of global communication educates wisdom thinking in the vernacular people, who reason and stew over all the bad and good things going on in the world. In seriously wanting to do what is right, we in a way put ourselves in God's shoes, for we want to do things that have good outcomes, like God. No one in his/ her right mind wants to hurt others or do things that damage.

Wanting not to do damage is an early sense I got out of thinking for myself. In my more mature years I focused on an area that seemed to me was doing a lot of damage, and that is the mindless attitude that prevails between scientists and religionists. It seemed to me that the science-profession and the religion-profession were intentionally behaving very badly toward each other, and in the process were hurting a lot of people—and doing God no favor.

Come to discover now, there are others, even professionals, who are thinking along the same lines. "Christ in Evolution" introduces the reader to some: "...Teilhard, Panikkar, Merton and Griffiths have ushered in a new type of vernacular theology in the twenty-first century. It is no longer a theology of the unlearned but of global experience, arising from the spiritual search for Christ amidst evolution, religious plurality, and difference. Vernacular theology today is a way of going about the world; it is not a matter of analyzing concepts but *doing* theology, shifting the context of theology from the rigor of academic discipline to the context of life and holiness. It is the theology of the poor person—not necessarily the economically poor but the one who recognizes his or her need and dependency on God and neighbor, and lives in openness, receptivity and gratefulness. (ID 125).

"Vernacular theology in the second axial period is a reflection on Christ in view of evolution, and not content to confine itself to philosophical analysis (although it does not deny such analysis). Rather, it is doing theology by way of spirituality. Thus, it involves the inner dimensions of a person where ultimate reality is experienced, and out of which one's actions flow. Spirituality, or "the doing of Christ" in the world today, must be the source of understanding Christ in the new age. (ID 125).

"The importance of a vernacular theology of global consciousness is that it opens us up to the mystery of Christ in a way that a more philosophical, intellectual approach cannot. It is a renewal of the Word incarnate as a spoken event, the *kenosis* of God's self-giving love in creation. The dynamism of the divine Word spoken throughout creation allows us to consider the Christ-event from its inception in history not as a static event but as an evolutionary one. (ID 125-126).

The imprinting of Word-experience is at personal and social, psychic levels of encoding. At the social level, people doing theology/ spirituality together has evolutionary conse-

quence. The dialogic exchange, with respect to interpreting externally the internal message of Christic altruism, serves to bring people to a collective conviction as to what best serves the common interest. In this regard, there is also an internal, “nurtural” effect, which is to habituate and predispose consciousness toward a receptive attitude of intentional habits, of choosing actions that serve common interests. Faith is the interiority of word, female personification; reason is the exteriority of work, male personification.

The practiced culture of positive nurture (as in the celebration of ritual sacraments) may over time have an epigenetic affect of predisposing genetic coding in the positive interest of imprinting in genes dispositions toward symbiosis and altruistic behavior rather than toward violent knee-jerk reaction in response to challenge and the violence of others. The Christian instinct/ intuition (to turn the other cheek) appears not to be more encoded in Christians than in people of other religions. Quite to the contrary, as Christian history testifies, the culture of dominion theology by any measure seems to be as violent as any other religious culture. Christians are specifically called by the moral teaching of Jesus Christ to culture their (Franciscan (?) “altruistic gene”, that is, to be visibly distinguished for their cultured habit of love.

The Christ of the Cosmos witnesses the consciousness of WORD/ LIGHT/ LOVE, the self-expression of divinity, today, tomorrow and forever. Every Newborn is a “Christ of Second Coming”. Every person who lives by Christ-likeness fulfills the coming of the Cosmic [total] Christ, the symbolic, symbiotic realization of Divine Instance in Creation.

Christ is the human revelation of personal Godlikeness. Godlikeness is spiritually expressed from the “within”, that is, in “word”; Godlikeness is bodily expressed, from the “without”, that is, consciously in “light”; and Godlikeness is personally experienced, in love, in communal relationships. The People of God, now living, is the fullness of cosmic Christic expression up to this time. The fullness (pleroma) of Christic expression in process, is accomplished through time by way of communication (word), consciousness (light), and conscience (love).

God is WORD, *via comunicativa*, the interiority, the “insidedness” (ad intra) of creation; God is LIGHT, *via illuminativa*, the exteriority, the “outsidedness” (ad extra) of creation; God is LOVE, *via unitiva*, the motivation of conscionable conduct, of communal bonding in intentional relationships, of Eucharistic transformation in human::divine correlation.

IV. Evolution’s SYMBIOTIC PATTERN is Nature’s PARADIGMATIC PLAN

SYMBIOTIC EVOLUTION Human::Divine Correlation

Intentional symbiosis is an evolved impulse of nature. In these times of peril symbiotic impulses occur sporadically but with little visible movement. However, as impulses gather a tide may swell and with it, movement.

By now, awareness of the quantum-universe and symbiotic implications are virtually everywhere except in Christian theological awareness. Every one who lives by quantum-electric conscience is a drop swelling the tide of hope for greater religious and civil symbiosis.

PARADIGMATIC NATURE

The Joined FAITH / EVOLUTION Syllabus

STEP ONE: Evolution 101: Cultural Orientation: Reality Check

2000: A SUMMARY PREVISION TOWARD GLOBAL REVITALIZATION: self-reflection, enlightenment, and symbiotic evolution advance wellbeing when personal living is mindfully directed. **The Global THINKING Community:** by the purposeful direction of intentional living, conscionable wellbeing thrives communally.

*2000 Summary: collect, summarize, frame problems in mind before speaking to them; engage interiority before bringing words to the problematic exteriority. Join the **Global THINKING Community** by “perfecting thoughts and thereby thinking more perfectly” — cogitata perficiendo, cogitando sic perfecta.*

STEP TWO: Evolution 202: Programmatic History: Depth Thinking

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE: 2nd Enlightenment consciousness advances: by reflection and awareness of Natural Law; **QUANTUM RELIGION:** by nature’s intensions and intentions, the harmony of Reason, Faith and Purpose; **RELIGION & CIVILITY:** and, by the mindfulness of Dialog, Discernment and Decision.

*Internalize depth engagement with the communal enlightenment:
Natural Law: understanding cosmic religious relationships;
Quantum Religion: discern correlations in symbiotic processing;
Religion & Civility: historical evolution of modern problems and counter-measures to break the cycles of fixation.*

STEP THREE: Evolution 303: Consciousness: Trust Based

THE POSSIBLE JOURNEY: The example of personal living radiates “conscious light”. Trust is ground virtue correlating wellbeing; **WHAT SELF-DONATION IS:** Eucharist is selflessness experienced in action; **GREEN RELIGION:** organic life attenuates energies of other and flourishes symbiotically with other “inside the cultural spectrum”.

*The Possible Journey: brings community together in trustful collaboration to deal with common problems/potentials;
What Self-Donation Is: identifies in altruism cultural remedies, personal inputs, and heightens attention to the ways (sacraments) of wellbeing;
Green Religion: encourages group effort to converts talk to walk; brings the interiority of words/ consciousness to works/ conscience.*

STEP FOUR: Evolution 404: Spiritual/ Secular Harmony: Continuity

NOVOGENESIS: The resonance of purpose harmonizes words, ideas, forms, and spreads throughout a warming light that stimulates newness; **METAGENESIS:** the iterations of life become self-aware in attenuated energy; **THEOGENESIS:** uplifted consciousness authenticates spirituality/secularity. Divinity shines through nature in the purpose of Godlike living.

*Novogenesis: Quantum Cosmology and the essential unity of energy/ matter;
Metagenesis: Quantum Metaphysics and the continuity of soul/ body;
Theogenesis: Quantum Theology and the self-reflectivity of divinity::humanity.*

www.justifiedliving.gather.com/nature

www.evolution101.org

www.secondenlightenment.org

Evolution is intelligent design, that is:

intelligent design is organic life transformed from “intensional” symbiosis to “intentional”. The self-reflective person, who is the personal extension of the Cosmic Christ, lives by and rationalizes the symbiotic purpose of organic life. The “divine milieu” of Teilhard de Chardin is the spirituality of “divine instance”, the inspiration of the Cosmic Christ. Our destiny in nature is the fullness of love, of Cosmic Christ-likeness.

THEOLOGY: trickle-down or trickle-up?

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on February 3, 2009 - 12:16pm. --- [Parish Life](#)

From my Baltimore Catechism days I learned that God revealed Himself through the prophets and Sacred Scriptures, and that direct Revelation by God ended when He sent His Only-Begotten Son Jesus to save humankind and reveal by divine teaching and example how they were (and we are) to live.

As a student of Theology in the Seminary I was taught essentially the same lessons about direct divine Revelation and salvation. In other words, Revelation of God has been by direct divine action (intervention) from the-top-down — the paradigm of “trickle-down theology/ grace”.

In Earth-centric cosmology and the theology of dominion, trickle-down grace/ revelation makes sense. However, from the perspective of symbiotic evolution, they make no sense. From the perspective of evolution, consciousness is the energetic aspect of evolving complexity. As forms of matter become more complex so does the subtlety (awareness) of their energetic complexes.

From the evolutionary perspective, consciousness is a “trickle-up” energetic complexity. By evolution, as material forms become more complex so do their energetic complexes. Conscious inclination toward common wellbeing and symbiotic purpose are inclinations toward “divinity” consciousness. Evolutionary consciousness attributes equal potential and complexity to every person, even with respect to conceptualizing God and imitating God-like behavior in personal/ social living.

Trickle-up theology makes more sense to evolution than trickle-down. Theology, whether it is trickle-down or trickle-up, is a root issue of conflict between Vatican I (anti-evolution) and Vatican II (pro-evolution). Pope Benedict seems clearly torn by the dichotomy and is trying to be both Tridentine-sensitive and V2-sensitive.

Evolutionary symbiosis is God-like. Trickle-down theology and trickle-down economics are “of a piece”; both are now imploding in awareness and public experience.

[◀ Introduction to the PARISH LIFE table Baltimore Catholic Schools ▶](#)

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Sylvester, you have written

Submitted by [Little Bear](#) on February 6, 2009 - 12:56pm.

Sylvester, you have written so often (and exceptionally well) about evolution. There is a readiness (an evolution) that is occurring in Christian/Catholic understanding of how God

operates in our personal lives, in the life of the Church, and throughout the world, as well.

I believe that you, Dennis & AnnieO, have accurately pin-pointed how God does work among us (for God has pitched a tent among us). Loving parents carefully observe their children and as the kids mature, more complex interactions, duties, responsibilities, and freedoms are encouraged by the parents. God knows where the human race is now. And we are at the point in our evolutionary history where "trickle-down-only" theology is no longer sufficient. There needs to be more.

In the Church, the theological/spiritual formation of the entire people of God (this means all believers, regardless of their rank in the church or in society) is first and principally the work of God. And all of us are called upon to collaborate in that work. The setting in which this formation takes place is the life of the community, where the Spirit abides.

While some individuals may have more information about certain areas of the life of the Church than others do, that does not mean that they are better-formed Christians. There are varieties of gifts, and it is precisely the combination and mutual interaction of these gifts that makes for the beauty of the whole. There must be trickle up and down---both.

In any society, flaws abound. People act largely on self-interest. But the self-interest of many works together for harmony in society in which we can live, grow, and develop, even though that harmony may not be the best imaginable. "Everything is full of vice, yet the whole is a paradise." That is the perspective of chapter 7 of Lumen Gentium. That is the reality. Theological/Spiritual growth cannot take place outside existing reality. And we cannot reach our full potential as God's people if we are viewed as the "receivers only" of a "trickle-down" theology.

God has shown an intense interest in us, in our actions, in our growth, and in our lives---are we able to take God's interest seriously enough to contribute to the growth of all of God's people?

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Sylvester~ in entering

Submitted by [Dennis](#) on February 4, 2009 - 7:38pm.

Sylvester~ in entering history via the Old Testament God does/did seem to employ the culturally appropriate "trickle down" approach. The Incarnation is, I think, the turning point meant to be understood with the unfolding of time and consciousness that the "trickle up" is the creative response, the response of creation, imbued with the godliness of Christ that made the conversation possible, the relationship feasible, efficacious. Think for a moment of the archetypical story of Pinocchio. (Please ignore the spelling). No matter how much Guipetto loved his wooden puppet the love relation was impossible, his "love" was unrequited and so, not fully love. The bestowing of "humanness" made the cycle possible. As you imply, there is nothing wrong with the "trickle down", it is simply incomplete, as God intended it to be and to be fulfilled by bestowing His godliness, His Christ to, in with us as we reciprocate, complete and return.

"Love is a mutual benevolence, mutually known" (Aristotle, "Ethics")

Thank you, Dennis. Let me

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on February 6, 2009 - 11:31am.

Thank you, Dennis. Let me expand my thinking. The issue before us is the hypostasis (understanding) of cosmic::human::divine evolution, about divine instance in creation and the "flow of grace".

The cosmic and the divine are so intimately immersed in oneness, as is humankind, that human consciousness (self-reflection) is overwhelmed to put in words the working of correlation (mutuality, complementarity, subsidiarity) and co-identity in the divine milieu. Immersion isn't either trickle-down or trickle-up (as AnnieO says) but trickle-all-around. Indeed, quantum dynamics at the wave/ particle level are much more than "trickle". Total cosmic immersion, reworking, prevails throughout and at all times.

Institutional self-serving capitalizes on total-immersion's well of wealth, it claims hierarchical ownership in the dispensation of grace, and attempts to control privilege and grace. Male patriarchy imposes on humankind the enthrallment notion that divine prerogative belongs to it to control the plumbing by which grace comes to humankind. That theory is a fiction, as is corporate capitalism (Wall Street gamblers, banks) which dominates Earth's wealth and the flow of money.

Does God self-reveal differently today than in the past? only in the sense of the changed complexity of the evolving cosmos and consciousness. But always "grace supposes nature". Habits of tradition and expanding complexity complicate human efforts to understand the enormity of cosmic immersion and human::divine correlation.

Water is universal life's amniotic resourcement in the portioning of cosmic::divine largesse. Femininity is the ground-state of all vitality, the amniotic well of baptismal water carrying the breath of divinity. By divine attribution males share privilege and place in the "stirring of the waters", a more modest role than what patriarchy arrogates to itself.

Baptism by immersion, it seems to me, far better represents amniotic consciousness in the role of cosmic::divine::grace::Eucharist. Trickle-down baptism, on the other hand, better accords the ecclesial mind of dominion theology and claimed male control of the flow of grace.

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This is wonderful Sylvester:

Submitted by [colkoch](#) on February 19, 2009 - 1:59pm.

This is wonderful Sylvester: "Immersion isn't either trickle-down or trickle-up (as AnnieO says) but trickle-all-around. Indeed, quantum dynamics at the wave/ particle level are much more than "trickle". Total cosmic immersion, reworking, prevails throughout and at all times."

But this is better: " Male patriarchy imposes on humankind the enthrallment notion that divine prerogative belongs to it to control the plumbing by which grace comes to humankind. That theory is a fiction,"

Maybe this is because men are obsessed with their plumbing and women just go with the flow when it comes to having creation completely immersed in their bodily fluids. I will miss you Sylvester.

<http://enlightenedcatholicism-colkoch.blogspot.com>

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I think it's always both.

Submitted by [AnnieO](#) on February 4, 2009 - 7:37pm.

I think it's always both. Although I can't quote the V2 documents off-hand, my guess would be that that interaction is suggested, if not recommended, as the appropriate strategy for theological work.

On the Wrong Side of History

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on February 12, 2009 - 6:00am. --- [Spirituality & Culture](#)

One of the more shocking events of my lifetime that I witnessed on the television (with my daughter Monica) was the arrival of Pope John Paul II in Central America, (we as a family made a significant contribution to fund the Pope's coming to Iowa) when the priest, poet, politician Ernesto Cardenal genuflected to greet the Pope and kiss his ring, only to be slapped in his face by the Pope as witness to the Pope's vitriole for Cardenal's political activism in particular and Liberation Theology in general.

Ernesto Cardenal wrote the epic poem "Cosmic Canticle" which The Bookwatch calls "more...than another poet's collection of singular verse: Cardenal spent over thirty years producing this epic, which relates Latin American history to the evolution of human understanding. [These] cantos are provocative creations." The NCR wrote, "Like Pablo Neruda, Cardenal combines politics and poetry while speaking forthrightly about the history of exploitation in the Americas".

The shock of the Pope's gesture carried through in follow-up appointments of bishops and cardinals who shared his animus for Liberation Theology in particular and against the Vatican II call for liberation beyond Tridentine theology/ ecclesiology. The continuing and nasty worldwide split in Roman Catholicism between the recidivist minded hierarchy and the reform-minded is the bitter fruit of Pope John Paul's choosing the wrong side of history, what Arthur Jones calls the "Roman Imposition...the Wojtyla-Ratzinger continuum" (NCR September 9, 2005, pg 7).

Pope Benedict surely seems to be in the "continuum" mode of "slapping faces". His papacy occasioned the removal of Father Thomas Reese, S.J. from his post as Editor of the Jesuit Magazine, AMERICA; the Pope's anti-evolution position in favor of "intelligent design" brought about the removal of Father George Coyne, S.J., chief astronomer after 28 years heading up the Vatican Observatory;

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-401950/Pope-sacks-astronomer-evolution-debate.html> the recent lifting of the excommunication of the four Swiss bishops is a slap in the face to Pope John Paul II who had excommunicated them.

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0900355.htm>

What strange and disconcerting signals are coming from the Vatican. This Pope seems in the least to be diffident toward Vatican II intentions which sought to uplift the Church and the world from their destructive and self-imposed fixations in old world theories that oppose modern science, social sensitivity, and common sense (sensus fidelium).

[◀ Learning to Pray Cultic vs. Universal Priesthood ▶](#)

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Cultic vs. Universal Priesthood

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on January 15, 2009 - 11:37am. --- [Spirituality & Culture](#)

Like all cults, patriarchal priesthood (clerical) has been rationalized on and evolved on a myopic worldview that self-affirms and self-sustains its own preferred myopia. The problem for patriarchal cult is that its theories of worldview and priestly service are narrowly elitist and misinformed.

Patriarchal culture has hyper inflated its isolationist priesthood in such a way that its inner instincts are blind to nature and the larger world to which it owes first obligation. Like other hyper-inflated and misinformed theories, cultic priesthood is also destined to implode — as is happening at the present time.

Male priesthood (ministry) needs to break out of the eggshell of its idiosyncratic worldview, open itself to the evolutionary worldview, and recover what priestly credibility it can by recognizing its undivided allegiance to the Sacrament of Natural Order and universal priesthood in service of holistic nature and global people.

[◀ On the Wrong Side of History Exit To Entrance ▶](#)

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Sylvester, Your comments are

Submitted by [Little Bear](#) on January 28, 2009 - 11:22pm.

Sylvester, Your comments are quite accurate, I'm afraid. A dear friend and colleague of mine, while on vacation during the Christmas break visiting kids and grandchildren, heard a young priest give a homily on topic concerning the slippery road to Hell many Catholics were on. This was because so many of them had voted for (now President) Obama. Although this was during the Christmas season, this priest ranted on and on about this topic. He did not care a pin that folks got up during his homily and left---"They are committing grievous sins, who will not even listen to the voice of Church Authority" he stated to the rest of the congregation---as these people walked out.

My friend (who did not walk out) decided to talk to the young priest after the Liturgy. He asked the priest why he was so sure as to conclude that all these folks were in Satan's hot grasp. The priest arrogantly responded that in their training, priests have studied theology and know what God wants. And the people, like my friend, need to listen and obey their priests who have had the education and training in this area. My friend, who has a doctorate in theology (and teaches it), and a masters in spirituality and pastoral counseling--just said, "Thank you, Father, for your time" and walked away. No use writing to the priest's bishop---the bishop had been one who had said the very same things all during the presidential debates and at election time.

The ordained priesthood is not attracting the number of candidates that it has in the past. And it is imploding upon itself. When the dust settles from the clerical implosion---only the universal priesthood will be left.

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Little Bear, that is so

Submitted by Sylvester L. Steffen on February 4, 2009 - 6:05pm.

Little Bear, that is so incredibly sad and tragic for so many, many reasons. Thank you for sharing.

“Why dredge up now the

Submitted by Sylvester L. Steffen on January 24, 2009 - 5:12am.

“Why dredge up now the Counter-Reformation history of the Catholic Church? Because it seems very clear that lines are now drawn for a new cultural war within Roman Catholicism between the ecclesiologies of Vatican I and Vatican II. That this is true, is documented in a new book “Evolving Visions of the Priesthood” by Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, Liturgical Press, ISBN 0814628052, reviewed by Katarina Schuth in AMERICA, A Jesuit Magazine, Vol. 190 No 4, Whole No. 4639, February 9, 2004, Pp 26-27.

“Reviewer Schuth quotes Jesuit John A. Coleman to the effect “that seminaries have the responsibility to provide proper theological formation in order to prevent future priests from adopting a pre-Vatican II posture: rigid, clerical and close-minded.” The disjunction between younger priests and older priests clearly exists, and it is persistent, destructive and unacceptable.

The reviewer quotes the book as to the contrasting views of younger priests for older priests and of older priests for younger priests: “Younger priests called the older priests liberals, leftist fringe, secularized, anti-establishment, a ‘lost generation,’ and priests with a social work model.” “Older priests referred to the young men as inflexible, divisive, liturgically conservative, institutional, hierarchical, and believers in cultic priesthood.”

“The catholic priesthood is already in crisis and a new clerical war within the church between conflicting ecclesiologies can only deepen the crises, aggravate lay distrust and render the priesthood more irrelevant than it already is. The crisis caused by the seventeenth century Counter-Reformation history of Roman Catholicism is a cautionary tale that young priests need to understand and take seriously.

This threatening new war, like the old, roots in conflicting worldviews. Vatican II, in view of modern evolutionary consciousness, rightly calls for new theological analysis and synthesis that get beyond the dead and destructive absolutisms of theological centrism and staticism.

From the **AFTERWORD, "RELIGION & CIVILITY, the Primacy of Conscience"**

<http://www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail~bookid~16722.aspx>

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I think a radical

Submitted by [newhope](#) on January 23, 2009 - 1:20am.

I think a radical reinterpretation of the priesthood is needed, but this posting is gobbledygook.

Please enlighten us on what

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on January 23, 2009 - 7:46pm.

Please enlighten us on what "radical reinterpretation" is needed. I'm eager to be educated. Thank you.

Please define and describe

Submitted by [AnnieO](#) on January 23, 2009 - 12:46pm.

Please define and describe what you mean by "gobbledygook." You haven't given us much to think with herein.

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Religion is a Green Apple

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on November 7, 2008 - 1:59am. --- [Ecological Sustainability](#)

The Apple of Eden is a metaphor for divine Prevision and Provision. Prevision is divine anticipation of need and Provision supplies for the need. The Wisdom of Prevision and Provision is tasted in nature's largesse.

The premature consumption of green nature is the frustration of Wisdom, what is the "original" and present sin of consumerist consumption. Dominion theology and patriarchal politics are the religion and culture of idolatrous self-obsession, of greed, of ignorance and arrogance.

Perhaps, in spite of humankind's consumptive capitalism, enough green fruit has yet escaped consumption and can yet ripen. Ripeness is a matter of cultural "maturity" and understanding of "reality". Only if the green fruit is respectfully secured so it can ripen can humankind experience the sweetness of divine Prevision and Provision.

Mature consciousness, the prizing of nature's fruitfulness, lets us experience Eucharist and the capacity of human maturing beyond compulsive consumption which doesn't know how to wait for the fruit to ripen. God's warning at the Garden Gate is still, "Don't eat the Green Apples!"

See free book download "**GREEN RELIGION, Inside the Cultural Spectrum**" at www.evolution101.org

« [WASTING NATURE: A Serious Response Creation Care](#) »

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RELIGION is a Reality to the

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on December 9, 2008 - 4:37am.

RELIGION is a Reality to the extent that conscience prevails in consciousness: as such, Religion is a work-in-progress together with evolving consciousness/ conscience — what is “GREEN Religion Inside the Cultural Spectrum”.

PREVISION **PROVISION**

"Prevision and Provision are what religious sensitivity, adulthood is about.

Joseph of Egypt exemplifies prevision and provision. As the Eucharistic archetype, he represents the universal priest.

"The adult authority figure knows that planning and provisioning are his/ her responsibilities. Anticipating, planning and providing are moral acts — what intelligence and maturity do, what parents, nature, God, do.

"Successful living involves intentional symbiosis, intelligent designs and insightful maturity; this is true for individuals, families, communities, institutions, nations, and Churches.

"The failing of Church and priesthood to anticipate and provide for the needs of Sacramental Eucharist speaks volumes as to failed intelligence, failed faith and failed maturity.

"Religion is organic. Religion is a green apple; it renews seasonally; it takes a lifetime, a season to ripen, to grow from childhood into adulthood, to mindfulness and fullness in wisdom, age, and grace.

"Religion does not exist outside real-world relationships. Religion is social and personal. Religion is discerned in conscionable concern and in the adult caring of people for each other. Religion is about service, not about imposing on others. Religion is cultured altruistic sensitivity.

"The CONSCIOUS LIGHT TRILOGY is about personal religion and adulthood; about nature and light; about living intentionally inside the cultural spectrum and provisioning Eucharist/ Grain.

<http://www.evolution101.org/Manuscript%20GREEN%20RELIGION.pdf>

Book back cover at page 213

WASTING NATURE: A Serious Response

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on February 2, 2009 - 1:10pm. --- [Ecological Sustainability](#)

The gravity of cultural implosion globally happening isn't yet appreciated for the lasting impact it will have, for years, even centuries. Societal abuses bringing on implosion have been going on for centuries; but in the twentieth century they amplified in unprecedented and unsustainable ways.

Nature has been changed in lasting and profound ways, in some ways, irreversibly. It is quite sure that the “good life” of the last fifty years will not repeat. In some ways, that is good, and in others, bad.

It's time to change THINKING and HABITS or the “bad” will get much worse.

Globally, humanity is confronted with multi-faceted collapses of ecologies, economies, and institutions, whether business, religious, political or financial. Before these social calamities can be reversed, mitigated, societies need to understand more “organically” the moral failures that set the global stage for massive abuses and collapses of nature.

When an honest assessment is made and causes are understood and acknowledged, there is hope that moral correctives can be put in place and remedies applied to reverse wrongdoing and restore ecologies, economies, future wellbeing.

The globally perilous state of cultural affairs has been troubling me since more than fifty years. I have come to believe that institutionally, religious/ civil culture (especially in the industrial Western world and its multi-national corporations) has been compounding illusion upon illusion by mistakenly hyping the place and privilege of humankind in the order of nature. Even now, religious culture presumes a self-serving faith that is radically disconnected from the order of nature from which all organic life arises and depends.

The worldview yet advanced in religious/ civil culture, and which justifies arrogance and self-aggrandizement, is mythical—without grounding in reality. The static-centric worldview that dates back two millennia is an illusory basis for cultural reliance. It is my sense that unless and until we get off the fraudulent worldview (theology) of staticism and centrism, and replace it (them) with a worldview consciousness/ theology of evolving reality, we will continue to deceive ourselves, behave tragically, waste nature and each other.

Universal problems scream for universal answers, answers that are informed in common natural processes and human dependence on them. Institutions that are beholden to the presumptions of the static-centric worldview are incapable of promoting a worldview that exposes the lies of their presumptions. It takes outsider vision, institutionally independent, that is honest with connections of causes and consequences, to see the problem and to propose workable solutions.

It's time to change THINKING and HABITS or the “bad” will get much worse.

For more than five decades, my lifetime commitment has been to inform myself in the cultural illusions of the static-centric worldview (SWV) and the problems associated with them, and to develop a communal strategy to advance universal awareness of the evolutionary worldview (EWV) and the universal moral implications of it.

In this time I've been working to develop an interdisciplinary approach to the problem and toward a universal sense of moral imperatives dictated by the essential interdependency of all life, and the dependency of all life on organic linkages in ecosystems defined by geography, biology and evolution.

The advances of evolutionary science and the broad cultural knowledge of science that prevails, make it morally inexcusable for institutions to rely on presumptions that can't be justified (in reality) to common, scientific awareness. Religious faith is misinformed if it has no awareness of evolution's imperatives. Correcting the lack of religious awareness of evolution seems on its face to be the priority beginning for culture, for religion. Any meaningful change in society toward greater responsibility and moral conduct has to be based on solid facts of relationships in nature and all life in it.

For purposes of enabling personal and social growth into moral and practical understandings of connections in the world of organic/ religious evolution, I have developed and put online a syllabus of "Joined Faith/Evolution Study" that exposes the connections of cultural/ religious illusion to the static-centric worldview, and that points the way to implementing a change of worldview consciousness and greater moral appreciation for nature and human connections in nature and all other life.

It's time to change THINKING and HABITS or the "bad" will get much worse.

New thinking and new behaving are first steps to self-healing and healing of nature. By studying the Faith/Evolution syllabus we may experience immediate encouragement and greater self-esteem because when we try to find harmony with nature, nature gives back in kind.

Why not begin a study group in your church, in your community? Why not at least begin now to move your own personal life toward living more sensitively and sustainably with nature?

Excuse me if I repeat myself, but the daily news about economic/ ecologic failures and scrambling efforts to come up with solutions press me to do what I can to re-focus on root issues/ problems that are linked and that demand answers. Religion is part of the problem and has to be involved in the solution. Religion needs change.

Do what you can to spread the word! Thank you.
Sylvester L. Steffen

[◀ Ecological Stewardship Religion is a Green Apple ▶](#)

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Sylvester, I look forward

Submitted by [James E. Duane](#) on February 14, 2009 - 9:39pm.

Sylvester,

I look forward with great anticipation, to the Thomastic rebuttal of such a wonderful explanation of "WHAT HAPPENED!" There's no doubt in my mind that should God ever need an explanation of ANYTHING, he'll read you! Bless you! James Edward

THE PROBLEM WITH ISMS:

Submitted by [Sylvester L. Steffen](#) on February 11, 2009 - 11:42am.

THE PROBLEM WITH ISMS: "Biblicism" and "scientism", while adversary to each other have like theories. http://www.luthersem.edu/word&world/current_issues.asp "Reading the Bible after Darwin", MARK A. THRONTVEIT and ALAN G. PADGETT: "The historical and scientific accuracy of the biblical witness has become increasingly difficult to maintain in light of the Darwinian revolution. A positive result has been a return to a proper theological reading of Scripture, not as our primary source of technical information but of insight into God's means of dealing with us and God's creation"

"Biblicism" is the belief that the bible can answer any question; "scientism" invests the same faith in science. These opposing isms get in the way of religion and science finding

reconciliation. To escape the problem and frustration of these isms, we need to know about the nature of isms in general.

Isms are ideologies promoted by group-think. Isms involve believers who publicly act on group conviction. Isms come into existence quite in the same way. Group experience and thinking arrive at assumptions as to the way things are, in religion, politics, business, whatever... From common assumptions, groups come to presumptions, and from presumptions they come to theories, and from theories they come to dogmas.

If and when the underlying assumptions are disproved, isms fail, and when their assumptions fail so do theories and dogmas. Examples of failed dogmas (isms) are imperialism, fascism, communism, and presently corporate capitalism (at least the U.S. version). Religions are not immune from failure when their faith assumptions lose meaning and credibility.

Humankind globally has assumed that natural ecologies, environments, can stand any kind of abuse humans give them. Religiously, politically, corporately, global cultures have promoted theories (dogmas) that are disrespectful, careless and mindless in allowing the exploitation of nature. Their common theories and dogmas toward nature are proven wrong, which now requires a global change and reassessment of beliefs and practices respecting personal/social relationships with nature.

Religions must change; politics must change; business must change; we must change. Humankind has to chart a new course, and it begins with understanding how "we belong to nature", not on the assumption that "nature belongs to us".

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“EXCELLENCE”, a Reflection

What is faith's universal standard? On this religions might find some agreement: that altruistic, faithful living **EXPECTS EXCELLENCE, EXEMPLIFIES EXCELLENCE.**

By this standard we acknowledge faith as a process that relies on reason, for excellence cannot be pursued, much less achieved, if one does not in her/ his lifetime pursue that by which excellence can be acquired and right living authenticated.

Excellence supposes conscience; conscience supposes knowledge (cum scientia); and knowledge is lifetime pursuing, learning, and evolving. It begins not just with openness to light but with the owning of light.

Excellence is seeing and doing what universal experience reveals to conscience. This, it seems to me, is what universal, authentic religion is about, what Jesus exemplified and taught in his lifetime. In imitation of Jesus, EXCELLENCE is what we ought to do.

V. “Teaching Genesis to Teenagers”

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What Are We Telling the Kids? Teaching Genesis to Teenagers

PAUL E. NYNAS

QUESTIONS AND MORE QUESTIONS

If God created the world, then who created God? Why did God put the forbidden tree in the garden in the first place? Whom did Cain and Abel marry? How could the world have been created in seven days when my teacher says it took millions of years? How did Noah get all the animals of the world on one boat?

This is just a short list of many questions that I have received while teaching confirmation classes about the book of Genesis. If you have been in the trenches walking alongside young people as they journey through confirmation, I am sure you have heard these questions too. The question is, How do we faithfully answer these important questions in light of our faith and in light of our modern scientific understanding of creation?

Every week during confirmation instruction at the church I serve we have something called the “Question of the Week.” Our students gather for a large group teaching session one week and then reflect on this teaching in small groups the next week. During that small group time, if they have big questions, things that really make them wonder, things that they cannot answer on their own—about anything—they are invited to write them down and turn them in. During the next

We cannot pass on the faith to the next generation without dealing honestly and authentically with their real questions—including questions about the relation between faith and science, Genesis and Darwin. Risks are involved, but not to engage such matters is the greater risk.

class we take some time to wonder with the students about their questions. Every year, without fail, the majority of questions we receive concern the Genesis creation stories. Young people want to know how they can reconcile the God of creation found in our apostolic confession and biblical witness with all that they are learning about the formation of the world in their science classes. Is there room for evolution and Darwin in the claims of our faith?

ANSWERS AND MORE ANSWERS

I used to think that to be a good pastor to young people I had to have a neatly packaged, easily understandable answer to all their questions. But life is not that black-and-white. There are some questions that just cannot be answered in a single paragraph or with a clever illustration. Not only that, how we approach and answer students' questions is highly important to their faith, because underneath their questions are more questions—questions about how faith in Christ and the witness of Scripture can fit into their life and their view of the world. There is a lot at stake when we answer students' questions.

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a single paragraph or with a clever illustration*

Consider Mark. I met Mark on a Tuesday afternoon. He had called me up after attending one of our Sunday services for the first time, and he said he had a lot of questions he just needed to talk to a pastor about. He wasn't kidding. Mark is twenty-six years old, recently engaged to a young woman who wants to go to church, and until last Sunday had not been back to church since he was confirmed in the ninth grade. His fiancée's insistence that church was important to their married life had set him into a tailspin.

Mark came into my office, a spiral-bound notebook in hand. He was kind of nervous, but he thanked me for meeting with him. Before I could even begin with a few get-to-know-you questions, he jumped right in, opened up his notebook, which was filled front to back with questions and thoughts about life and God, and began to ask me what I thought about all he had been wondering about.

Guess what his questions were about? He wanted to know how he could "fit" the claims of Scripture into what he had experienced and learned about the world. When Genesis spoke about the world being created in seven days, does it mean seven literal twenty-four-hour days? Where does evolution fit into faith?

So, I asked Mark more about his questions. Where did they come from? What was the source of what he believed the church taught about his questions? When he was in the eighth grade, he attended a Lutheran church in town. He was a smart kid with a lot of questions. His pastor was teaching about the First Article of the Creed and creation. Mark wanted to know how this fit into what he was learning about

evolution at school, so he asked his pastor. His pastor told him God said the world was created in seven days and he just had to believe. Mark checked out. He was done with the church. Christianity did not make sense to him. In his eighth-grade mind the church was irrelevant to what he was learning about the origin and meaning of life. He would never have come back were it not for his fiancée.

There is a lot at stake when we answer students' questions.

RISKY BUSINESS

At Hope Lutheran Church we write our own confirmation curriculum. I cannot say that I have read or reviewed every other curriculum available, but I always have an eye out for new stuff. When it comes to teaching about creation and Genesis stories, I have to say I have been generally disappointed. Many teach about creation, that God is our creator, that he is our "Father" and that he created the world and all that exists. Most then spend most of their time focusing on the theological implications of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed or the creation story. For example, if God is our creator and we are created in God's image, what does it mean about how we treat each other and our world? Most do a good job of this. Great stuff to think about and reflect upon. However, rarely do I find a curriculum that addresses how the Genesis stories relate to what students are learning about science, Darwin, and evolution. When we fail to be open to these questions we fail to be relevant to what teens are learning and thinking about.

My hunch is that most avoid teaching or thinking about this because of the possible political or parental feedback they may receive. I have parents that believe that when Genesis says that the earth was created in six days and the on the seventh day God rested it means seven literal twenty-four-hour days, and that the world we live in is only a few thousand years old. In their worldview the public school science teacher is the enemy or at least seriously misinformed or deceived. For them, anything less than a strict, literal interpretation of the creation stories refutes the truth of Scripture.

On the other hand, I have many parents who have just as many questions as the students I serve. They want to know how the claims of science can be reconciled with the claims of faith.

This is certainly a hot-button issue. After all, in many school districts, the debate continues about whether or not intelligent design (the idea that there is a Designer that has planned and made the universe and everything in it) is a credible theory to be included in students' science textbooks.*

To begin to wonder aloud with young people about the claims of science and Scripture when it comes to creation can be risky. It would be easier to play it safe, to

*Editor's note: The debate continues despite the clear rejection of such teaching as unconstitutional by Judge John E. Jones, an ELCA Lutheran, in *Kitzmiller et al. v. Dover Area School District* in 2005. For a thoroughly readable account of the issues and the trial, see Edward Humes, *Monkey Girl: Evolution, Education, Religion, and the Battle for America's Soul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

focus on the larger theological claims, and hope to brush over or ignore the more difficult questions of how science and religion can interact. But if we do, we fail to be relevant to the real questions our young people have, young people to whom we have made promises to pass on our faith.

*when we set up science and faith as oppositional forces,
both vying for the allegiance of young hearts and minds,
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Two years ago, I attended a cousin's wedding in Denver, Colorado. While I was there I had the opportunity to engage in a faith conversation with a younger cousin of mine. My cousin is an ambitious, intelligent, responsible young man who had recently been married. I knew, through the family grapevine, that he had abandoned his faith and claimed to be an atheist. His wife grew up in a home with a vocal atheist father. I had not seen my cousin since I was in college. As we sat across the dinner table both of them looked at me as somewhat of an oddity.

My cousin began the conversation, "So, you are a pastor, huh?"

"Yes, I am," I replied.

"Well, I don't believe there is a God or that people should force their religions on anyone else," he jumped right in there. Great way to start a peaceful conversation, I thought.

I wanted to unload on him and tell him how foolish he was to abandon his family's faith, and argue with him about the bold truth of the gospel. However, I relaxed my defenses and asked him how he came to that discovery in his life.

He was amazed that I wanted to hear his story. He said it all began in junior high school, in confirmation, when his friend was challenging his pastor about the claims of the Bible over against the claims of evolution and science. The pastor told him that his questions were unimportant and that he simply had to make a choice, either his textbooks were telling the truth or the Bible was. My cousin made his choice.

These questions are important. When we set up science and faith as oppositional forces, both vying for the allegiance of young hearts and minds, more often than not I believe we will lose. At Hope, we teach young people that science and faith do not contradict but in fact can complement one another, and furthermore that science can be an amazing way to explore the mysteries of God and God's creation.

CONTEXTUALIZE IT

Confirmation students learn about creation at two different points in their three-year experience at Hope; once in seventh and eighth grade when they study

the book of Genesis as part of a biblical overview, and once in ninth grade when they study the First Article of the Apostles' Creed.

When we teach the biblical stories we involve the students in a dramatic, interactive, multisensory retelling of the creation story of Gen 1. We lower the lights, project images of the earth and universe on a large screen, as God speaks and creates the various parts of creation. We try to bring the biblical narrative to life as best we can so the students cannot ignore it.

After we have done this, we spend some time reflecting on what this all means for how we understand ourselves, how we understand the nature of God, and how we understand and treat each other and the world we live in. Rather than just telling the students what they should think, we engage them with open-ended questions and ask them to connect the dots and wrestle with the implications and mysteries of the creation story.

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By this time, the brains are swirling with more questions. How does this all fit in with evolution? How can the world be created in seven days? This is where Rob and John come in. Rob and John are both members of our congregation who also happen to be middle-school science teachers, the same teachers from whom the majority of our confirmation students are learning about Darwin and evolution. Rob and John spend time with our students explaining how they fit the claims of Scripture together with what they know about the world as scientists. They explain that, for them and for many Christians, science and the Bible do not contradict but simply help us see different realities about our world and about God. For one to be true doesn't mean that the other needs to be false, but in fact both can be true in different ways at the same time. We teach them that science and faith can complement each other, each giving us a fuller, deeper, richer understanding of the world we live in, the world that God created.

Often, in confirmation classes, it is a complicated task to engage the hearts and minds of our students. They face a myriad of distractions, from the person of the opposite sex sitting in the next row to what their friend is doing at the moment, and how to answer their latest text message. But when we talk about science and creation, their eyes are alert, they sit up in their chairs, and they are eager to hear what their teachers and their pastors have to say. It is clearly something that most young people are thinking about.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENTS

Faithfully stewarding the rich and life-giving claims of faith to the next generation is certainly an important task of the church. It is often messy, unpredictable, and full of challenging ideas, behaviors, and questions. But I wouldn't trade the privilege of walking alongside our young people for anything. For all our deeper understanding, complex thought, and intelligent theological reflection, if we fail to pass on our beliefs to the next generation, to be good stewards of the knowledge that God has collectively given us, we have failed. The task of intelligently and respectfully engaging the hearts and minds of young people is at the forefront of our commission from Jesus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19–20).

From my perspective as a parish pastor, I offer the following encouragements:

Honor questions

It is important that we create space for young people not only to ask questions, but to explore them as well. I have learned over and over again that when a young person asks a question the best response is to ask them more questions. Find out what they really are thinking, where their question comes from, and why they are asking. Encourage them to wrestle with the question themselves. The temptation is simply to give them a neatly packaged, concise answer. When it comes to complex issues, like how to reconcile science and faith, there are no such easy answers. Invite and welcome students to think about the mystery of God. Think about how much study, thought, reflection, and prayer it has taken you to arrive at the conclusions you have. Our job is not to regurgitate our theological education on young people but to walk alongside them in their journey of faith discovery.

This is not a new or particularly modern idea. Even Jesus spent three years telling stories, explaining ideas, praying and wondering with twelve young men before he sent them into the world. When he was asked a complex question himself, Jesus often spoke in parables, inviting the questioner into deeper, more thoughtful reflection.

Be authentic

Unless we demonstrate to young people that we are actually concerned about who they are and the realities they live in, they are not going to be concerned about the things that we care about. I do not believe that in order to be authentic to young people we need to dress like them, act like them, or even be closer in age to them; however, we do need to be aware of and respect their experiences and their generation's particularities.

We cannot assume that we know everything they need to know, that all teenagers are the same, or that their experience of adolescence was the same as ours.

Young people live a complex, media-driven, consumer-oriented society. We need to be able to navigate their realities in order to engage their faith. At Hope we are working on creating a blog site for our young people where they can ask questions and have discussions about what they are learning at church. Students are invited to “facebook” and “text message” us questions about what they are learning and thinking about. Ultimately, for a young person, authenticity has to do with showing a genuine interest in and respect for who they are, what they think about, and what they believe.

Take risks

If we truly engage the lives and questions of young people we will need to take risks—risks that we might offend someone, risks that we will have to talk about real-life issues that are not always politically or socially favorable. Young people do not always need answers to all their questions (just as we don’t have answers to all our questions), but they do need adults of faith who are willing to enter into the conversation with them. Teaching about the complex relationship between faith and science may come with the risk that you might offend some parents, but this is at the heart of students’ thoughts, culture, and questions. We need to take the risk of meeting young people where they are and exploring with them topics of faith and life that they are wondering about. Not to engage their questions, hearts, and minds in meaningful and intelligent ways is the greater risk. ⊕

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And The Story Goes on

It isn't for us to know "the rest of the story". But for now, we are the story. The past is invested in us, and the future depends from us and our investments from the past. The future is destined in part by what we do in the present.

Times seem always to be troubled. Some times are more troubled than others. Our times are particularly troubled. One doesn't have to look far to see that this is true. The divisions are wide; the chasms needing to be bridged are deep. The question: how? for one side to get to the other? Even the attempt of the Pope to reconcile the recalcitrant bishops in the Church is ridiculed by people on opposite sides of the divide. The dissident Swiss bishops are agreeable to be received back in the Church but apparently on their terms. And then, there's the servant priest Roy Bourgeois, MM, whose sin as far as the Church is concerned is his commitment to the universality of the priesthood, only to be excommunicated for his good intentions and efforts on behalf of the work of the Cosmic Christ. Then, there is the Church laity, still enthralled by the ancient imperial expectation to obey, praise, pray and pay.

The Church is in our hands today, in our children's tomorrow. Nature does not stand still. She accepts all and presses the causes and sense of intentional symbiosis. If we learn the lessons of nature, the graced message of trustful relationships, we will, in spite of confusion and frustration, become what we are meant to become, agents of a better future and doers of the work of love.

History moves on, recording the successes and failures of symbiotic efforts. Success comes with vision of staying on the right side of history, while failures come with lingering too long on the wrong side of history. Our Church hierarchy seems yet to insist on lingering too long on the wrong side of history. The tidal wave of the People Church must continue to uplift and carry all forward, willingly or unwillingly, into the future that will not be stopped, the good-will future of symbiotic purpose, the work of love.

The Personal Toll

People are sensitive to reality in very different ways. Such sensitivity is both a joy and a burden. So it seems to me it was for our daughter Monica. She always was a spiritly and totally alert person. She excelled in everything she did. She was challenging company, also to her five sibling sisters, who revered her but also, sometimes, responded to her...well..."restively?"

Monica was explorative, sometimes dangerously so. Though we as parent were at times fearful, we were always trusting. She spent a generous number of years completing her baccalaureate degree at Iowa State University, which in fact included many "majors" and no "minors". Though she had a declared major (Architectural Design) it is questionable from the record that it was her major interest or even focus. She was the better person because of her widely diversified interests.

After graduating she did design work at Boone, Iowa, for a contractor for several years, but for whatever inspiration, decided, with their eager approval, to come and stay with her aging parents, and to seek work locally. Most of her years were spent with a local start-up business (of former school friends) in Landscaping.

After the onset of disablement from a brain tumor, she worked for a local Frame Shop, which gave her opportunity to use her fine arts skills. The walls of our home are graced with artful pieces of her doing.

These were very special years she spent with us, particularly because of her medical situation and difficult prognosis. After surgical removal of the brain tumor (which recurred) she recovered well enough to continue working at the Frame Shop for a couple years. From the time of her surgery to the time of her death, we had four really close years together.

Politically, philosophically and religiously, we three became very much alike. Watching TV nightly news was something of “show time” for we talked back to the TV and at people who showed such bad judgment in the choices they were making and that affected nature and all humanity. The desperate and wrong direction of our country and the world was depressing for us to watch, and for Monica especially who seemed to take it all so very personally.

Constant exposure to inexplicable dumbness and non-chalance by people in high places toward really important eco-social issues, and cavalier wasting of life and wealth, really wears on a person over time. Monica troubled through the painful times with us, and spoke so categorically of her chagrin, even as she continued to do computer work for me in proofing my writing and doing her art, itself a commentary of obvious mixed emotions. (See the book covers of PRIMARY SCRIPTURE, QUANTUM RELIGION, RELIGION & CIVILITY, and THE POSSIBLE JOURNEY”). She remains for me a powerful inspiration in keeping me focused on writing.

What internal physiological impact the conflicted reality of the times had on her cannot be known, but it is medically known, and I know from personal experience, that constant exposure to persistent stressors has epigenetic consequence, “tags” that trigger disease like gastro-intestinal disorders and osteoarthritis. That Monica came down with her brain tumor at the same time as the onset of my diseases may be just coincidental, but there may be more to it than that.

Modern genetic science has discovered that persisting stressors function epigenetically, that is, like baggage loading down pertinent genes and exposing them to mutations, malfunction and causal roles in disease, including cancer. It is my personal sense that the milieu of excessive human, political folly of the times, and the radical degradation of nature aggravated by it, wore exceptionally heavily on her and that her brain tumor was in the least aggravated by epigenetic tagging of persisting psychological stressors.

Through it all she radiated vivacity, smiling to the very end.

Monica, keep smiling over the troubled world. Thank you. I’m eternally grateful for what you have done and are doing—the work of love, the work of the Cosmic Christ. Keep close to your sisters, and especially, to your nieces and nephews. Love. Dad, and Mom.