

## Richard Rohr

### “Radical Grace and Evolutionary Spirituality”

Episode 15 of The Advent of Evolutionary Christianity  
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**Richard Rohr** is a Franciscan priest who founded the Center for Action and Contemplation (in New Mexico, USA). A contributing editor for *Sojourners* magazine and a contributor to *Tikkun* magazine, he is the author of many books and educational programs, including, *The Naked Now: Learning to See As the Mystics See*; *Why Be Catholic?*; and *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

This is one of the best dialogues for presenting a variety of key Christian concepts (e.g., a **relational view of God** and a sense of **Incarnation as old as the Universe**)—but always as a way of calling forth **positive emotional responses** and for **nurturing bonds with other faith traditions**. As well, Rohr speaks of the central role that **mystical experience** plays in fostering faith—**faith as “trust,” not “beliefs”**—in the face of not-knowing (even doubt), and **science’s role in modeling an openness to change and expanding mystery**. He also discusses how an **evolutionary view of reality** can help us cultivate a **nondualistic mind**, and how viewing **the human life trajectory as entailing two major phases** offers practical guidance. Rohr also speaks of the importance of his **Franciscan** tradition for nurturing **reverence for Creation**—and he does so without troubling over whether and how his views are distinct from pantheism or any other theological tenets that Catholicism has traditionally established firm boundaries against.

#### SUGGESTED AUDIENCES

This dialogue with Richard Rohr is highly recommended for any person or group who values faith experience, emotional wellbeing, and social harmony over doctrinal rigidity and allegiances. Accordingly, listeners would be advised to be open to stretching beyond ancient understandings of Christian faith. Nonetheless, Fr. Rohr’s humble, generous way of being, combined with a deep love and thorough knowledge of scripture and tradition, allow him to say

some very prophetic and radical things in ways that a diversity of faith perspectives are willing to hear. In fact, many find his bold yet inclusive approach to be refreshingly alluring.

Because Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest, this dialogue is especially recommended for all Roman Catholics who are eager to hear new possibilities for the tradition. This episode is highly recommended, also, for Emerging Church, Integral, and Progressive Christians—as well as for young people and secularists who have little patience for theological and biblical hermeneutics, but who yearn for renewed hope and other emotional and practical benefits.

## **BLOG COMMENT**

### **Ellen S. says:**

I have listened to many of these discussions and have drunk deeply from the well. This particular one needs to be lifted up as a singularly important dialogue. I made notes, was astounded, and many of my preconceptions of Catholic viewpoints were shattered by this insightful discussion.

Richard Rohr underscored how it is true that “being Jesus-like” is so much more important than espousing a Christ-centered doctrine. His truths seem so obvious, but are difficult to bring to fruition in one’s own life. It does speak to the clarity of his vision that we say, “Of course,” yet have so much trouble honing to his principles. Bravo! So much work to be done.

### **Arek says:**

I’m from Poland. When I first read Richard Rohr’s book, *Everything Belongs*, I knew I’d been waiting for such words all my life. Now, when I’ve just finished *The Naked Now* and listened to your conversation, I realized and I’m sure I had to wait for this moment for so long. It seems to me that now it’s the time to begin the second half of my life. I’m 43 and I’m much more interested in ‘the content’ rather than ‘the container,’ as Father Richard put it in the conversation. Thank you, Father Richard, for your great words—and thank you, Michael, for the great idea of the conversations.

## **KEYWORD TOPICS**

**Roman Catholicism, Vatican II, Franciscans, Baptism in the Spirit, Pentecostal, New Jerusalem Community, The Center for Action and Contemplation, dualistic thinking** (criticism of), **both-and thinking, contemplation, the contemplative mind, wisdom, patience, social action, orality, Enneagram, Jesus** (Jewish heritage of), **Paul** (as mystic), **developmental stages of life** (two halves of), **compassion, Christian virtues, evolutionary perspective** (as supporting “beginner’s mind”), **mystery, humility, mysticism** (acceptance of “unknowing”), **biblical faith** (certainty as being in opposition to), **God** (“mystery” as importance character of), **Augustine, Sallie McFague, metaphors and models of God, Jennifer Michael**

**Hecht, doubt** (and the importance of questioning), **Mother Teresa** (her doubt as laudable), **Jesus** (through which Spirit became flesh), **the Incarnation and the Christ** (as extending back to the birth of the Universe), **biblical passages** (that reconcile Christ with an ancient universe), **deep time** (for appreciating the Incarnation), **St. Francis, St. Bonaventure, reverence for Creation, Bruce Sanguin, Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, self-expansion as an expression of the universe, Luther, Calvin, the Reformation** (its shedding of religious mysticism as an unfortunate consequence), **theories of salvation** (as less important than mystical experience), **Trinity** (critique of), **God as “relationship”, “God” as a verb, perichoresis, Cappadocian Fathers, Martin-Buber, Great Chain of Being, Newtonian cause-and-effect** (inadequacy of), **religion** (as not beliefs but “participation”), **Epic of Evolution, Big History, empathy, compassion, Einstein, Unified Field, Jesus** (as inclusive, not exclusive, Son of God), **revelation** (everything as informing), **global heart, Thomas Merton** (as one of his teachers), **inclusive religion** (importance of), **Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, epistemology, Richard Dawkins, New Atheists, Simone Weil, Jesus** (as role model)

## BIOGRAPHY

**Fr. Richard Rohr** entered the Franciscans in 1961 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1970, receiving his Master’s Degree in Theology from Dayton that same year. He founded the New Jerusalem Community in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1971, and the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1986, where he serves as Founding Director. He lives in a hermitage behind his Franciscan community in Albuquerque and divides his time between local work and preaching and teaching on all continents.

Rohr considers the proclamation of the Gospel to be his primary call, and he uses many different platforms to communicate that message. Scripture as liberation, the integration of action and contemplation, community building, peace and justice issues, male spirituality, the Enneagram, and eco-spirituality are all themes that he addresses in service of the Gospel.

He is probably best known for his numerous audio and video programs, and through the Center’s newsletter, *Radical Grace*. He is a contributing editor/writer for *Sojourners* magazine and recently published a seven-part Lenten Series for *National Catholic Reporter*. His website is: <http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/richard-rohr>

## SUPPLEMENTARY VIDEOS

There are many superb videos of Richard Rohr freely available online. Here are two:

“Falling Upward” (2:30 mins) - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4og\\_LyEsiN0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4og_LyEsiN0)

“Why Males Need Initiation” (12:00) - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpaDbjx8RFA&feature=related>

## SUPPLEMENTARY WEBPAGE

Listener comments to this audio can be found, and new ones posted, at the following url:  
<http://evolutionarychristianity.com/blog/general/richard-rohr-evolutionary-humility-and-radical-grace/>

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

**1. The two halves of life.** The topic that Richard Rohr talks about the most in this dialogue is the subject of his 2011 book, *Falling Upward*, subtitled, “A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life.” He briefly describes the two halves this way:

The first half of life is basically giving yourself an important **identity**, a sense of **boundaries**, some **impulse control**, some laws, some structure, some importance. You’ve got to do that. I guess the psychologists would say it’s building your ego structure... If **the first half of life is creating your container**, then **the second half of life is “What are the contents?”** What’s this container meant to hold?

He then goes on to list some of the “Christian virtues” that could be nurtured in the second half of life, given an adequate “container” that was built up in the first half of life.

**Question 1A:** *Is there a development model of the life journey that you have already found useful in reflecting on your own life and transitions? If so, what is it and how has it helped you?*

**Question 1B:** *Discuss Richard Rohr’s “two halves” view of the human life journey, from the standpoint of whether it is something you may find useful for reflecting on your own life journey (and perhaps for helping you better understand the challenges that friends and family members face at different points in their lives).*

**2. Religion as stuck in the “first half of life.”** Richard Rohr, a priest in the Roman Catholic tradition, applies his “two halves of life” model to **critiquing religion** itself. He says,

We need the first half, but you can’t stop there. You have to integrate that with what I call the tasks and the goals of the second half of life. And that’s my big disappointment in so much of organized religion. I’ve been **a priest forty years** now, and it seems to me **we keep doing the tasks of the first half of life over and over and over again.**

**Question 2:** *Was that an insightful comment for you in your own experience with religious institutions? If so, how? If not, how is a religious institution you are familiar with actualizing the “fruit” of the spiritual quest — not just attending to the needs of the institution or its own identity but actually doing important work in maturing the hearts and minds of its members and in bringing goodness into the world?*

**3. Where “evolution” enters the picture.** About a quarter of the way into the dialogue, the conversation moves to the theme of this series. Michael Dowd asks Richard Rohr to “share a little bit about how an evolutionary understanding of reality, an evidential understanding of reality—that is, a science-based view of reality—has made a difference in your own faith walk.”

Rohr responds,

Wow! You know, Michael, it's become almost foundational. If what's happening is evolving, then of course you've never *got* it. **It keeps you with a beginner's mind.** It keeps you with that kind of **humility**: an expectation of an open horizon. I think the bane of religion (and not just Christianity) has been this closing down of such openness way too early, because of the assumption that "I understand; I know!" And I think this is the **arrogance** that so many people have come to resent in religious people—not just Christians, in other religions too.

**'Knowing' in the mystics was always balanced with 'unknowing.'** And that putting together of knowing with unknowing is for me **the very heart of biblical faith.** Now when you eliminate all unknowing and make it all knowing—as in, "I'm certain about everything and I understand everything"—in my opinion, you're outside the realm of biblical faith. You no longer have people who are humble or in awe before reality. What an evolutionary perspective does is necessitate that you're always in kindergarten, you're always in awe, you're always expecting more. You're always allowing God to be mystery. You never assume that you totally understand.

**Question 3:** *What comes up for you in reflecting on Richard Rohr's response? Especially, what do you think of his recasting **unknowing and doubt as valuable states of mind**? Do you agree or disagree, and why?*

4. **God, mystery, and mysticism.** Richard Rohr quotes **Augustine** favorably, saying, "If you comprehend it, it's not God." He continues,

We've walked around for centuries acting as if God is in our pocket. There's no notion of Incarnation, of the deep meaning of time and unfolding and **mystery.** So I'm profoundly grateful for any **evolutionary understanding.** I think it returns us to the **mystical** level of all religion, and that's where all the power is at.

**Question 4A:** *Do you share Richard Rohr's enthusiasm for **mystery**—for having gratitude for spiritual or mystical experiences, exactly as they are, rather than feeling compelled to understand and explain those experiences? Please elaborate.*

**Question 4B:** *Is Richard's enthusiasm for **science's role in expanding rather than diminishing mystery** something that you already have been sensing? Or has your experience been the opposite—that the more you learn about the universe and the workings of evolution, the more your concept of God or your faith is diminished or threatened?*

5. **Growing beyond dualistic thinking.** A central theme in Richard Rohr's teachings has been moving beyond "dualistic" thinking into more nuanced forms, especially "both-and" thinking. He says,

**I found dualistic thinking to be as much on the Left as it was on the Right.** It was just a different vocabulary, but it still always split the universe into the good guys and the bad guys—totally right or totally wrong.

He also says,

We don't need to go around creating enemies all the time. If even 10% of what a person is saying is right, **why can't I be grateful for that 10% and build on that**, build bridges toward it instead of immediately blocking it off?

**Question 5A:** *Reflecting on your own life journey, can you think of a **controversy** that you once perceived and judged in a "dualistic" way, but that you later came to see in more nuanced terms? And can you recall an event, a person, or an insight that helped you move beyond dualistic (either-or; right-wrong) thinking on that particular issue? (Please elaborate.)*

**Question 5B:** *[Continuing from 1A] Did that shift in thinking make you more **willing to act** and perhaps more capable of wise action? Or did your newfound ability to see both sides of an issue actually dampen your enthusiasm for taking action?*

**Question 5C:** *For any controversy or matter in which you moved from dualistic to more nuanced thinking, did you find yourself having more **compassion** than before? And in what ways? (Again, you may wish to reflect on a specific example.)*

**Question 5D:** *Is there a **positive role for "dualistic thinking"**? That is, are those who speak or act from a standpoint of "I'm right, and they are wrong!" have a role to play in cultural and societal evolution? If so, what is that role? (It may be useful to think of a specific example.)*

6. **"The contemplative mind" for growth in wisdom and patience.** The organization that Richard Rohr founded is called the **Center for Action and Contemplation**. In this particular interview, he talks about how a "contemplative mind" can assist in action in the world. He says,

**The contemplative mind doesn't create unnecessary dualisms.** It doesn't create unnecessary problems. And for me, that's been the great loss to Western Christianity, that we don't *know* that. We've almost got a PhD in creating either-or thinking. It makes you an expert in saying "but...but...but" instead of "and." I would say that's become the undertone to almost all the things I try to teach: a kind of recognition of **the contemplative mind** and that when you bring that to the social issues, you just have much **greater wisdom and much greater patience** when you don't have immediate success.

On the CAC website, their short mission statement makes the connection in this way:

We are a center for experiential education, rooted in the Gospels, **encouraging the transformation of human consciousness through contemplation**, and equipping people to be instruments of peaceful change in the world.

**Question 6A:** *Have you already had some exposure to "contemplative" forms of Christianity? If so, how? Do you have a sense of **the ways in which contemplation is practiced** and what its intended benefits are? If not, what questions do you have about contemplative Christian practice?*

**Question 6B:** *Richard Rohr uses contemplation to bring "greater wisdom and much greater patience" to engagement in social issues. **What tools or techniques, if any, have you found helpful in cultivating greater wisdom and patience** in yourself?*

7. **The liberal and conservative impulses in evolution.** Host Michael Dowd concurs with Richard Rohr on the importance of “both-and” thinking. Dowd says,

I have often said that liberals who trash conservatives and conservatives who trash liberals—neither one of them really *gets* evolution, because **evolution is a dance of a conserving element and a liberating element**. I mean, **DNA is conservative**. It holds onto that which worked in the past, that which was vital to the stability or the survivability or whatever of the organism or the society. And that’s an essential component of any society or any being, for that matter. But there’s also a need for that which transcends what has been before, that which **pushes the boundaries of the possible**, expands the circles of inclusion. And this progressive or liberal element is also essential to evolution. Both are necessary.

**Question 7A:** *Did you find Dowd’s reflection on **the importance of both a conservative and a liberal impulse** in evolution to be helpful? In what ways? Alternatively, in what ways do you see things differently?*

**Question 7B:** *Call to mind a particular issue that is divisive in your culture or church and that troubles you. Now consider: Where (if at all) might a stronger **appreciation** for both the conservative impulse and the liberal impulse be helpful in finding a way forward?*

**Question 7C:** *In learning that evolution itself exemplifies a melding of both conservative and liberal impulses, do you perhaps **feel more hope and trust** in how the problems of the world might ultimately resolve? Please elaborate.*

8. **“Your gift is your sin, and your sin is your gift.”** Dowd mentions that his first encounter with Richard Rohr’s ideas was via an audio program on the **Enneagram**. Rohr says that this is not a main subject of his, so it is not further discussed—except that Rohr characterizes the understanding it brings as, “Your gift is your sin—and your sin is your gift, and you can’t have one without the other.”

**Question 8A:** *Have any of you experienced the Enneagram model of human differences in a meaningful way—and would you share with the others what you found **most helpful** about it?*

**Question 8B:** *The idea that “your gift is your sin and your sin is your gift”: Are you attracted to this notion as a means for **nurturing compassion** for yourself and for others, or are you cautious about it as perhaps **justifying complacency**?—or maybe both? Say more.*

**Question 8C:** *Take a moment to reflect on your own inventory of **standard complaints** about yourself or significant others. See if you can find ways in which the negative characteristics that you criticize might actually be the “shadow” side of a trait or propensity that you value or admire? Discuss any insights that come from that reflection.*

9. **Mother Teresa’s doubt as “the highest level of religion.”** Richard Rohr talks about “doubt” in a way that portrays it not only as a normal aspect of spirituality but as **a kind of spiritual virtue**. He says,

Remember a few years ago when the public press was **shocked that Mother Teresa was suffering from so much doubt**? The very fact that they were so shocked by this tells me how far we've moved from the biblical tradition. In my opinion, **she reflected the highest level of religion—and that is this living in partial darkness**. We localized the whole act of faith so much in the head that doubt became an intellectual dilemma. That's not where it's localized. It's much bigger than that.

**Question 9A:** *When you first learned of the depths of Mother Teresa's doubt and the suffering it caused her, **what was your reaction**? Did that disclosure sadden you? Or perhaps madden you—that her personal, private correspondence was made public? Or, did it have a positive effect on your sense of her—either in the way that Richard Rohr describes or perhaps in making her more like any of us?*

**Question 9B:** *What do you think of Richard Rohr's assertion that Mother Teresa's doubt is an example of **"the highest level of religion"**?*

**Question 9C:** *Are there **examples from your own life** where doubt and darkness led to gifts of grace and transformation? If so, is there anything you'd be willing to share about this?*

10. **Christ and Incarnation as old as the Universe.** Richard Rohr explains his notion of Jesus, the Christ, and the Incarnation in a way that **celebrates an ancient Universe**. He says,

Because I'm a Christian, **I believe that the great trump card of Christianity is the mystery that we call Incarnation**. We believe the spiritual world became flesh in Jesus. It became human, actually became material and physical. And the hiding place, or the revelation place, of God is the material world. Now if what I believe is true, then the human Incarnation began 2,000 years ago. But **the mystery of the enfleshment of Spirit began approximately 14 billion years ago**. That's the *real* birth of Christ. Now if you say that to Christians, they're shocked. So I point them to the prologue to John's Gospel, the hymn in the beginning of *Colossians*, the hymn in the beginning of *Ephesians*, and the first chapter of the first letter of *John*. These passages all say, without any equivocation, that Christ existed from all eternity.

**Question 10:** *What is your response to Richard Rohr's understanding of **Jesus, the Christ, and the Incarnation in an ancient Universe**? How important is it to you to have **congruence** in your religious faith and scientific understanding? What about the biblical passages that Richard cites? Is it helpful for you to know that one can find passages in the **Bible** that reconcile the incarnation of the Christ 2,000 years ago with the existence of an extremely ancient universe?*

11. **Benefits of a deep-time perspective.** Michael Dowd consistently points to the concept of "deep time" as something that all of his invited guests not only accept but have integrated with their Christian faith. Richard Rohr explains his enthusiasm for doing so:

**Deep time** is not just taking my moment as if it's the reference point, the be-all and end-all. Rather, I must look to how I fit in to past and future. How am I connected to this universal history, this geological history, this history of civilization? **How do I situate myself inside of all of that history?** This seems to me to be the real appreciation for **Incarnation**. Incarnation is planted inside of the



very nature of the world that God created. **God is revealing God's self in every creature.** Every creature is a Word of God.

**Question 11A:** *Did you find this passage about deep time helpful? How or how not?*

**Question 11B:** *Do you have as much passion and enthusiasm **for seeing your own life within the context of "deep time"** as Richard Rohr and Michael Dowd seem to? If not, would that degree of passion be something you would like to nurture in your own faith journey? Is this series in any way helping you do that? Alternatively, if a deep-time perspective doesn't attract you, what is the core of your faith or worldview that helps you thrive despite the vastness of the universe (in both space and time)?*

12. **The Franciscan reverence for Creation.** Richard Rohr gives a quick summary of **the role of St. Francis and St. Bonaventure** in molding the worldview of the Roman Catholic monastic order that he himself is part of: the Franciscans. He says,

My [spiritual] father **St. Francis** understood this notion in a very romantic way that the world has learned to love. When he called everything "brother" and "sister," he gave **subjectivity** to everything. He gave a certain kind of **equality** to everything, which no one had done in precisely that way, in that beautiful a way. Then we had an early mystic in the Order, **St. Bonaventure**. He was a philosopher who took the experience of Francis and made an entire philosophical system out of it, in which he made that very point: that every step of creation, **every piece of creation is another Word of God.** Each is another footprint, another fingerprint or revelation of the mystery. So the whole distinction between sacred and profane just doesn't work anymore. It's not even useful or helpful. It's not *true*. There's only one universe. **It's all sacred, and it's all revealing the divine.**

**Question 12:** *Were you already familiar with how the Franciscan Order and its esteemed founders (Francis and Bonaventure) applied **reverence for Creation** as a central tenet of their faith walk? And to what degree is your own perspective in alignment with this aspect of the Franciscan worldview?*

13. **STORY: "The universe is inside me, too."** In several of the dialogues in this series, host **Michael Dowd** makes the same point about how a shift to an evolutionary understanding of the universe can serve as a kind of **awakening**—of helping **expand one's sense of intimacy and identity with this vast universe.** He tells this story about having witnessed a nun navigate this ecstatic shift in identity. Dowd says,

I remember back, oh gosh, probably eight years ago now, I was speaking to a group of Catholic nuns at a retreat center in Indiana, and there was a very elderly nun, ninety or ninety-two, who came up to Connie, my wife, and she said, "You know, I've heard **Thomas Berry** and **Brian Swimme** before. But something happened in the course of this presentation here; I realized that the universe isn't just *outside* of me. **The universe is inside me, too.**" And she was just lit up! This 90-year-old nun was *getting* it in a different way: a sort of scientific mysticism. She was having this **mystical experience** that there was no separation between her and nature, that she was part of this divine creative process.

**Question 13:** *Have you already made the shift in identity in a way similar to how the elderly nun in this story awoke to the transformative power of taking on the story of the universe as one's own? If so, can you describe how it happened? If not, **do you find this shift attractive?** Or does it seem irrelevant to your own faith or philosophical journey? Please reflect on these questions and then elaborate.*

14. **Mystical religious experience as crucial.** In one of the most theologically radical passages in this dialogue, Richard Rohr expounds on the importance of mystical experience over doctrinal beliefs. He says,

When you don't get to the mystical level, all you have left is low-level morality—at best. As a Catholic, I'm not in any way trying to speak against the **Reformation**. But I listen to the arguments of **Luther** and **Calvin**, and they are still so preoccupied with sin, guilt, and shame—as if the only issue is moral unworthiness. **There's no mystical thing to delight in anymore.** And it's we Catholics who lost it. I'm not blaming them, but the fights of the Reformation are all on a rather low level. It's like, "Who cares about that—you've both missed the point!" I'm trying to say they both missed the point, Luther and the Pope, in arguing about theories of salvation.

**Question 14:** *Did Richard Rohr's comment resonate with you, upset you, or something in between? Try to reflect on the basis of your reaction and share whatever you're led to, if anything.*

15. **"God is relationship."** Richard Rohr explains his preferred concept of God as "relationship." He says,

If God is Trinity, then God himself, herself, itself, is *relationship*. This is my foundation—that God is not a noun; **God is a verb**. God is an eternal circle dance... This is the idea of the Cappadocian Fathers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, that **God is a circle dance**. Once that becomes your template for the very shape of the divine, and therefore the very shape of creation, then there's **nothing that can be understood outside of relationship**.

We're now looking for a dynamic vocabulary to describe what's going on, and to recognize what we've now seen in the **atom**—or what we see in the **galaxies**—that **it's all relational**. The old Newtonian world of simple cause-and-effect doesn't explain things well at all. It's *many* causes and *many* effects. Talk about **mystery!** It makes us much more **humble**. And the idea of the heroic individual saving himself, or becoming morally superior (or even morally inferior) by himself, just isn't helpful anymore. It isn't helpful to think of anything outside of a web of relationships.

**Question 15:** *Do you find Richard Rohr's concept of God attractive? In what ways (or not)?*

16. **Religion not as "belief" but "participation."** Rohr attempts in this dialogue to express **religious experiences of great depth that are hard to put into words**. For example he says,

We're speaking of **theology today as a turn toward participation**. Religion is not believing things or observing things or judging things; but religion is *participating* in something. Once you move to that level—and true spirituality always leads you there—it doesn't really matter what the practice is.

If it leads you to **an experience of participation with the mystery**, then you know it's not just mystery. You become aware that it's everywhere, and it's all the time. It's not just mine: I didn't create it; I fell into it. Once you see the mystery at that level of depth and beauty, it's very easy to recognize that others are participating in that too—and not just those who use your vocabulary or your cultural definitions of things.

**Question 16:** *What is your response to Richard Rohr's conclusion that **a sense of "participation" is more important than "belief"**? Notably, have you yourself experienced that sense of participation that he speaks of? Please elaborate.*

**17. Science as teaching religion humility.** Near the end of the dialogue, Richard Rohr stresses the importance of **epistemology** (the study of how we know things) — and that religion would do well to adopt some of the **humility in knowing that science exemplifies**. He says,

In religion we put all our emphasis on metaphysics, on having the right metaphysical answer... I'm grateful for **the humility about knowing that science has given religion**, even though I don't think we've learned the lesson yet. In fact, we've pushed religion into a corner because we don't want to learn the lesson. I find that many of my scientifically educated friends are much more dialogical, humble, and patient in conversation (for the most part) than we clergy. That for me is a really huge gift, because until we change *how* we know and stop throwing around *what* we know with such great certitude, I don't think that conversation is going to move forward.

**Question 17A:** *In your own experience, in what ways **has the scientific enterprise demonstrated humility** in its sense of knowing? What about the opposite: hubris?*

**Question 17B:** *Try to call to mind an example where a religion or a **particular religious institution demonstrated humility** in its capacity to know. And call to mind the reverse: an example where you felt that a religious person or institution was claiming too much certainty. What two examples did you choose?*

**18. Evolving Christianity to be like Jesus.** The final question that Dowd asks is how Christianity will evolve. Richard Rohr responds,

Just *being* Jesus is more than enough agenda for one lifetime! **Just try as best you can to be Jesus in this context according to your gifts**. If Christianity could just *be* Jesus, instead of making Jesus into a product or into an opponent—always one who builds boundaries instead of bridges—then, that would be my hope. That stance would certainly **evolve consciousness**, it would evolve religion, and it would evolve us as individuals. No longer can I build on my ego need to be superior or to be separate. Instead, I have to move with the soul—which sees the similarity, which sees the communality in all things. If Christianity evolved in that way, it would be a much more gracious world.

**Question 18:** *If you regard yourself as Christian, **where do you fall on the faith spectrum** between following Jesus as a model of the possible human v. revering Jesus as the human incarnation of God? If you are not Christian, to what extent have you been aware of Christians*

*who, like Richard Rohr, look to Jesus as a role model and inspiring presence rather than as an otherworldly entity sent from heaven to save us?*

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