

Forcing Change



The Dissident Christian Does this Describe You?

Editor's Note: This article is published with permission of the author, Carolyn Henderson, who writes a column for Beliefnet.com titled *Commonsense Christianity*. Her husband, Steve Henderson, is a full-time fine artist. You can find links to Carolyn's site and original article, along with Steve's online art gallery, at the end of this piece.

In today's era of group think and community consensus, a reality in churches as well as in secular culture, Carolyn's article is a refreshing reminder to ask questions and seek Biblical wisdom.

By Carolyn Henderson.

It doesn't take much to be a dissident to today's society. All it involves are two things:

- 1) Asking questions, and
- 2) Refusing to passively accept everything that we are told.

At an art museum, a dissident viewer is one who asks the guide, "Why, specifically, is this painting so famous and expensive? In all honesty, it does look like something my 8-year-old could do."

In a university science class, it looks like this, "But professor, Darwin himself admitted that not just one, but many many 'missing links' would need to be found to confirm the accuracy of his theory.

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Carl Teichrib, Editor

Given that, in all this time and with all the research put into it, we haven't found one, what does this mean?"

Around the water cooler: "If Democrats and Republicans are so diametrically and radically different, why does nothing ever really change for the better, regardless of who is in control?"

At church: "I don't agree with many points on the pastor's last sermon, which isolated a few verses out of context, and seemed to be pushing me into behaving a certain way. If I choose to give my money to a woman I know whose electricity will be shut off if her bill isn't paid, as opposed to writing a check to the church this month, am I really sinning?"

Don't Shut Up

Many times, the response to our asking questions is a variation of, "*Shut up! You don't know the full story, so you have no right to speak,*" which totally ignores the fact that you were simply asking a question, not propounding an opinion.

When it comes to religious situations, we're too full of grace to say, "Shut up," but the second aspect - that you don't know what you're talking about so please leave the thinking up to me - still emerges.

People asking questions are dangerous, because they upset the status quo, and one of the best ways to silence potential troublemakers is to put them on the spot or ridicule them. Since most of us don't relish looking like fools, this method is remarkably effective in squashing potential opposition.

Yes, We're "Fools"

The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians, spends a significant amount of time comparing foolishness versus wisdom, from the perspective of humanity and that of God, and urges, "If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise." (1 Corinthians 3: 18)

Jesus in John 15: 18-19 tells us, "If the world hates, you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates, you."

It will mock you, disparage you, discourage you, and ridicule you for the way you live and the questions you ask - and quite unfortunately, the world's influence is not exempt from religious

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circles. For this reason, while it is important to interact with other Christians and encourage one another (which many people associate with church attendance), it is equally important to maintain a strong, independent, and private relationship with God.

DIY Christianity

This means that, while a pastor's sermon or elder's Sunday school class may provide enlightenment, teaching, and wisdom, it is not infallible and the ultimate responsibility to read, and understand, God's Word is yours. This isn't as frightening as it sounds, because you have three powerful resources to accomplish this task:

- 1) **The Holy Spirit lives within each and every Christian**, and this Spirit of Truth "will guide you into all truth." (1 John 16: 5)
- 2) **You have an innate level of intelligence** that enables you to analyze, critique, question, research, and learn.
- 3) **You have a Bible written in the language that you speak**. If this were the 13th century, and the only Bible in town were written in Latin, which you don't read, there would be justification in the accusation that, "You don't know what this book says." Do not allow this sentence to be replaced by, "You don't have seminary training or a PhD in theology, so you really don't know what you're talking about."

Christians: we're supposed to be salt. Salt changes the flavor of the food around it. This means that there's no way we can jump into the stew without changing the way it tastes.

Ask. Seek. Knock. This command from Matthew 7: 7 isn't limited to the people at the top of the pyramid. It's directed to all of us.

Thank You

If you are a Christian, the world needs you, doing whatever it is God asks you to do each day - and you won't know what work He has for you if you don't ask Him. You are an important, valued, and precious member of God's family, regardless of how unimportant you look by conventional human standards. Remember, God thinks differently than we do, and the closer we draw to Him, the more He can teach us to think this way as well. **FC**

You can read more of Carolyn Henderson's work, and follow her writing, at *Commonsense Christianity* (www.beliefnet.com/columnists/commonsensechristianity). Her article, with original artwork by her husband, Steve, can be found here:

www.beliefnet.com/columnists/commonsensechristianity/2013/12/the-dissident-christian-does-t-his-describe-you.html

Steve Henderson's online art gallery is: <http://stevehendersonfineart.com>.

Greening the Christian Community: *The 1970s*

By Carl Teichrib

Author's Note: This essay is part of an ongoing manuscript project that explores deep-ecology and the Christian response to the green movement. That said, it is an historical piece that seeks to understand the recent jump-in points where Christendom and ecological interests joined in seeking social change, political action, and interfaith partnerships. For the purpose of this essay, the dominant time period explored is the decade of the 1970s. However, as I wish to demonstrate current relevance to the linkage between Christianity, interfaithism, the politics of green and social transformation, the first section is an overview of the 2010 World Religions Summit.

“Christianity rescued the world from this lunacy. Today, Christian Churches may be in need of rescue.” – Robert A. Sirico.¹

Leveraging world religions to be agents for global change is brilliant.

In 2010 I had the opportunity of attending the G8 World Religions Summit (WRS), held in Winnipeg, Manitoba.² Here, building on successive World Religions Summits going back to 2005, spiritual leaders from around the world hoped - through their collective voice - to influence the direction of global governance. After days of speeches and drafting documents, a finalized declaration was sent to the heads-of-state gathered at the G8 Summit in Huntsville, Ontario. Three main points punctuated the final version: Addressing poverty, investing in peace, and caring for the earth.

Under the draft subheading, “Care for the Earth,” the high-sounding call was issued for “mutual care and nurture between people and ecosystems.” To that end, industrialized nations were blamed for eco-degradation, as was religion; “The roots of this crisis are spiritual and moral.”

To fix this spiritual problem, a “renewed eco-ethics” was demanded, one that promoted “just distribution of resources” with “a new generation of rights related to ecology.” Faith groups, the religious leaders proclaimed, “must move to action-oriented results... building morally sustainable communities.”³

As the WRS *Resource Kit* affirmed,

“Our faith traditions call us to make caring for the Earth a priority. Many Aboriginal spiritualities emphasize the circular nature of life and relationships of mutual care and nurture between people and ecosystems. Faith communities see the environment through a lens of life on the planet as a unified whole, not unlike the cells of a body, infinitely differentiated in form and function yet deeply interdependent. In this framework, industrialized countries have caused a disproportionate amount of environmental damage; they now owe an ecological debt to developing countries, to all life and to the future.”⁴

Invited WRS leaders came from a multitude of spiritual pursuits; Islam, Buddhism, Shintoism, Judaism, Hinduism, the Bahai’ community, and Native spiritual traditions. Christendom, however, was

the most represented; Mennonite, Episcopal, and Catholic voices added their weight, with the broader evangelical community represented through a variety of groups, including the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

A few months before the WRS, Karan Hamilton,⁵ the chairperson for the event, stressed the importance of bringing diverse Christian organizations to the table.

“They come by virtue of their position and that’s been a very deliberate strategy. So the Archbishop of Canterbury is invited... Jim Wallis from Sojourners is coming... The general secretary of the All African Conference of Churches will be one of the plenary speakers. His position means that he represents – institutionally, structurally, organizationally, however you want to put it – the Christians of Africa, which is half the population of Africa.”⁶

As an observer I was struck by the openness of this strategic approach. The reality behind this methodology emerged, on more than one occasion, with the boast that attending religious leaders and their partnered organizations represented a massive and global block of political, economic, and moral power. Such a claim is normally couched as a generalization, but many in attendance represented both a broad community and narrower cross-sections, meaning that their involvement demonstrated a tangible connection to an active grass-roots membership within a larger context. Global, national, and local were connected through this “very deliberate strategy.”

In fact, more real constituent influence resided in their hands than most of the of the political heads-of-state attending the G8. Consider just a partial representation from Christendom alone: The World Evangelical Alliance, which claims to be a platform for 600 million evangelical Christians; the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, with 75 million in 100 countries; the Russian Orthodox Church, 150 million members; the Church of England, which represents 80 million in the Anglican Communion; the Armenian Apostolic Church, with 10 million followers; the All African Conference of Churches, 120 million; and the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops, whose numbers are not large relative to some other groups, but it has a direct connection into the global Roman Catholic community (1.2 billion members). The World Council of Churches, claiming almost 600 million churchgoers, was represented by a member of its Central Committee - not an inconsequential position.

But remember, it wasn’t just Christendom represented at the World Religions Summit. Other religions and faith groups, some with very politically active components - such as the Canadian Council of Imams - added their weight to the WRS spiritual-political collective.

Yes, leveraging faiths as agencies for global change is a brilliant play, as no other formal categorization spans the planet the same way. Religions transcend political ideologies, economic systems, national boundaries, cultural distinctions, ethnic divisions, generational gaps and historical epochs. In aggregate, followers of religions represents a majority of the planet’s population. In 2010 the Pew Research Center reported that 84% of the worlds population identified as belonging to a specific religion. Of that number Muslims made up 23%, 15% were Hindu, and 31.5% claimed Christianity.⁷

Is it any wonder then, that at the 2008 World Religions Summit in Sapporo, Japan, the closing document read; “Collectively, our religious communities are the world’s largest social networks

which reach into the furthest corners of the earth...”⁸ Religions, therefore, must be leveraged in response to our pressing “planetary crisis.”

While the World Religions Summit is a relatively recent development, the idea of religions coming together and collectively calling for “global action” on the environment is not new. Partnerships between Christian groups, other religions and the politics of deep ecology began in earnest during the 1980s, while drawing from the social changes of the 1970s.

Bridging Faith And Earth

Political, economic, social and religious transformation doesn’t happen in a vacuum. So in order to understand today’s eco-Christian context, we need to traipse into the not-so-distant past.

The intersection of *representative* Christianity and the modern environmental movement can be traced to the first Earth Day in 1970. In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* we read,

“Earth Day that year was an important event for Americans in general, but especially for the churches. It not only raised awareness of the ecological crisis, but many of its promoters leveled *blame* for the mistreatment of nature at the Christian churches...

The criticism stung. Christians have always tended to assume that Christianity is on the side of the good. Clearly the massive degradation of the natural world was not good.”⁹

Already facing the negative reaction that accompanied Lynn White Jr.’s famous 1967 essay, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” charging Christianity as the fundamental cause of environmental degradation, ecclesiastical bodies found themselves scrambling to demonstrate ecological sensitivity. Christianity was at fault, came the message from noted academia, a now-vocal counterculture, and the key Earth Day text - *The Environmental Handbook*. Christianity, therefore, needed to clean up its act and become part of the solution.

Although theological interest in ecological issues preceded this event,¹⁰ the first Earth Day was an important turning point. Leigh Eric Schmidt, writing for *The Harvard Theological Review*, provides a glimpse of the Christian response,

“The first Earth Day in 1970 provided an occasion within the churches for expressing concerns over the environmental crisis. Religious involvement in this ecological awakening was substantial. Both the president and the general secretary of the National Council of Churches endorsed Earth Day in mailings to church leaders in March 1970; they also encouraged the observance of an Environmental Sabbath...”¹¹

Today the “message of green” is firmly embedded within countless individual congregations. Indeed, it is difficult to find a church that don’t place some emphasis on environmental advocacy. This, however, was not the case during the 1970s.

Instead of local pulpits sermonizing on the environment, a current reality today, arguments for ecological “social change” was predominately restricted to upper-level settings; denominational governing bodies, seminaries, and ecclesiastical associations. It was in these circles where debate took place regarding eco-responsibility, the “limits to growth,” land and resource usage, “wealth redistribution,” global interdependence, family planning and overpopulation, the role of govern-

ment, and the ethics of capitalism. “Eco-justice” became a theme for deliberation and application. Such conversations were taking place within the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, the Canadian Council of Churches, the Church of the Brethren, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church, the American Baptist Church and even the Southern Baptist Convention, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church in America and Canada, and the Episcopal Church.¹²

In the United States, the Episcopal denomination found itself on the cutting edge of spiritually-charged ecology. Although ridiculed by some within the broader Anglican Communion, the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine - New York City’s Anglican flagship - was creating history by unabashedly blending mysticism, pantheism, and deep green with Episcopal traditions. Enter, James Park Morton.

In 1972, Morton became Dean of the Cathedral and surrounded himself with mystical and planetary thinkers such as Thomas Berry and William Irwin Thompson. Soon he met environmentalist and humanist philosopher René Dubos¹³ of “think global, act local” fame. As Morton noted in a 1990 interview with *In Context*, “He [Dubos] was the one who really turned me upside down... I went through some very serious reconceptualizing of man’s relation to the Earth as it had been spelled out in the Judeo-Christian tradition.”¹⁴

Morton, already involved in William Thompson’s Lindisfarne Association and the promotion of its New Age vision, worked hard to turn his church into a “Green Cathedral” - a “high place” in sync with planetary thought. Describing a Lent service, Morton explained,

“I would say, ‘Let’s talk about the suffering of the *Earth*, the passion of *water*. Let’s talk about Jesus *in Earth* - God incarnate in the flesh of the Earth, the flesh of water, the flesh of the elements of creation and how that creation is suffering - the *passion of the creation*.’ And that was very effective.”¹⁵ (italics in original).

In 1979 the Cathedral held its first *solar service*, a “Sun Day Celebration.” That same year the Cathedral also hosted an environmental fair and a book signing for the release of James Lovelock’s now-famous work, *Gaia*. “We had the book party here at the cathedral,” Morton reflected in his interview, “and his first public exposition of the Gaia Hypothesis was from our pulpit.”¹⁶

During Morton’s years as Dean his Cathedral became a repository of planetary thought, providing physical space for the Gaia Institute, Lindisfarne’s educational programs, and temporarily housing the universalistic Temple of Understanding. The Cathedral also witnessed - and continues to engage in - a host of “progressive” activities, including interfaith worship services, “Gaia masses” (the first one happened in 1981), lectures on green spirituality, and it has been a place for rallying the forces of eco-politics. In 1985 the Cathedral held its first “Blessing of the Animals.”

Note: Since 1985 the blessing has been an annual event, one year including an elephant.



So much was happening at Morton's Cathedral that by 1994, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, Doug Bandow, wrote the following; "At times one wonders whether the formally Christian Cathedral retains an interest in Christian worship."¹⁷

"...the Cathedral has included Buddhist meditations, African chants, and other non-Christian worship practices in its services. Moreover, Morton has placed a live blue crab and other animals in an Earth Shrine in the church's nave as 'a symbol of ecotheology.' He [said]... that the blessing of animals 'is the profoundest kind of religious experience we can have'."¹⁸

By then other Episcopal churches were starting to come around to Morton's thinking. Bandow writes how one Anglican minster remarked; "...we are now beginning to see that Morton was a pioneer with the courage to challenge orthodoxy that was largely outdated."¹⁹

The decade of the 1970s, however, is important to note for another faith factor. As denominations and leading congregations started to explore environmental themes, an informal yet important eco-theological courtship was taking place with other religions.

Spiritual Summits

Interfaith encounters have long been a springboard for *visions of action*, communicating the desire for a harmonized and universalized existence. This was certainly the aspiration of the first great inter-religious event of the modernist era; Chicago's 1893 World's Parliament of Religions. Here, representatives from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Theosophy, Judaism, Shintoism and Taoism interacted with spokesmen from Christianity, the dominant attending religion. From start to close,²⁰ the Parliament called for the "Brotherhood of Religions" - the *Fatherhood of God* and the *Brotherhood of Man* - the oneness of faiths within a united humanity; "The goal before is Paradise. Eden is to rise."²¹

Although the history of interfaithism is grounded in the first Chicago Parliament, with later advances through the World Congress of Faiths and Vatican II, it was the Temple of Understanding - birthed during the 1960s - that paved the way for connecting ecology and interfaith activity. By working together, it was believed, the religions of the world could apply the principle of interdependence. The purpose of the Temple, according to its own literature, was to "achieve universal recognition of the underlying Oneness of the Family of Man."²²

Paradise could be restored if religions would put aside differences and bring collective power to bear on world issues. A "Spiritual United Nations," aiding the political United Nations, could "endeavor to build a better human society."²³

The Temple of Understanding was the vision of Judith (aka Juliet) Hollister, a housewife in Greenwich, Connecticut, who, while enjoying peanut butter sandwiches with a friend, came up with the idea of housing the religions of the world in one location - a place for understanding and commonality. This thought turned into a meeting with the Assistant-Secretary of the Ford Foundation, William Nims, who encouraged Hollister to flesh out her idea. Soon after a surprise opportunity arose through an encounter with Eleanor Roosevelt's cousin over a dinner party; Would she be willing to discuss the Temple concept with the First Lady?

The following week, with architectural drawings in hand for a house of global faiths, the visit became a reality. Upon seeing the design Mrs. Roosevelt exclaimed, "This is very beautiful - a sort of spiritual United Nations. My dear, how can I help you with your dream?"²⁴

Armed with letters of introduction from Roosevelt, Hollister (pictured right) traveled around the globe meeting with religious and political leaders to see if support could be raised. The results were encouraging, including positive responses from UN Secretary-General U Thant and Henry Luce of *Time-Life* fame, and although the physical Temple was never constructed the organization was rapidly gaining influence. By 1968 the Temple hosted its first interfaith "Spiritual Summit" in Calcutta, thereby demonstrating that religions could cooperate with the totality of humanity in mind.



"What we have to recover is our original unity," mystic Thomas Merton emphasized in his closing speech. "What we have to be is what we already are."²⁵

Summit II took place in Geneva and brought together leaders from a multitude of religious persuasions. Dr. Eugene Blake, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, was a participant. Other delegates were attached to the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Christians and the Church of England's Council on Foreign Relations. The topic: Practical Measures for World Peace, with a sub-theme that broached the question of ecology - "The Population Problem."

Summits III and IV, held at the Harvard Divinity School and Cornell University, explored issues of secularism and culture, and the building of a "World Community." But it was at Summit V where interfaithism and deep-green intersected in a meaningful way.

Hosted by and housed in the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, the Temple of Understanding's fifth Spiritual Summit, from October 19-24, 1975, was extra special. Summit V started with a "colorful and dramatic procession of about 200 religious dignitaries from all over the world."²⁶ Then, over the week, four working panels tackled "The Unity of the Human Community," "Ecology and the Spiritual Environment," "Creating the Future Community," and "Women, Religion and World Community."

Margret Mead, the famous cultural anthropologist, gave the opening address and connected the protection of the atmosphere with our common human unity. Later, astronaut Edgar Mitchell and other delegates debated the role of technology in relation to ecology and evolution. Marcus Braybrooke, President of the World Congress of Faiths and member of the Temple of Understanding's International Committee, recalls the acknowledgement that religious groups "needed to develop experts for advisory positions in practical matters of state and on political decisions."²⁷

But the best was saved for last. On Friday, October 24, Summit V closed by gathering at the United Nations as a united voice. Certainly this was an historic event, for it was the first time in UN history that a combined religious delegation addressed the world political body. Meeting in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium, this extraordinary session started with a meditation by Sri Chinmoy, Director of the UN Meditation Group. After some introductory speeches, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim gave a briefing on the future of the United Nations. Towards the end, Jean Houston presented a

Joint Statement calling for the UN to “consider the creation of an agency which will bring the much needed resources and inspirations of the spiritual traditions to the solution of world problems.”¹¹

The Joint Statement also announced that “the great religions and spiritual movements of our time stand ready to unite around their common spiritual and moral vision.”¹² Human rights, the environment, and world peace were each noted as parts of a new morality and ethics.

In closing, Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast gave a blessing which recognized the sacredness of the UN as “a symbol of human concord, a symbol of the truth that this poor, mistreated earth belongs to all of us together.” The monk continued with a challenge; “As we stand, then like plants standing on a good plot of ground, let us sink our roots deep into our hidden unity...”¹³

One last Spiritual Summit took place before the Temple of Understanding transitioned with the times. Summit VI, held jointly in Morton’s Cathedral and the Church Centre across the street from the United Nations, took place in October 1984. This gathering of spiritual leaders, claiming to represent “over one-half of the Earth’s population,”¹⁴ met to consider and support a document drafted by Robert Muller, then UN Assistant Secretary-General. Muller read his draft text, a *Declaration of Oneness for the Human Family*, to the Summit delegates. This *Declaration* promoted the “convergence of world religions towards a Global Spirituality,” “social justice,” and the need for World Religions “to bear upon the solution of world problems.” Interdependence in the “total order of things” was pressed home; “The Evolutionary task of human life and society to move through the eternal stream of time towards interdependence, communion, and an ever expanding realization of Divinity.”¹⁵

The Temple of Understanding recognized the ecological importance of Summit VI, and especially that it helped to “develop this awareness of the earth as a living being; just as the trees and plants have a consciousness, so does the earth.”

The result of Summit V was profound: “[A] new way of looking at the relationship between faith traditions and ecology began to develop.”¹⁶

Conclusion

During the mid-to-late 1980s a series of groundbreaking events transpired that would embed Christendom within a burgeoning planetary eco-political and spiritual system. These events included the 25th anniversary of the World Wide Fund for Nature and the influential Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders, both of which leveraged Christian influence to promote a fundamentally socialist and pagan idea of planetary oneness and world management. Other developments too were taking place, and combined these formed the foundation upon which much of today’s Christian eco-activism is built.

But this foundation didn’t take shape without a pre-existing framework, one fashioned from the dreams of decades past. *FC*

Endnotes:

¹ Robert A. Sirico, "Despoiler or Problems-solver," National Catholic Register, October 23, 1994. This article can be found on the Acton Institute webpage, www.acton.org/public-policy/environmental-stewardship/theology-e/despoiler-or-problem-solver

² See the June 2010 edition of *Forcing Change* (www.forcingchange.org) for a report on the World Religions Summit.

³ 2010 World Religions Summit, Interfaith Leaders in the G8 Nations, *A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action*, Final Draft, June 23, 2010.

⁴ *Resource Kit*, 2010 World Religions Summit, under the section, "2010 Interfaith Statement" and the subtitle, "Care for Our Earth."

⁵ Besides a primary organizer of the event, Hamilton officially represented the Canadian Council of Churches. Not incidentally, she plays a leadership role in the World Federalist Movement (WFM) - the planet's largest membership organization dedicated to establishing "world government." This is important in that the World Religions Summit was enmeshed in World Federalist webs. Not only was Hamilton directly involved, but the event was brought to Winnipeg through the influence of James Christie, who then served as its Secretary General. Christie, like Hamilton, is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches and was then chairing the Council of the WFM. Topping it off, the Summit was held at the University of Winnipeg with Lloyd Axworthy, president of the UofW, playing an active part in the Summit. Axworthy, too, is a World Federalist - he was and remains the WFM International President.

⁶ As reported by Doug Koop, "World religions summit in Winnipeg will deliver message to G8," *Christian Week*, March 26, 2010. Online edition.

⁷ *The Global Religious Landscape* (Pew Research Center, December 2012), p.9.

⁸ *Call from Sapporo - World Religious Leaders Summit for Peace, July 3, 2008*, see "Introduction."

⁹ H. Paul Santmire and John B. Cobb Jr., "The World of Nature According to the Protestant Tradition," *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.132-133.

¹⁰ Two examples: 1) See Joseph Sittler's "Called to Unity" speech given at the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, November 21, 1961, in New Delhi, India. It should be noted that Sittler, a Lutheran theologian who called for a "theology for the earth," and a handful of other professors and philosophers, were exploring Christian-religious-ecological ideas in the late 1940s and 1950s. 2) By the mid-1960s a group was formed under the umbrella of the National Council of Churches. Known as the Faith-Man-Nature Group, this body of theologians, philosophers and scientists convened annual meetings and published reports such as, *Christians and the Good Earth*, *A New Ethic for a New Earth*, and *Religious Reconstruction for the Environmental Future* (funded by the US Department of Education).

¹¹ Leigh Eric Schmidt, "From Arbor Day to the Environmental Sabbath: Nature, Liturgy, and American Protestantism," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Volume 84, Number 31, July 1991, pp.317-318.

¹² Consider a few examples. The American Baptist Church 1977 *Policy Statement on Energy*, which reads in part, "No country can live for itself. We must cooperate with each other. Cooperation by definition connotes interdependence, a recognition by all of us that we share global responsibility for the stewardship of resources and justice for humanity." The Southern Baptist Convention 1974 *Resolution on Stewardship of God's Creation*, "...we urge Congress and concerned governmental agencies to take aggressive action to conserve our diminishing resources." The Canadian Council of Churches 1973 report, *Whose Man? Whose Resources?*, "...a strong argument can be made for community ownership of all land..." At the 1975 gathering of the World Council of Churches, biologist Charles Birch explained, "A prior requirement of any global society is that it be so organized that human life and other living creatures on which human life depends can be sustained indefinitely within the limits of the Earth. A second requirement is that it be sustained at a quality that makes possible fulfillment of human life for all people. A society so organized to achieve both these ends we can call a sustainable global society... with a new sort of science and technology governed by a new sort of economics and politics." (quoted by Dieter t. Hellel, "Eco-Justice Ethics: A Brief Overview," *The World's Religions: A Contemporary Reader*, published by Fortress Press, 2011, pp.184-185).

¹³ Rene Dubos was a noted microbiologist who spent the bulk of his professional career at the Rockefeller Institute and Rockefeller University. He wrote numerous books and his *So Human An Animal* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) received the Pulitzer Prize for Nonfiction. *Only One Earth* (W.W. Norton, 1972), a book he co-authored with Barbara Ward, was commissioned by Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, to act as a framework report for the UN event. The cost of producing the report was fully covered by the Ford Foundation, the World Bank, and the Albert Schweitzer Chair at Columbia University. The last chapter suggested a "planetary order" and "planetary interdependence," closing with the call for "an ultimate loyalty to our single, beautiful, and vulnerable planet Earth" (p.220, second last paragraph).

¹⁴ Alan AtKisson interviews James Parks Morton, "The Green Cathedral," *In Context: A Quarterly of Human Sustainable Culture*, Winter 1990. This can be read online at www.context.org/iclib/ic24/morton (Accessed January 28, 2014).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Doug Badow, *The Politics of Envy: Statism as Theology* (Transaction Publishers, 1994), p.55.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.55.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.55.

²⁰ The closing of the Parliament repeatedly touched on the "brotherhood of man," however, the final speech was controversial in that Jesus Christ was expressed as the sole and universal unifier; "Jesus of Nazareth is the universal Homo, the essential Vir, the Son of human nature. Blending in himself all races, ages, sexes, capacities, temperaments, Jesus is the archetypal man, the ideal hero, the consummate incarnation, the symbol of perfected human nature, the sum total of unfolded, fulfilled humanity, the Son of Mankind. Towering above all mankind, yet permeating all mankind, Jesus Christ is mankind's one great Inductive Man... the Eternal God's own infinite solar light. See how he absorbs and assimilates into his own perfect religion all that is good in all other religions - the symbolism of Judea, the aspiration of Egypt, the aestheticism of Greece, the majesty of Rome, the hopefulness of Persia, the conservatism of China, the mysticism of India, the enthusiasm of Arabia, the energy of Teutonia, the versatilities of Christendom." George Dana Boardman, "Christ the Unifier of Mankind," *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893* (Open Court, 1993, edited by Richard H. Seager), p.466.

²¹ Speech of Emil Gustav Hirsch, "Elements of Universal Religion," *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism*, p.224.

²² *The Temple of Understanding* (1982 Temple brochure), introductory page.

²³ Ibid., p.3.

²⁴ See Marcus Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope: One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue* (SCM Press, 1992), p.94. Braybrooke, who is the President of the World Congress of Faiths, devotes a fair amount of space to documenting the history and early activities of the Temple of Understanding.

²⁵ *The Temple of Understanding* (1982 Temple brochure), p.11.

²⁶ Ibid., p.11.

²⁷ Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope*, p.101.

²⁸ *The Temple of Understanding*, p.15.

²⁹ Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope*, p.102.

³⁰ Ibid., p.102.

³¹ Ibid., p.107.

³² Ibid., p.107.

³³ Temple of Understanding website; www.templeofunderstanding.org/wwa_Faith_Ecology.html. Note: this site has now changed. The quoted text comes from the July 25, 2009 screenshot.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

By J.R. Nyquist.

Editor's Note: This article was originally printed in Volume 3, Issue 5 of *Forcing Change*. However, it's a timeless piece that fits with the unstated theme of this edition.

Diogenes the cynic was a Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C. who walked the streets of Athens carrying a lamp in broad daylight. People asked what he was doing. He said, "I am just looking for a human being." After Plato offered Socrates' definition of humanity as "featherless bipeds," Diogenes brought a plucked chicken to Plato's Academy, saying, "Behold! I have brought you a human being." When captured by pirates and sold into slavery his new master asked what his trade was. "Governing men," he replied, adding that he wished to belong to someone who needed a master. One morning, when Diogenes was basking in the sun, Alexander the Great came to see him. Wishing to do the philosopher a kindness, Alexander asked if there was any favor he could bestow. "Yes," replied Diogenes. "Stand out of my sunlight."

The integrity of Diogenes has much to do with his independence. He was not interested in advancing his career, winning the favor of princes, or making money. He didn't flatter his teachers or the public. When he spoke, there was no reason to distrust what he said. He had nothing to sell, so he had no motive to flatter or manipulate. In today's world we have become very comfortable buying and selling things. It is also our habit to say what is pleasing to our superiors. More and more, our culture emphasizes the necessity of having a career, of promoting oneself, of making money and impressing other people.

To be wise, to love wisdom, requires a different emphasis than that of today's culture. It requires an emphasis on truth and clarity. To be successful today, to advance your career, truth and clarity aren't always appreciated. Perhaps you have heard that the customer is always right. And everyone with common sense knows that the boss is right – *because he is the boss*. Despite our egalitarian pretenses, rank is an inescapable reality of human existence. And when rank and privilege are abused, when truth is disregarded, what is the underling to do? Should he, like Socrates, drink the hemlock? Alexander the Great admired the nobility of Diogenes, because Diogenes revered his own clarity and the truth above all mortal masters. The Macedonian said, "If I were not Alexander, then I should wish to be Diogenes."

The crisis of our time is a crisis of intellectual integrity. We are suffering a deluge, in which common sense is drowned by the career logic of millions of nonentities. They are nonentities because they are careerists, because they have put something trivial above what is non-trivial. Their indifference to truth is seen in their daily compromises, their evasions, their manipulations of each other. They have become accustomed to subtle

distortions, euphemisms and rationalizations. “I have to make a living,” says the salesman. “I have to win votes,” says the politician. “I have to raise my ratings,” says the television personality. “I have to keep my job,” says the employee.

Quite naturally, ducking and weaving through reality is sometimes required for survival – or so we think. But survival is easier than we imagine, and the truth is more important than the supposed glory of a chosen career path. To become a collaborator against the truth, to participate in a regime of self-deception, should not have been normalized. We censor ourselves because we don’t want to be unpopular. We don’t want to offend our “superiors.” But the salvation of a country – of any country – usually boils down to the willingness of one respected figure taking an unpopular stand, or one subordinate risking the wrath of his superior.

Consider the significance of *Christ on the cross*. Read the words of Mathew 16:25: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

This is not a guide to success in the popularly accepted sense. It is something far more important. Ask yourself, honestly: What is the value of a false position? The policy of holding your tongue and deceiving others by omission is not workable. Why should we waste our time ducking and cringing? To hide what we think, and disguise our true thoughts, is to act the part of a slave or underling who serves his master by fooling him. This is not a position of self respect. It is a position of retreat and compromise.

Isn’t it better to speak the truth? **FC**

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