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TOWARD A GLOBAL SPIRITUALITY

by Patricia M. Mische

For its 25th anniversary year Global Education Associates is pleased to reprint a new, revised edition of "Toward a Global Spirituality" by GEA co-founder and president Patricia Mische. Originally published in *Spirituality and World Order*, No. 16 of *The Whole Earth Papers* series, in 1982, the article was reissued for GEA's tenth and fifteenth anniversaries and has continued to be one of GEA's most requested reprints. Readers seem to feel -- and we agree -- that its relevance and power have only increased with time.

We feel this is true of GEA's work, too. If this is your first encounter with Global Education Associates, you'll be interested to know that the philosophy expressed in "Toward a Global Spirituality" underlies GEA's work for a more peaceful, just and ecologically secure world. The transnational, multi-cultural, interdisciplinary GEA network is in over 90 countries worldwide. On the back cover you'll find a brief description of GEA; the facing page and inside back cover list some of our publications and audiovisual resources. We invite you to send for other GEA materials, and to join with us in the important work of, in Patricia Mische's words, "planting seeds for a new Genesis."

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Our spiritual journey—our search in life for God—must be worked out now in a global context in the midst of global crises and global community. Our spirituality must be a global spirituality.

TOWARD A GLOBAL

At this point in human history there is no more important area for exploration and development than global spirituality. For we have new powers over life and death never imagined by our ancestors. We can create new life forms in test tubes. We can alter the DNA — the genetic coding that has built up through eons of natural selection. We can alter Earth's climate through deforestation and the overproduction of ozone-depleting and green-house gases. We can cause the extinction of thousands of plant and animal species. We can reduce millions of human beings to marginal lives of poverty, hunger, and alienation through inhumane economic systems and unjust social systems. When they rebel we can annihilate them with weapons of local or mass destruction that continue to be produced, stockpiled and traded around the Earth. Moreover, we can by our actions in the present inflict untold pain and death on those yet to be born many generations hence.

We have become as gods with new powers to create and destroy life. But we have not yet developed with these new powers the spiritual, mental, and moral tools to even think about what we are doing, much less the wisdom and commitment to use our new powers in ways that preserve human life and the integrity of creation. Nor have we yet developed systems at the global level to adequately deal with the global reach of these new powers and assure our common well being. There has been a tragic lag in our development — a lag that is both spiritual and systemic.

We are in a new and dangerous phase in human evolution and the Earth's evolution. Our human activities now will have dramatic consequences for the further stages of the evolution of the planet. A new maturity is demanded of us. We must become wiser than we have ever been before, for the world we are entering cannot be understood or addressed adequately with past visions, analyses, and systems. We must become more fully conscious and holistically spiritual than ever before, awakening and attuning ourselves to the sacred presence in all life and bowing to the inner workings of the Spirit in the Earth's processes —lest we destroy our own lifeline out of ignorance, unawareness, or arrogance.

We must become spiritually strong enough to go through psychic death — dying to old structures and worldviews that divide us and destroy, erode, or subvert our humanness and unitiveness. And we must be spiritu-



SPIRITUALITY

BY PATRICIA MISCHE

Patricia Mische, co-founder and President of Global Education Associates, has authored numerous works, including *Star Wars and the State of Our Souls* and, with Gerald Mische, *Toward a Human World Order*.

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ally young and creative enough to dream new dreams, conceive new myths, birth new social systems, and nurture an expanded sense of identity and community.

Spirituality as the term is used here is not to be equated with pious practices and rituals, whether genuflecting, bowing, sitting in the lotus position, lighting vigil lights, or visiting shrines. Such practices have value when they symbolize, evoke, or express a deep, inner life of the spirit. But they can become hollow and empty when their deeper signification is forgotten or abandoned and when they are used instead to escape from the challenges of life, including the call to an authentic spirituality.

Authentic spirituality awakens and calls us to conscious attunement to the sacred source of life. At the deepest part of every and all being is the sacred. Spirituality is the process of ordering our life in intimate communion with this sacred center and source.

Spirituality is not static. It is not a finished state or final place of arrival. Rather spirituality is a process. It is a sacred journey.

It is a sacred journey we each are called to make. In a certain sense we each make this journey alone. No one else can make it for us. But in another sense we make this journey together, in communion with others. The whole planet with all its life forms and billions of people — indeed the whole cosmos — is on a collective journey. This is true in a physical sense as we hurl together through space on one Earth. This is also true in a spiritual sense. There is a sacred source at our collective center from which all our separate journeys originate and in which we all find life and direction.

There is a flow between this collective journey and our personal journeys. They cannot be separated. We are all part of an ongoing cosmogenesis. The whole cosmos is in a process of Becoming. Earth is in a process of Becoming. So are all Earth dwellers: Trees, water, flowers, crickets, hummingbirds, humans—we are all Becoming. We are all developing worlds within a larger developing world within a developing universe.

A Global Age

For this reason, true spirituality — the authentic religious journey — can never be an escape from life's problems. God, the sacred center at the source of all authentic spiritual journeys, must be met in the midst of life, not in escape from life. Today we live in a global

age — an age of planetary exploration and communications and new, global interdependencies. Our spiritual journey — our search for life in God — must be undertaken now in a global as well as local context, in the midst of global crises and an emerging global community. Our spirituality must be a global spirituality.

Strength/Stress in A Global Age

The failure to resolve many of our global problems is not due primarily to a lack of knowledge that we have critical problems. Even young children can name many of the problems. Nor is it due to a lack of human, technological, or material resources; these capacities are available now if we have the will to employ them. Nor is the failure only to a lack of political will, although that is surely a factor. Even deeper than a lack of political will, and contributing to it, is a sense of powerlessness that many people feel in the face of problems that are global in scale and complexity.

This sense of powerlessness is related to a lack in both inner, spiritual strengths, and outer institutional strengths. On the *inner*, personal level, many people have not developed the spiritual maturity, courage, and discipline to respond creatively to the global problems they see. They lack a compelling vision of a preferred world and alternatives to the present impasse. Without such a vision and inner, spiritual strengths people are not motivated, empowered, or sustained in work for the global common good. They cannot muster the hope, commitment, and movement of the will necessary for creative action.

On an *external* level, in the socio-economic and political realm, people see that existing national and international structures are ineffective in dealing with global crises. The political, legal, and other systems now in place were developed for a bygone era. But many people assume they are the last word and abandon hope for solutions to today's global problems. Ultimately we will need to develop global systems commensurate to the new needs of an interdependent world.

A strength/stress ratio¹ needs to be considered in developing systems adequate for our new, interdependent global community. This is true whether we are speaking of inner, psycho-spiritual systems or outer social, political, and economic systems. For a system to respond effectively to crises, the stresses on it must not exceed its strengths. Put conversely, we need to develop strengths (both inner, spiritual strengths and outer, institutional

strengths) that are equal to or greater than the strains that are likely to confront us in our new, interdependent world. Lacking commensurate spiritual and structural strengths to cope and respond creatively to critical world problems, people easily become burned out; hope and energy fade and give way to cynicism and despair.

A Spiritual Vacuum in Modern Development

This brings us to the crux of the modern problem. Many people today have never known, or have severed themselves from, spiritual roots in the great religious traditions of the past, and have not yet developed spiritual roots in an emerging global future. They are standing on nothing, groping for direction and meaning in a spiritual void.

Some try to compensate for their emptiness, uncertainty, and vulnerability by consuming more and more material goods or acquiring technical power in ever increasing giga-bytes. Yet their hunger for more goes unsatisfied and their ultimate questions unasked and unanswered. Others surrender analysis, judgment, and decision-making to religious cults or fundamentalist groups in exchange for moral certitude or promises of one brand or another of salvation. Still others go from one religious fad to another, chasing a new high, only to come down more disillusioned and cynical than before.

This spiritual hunger is symptomatic of the modern scientific and industrial revolutions that began in the West and then spread around the world. Although Western Christianity, as a force in the culture where this revolution emerged, might have offered some spiritual and moral correctives, it was for many centuries so divided against itself and against other religions in crusades, inquisitions, purges, and warfare as it competed for minds and souls, that many people no longer saw it as credible and did not look to it for spiritual or moral direction. Instead they looked to human reason and new technologies to solve life's problems. Moreover, some Christian leaders saw the new scientific knowledge as a threat to their own worldview and authority. Other religions were also unprepared for the new world that began emerging.

Without spiritual and moral correctives, some applied the new knowledge and technologies toward an unprecedented assault on the planet and its peoples. Systems of exploitation and domination (whether in the form of slavery, racism, colonialism, or environmental destruction), escalated to new levels in the West. The world beyond the West was carved up on European drawing boards and apportioned to one or another European sovereignty, who claimed possession of the land, waters, minerals, flora and fauna, and all the peoples and human communities dwelling there.

But the origins of this Western will to dominance preceded the modern age. The roots are deep in the founding myths and religious worldview of the West. In the Judaeo-Christian story of Genesis as it was interpreted for many hundreds of years, God was viewed as distant and apart from creation and the natural world. So were human beings. As the story was understood, God had given human beings "dominion" over nature and nature

was thus beneath them—an object for their care, but not integrally related to them. This I-it objectification ran as a fatal flaw through the Western psyche, separating and alienating its believers and upholders from the larger community of life.

Belief in a God-ordained mission and right to dominate the Earth feeds a will to dominance over all that is "other." It contributes not only to unconscious and conscious debasement of the natural world and thoughtless or systematic violence against the sphere of life, but also to debasement of and violence against other human beings. "Other" humans, other races, other cultures, other religions are seen as separate from, and less than, "me" or "us" rather than as kindred participants in one life system.

Ironically, although self-inflating, this worldview leads to self-debasement. When we view ourselves as separate from the Earth we deprive ourselves of a sense of belonging and meaningful participation in the community of life and thus sentence ourselves to existential loneliness. When we cut off our sense of kinship with nature and the larger community of life, we cut ourselves off from a major source of spiritual growth, personal fulfillment, and joy. When we destroy or denigrate any part of the Earth, we destroy and denigrate part of our own essence. We are from the Earth and of the Earth. What we do to the Earth we do to ourselves.²

False Gods

In this spiritual vacuum many people placed a blind faith in science, machines, and material progress to solve all problems and create a new heaven on earth. Nationalism, too, became a new religion. Some replaced or associated God with an exaggerated sense of national identity in delusions of power, supremacy, and separateness. The external practices of religion did not provide people with the spiritual strengths and courage to curtail the resulting wars and genocides.

Marxism

For some, for a while, Marxism and atheistic communism seemed more responsive and more relevant for addressing modern crises than any of the traditional religions. But the materialist dialectic and class analysis proved too limited to account for the complexity of the human psyche and human social systems to be an adequate guide to the future. The human person cannot be reduced to *Homo economicus*. Likewise, the Earth, a living system of which humans are a part, cannot be reduced to a "means of production."

While Marx provided a useful tool for some aspects of social analysis, his Hegelian "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" was too simplistic. It did not take into account that in living, dynamic systems, including human social systems, the possible causes of social problems, and thus the range of possible solutions, is usually greater and more complex than only two competing opposites. Moreover, the Marxian analysis suffers some of the same limitations as the paradigm of human dominance over the Earth. In fact it grew out of and subsisted in that

The more we grow in awareness of our own sacred source, the more we discover that our own sacred source is the sacred source of each person and all that is in the universe. In God, all are sacred. All 5.4 billion persons on the planet are sacred. All are loved by God, including those we consider our enemies.

paradigm. While it challenged domination of one class by another, it never challenged the paradigm of human dominance over the Earth from which class dominance feeds. Nor could it provide spiritual and philosophic foundations for an interdependent global community. In fact, it negated the very need for spirituality, even as it polarized and fractured, rather than built the foundations of true community.

A New Global Order

This is an age of tremendous problems and tremendous promise. We are at a critical point when future human well-being is not guaranteed, but must be consciously sought. Old orders and systems are dying; they are inadequate to respond effectively to the new dangers and opportunities of an interdependent world. Despite all the post-cold-war talk of a new world order, a truly new world order has not yet been born. What we have instead is the old world order with one rather than two superpowers. Most national governments are not prepared and not willing to lead the way to a truly new world order. Citizens must lead the way. We are the midwives who must help give birth to this new global order.

The birthing needed is more than only superficial modifications of the old bi-polar order built on military power and threat. Nor can we accept a multi-polar world order based on domination by the major economic powers. The new ordering must grow from a profound awareness of our common dependency on one Earth and one another. It must be built on values of peace, social justice, economic well-being, and respect for cultural diversity and the integrity of creation, with the democratic participation of all the world's peoples.

Such a truly new world order needs to be born *within* us first, in transformed consciousness and right ordering of our spirit, mind, heart and will. Real changes, the real transformations in history, have begun with inner spiritual changes. And the great transforming agents, the real formers of new cultures, have been spiritual leaders: Buddha, Lao-tse, Abraham, Moses, Mohammed, Jesus, Paul

This new order must also be born in the *outer* ordering of the world community; in a right ordering of our international relationships and structures; in the development of structures capable of supporting and main-

taining justice, peace and the integrity of creation. A new ordering of the soul requires and seeks a new ordering of the larger world, an ordering rooted in wisdom and compassion.

THE GLOBAL SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

The new web of global interdependencies that binds us together, and the tremendous challenges and complex moral choices before us require a far deeper and a more far-reaching spirituality than at any time in previous history. We need to resume our spiritual journey with a fuller vision and sense of purpose and within the framework of new, global parameters.

There is much that can be said about global spirituality, and still much for all of us to discover. But in the short space of this article I will limit myself to three important aspects of the global spiritual journey: the journey inward, the journey outward, and the journey forward.

For a spiritual journey is not made on a straight road that goes only in one direction, whether vertically in search of a transcendent God, or horizontally in search of a God present in others. Nor is it properly imaged as a circle. For there *are* transcendental realities that the circle may not accommodate. Moreover, a circle closes in on itself, excluding some even while including others. And a circle can also be closed in space and time parameters and unable to lead a community forward in response to new needs in history.

The Spiral

The more appropriate image for the spiritual journey today is a spiral, for a spiral travels inward, outward and forward.³ These are not opposing directions, but part of a flow; a flow that moves *inward* to encounter the indwelling and transcendent God – the sacred in one self who is the alpha and omega of all that is; *outward* to encounter God and the sacred in others – in human communities and the larger community of life; and *forward* in conscious and active participation with God in shaping future history, in ongoing genesis.

Keeping in mind the inseparability of the individual and collective spiritual journeys, let us briefly consider each of these *three dimensions of global spirituality*:

I. The Inward Journey: Encountering the Sacred in Self

The inward journey is a journey to the sacred source at the center of every being and all being. In it we separate ourselves from immediate sensory experience and surrounding environments and enter the inner source of our life and integrity and the deepest truth of our existence.

The inward journey requires facing and owning our deep past — all that has formed us. It cuts through the many layers of tradition, belief, culture, history, and symbols that are part of our personal and collective experience. We travel inward through all the individual and collective sufferings, joys, struggles, discoveries, changes that have brought us to this present time; through all the history and all the choices that have separated us and divided us and broken us, and all the choices that have bound us together, healed us, made us one. We journey back to a common source, back through all the ages of history; back through the birth of human consciousness and the birth of the human; back through the birth of life and the birth of the planet; back to the origins of the universe and the startling moment when the universe was charged to Become; back into the eye of God; back into divine love.

The inward journey is a journey of death and rebirth. It requires us to die to ego attachments. It confronts us with our personal and collective sin history and also our grace history. We are confronted with our responsibility for the state of our soul and the state of our world. We are forced to travel through the hell we have created within and around us. We are the oppressors and the oppressed. We are the ones who have destroyed, crippled, or strait-jacketed our own creative capacities; our potential to become more fully human. We are the ones who have broken the community; the ones who have refused food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. We are the ones who have violated the Earth and violated our neighbor. We are the ones who have delivered holocausts and genocides, torture and death. We are the ones who have cut ourselves off from love.

It is a journey that if pursued humbly and honestly to the deepest part of our being brings us to the dark tomb of self-knowledge and death which is also the dark womb of spiritual illumination and re-birth. It is the place where, having confessed our participation in the world's sin history, we can also discover our participation in grace history; in the Buddha nature; the Christ nature; the Tao; where we discover our existence in divine love; where we are re-conceived in the knowledge that we are called to love, to divine compassion, to fulfillment, to life; where we discover that all we need for our personal journey and our Earth journey has already been given to us; that from the beginning we have been blessed. It is where we discover and truly know that we are sacred beings.

II. The Outward Journey: Encountering the Sacred in the World

The Great Compassion

Paradoxically, the more deeply inward we go and the more we live in deep awareness of our own sacred center and source, the more universal we become; the more we grow in awareness and communion with all peoples. The joys and sufferings of the world's peoples are our joys and sufferings. We are part of one humanity. The struggles and hopes of the world's peoples are our struggles and hopes. Their loss is our loss. Their discovery and growth is our discovery and growth.

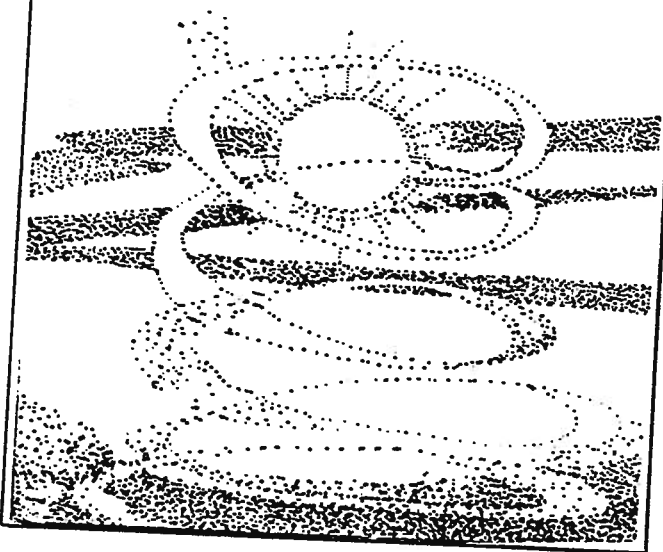
The more we grow in awareness of our own sacred source, the more we discover that our own sacred source is the sacred source of each person and all that is in the universe. In God, all are sacred. All six billion persons on the planet are sacred. All are loved by God, including those we consider our enemies. Thus Christ said, "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you."

A truly global spirituality recognizes that God's love and sacred presence is manifested in diverse and wonderful ways everywhere around the planet, in all cultures, nations, beliefs. A global spirituality respects diversity. It seeks to discover truth, beauty, and goodness in many different cultural manifestations. It recognizes the sacred in the wisdom and experience of all the world's cultures and traditions: in Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sufism, Baha'i, indigenous communities, and more.

A new world order will be nurtured in the universal extensions of love, compassion, justice, and peace. All of the great saints manifested this universal compassion. Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King are contemporary examples. Christ was a model of universal compassion. He stood with the sinners, the crippled, the lepers, the "foreigners," the poor, the hungry, the women, the humble fisherfolk. All these were in one way or another the "untouchables" of society, those living on the underside of dominance. And He witnessed that all were important, all were sacred. Were not all one in one Father; all branches of one Vine; members of one Body, sharing life in one Spirit?

Christ's universal compassion grew from a profound awareness and life in the Spirit. It involved being and doing; contemplation and action. This compassionate love was defined in both words and deeds: in the Beatitudes; in the command to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty; in the command to forgive the enemy; in the parable of the Samaritan and the encounter with the Samaritan woman where cultural and national divisions are transcended in awareness of shared humanness; in the imagery of the banquet to which all are invited; in the central image of one loving, forgiving Father; in the vision of the Kingdom of God which is to be realized within ourselves and in our relationships with others. And in taking on the human condition with full compassion; in giving up His life so that the world would learn how to love and how to live in the sacred.

A spiritual journey is not made on a straight road...it is a spiral that travels inward, outward and forward.



Forgiveness

The first step in the outward spiritual journey, in the healing of the planetary community and creation of a new world order, may be learning to forgive and to seek forgiveness. Universal love, compassion, justice, and peace are not possible without a recognition of our mutual responsibility for the brokenness of the world community and our capacity to heal that brokenness. We each have hurt and have been hurt by others; each has broken trust with another. We can each help heal the past.

This is true of nations as well as individuals. Perhaps armaments continue to proliferate not only because the trade is profitable, but also because as nations we are too proud to say we are sorry. It may be that as a first step to peace, the people of the U.S. should ask forgiveness of the Japanese for dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and to forgive the Japanese for bombing Pearl Harbor. It may be that the people of Japan need to ask forgiveness from the Koreans and Chinese for their past invasions and brutal occupations; that Germans need to ask forgiveness for the genocide of six million Jews and invasions of other European countries; that Russians need to seek forgiveness for their transgressions in Asia and Eastern Europe. Each nation and people have a history which needs to be healed before we can build a healthy world community together. Learning to seek and grant forgiveness between national and ethnic communities is an important part of the outward spiritual journey; a part of national and ethnic ego transcendence needed for a more human world order.

A Spirituality of the Earth

Any spirituality deep and expansive and strong enough for this new global age also needs to include a profound sense of our common dependency on one, living Earth. We are not over the Earth, but part of Earth's

life and will live or die as the Earth lives or dies.⁴ An authentic global spirituality will include a profound sense of the divine consciousness that informs every species and every atom of the Earth and universe. When a plant or animal species is destroyed, a part of God, a part of the Buddha nature, a part of the universe, a part of ourselves, is gone forever.

Everything that is on Earth comprises our human nature. If we lose any part of the Earth, we lose part of our nature. This is true in a physical/material sense. Our bodies are made up of Earth's elements in the same proportion as is the Earth. It is also true in a spiritual sense. To lose a rainbow, to lose the flowers, to lose a plant or animal species is to lose an important part of our experience and essence. If we lived on a desolate place like the moon, human nature would also be desolate.⁵

A world order based on authentic spirituality is more than just a human order. It is an order in which humans learn to bring their lives into communion with the Earth processes — material, plant, animal — of which we are an interactive and interdependent part. A global spirituality rejects the dualism between spirit and matter, between soul and body, between human and non-human. An authentic global spirituality recognizes what the Native Americans recognized when they spoke of a *united planet of nations* in which the human nation needs to live in right relationship with the *tree nation*, the *water nation*, the *bird nation*, the *buffalo nation*, etc.⁶

Our Shinto and Buddhist and Hindu and Taoist and traditional African and Native American ancestors intuitively understood the divine presence in Earth's life processes and our spiritual kinship with all life forms. Thus when Chief Seattle, leader of the Native American Suquamish people was asked to sell tribal lands to the U.S. government in 1854, he is purported to have responded:

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. We are part of the Earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man — all belong to the same family.

If we sell you our land . . . teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground they spit upon themselves.

This we know. The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.⁷

Thus, too, these lessons from Zen Buddhism:

Once when Joshu was still with Nansen, Nansen took an ox into the Monk's Hall, and led him around. The head monk whacked the ox on the back three times, and Nansen took a sheaf of grass and put it in front of the head monk, who said nothing. Has an ox the Buddha Nature? Had the head monk the ox nature?⁸

Rain, hail, snow and ice are divided from one another; But after they fall, They are the same water of the stream in the valley.⁹

Thus also in Taoism:

The universe came into being with us together; with us, all things are one.¹⁰

We need to relocate the deep awareness our tribal ancestors had of the sacredness of the Earth and all its living parts; their sense of oneness and interdependence with the Earth and each other.

This does not mean going back to the past. We cannot go back. The world of today is far too complex for that. But we must bring the best insights of the world's spiritual traditions forward into our new global context and add to these a new spiritual inquiry appropriate to our times. Even in this more complex, post-modern world we must come to see how we are bound together; and that what we do to the Earth and to each other we do to ourselves. We live or die as the Earth lives and dies. We will live or die as our brothers and sisters live or die.

Unity of Life

The world has long been divided by the external differences between religious belief systems. Bitter and bloody wars have been fought over these differences. But at the inner, mystical core of all authentic religions has been a common unitive experience, a vision of the oneness of life. In fact the English word *religion* is derived from the Latin *religare*, which means "to bind together; to make whole; harmony." In Sanskrit one of the original meanings of *dharma* (eternal religion) is the same: "to bind together as one the whole universe."

The discovery and affirmation of the unity of all in one Spirit, one sacred source and divine consciousness, is a recurrent theme not only in tribal and Eastern spiritual traditions, but also in the mystical streams of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is central in Sufi and Baha'i spirituality which grew out of Islam. It is the essence of Christ's teachings:

*"That all may be one as I and the Father are One"
"Love one another as I have loved you"
"I am the vine, and you are the branches"*

The old separations were only separations of the mind. The deeper reality is our oneness in one God, one Earth, one life, one nature. To understand this is to understand the basic message of authentic religion but it is

also to understand the basic truth of the universe. It is to *stand* in the deepest truth of existence—that we are all part of one life on one planet that is itself part of one cosmic creation process. What happens to the Earth and to the "other" happens to ourselves.

To *stand* in this awareness is the deepest mode of knowing because it is knowing in the sense of seeing/doing. It demands that we live our lives in accord with the knowledge of our essential unity with all life.

Science and Spirituality

If religious leaders lost sight of this basic spiritual truth, science is now helping them rediscover it. This is ironic because in their commitment to empirical verification scientists often dismissed the more intuitive knowledge and insights from religious inquiry.

Nevertheless, and despite a near exclusive focus on quantifiable material reality, scientific inquiry is now verifying empirically what spiritual visionaries through the ages understood intuitively. Scientists have explored the smallest particles of matter and the far reaches of space and proclaimed that all is interrelated and bound together. The universe is one. It is charged with a marvelous intelligence and cosmic laws that guide its inner workings, from the smallest cells with electrons, neutrons and protons functioning in patterns of dynamic communion, to the solar systems and galaxies moving in cosmic communion and interdependence.

Astronauts have gone into space as technicians. Some have come back as mystics. From the darkness of space they saw Earth in a new way. This new vision of the Earth as a sub-system of one minor solar system in a remote galaxy of a vast cosmos brought with it a new humility. We are not so powerful after all. We did not create the Earth and we are not over it. We are not the masters. We are part of this single cell we call Earth and "We will live or die as this cell lives or dies."¹¹

There is an existential loneliness that comes from our sojourn in space. We do not know whether there is life as we know it on any other planet. Our planet may be a singular living and life-supporting cell among the billions of planets and solar systems in the galaxies. This loneliness is awe-filling. We are filled with dread at the possible emptiness and silence of the universe and also filled with awe at the possible, yet unknown, fullness we may discover.

Through our new technologies we have gone into the remote and silent reaches of space where the gods were once thought to dwell with the expectation of claiming it for our own. For some, in that dark stillness a powerful, ultimate presence was felt that is beyond knowing. We have returned to Earth with the new but old knowledge of the indwelling presence of the sacred. And we are discovering that the God of the Cosmos is also still immanent on Earth, having never really left. It was only we who could no longer see or hear or know that presence because of our aberrations. But we are coming to know again, as our tribal ancestors knew, that this is the planet of the indwelling God, a sacred place where the Spirit of Life is working a new creation, a new genesis.

III. The Forward Journey:

New Genesis

The vision and story of the cosmos that has emerged from scientific inquiry is, in Thomas Berry's view, the most profoundly revelatory experience of human kind since the emergence of the great religions. In its corrected, integrated version, he says, "this story constitutes the basic hope for a viable future for the human community and for the planet Earth." Once this cosmological myth is given its integral expression as "a numinous/spiritual as well as a mechanistic/physical" process, he says, then the human community has a foundation on which to proceed in creating a new human order:

World order is a product of the world process. In its human phase world order is a continuation of the cosmic/earth process. The "order" involved is not the order of an abiding image of eternity such as that presented by Plato . . . but the order of a universe and a human community that is coming into being. This sense that the human order is a continuation and participation in an emerging world process is primary in our discussion. There is not, and never has been, an established world order. There is only the world genesis: a cosmogenesis, biogenesis, anthropogenesis.¹²

The forward journey begins with the recognition that the present order, however dark, however dangerous, however polarized, is not the last word. Human genesis, like the cosmogenesis of which it is a part, is still in process. We have not finished our journey. We are unfinished humans and unfinished communities. There are no developed nations. We are all developing nations, part of a developing world community. We are called to grow, to become more.

Struggle, Pain, Hope: The Becoming Human

The forward spiritual journey is the struggle toward the not yet but possible human and the possible human community. It is the journey of the becoming human and the becoming human community. It is conscious

participation in ongoing genesis.

The outward journey: the authentic recognition of God's love for the world; real compassion; leads to engagement in the world, to struggle, to action, to suffering, to vulnerability, to growth. Without vulnerability and struggle we cannot grow, we cannot create, we cannot go forward.

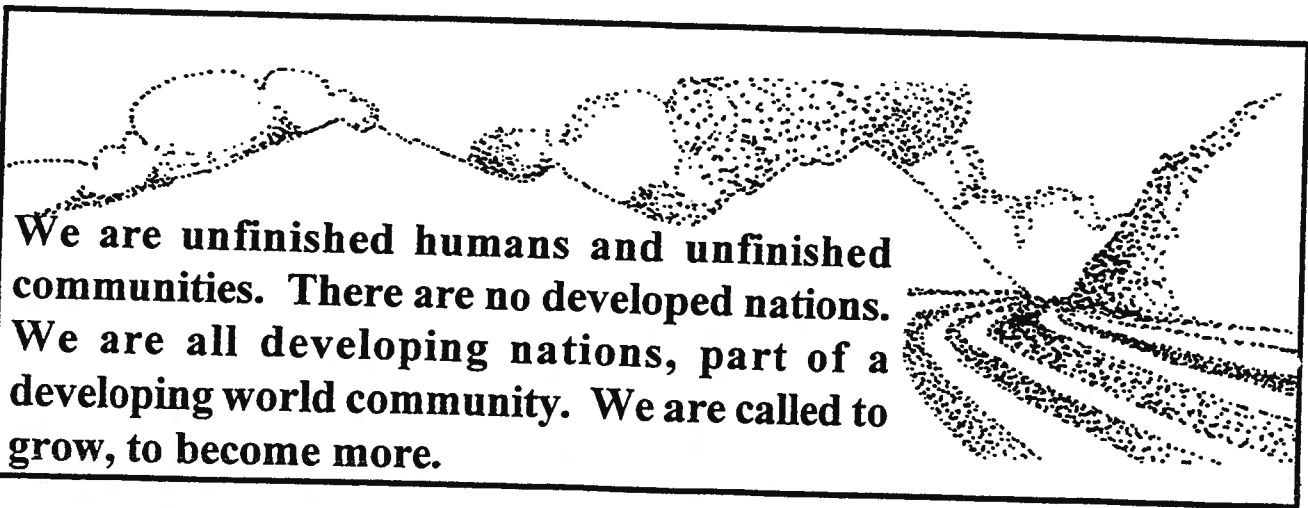
A truly new human order will be created in the meeting ground between contemplation and struggle, between reflection and action. The personal spiritual journey takes on meaning and purpose when we struggle to find an adequate response to the real life and death questions which life puts before us. As Victor Frankl noted in *Man's Search for Meaning*, we find meaning or fulfillment not when we seek our own spiritual realization, but when we transcend ourselves in response to the larger questions which history constantly puts before us.

Frankl made the following observations about the brutal experience he and others suffered in a Nazi concentration camp, when many were tempted to surrender their will to live:

What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn that ourselves and furthermore, we had to teach despairing men that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answers to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.¹³

He also wrote:

By declaring that man is a responsible creature and must actualize the potential meaning of his life, I wish to stress that the true meaning of life is to be found in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. By the same token,



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*the real aim of human existence cannot be found in what is called self-actualization. Human existence is essentially self-transcendence rather than self-actualization. Self-actualization is not a possible aim at all, for the simple reason that the more a man would strive for it, the more he would miss it. For only to the extent to which man commits himself to the fulfillment of his life's meaning, to this extent he also actualizes himself. In other words, self-actualization cannot be attained if it is made an end in itself, but only as a side effect of self-transcendence.*¹⁴

What a desperate collection of people recognized and asked of themselves in the shadows of the gas chambers and mass extermination, we who live today in the shadow of ethnic cleansings and ecocides need to ask ourselves: "What is life asking of us?"

Today life is putting before us some very critical questions. They are life and death questions. These questions are not being adequately addressed in any national or international political fora. They haunt us all the more, crying out for some form of adequate response — if not from constituted governments, then from civic society and religious groups.

Around the Earth, young people feel anguish about their uncertain future. Many feel powerless in the face of the enormity and complexity of the issues today. We stand in this time and space, at a place in history where we are personally and collectively being asked to respond to life and death questions about the future of humanity; when we are faced with anti-creational or creational choices; when we are being called to participate consciously in ongoing genesis, in creating new structures commensurate to the needs of our times. And we may look at ourselves and ask, "Who are we? Are we capable of the psychological, spiritual, and intellectual growth required for the next stages of our journey? Are we capable of becoming, and living responsibly in, a world community?"

While some scientists have been exploring outer space, others have been exploring the inner space of the human psyche and soul, the inner reaches of human nature. Some have done brain and mind research, probing the further reaches of human capacities for both intuitive and rational modes of knowing. They have discovered that humans have vast under-developed and untapped potential; that we haven't begun to reach the limits of our mental, psychic, and spiritual capacities; that we may still be in an early stage of our evolution. In short, we are still in a process of *becoming human*. And we are still in a process of becoming a human *community*.

The work of psychologist Abraham Maslow¹⁵ provides a helpful image of what it means to *become fully human*. It also illuminates what it would mean to become a *true world community*. In Maslow's vision, the two are inseparable and essential to one another.

Maslow describes human potentialities in terms of inherent human needs and capacities that include *Basic needs* (food, shelter, security, belonging, affection, esteem) and also *Meta or Being needs* or values.



Maslow's list of Being needs or values include some 40 attributes such as Justice, Peace, Love, Unity, Beauty, Truth, Goodness, Simplicity, Joy, Playfulness. These are not abstract ideals remote from human possibility. They are part of the ground of our being; without them we feel incomplete, deprived, not fully human.

These Being needs are also the words which, through centuries of spiritual search, people in different cultures have used to describe God, the Buddha nature, the Christ nature, Atman, the Divine. In its essence, the human search for completeness, for becoming fully human, is the search for the indwelling God in us, and for becoming more like God. The Being needs or values pull us forward in search of their realization, even as trees struggle upward in search of light. From the beginning we have been coded to seek our realization in this way; the realization of our personal potential and also our collective human potential. Our potential being, our potential humanity, pulls us forward toward its realization.

Justice, peace, community are not easily achievable, but they are not something apart from our nature. They are part of our calling and meaning in history — the not yet but possible human struggling to Become; the working ground for and through which we shape our personal and planetary future.

Maslow observed that the instinct to become fully human is not strong. Thus, unlike animals with strong instincts to be fully what they are, we humans do not automatically realize our potential. We are much more vulnerable than animals. Maslow felt that the great tragedy of human existence was that so many finished their lives without realizing their full potential. He felt that the "actualization of the highest human potentials is possible — on a mass basis — only under 'good' conditions; that we need a good society in which to grow." By "good society" he said he meant "one species, one world."

Like Frankl, Maslow concluded that self-realization is not attainable when sought as an end in itself. Only through self-transcendence, through responding to issues larger than self do we become fully human. In a sense we can look at the issues history is putting before us and, like Christopher Fry, thank God we live in times when problems are "soul sized," when so much is demanded of us, when we are challenged to stretch our-

Deeply spiritual persons experience the suffering in the world as their own suffering. The world is not something apart from them. Their skin is not a dividing membrane that separates them from the world but a permeable membrane, through which events of the world and events of their inner life flow into one another.

selves and become more than we have been.

Maslow saw the long range goal as world peace through one world, one law. For him the development of the fully human person and the development of a more just and peaceful world order were inseparable from each other. He put it this way:

There is a kind of feedback between the Good Society and the Good Person. They need each other, they are sine qua non to each other. I wave aside the problem of which comes first. It is quite clear that they develop simultaneously and in tandem. It would in any case be impossible to achieve either one without the other. By Good Society I mean ultimately one species, one world.¹⁶

A more just and peaceful world order can be viewed as a necessary pre-condition for the full flowering of the human person and the full flowering of an authentic, lived spirituality. It can also be viewed as the natural outcome of the human search for completion and fulfillment, of an authentic spirituality.

For Maslow the far goal was world peace through world law. For Sri Aurobindo, the Indian mystic and philosopher who was a spiritual leader in India's struggle for independence, a new world political order was a necessary step in the larger spiritual journey of the human community. The far goal for Aurobindo was spiritual union; a spiritual order. But he saw political unification as an essential middle step that could not be separated from or skipped over in the longer spiritual journey.¹⁷

What Kind of World Order?

Whether one sees the far goal as spiritual union or as full human realization in a context of world peace through world law, there are immediate problems that challenge the well-being and survival of our children and grandchildren. We are still en route on our human journey. We still have a long way to go to a world order of Maslow's or Sri Aurobindo's vision. Meanwhile, a new order is already evolving.

The question before us is not *whether* there will be a new world order. Rather, it is *what kind* of order? On *what values and worldviews* will it be built? Will it be based again on domination over the Earth and each other? Will

it serve a few at the expense of the many? Will it perpetuate hunger, deprivation, war, and dehumanization? Will it be an order where increasing wealth flows from the poor to the rich? Or will we who live now decide to work in partnership to develop a world order that serves the common good for all of us who live now and in the future? Will it be a liberating and humanizing world order? Will it keep the Earth abloom? Will it help us become more fully human and more fully human community?

The answer to these questions will depend upon the quality and values of people who shape this new world order, and on the quality of their spirituality. Who will be involved in the formulation and decision-making processes for a new world order? Will they include men and women rooted in a global and creational spirituality? In a spirituality that is conscious, courageous, humble, and yet bold enough to guide and support us in becoming co-creators with the Spirit of History in the work of building the Earth?

We live in a certain fullness of time. All of the great spiritual visionaries of the past saw the oneness of life — a dynamic world order — beneath the surface evidence of brokenness. But never before in history has the vision "that all may be one" been a practical possibility in the human social order. Now, for the first time in history, we have the global transportation, communications, and economic infrastructure that make human community on a global scale a practical possibility. Now, for the first time in history, we know how many we are on the planet, what our languages are, how we are alike and different. Now we know through our explorations in space, our explorations of the earth's biosphere, our explorations of the limits and possibilities of our one planetary home, how mutually dependent we are on the Earth and on each other for our future survival.

It is a time in history, therefore, when the call to world justice, peace, ecology, and unity takes on special significance. We who live in this time have an opportunity to forward a more humane and environmentally responsible world order. We are challenged to do this within ourselves in deepened consciousness of our mutual dependence and in deepened consciousness of the Earth. And we are challenged also to forward our mutual survival and well being through the development of a world social political order of greater justice, peace, and ecological balance.

An Interdependent God

But there is no guarantee that a more humane, peaceful, and ecologically balanced world will be developed. We live in an interdependent world. The God of this world is an Interdependent God: a God who acts through us; who depends on us; who depends on our willingness to help create the future; our willingness to take on the critical questions of history and to be conscious participants in ongoing creation.

We live at a critical crossroads in history. All of history has been leading to the present moment of decision. All of our separate past histories now converge in one shared future history. There always has been a world order from the beginning of the creational journey. Only we in our blindness didn't recognize it. We set up divi-

sions and boundaries. We lost sight of the sacredness of ourselves and all creation. Now we are being called to die to our old divisions, to heal our brokenness, to build the planet of God as a sacred planet where God's love is more fully manifest.

To do this requires a deep spirituality. A deep relationship with God. Otherwise we will give up hope. The deeply spiritual person sees the suffering in the world and takes on that suffering (as Christ took it on). This is possible only when we live in hope. Otherwise the suffering could not be endured. It would lead to cynicism and despair. It would kill the spirit and the capacity to create.

Deeply spiritual persons experience the suffering in the world as their own suffering. The world is not something apart from them. Their skin is not a dividing membrane that separates them from the world but a connecting membrane, a permeable membrane, through which events of the world and events of their inner life flow into one another.

They suffer with the world. But they do not become obsessed by their suffering and the world's suffering. They do not let it overwhelm them or destroy their spirit, their ability to choose life. To live deeply in the Spirit is to be able to see beyond the immediate evidence of brokenness and suffering. It is to be able to imagine alternatives. It is to seek the not yet, but possible future. To live deeply in the Spirit is to find the courage to create in the midst of darkness; the faith to plant seeds in the dark ground of our times so that new life can flourish in the future.

Rubem Alves, the Brazilian author of *Tomorrow's Child*, had this to say about hope and suffering and the creative act:

What is hope? It is the presentiment that imagination is more real and reality less real than it looks. It is the hunch that the overwhelming brutality of facts that oppress and repress is not the last word. It is the suspicion that Reality is more complex than

realism wants us to believe; that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the actual, and that in a miraculous and unexpected way, life is preparing the creative events which will open the way to freedom and resurrection.

The two, suffering and hope, live from each other. Suffering without hope produces resentment and despair. Hope without suffering creates illusions, naivete and drunkenness.

Let us plant dates, even though those who plant them will never eat them. . . . We must live by the love of what we will never see. This is the secret discipline. It is a refusal to let the creative act be dissolved away in immediate sense experience, and a stubborn commitment to the future of our grandchildren. Such disciplined love is what has given prophets, revolutionaries and saints the courage to die for the future they envisaged. They make their own bodies the seed of their highest hope.¹⁸

We must be far-sighted enough to plant seeds now toward a new Genesis so that our descendants will look back on us as ancestors who brought honor and life to them and the planetary community. We must be willing to bring whatever talents, skills, insights we have toward a new genesis in the human community. We must know and act on the knowledge that we are co-creational beings, and that, while the whole responsibility for the whole future of the world does not rest on any one person's shoulders, we each have a unique task to do in forwarding a more human world order that no one else can do for us. It is in discovering that task and taking it on in community with others that we will find meaning in our life and a sense of belonging, and that the world will find the needed vision, direction and basis for hope in the journey ahead.

Everything we need to make a successful journey into the future is already available to us. We only need to have the courage to plumb our own depths and discover there the indwelling God who abides in us and in the world, calling us to Become. ■

FOOTNOTES

¹ In his book *Stable Peace*, Kenneth Boulding proposed a strength/stress ratio for maintaining a stable peace. A similar strength/stress equation needs to be considered in human psycho-spiritual development, and in new global socio-political systems.

² See Thomas Berry, "The Ecological Age," in *The Whole Earth Papers*, No. 12 (1979), Global Education Associates.

³ Many people have since used the image of the spiral for the spiritual journey, but I first heard it from Sr. Donald Corcoran, OSB, in her 1979 address at the Global Education Associates Institute at Stony Point, New York.

⁴ Thomas Berry, "The Ecological Age," *The Whole Earth Papers*, No. 12 (1979), Global Education Associates.

⁵ Thomas Berry, in a presentation made at a Global Education Associates' Institute at Seton Hall University, October, 1981.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ The full text of Chief Seattle's speech has been printed in a number of works, one of which is *Power to the People: Active Nonviolence in the U.S.* (Culver City, CA: Peace Press, 1977).

⁸ From *Zen and Zen Classics: Selections from R.H. Blyth*, compiled and with drawings by Frederick Franck (New York: Vintage Press, 1978), p. 63.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁰ As quoted in Alan Watts, *Tao: The Watercourse Way* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

¹¹ Thomas Berry, "Ecological Age," *op. cit.*

¹² Thomas Berry, "Contemplation and World Order," in *Christian Voices*, a special edition of *The Whole Earth Papers*, No. 10 (1978), Global Education Associates.

¹³ Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (Harper and Brothers, 1954, revised ed., 1970), and Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Van Nostrand, 1962).

¹⁴ Abraham Maslow, "Politics 3," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

¹⁵ Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (*op. cit.*) and Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (*op. cit.*).

¹⁶ Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Evolution of Man* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1974), and *Human Cycle, Ideal of Human Unity* (New York: International Publishers Service, 1971). See also, A. B. Patel, *Toward a New World Order* (Pondicherry, India: World Union International, 1974). Mr. Patel builds on the thought of Sri Aurobindo and considers both the spiritual and political implications for world order of Aurobindo's thought.

¹⁸ Rubem Alves, *Tomorrow's Child* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).