

Seven Great Post-Biblical Revelations

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1. Evolution understood in a sacred way is a grand unifying, inspiring, empowering worldview.

- a) "A sacred way" means honoring traditional religion, honoring nature, and honoring the wisdom of evolution.
- b) This perspective reconciles science and religion and bridges different religions as well.
- c) This worldview, or vista, can inspire us to fulfill the Great Work of our time: ensuring a just, healthy, beautiful, sustainably lifegiving future by co-creating evolution's (God's) next great adventure in cooperation and complexity: humanity living in a symbiotic, mutually enhancing relationship with both nature and our technology.

2. Human language is inherently symbolic, meaningful, and consequential.

- a) Words are maps, not the territory; they are menus, not the meal.
- b) Reality will always transcend whatever we can say or think about it.
- c) All language for Utimacy is metaphorical; God words can be analogously true, but never literally so.
- d) We are meaning-making animals; we cannot *not* make events and processes mean something. Even if we say something is meaningless, we're making it mean that. To live with language is to live in meaningful world.
- e) Meaning is manifold and transforms over time. There is never only one right interpretation of anything. Rather than being true or false, meanings are more or less useful, more or less inspiring, more or less empowering, etc, and our understanding of these will necessarily change over time (see 5i and 5j, below).
- f) What we say, think, and believe about something makes a difference; it shapes our perceptions and emotions by becoming the lens through which we interpret our experience.

3. "The universe" is a sacred story of nested creativity and cooperation at ever wider scales and levels of complexity.

- a) There's no such *thing* as "the universe". What we call "the universe" is not a thing, nor is it a place. It is an ongoing process of divine creativity, a sacred evolutionary epic.
- b) There is a clear direction to the creativity of the Whole, which is discussed in number 5, below.
- c) The Great Story – the 14 billion-year epic of evolution told as a sacred story – honors and expands traditional religious stories and doctrines. It does this in two ways: (1) by uplifting the symbolic/cosmological truth of traditional religious concepts and showing how traditional beliefs and doctrines are more meaningful, more real, and more compelling when interpreted metaphorically and cosmologically, rather than literally. (2) It also does so by showing how traditional religious values – such as love, compassion, generosity, repentance, forgiveness, transformation, integrity, self-responsibility, mindfulness, and so forth – are at the very heart of what is needed for us as individuals and a species to continue to mature and fulfill our evolutionary potential.
- d) Reality is made up of creative "holons": wholes that are part of larger wholes that are part of larger wholes, etc, like nesting dolls. Every holon has an inner, outer, individual, and collective experience. As Thomas Berry has said, "The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects." A subject acts; an object is acted upon.

4. "God" is a legitimate, intimate proper name for that Ultimate Creative Reality (the largest nesting doll) which transcends yet includes all other levels of reality.

- a) God certainly may be more than an intimate personification of the cosmic evolutionary Process, but a God that is both omnipresent and immanent, as most religious traditions affirm, cannot *possibly* be less than this.
- b) "God" is a proper name for the largest scale Whole that is more than the sum of its parts – that Ultimate Reality which embraces yet is more than all other realities, measurable and immeasurable. God is not a Supreme Being, an aloof Creator residing outside a clockwork universe. God *is* Supreme Being, the great "I Am" of existence, revealed in and through everything in the cosmos. God is as intimate with us, and as present, as our own heartbeat.
- c) Calling the greatest whole "the universe" may be advantageous for the scientific pursuit, but in a religious context it has serious liabilities, notably, objectifying, depersonalizing, and equating the All with only the measurable.
- d) "Satan," or "the devil," is a traditional personification or personalization of the process of entropy – the violent, chaotic, destructive side of the cosmos. That which tempts us, tests us, or would seemingly have us choose some path other than that which would serve our higher good and serve the whole, and that which we reject and abhor, is often seen, from our vantage point, as demonic.
- e) Entropy/evil must be dealt with nonviolently (if we are to be effective); it can't be eradicated. The greatest evils in human history, without exception, have been committed by those who were trying to eradicate evil from the world. Hitler, Stalin, the Inquisition, and the Cambodian killing fields are only four of innumerable examples of this.
- f) Throughout the entire history of the cosmos, its violent, chaotic, destructive side has consistently been held within the larger arc of creative evolution. Said another way, Time/God can be counted on to take bad news and breakdowns, and from these create good news, new possibilities, and new opportunities. Christologically, the Gospels and the book of Revelation in the Bible are making a similar point, using the events and symbols of their time.

5. Time has a direction. "Creation" is in a process of becoming more than it was before and becoming more intimate with itself over time, and humanity is now an integral part of this process.

- a) Evolution is going somewhere; there's a consistent direction to divine/cosmic creativity.
- b) Traditionally, many scientists and theologians have recognized that the cosmos tends toward greater differentiation, greater complexity, and greater self-awareness over time (J. Huxley, Teilhard de Chardin). Recently,

direction has also been seen in improvements in the way information is retained and passed into the future (J. Maynard Smith and C. Szmarthy). And we are also now beginning to appreciate how evolution has produced, and continues to produce, cooperation at ever increasing scale and evolvability (J. Stewart, P. Corning, R. Wright).

c) Why cooperate? Those who cooperate can outcompete non-cooperators and evolve more effectively.

d) Greater scale requires that the organism/organization overcome a fundamental barrier to cooperation, namely, self-interest and the natural advantage of freeloading and cheating. This can be done only by ensuring that each individual in the system personally benefits by their cooperating and pays for their not cooperating. (The results or effects of cooperating and non-cooperating must be fully captured by the system.) For cooperative evolution to increase in scale and complexity, serving the whole must be in the self-interest of each individual, and the costs of cheating, freeloading, lying, oppressing, and polluting, must be borne by those who engage in such behaviors.

e) Some form of vertical management (internal, external, or both) is required for expanded levels of cooperation. In the human realm, this will take two forms: an inner, spiritual development, which includes expanding one's sense of self (see below), and an outer system of governance (laws, taxes, incentives) which capture effects, good and bad, and distributes wealth in lifegiving ways, for the whole *and* for the individuals.

f) Our future (destiny?) as a species is to design and manage all human programs, policies, activities, and institutions such that by contributing to others and serving our larger planetary self we personally benefit, and that there are effective disincentives to lying, cheating, freeloading, stealing, polluting, dominating, oppressing, etc.

g) Sensory evolution (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) is the universe becoming more intimate with itself.

h) Humanity is the universe/evolution become conscious of itself, and growing ever more conscious over time.

i) Because of the developmental nature of the evolutionary process, something that is healthy and even necessary for life to thrive at one time can become problematic or deadly later. For example, two billion years ago it was optimal for life (bacteria) for there to be less than 2% oxygen in the atmosphere. Today, however, anything less than 15% oxygen would mean the end of virtually all animals, including us.

j) Beliefs, a very recent evolutionary development, are not exempt from the same dynamic. Beliefs and interpretations that were vital and lifegiving at one time in history, if not updated, can become counterproductive and stifling at another time, when our world and we are at a different stage in our development.

6. As a species and as individuals, we are maturing and our self-interest is expanding.

a) As our communications/thought processes evolve (speech, math, writing, science, computation, Internet), and as our technologies of discovery evolve (microscope, telescope, computers, etc), so do we; and vice versa.

b) Maturing means, among other things, loving, trusting, and feeling compassion more broadly than before.

c) Expansive self-interest is natural to the process of evolving emotionally and spiritually.

d) As we mature, our circles of care, concern, compassion, and commitment naturally enlarge.

e) Our understanding and experience of the divine evolves as we do.

f) Spiral Dynamics (S.D.) is an enormously useful model for understanding human values and complexity, as well as psychological, social, and cultural development.

g) Second tier consciousness (Yellow/Turquoise in S.D.) tends to be marked by the following:

- A decrease in fear and increase in trust/faith in the process
- Trust in the breakdowns, problems, chaos, setbacks, and difficulties of life
- Circles of love, compassion, care, and commitment that include the entire community of life
- An ability to honor the whole spiral in oneself, others, and cross-culturally
- A willingness to accept and support the developmental journeys of others
- Celebration of one's cosmic, Earth, continental, bioregional, cultural, religious, & personal stories
- Awareness that loving others and honoring nature is also loving and honoring God
- A tendency to use decision-making processes that value diversity and differences
- Passionate commitment to the health and evolution of the whole
- Freedom from addiction to self-destructive behaviors and habits of thought

h) The leap to second-tier thinking can be facilitated by born-again and enlightenment experiences, 12-step work, and other transformational programs and processes. Thomas Berry has advised of the need to "reinvent the human at the species level," which also points to this momentous shift.

7. Death, destruction and chaos are natural and generative. Said another way, death and resurrection are integral to the cosmos and necessary for the continuing evolution of life and consciousness.

a) Through the *ecological* sciences and whole-Earth awareness, we now know that a planet without death would be a planet with no children. Spatial finitude offers no other possibility.

b) Through the *evolutionary* sciences we have learned that a planet without death would be a planet with no complexity, with no opportunity to experiment with new forms and build on success (natural selection).

c) Through the *astronomical* sciences, we have learned that death is intrinsic to the heavens – that is, even stars die. More, we now know that only through the death and material recycling of previous generations of stars was it possible for God/the cosmos to give birth to planets and life, because all chemical elements other than hydrogen come into being inside stars (stellar nucleosynthesis).

d) No generations before our own could have known in such detail that death is natural and pervasive in the universe. Nor that resurrection – new life, new possibilities – is so closely partnered with death. Nor that there are innumerable examples in Earth's history of emergencies calling forth emergence, of crises prompting creativity.