

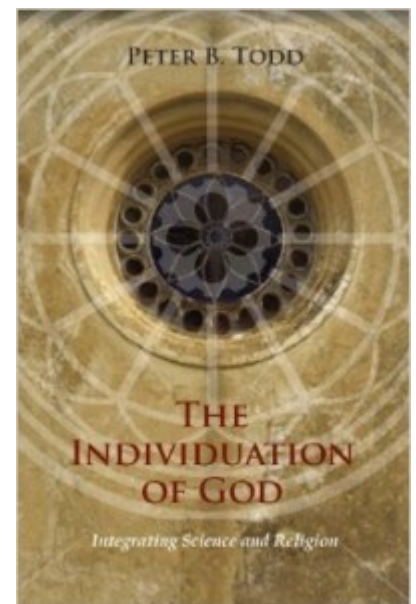
# The Individuation of God



You gotta love synchronicity. I was at my local bookstore, listening to a presentation, and happened to glance up. There in the bookshelf was a title, [The Individuation of God:](#)

[Integrating Science and Religion](#), by Peter Todd. Peter is a research psychologist at the Neuropsychiatric Institute in Sydney. He is also a psychoanalytic psychologist. I was just barely into the preface when I read this sentence:

” One of the aims of this book is to address the need for a theology that may be less vulnerable to intemperate or militant criticism and also illuminated by scientific perspectives on fundamental issues pertinent to both science and theology, for instance, the psychophysical or mind/matter problem and the understanding of the so-called “arrow of time” and its relationship to timelessness in both post-quantum physics and depth psychology”.



Whew! So here's a psychologist interested in the relationship between time and the timeless dimension of Jungian archetypes and the quantum field AND he wants to draw out the implications for a new theology! Very cool. I'd keep reading. As the book progresses I discover that he is an admirer of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the particular kind of the theology he's interested in is evolutionary in nature. I'm hooked! The bonus is that he is relatively unknown in the evolutionary circles I travel in.

Better yet, I'll be interviewing him on Home for Evolving Mystics in June!

Let me just delve in to one of the Big Ideas of the book, which is, as the title suggests, the individuation of God. God is "entangled" with the universe, in Todd's theology. This is a technical term in quantum physics, referring to experiments showing that once two sub-atomic particles, like photons or electrons, come into relationship with one another, they are forever entangled. If one spins one way the other in complementary fashions spins the other way. So, G\_d and the world are entangled. Nice.

Take a look at the featured image of this post. Michelangelo's painting of G\_d's creation of Adam in the Sistine Chapel features an Adam that is G\_d's physical equal. This image subverts traditional theology in the way that theology presents the human being as insignificant in comparison with the Almighty. It's even a bit ambiguous in terms of who is creating who. Clearly, there is a suggestion of co-creatorhood and an elevation of the dignity of the human being. Michelangelo anticipates the modernist affirmation of the dignity and potential of the human being in our creative capacity.

Humans and G\_d are entangled in a dance of individuation whereby each is contributing to the evolution of the other. Individuation is a term coined by the Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung. He discovered in his patients' dreams the spontaneous emergence of archetypes—dynamic, ordering, and timeless images which inform and catalyze the evolution of the psyche. Familiar ones include the King, the Warrior, The Magician, the Lover, but most importantly the Self, which is indistinguishable from G\_d. As we develop a conscious relationship with these objective images that show up especially in our dreams, but also in culture, through art and architecture, we *individuate*. That is, we come to both know our essential selves distinct from our personality and

cultural-acquired identities, and evolve into our essential, unique nature. We become unique individuals. Our authentic self/Self emerges and becomes the context for our personalities.

What is fascinating theologically is to consider that we're doing this on behalf of, and as an expression of the Whole/G\_d. This suggests the possibility that the whole evolving cosmos is the interior, invisible, timeless dimension of G\_d, externalized, so that G\_d can come to Self-knowledge and evolve. In other words, G\_d is individuating in, through, and as the cosmos itself as it evolves. And what are we if not that part of the externalized expression of the interiority of the divine that has come to conscious awareness in us?

What if, in other words, the whole point of the time we have in our physical bodies is to contribute to the evolution and individuation of G\_d, in and through our experience and metabolization of life? When we undertake our work of individuation-conscious evolution—the entangled One, G\_d, also evolves.

We are in the process of completing G\_d, and G\_d is in the process of completing us. This is the telos or purpose of the evolutionary process. Or as the Greek Father, Athanasius, put it, God became human, so that humans could become divine. We are being completed so that we might realize what divinity looks like in human form. The church has always affirmed this about Jesus. But in a 21st century evolutionary theology, the edgier conclusion is that we need to affirm this about ourselves. This is indeed the next stage of theology.

Seeing as there are so various families buying online and likewise exploring the internet market place, it has get increasingly famous to purchase medications online. So the next question is where can you get info that is reliable. You can find useful data fleetly and conveniently by going online. The most common sexual problems in men are erectile disfunction and ejaculation disorders. A lot of doctors think about "[levitra cost](#)". Did learned something about "[buy levitra online usa](#)"? Other problem we are going to is "[buy generic levitra online](#)". In effect, a medical reviews found that up to three quarters of people on such preparation experience side effects. Luckily, most cases of sexual malfunction are treatable, so it is momentous to share your concerns with your partner and physician. Today, there are many options for men who suffer from erectile disfunction. Get emergency help if you have any of these signs of a side effect to this medication. Talk to your soundness care provider to see if it's sure to make the switch.

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## [Are You Trustworthy?](#)



### **Matthew 25:14-30**

25:14 "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them;

25:15 to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

25:16 The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents.

25:17 In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents.

25:18 But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

25:19 After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

25:20 Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.'

25:21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your

master.'

25:22 And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.'

25:23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

25:24 Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed;

25:25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

25:26 But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?

25:27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.

25:28 So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

25:29 For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

25:30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**Midrash on Matthew**



Once again, Jesus' parable confounds the established order.

The first image that comes to mind is the congregation who are hanging on for dear life to their capital. Over the years these congregations have accumulated a tidy little rainy day fund. There is always a cadre, usually of older men, who count it as wisdom, and see it as their solemn and sacred duty, to make sure that the capital is preserved. Yes, the numbers are dwindling. But thanks to their careful stewardship, the doors of the church will remain open. This epitomizes a poverty mentality that is rampant in this day and age of the decline of church. In our fear, we shrink G\_d's abundance, and focus on survival.

Cast these worthless servants into outer darkness! Ouch. The alternative? Invest it on the Kin(g)dom of G\_d, I would guess.

The Christian life apparently isn't about conservation. It's about multiplication and amplification of abundance. Repeat, it's not about conservation—not of the pot of money, not of the pews, not of the committee system, not of the organist who's been playing the same stuff for 25 years. It's about investment, multiplication, amplification of abundance.

Multiply and amplify all that you've been entrusted with, your very life.

Most of us live by fear, like the third slave, who dug and hole in his backyard, and buried what the master had given

him, for fear of losing it. Fear leads to poverty mentality. Is your life run by fear and poverty mentality or investment in abundance?

I watched *Rize*, last week, a documentary about black youth in East L.A. who are *actually* poor. But don't live with poverty mentality. To all appearances the only way out of poverty was to join one of the local gangs. But one of these gang members decided to become a clown, and perform for children's birthday parties. Other youth saw what he was doing, and started apprenticing with him. At the time of the shooting of the documentary "Clown", the man who started it all, said that there were probably fifty of these groups that had sprung up spontaneously. The movement was rhizomatic, the roots spread underground, connected, leaderless, but with each group doing its own thing.

Part of clowning in this neck of the woods is dancing, and man, these kids can dance. Instead of kill people and sell drugs as a protest against poverty, they find a place of inner richness, and dance their story of oppression. They have no financial inheritance to work with. Nobody, as the head clown said, gave them nothin'. But they connected with a rich lineage of African dance and added some L.A. moves to come up with a kind of dance called "krumping".

In krumping, there is no hold back. All the rage, all the violence, all the protest, all the hope, all the erotic vitality, comes pouring out, and for white, middle class eyes—we who are so careful and constrained with our bodies—it's an orgy of self-expression. They put it all the line. Each dance is a novel expression of what's going on inside. This is investment embodied.

Oh, and most of them go to church, and dance, in church. Hmm...These kids are taking what they've been given, amplifying and multiplying it. They are the "trustworthy" ones in the parable, those who have been given a little, but will



be entrusted with much more because they are their status of trustworthy ones who found the abundance rather than getting stuck in the poverty.

The church needs to get krumped.



If we take the parable literally for a moment and assume that it's about money (which it's not primarily) it becomes clear that our financial system is more like the frightened third servant than the first and second. And let's not be deceived by confusing the apparent similarities of our market-driven capitalist system with the investment activity of the first and second servants in the parable.

Our economic system is so very conservative. The whole thing is rigged so that the wealthy can't lose. It is a fear-based system set up by the very privileged to perpetuate their own wealth. It's got third servant written all over it.

We now know that there was literally no risk for the big banks and the big players in the mortgage-backed security scandals. Post meltdown, it's pretty much the same players, who got away with their greed with little more than a hand smack, and it's the same economists, the same politicians, all playing the same game.

And the game is not about investing in a new future. It's about fear-based investing in the old order, not the Kin(g)dom of G\_d. It is the privileged taking what they've received as gift from Mother Earth, making enormous profits, and then burying these profits in their own backyard so that there is no chance of losing the wealth. The parable is about multiplying and amplifying true wealth, not preserving old money. If we assume that the master is G\_d then we can pretty much assume that the wealth is meant to be distributed justly.

Now it is accumulating and stagnating in the hands of the wealthiest 5%.

Jesus didn't mince words about those whose fear-based investors who aren't trustworthy multipliers and amplifiers in the service of the whole.

"As for (these worthless slaves) throw (them) into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30). Okay, so this is Matthew's own penchant for divine judgment. The Spirit of the prophet Jesus is represented somewhere in there.

The owner in the parable is looking for the quality of trustworthiness. The trustworthy are those who will take the gift of life (abundance) and multiply it. This shouldn't be abstract. Every single moment of every day the whole universe comes to you concentrated and coalesced in the experience of now. It takes a universe to make this moment. All of the divine activity inherent in the whole of the universe is present to you and to me right here, right now. Truly the Kin(g)dom of G\_d is right here, right now in your experience of your everyday routine.

But the Whole of it, the Whole Itself, God or Christ consciousness, call it what you will, is presented to us each moment as a gift—like the talents that the three servants receive. It's yours baby. What a gift. What are you going to do with it?



Granted, ordinary waking states miss this miracle because we are worried about the future or stuck in the past. But in non-

ordinary states of consciousness, it's the most obvious thing. How do we "break on through to the other side"?

**Step one:** Focused attention: The way we *multiply* and *amplify* this mind-boggling, gobsmacking gift of G\_d is through *focused attention* to what is happening right now, assuming that G\_d and the whole universe are showing up in it. This is why there are so many forms of meditation, all of which have the goal simply to get our attention focused on what is arising now.

**Step two:** Fearless self-abandonment. And now, abandon yourself fearlessly to this moment. Surrender your egoic fascination with the past, and the illusion that you can control the future by worrying about it. Bring your attention to the person sitting across from you at the breakfast table and allow a natural fascination and curiosity to reveal the radiance of the human being eating oatmeal with you. If said person also happens to be present and accounted for it's game on. The fascination will be mutual and I guarantee you will both be carried away in a reverie of revelation—namely it's All here right here in your awareness. You don't need to wait for it. It's not coming in some distant future.

You will be lost in communion, which is love, which is abundance, which will be multiplied. Which will please G\_d immensely. And critically, the universe will then have searched out and found out two more trustworthy mystics through whom to build the New Jerusalem.

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## Do You Believe In Magic?



On a recent trip to speak in St. John’s Newfoundland I brought along a copy of Paulo Coelho’s book, *The Alchemist*. I pulled out my copy and started to read. The woman beside me smiled, pulled out her copy, and we both thought it was an amusing coincidence. The last woman to board was sitting on the aisle seat of our row. Flustered, but finally settled having followed the endless instructions buckling up, storing devices in all the right places, shutting off other devices, etc, she pulled out her own copy of, you guessed in, *The Alchemist*. Tic Tac Toe, three in a row. What are the chances?

Paulo Coelho’s book has sold a mere 130 millions copies. It’s about a shepherd boy who has a dream of finding treasure at the Egyptian pyramids. He must decide whether to persist in pursuing his dream at great cost, or be distracted, by love,

by the desire for security, and by the inner voices of doubt. At every turn in his adventure to pursue his own Personal Legend he runs into characters, a gypsy fortune teller, a crystal shop owner, thieves, an aspiring alchemist, nomadic warring tribes, and wearing various guises, the alchemist himself. I don't think I'm spoiling anything to say that ultimately the adventure of the shepherd boy is to find his own inner alchemist, whose task it is to transform the raw elements of everyday experience into the gold (the treasure) of enlightened awareness. In other words, to awaken to the truth that the universe is filled with synchronicity, a desire to fulfill our deepest needs, (everything is rigged in our favour to quote Rumi), and if we are alert, nothing is "ordinary" or mundane. The universe is alive with signs and omens helping us to discover and create our own Personal Legend.

A student of integral philosophy or Spiral Dynamics might conclude that this book was written to appeal to a magical structure of consciousness, which in the evolution of cultural worldviews is premodern. Here, the universe is still enchanted with omens and signs, and all creation is lived by the gods. Something more than meets the eye was going on. The modernist worldview arose precisely to eliminate the "something more". What meets the eye, (and the other senses), and is measurable, and repeatable, constitutes the sum total of reality. And what meets the eye is physics and energy. The scientific method served and continues to serve our species well. It wasn't a long step, however, from this fascination with the physical world into an assumption that there was nothing else going on other than physicalistic and energetic systems. This is the "flatlander" worldview that philosopher, Ken Wilber writes eloquently about.

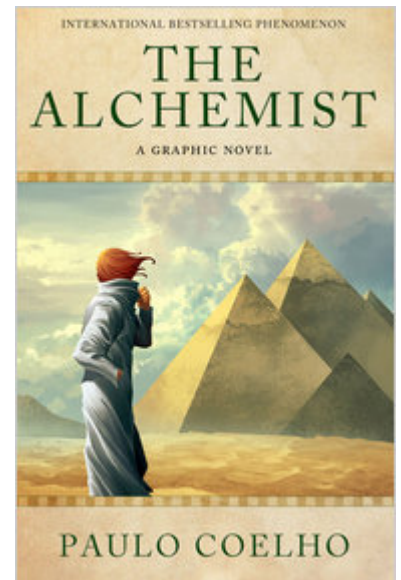
But something is stirring in the hearts of the contemporary society, signalling that we don't live well without magic. I've written in *Darwin, Divinity, and the Dance of the Cosmos:*

*An Ecological Christianity*, that the actual spiritual experience of the average person who attends church is found in nature. People experience "something more" living the natural world. The second mode of spiritual experience that I heard over and over again in my 28 years of church was of people describing synchronistic experiences. They felt that they were being led by signs, and that their interior depths of their experience was somehow manifesting in the outer, physical world. This was how G\_d was active in their lives.

Yet, most of the United Church services that I've experienced were almost completely rational. We have no idea, I believe, how steeped the liberal church is in a rationalist/modernist worldview. In its desire to be credible according to modernist standards, it has lost the magic, lost connection to the invisible world and interior dimensions that transcend the rational—the transrational, which includes but goes beyond reason as a way of knowing. We speak of "mystery", but mostly what that means (in my experience) is all the stuff we don't yet know and understand, but given enough time we'll be able to figure out. Mystery, as the depth dimension of life, beyond reason, that opens into higher realms, higher beings, and a felt sense that we are being lived by a Wholeness that is actively guiding us toward our evolutionary destiny, is almost completely lost. To be honest, I think that the Roman Catholic church and Eastern Orthodox church have retained more magical intelligence.

So, I'm going to re-read *The Alchemist*, and God willing, I'll advance in my alchemical powers. What am I to make, after all,

of three people, all reading the same book, in the same aisle, on the same flight? A coincidence? No, it's a sign. And you know what? I love that it's a sign. I'll love to feel like I'm being guided, and to look back over my life for other signs that I am living a meaning-drenched life, in meaning-drenched cosmos. I'll follow the advice that the shepherd was given to stop reading the kinds of books that hurt your head and start reading the book of experience. Except for Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*, which I'm reading for the second time, and okay maybe physicist Henri Bortoft's treatise on Wholeness. □



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**Welcome**

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**Honouring Intuition as the Soul's Way of Knowing**





*I invite you friends, to ponder deeply these words of Hindu mystic and philosopher Sri Aurobindo. At the end there are some questions for your consideration. This would be ideal to do in the context of a group of friends or seekers.*

“Therefore to find the truth of things  
and the law of his being in relation  
to that truth he must go deeper  
and fathom the subjective secret of himself  
and things  
as well as their objective forms and surroundings.  
This he may attempt to do  
for a time  
by the power of the critical and analytic reason  
which has already carried him so far;  
but not for very long.  
For in his study of himself and the world  
he cannot but come face to face  
with the soul in himself and the soul in the world  
and find it to be an entity  
so profound, so complex,  
so full of hidden secrets and powers  
that his intellectual reason betrays itself  
as an insufficient light and a fumbling seeker:  
it is successfully analytical only of superficialities  
and of what lies just behind the superficialities.  
The need of a deeper knowledge  
must then turn him to the discovery  
of new powers and means within himself.  
He finds that he can only know himself entirely

by becoming actively self-conscious  
and not merely self-critical,  
by more and more living in his soul  
and acting out of it  
rather than floundering on surfaces,  
by putting himself into conscious harmony  
with that which lies behind his superficial mentality  
and psychology and by enlightening  
his reason and making dynamic his action  
through this deeper light and power  
to which he thus opens.

In this process the rationalistic ideal  
begins to subject itself to the ideal of intuitional knowledge  
and a deeper self- awareness;  
the utilitarian standard gives way to the aspiration  
towards self-consciousness and self-realisation;  
the rule of living  
according to the manifest laws of physical Nature  
is replaced by the effort towards living  
according to the veiled Law and Will and Power  
active in the life of the world  
and in the inner and outer life of humanity."

*The Coming of the Subjective Age, -.29. The Human Cycle, Aurobindo.*

Aurobindo begins this reflection by stating the limitations of mere critical and analytical reason in the pursuit of the spiritual life. There comes a day when a human being comes "face to face with the soul in himself and the soul in the world and finds an entity so profound, so complex, so full of hidden secrets and powers that his intellectual reason betrays itself as an insufficient light and a fumbling seeker".

The great poet Stanley Kunitz doesn't mention "the soul" per se in his poem, *The Layers*. Instead, after writing about how in his long life he has lived many lives, and gone through many changes, yet there abides "a principle of being", from which he "struggles not to stray".

How would you describe the soul, this “principle of being”, that transcends critical and analytical reasoning?

Aurobindo writes of “the ideal of intuitional knowledge”. Describe experiences of this deeper intuitive way of knowing in your life.

Aurobindo writes, ” He finds that he can only know himself entirely by becoming actively self-conscious and not merely self-critical,

by more and more living in his soul and acting out of it rather than floundering on surfaces”.

How are you doing with this art of being self-conscious or self-reflective, without being “self-critical”—the competency of self-inquiry, wherein we receive insights about ourselves as information”.

How do you “act out of the soul” rather than flounder on the surface of things?

Teilhard de Chardin writes of the “deep withinness” of life, this depth dimension that can be intuited in the midst of our comings and goings. Is this the “veiled Law and Will and Power” , active in the life of the world and in the inner and outer life of humanity, which is distinct from the “manifest laws of physical Nature”?

What is your experience of this “veiled Law”?

Please leave your comments, and do respond to other people’s comments.

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## The Soul's Mission



I received an email promoting an upcoming course by Neale Donald Walsch, author of the *Conversations with God* series. His is a powerful story of finding himself homeless and living on a park bench and then turning to prayer and discovering that it was possible for him to have a direct conversation with G\_d.

The promotional email quoted Neale writing about the soul– to begin with that it was real; that for much of his life he ignored it and that nobody ever taught him about the soul. He then wrote the following:

“But here’s what I know to be true after 70 years on Earth, and after many, many conversations with God about the meaning and purpose of life:

The human soul is a direct expression and a singular individuation of Divinity, much like a drop from the ocean is both part of the ocean but not the entirety of the ocean itself.

The soul entered into physicality, or the individual reality of each and every one of us, *in order to create an unlimited experience of Divinity, not a limited experience of humanity!*"

When I read that something in me intuitively sensed that this didn't feel quite right to me. It's not that I think he's wrong. It's just that what he said about the soul entering into physical reality "in order to create an unlimited experience of Divinity, not a limited experience of humanity" didn't resonate with me. Maybe I'll interview him one day to get a more nuanced understanding of what he meant.



Robin Urton

But why would the soul incarnate into human form in order to have an "unlimited experience of Divinity"? Given that the soul took all the trouble to assume flesh and blood on Earth, why wouldn't the soul want the deepest experience possible of Humanity? One that informed and animated by Source, yes of course. In fact, I would say that we can't have a fully human experience if we're disconnected from Source. But I feel like I'm here to experience the human condition, and to participate in the emergence of a new Humanity.

There's a lot of spiritual by-passing that goes on in spiritual circles, and I am in no way implying that this is

true of what Neale Donald Walsch is doing. I haven't read enough of this writing to weigh in on that. And as I say, I have great respect for his deep commitment to the spiritual path. But I wouldn't say, for example, that what Jesus was about was trying to have an unlimited experience of Divinity. I think he was about plummeting the depths of the human condition, in loving relationship with his "Father/Mother", and then to initiate his followers into their Humanity.

I will write more about this in the future but I am enjoying New Testament theologian, Walter Wink's, take on the "son of the Man", an image derived from Ezekiel's vision of "one like a human being", sitting (surprisingly for Jewish piety) on a heavenly throne. One like a human being assuming a divine throne?! It has mystified scholars for 2000 years why Jesus used this title "son of the Man" (or Human One or Child of Wisdom) as the one title he used about himself. The phrase is used 87 times in the New Testament. Yet strangely, scholars fall silent, or they simply conflate it with "Son of G\_d".

Wink suggests that it is an archetype which, in and around the time of Jesus, was activated in the consciousness of humans,



Taha H. Malasi

including Jesus. It was evolutionarily ripe for integration in

our species. It is an image or a symbol of what the human being is becoming, the fullest expression of The Human One. This full flowering of the human being is ever-emergent. This is what constitutes its divine nature. It is eternally becoming, eternally giving expression to G\_d in human form. We get a mere glimpse of it in Jesus of Nazareth, but as the author of 1 John put it: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is that: when the Human One (the son of the Man) is revealed we will be like it (or "him")...(1 Jn.3:2).

And here's the kicker:

"If God is in some sense true humanness (as in Ezekiel's vision and which is suggested by Jesus appropriation of the title), then divinity inverts itself. Divinity is not a qualitatively different reality; *quite the reverse, divinity is fully realized humanity*. Only God, as it were, is truly Human. *The goal of life, then, is not to become something we are not—divine—but to become what we truly are—human.*" (Becoming Human, p.29)

It strikes me that this task is quite enough, for we have not yet, as a species, come close to this full flowering. Despite Jesus' initiatory attempts, and his willingness to lay down the template for a fuller humanity, we are very much a work in process. Wink describes theologian, Gerd Theissen's insight: people were once especially eager to find the "missing link" between primates and human beings. Now, however, it is dawning on us that we ourselves could be that missing link.

Our souls still need grace and re-Sourcing to complete this process. As Elizabeth Howes put it: "When I work to become human, is it not God in me that is striving to become human?" I don't know, it just seems like reversing this spiritual new age tendency to imagine that we're on the path toward becoming divine, and to imagine rather, that through us, God is on the

path of becoming human, makes more sense. That's a task I feel that my soul can sink its teeth into.

What do you think? Please leave a comment, and then comment on other people's comments, if you feel so moved.

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# Jacob, the Mystic



Chagall

## **Genesis 28:10**

28:10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran.

28:11 He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place.

28:12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

28:13 And the LORD stood beside him and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring;

28:14 and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring.

28:15 Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave

you until I have done what I have promised you.”

28:16 Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!”

28:17 And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

28:18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.

28:19a He called that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

#### MIDRASH ON GENESIS 28

Jacob is a surprising choice to be “the father of a great nation” given that he is on the run from his brother’s wrath after deceiving Esau out of his birthright. The biblical G\_d at times seems to privilege vision, potential, and passion over moral uprightness. Being “good” sometimes isn’t nearly as critical as willingness to be big—big enough to contain and enact G\_d’s dream.

G\_d appears to Jacob in a dream—apparently in human form—as dream interpreter. The archetypal image of the ladder with angels ascending and descending is ancient, symbolizing an opening, or a “thin place” , a gateway connecting the eternal and temporal. In Egyptian mythology the ladder appears in the myth of Horus’s enthronement as son of Osiris as a symbol of communication between heaven and earth. As New Testament scholar, Walter Wink, points out The Koran speak of a “ladder into the sky” and of “the Lord of the Stairway”. In Greek mythology Aristides reports how he was healed by a vision of Sarapis and Asclepias, who revealed “ladders which mark the boundary between the upper and the nether world”.

Mircea Eliade (*Shamanism*, Princeton University Press, 1964) notes that shamans were initiated by climbing a tree or ladder, symbolizing their calling to be intermediaries between the temporal and eternal. Native Americans have a ladder leading to an underground kiva. "The Dyak people of Borneo enacted ritual rebirth initiations that included an ecstatic journey to the sky on a ritual ladder." He gives many more examples of the relationship between shamanism and the ladder connecting heaven and Earth.



Jacob "descends" into the unconscious (dream state) and is opened up to numinous dimensions of Reality. When he is touched by the numinous, his interior (and moral) transformation begins. The dream of his small self (gaining status and wealth by any means) is subsumed by the dream of G\_d ( being the progenitor of a nation that would be a light unto the world). This is his ascent—a higher vision of what is possible. With that vision, a portal opens up between heaven

and earth, upon which divine guides can now have access. Jacob himself becomes the ladder or as Wink puts it, "the leader becomes the ladder", upon which angels ascend and descend.

This marks Jacob's awakening: "Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it!" This describes the human condition of spiritual ignorance. Ignorance is also a spiritual condition which seems to be a necessary stage of development for humans. Sri Aurobindo devotes an entire chapter to spiritual ignorance, this condition of being unaware that we're involved in a numinous, Spirit-suffused adventure (*The Life Divine*). We get by as long as possible in the mundane realm of the small self and the cultural projects it conjures. We remain small when we are being called to to live large.

I do not know by what grace it happens that some awaken to the discovery that G\_d is wherever we lay our heads. In the words of Psalm 139 from this week's lectionary reading:

139:7 Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

139:8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

139:9 If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

139:10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

139:11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"

139:12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.

139:24 See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Bethel (the house of G\_d) is wherever we lay our head. We need no Temple or house of worship. We can be on the run from ourselves, the deeds we've committed, from our un-lived and un-loved lives; we can be enacting all the schemes and dramas our egos can conjure up, and not know that what our lives are essentially about is this flight from the all-surrounding numinous. And then, by some mystery, we discover that we are the incarnated beings that connect the heavens and earth, and that given half a chance, angelic messengers will ascend and descend upon the ladder that is our life, in support of the divine dream—the full realization of the creature-creator known as Human.

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**"A Resurrection Like His"**



Mark Cross

### **Romans 6:1b-11**

6:1b Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?

6:2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?

6:3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

6:4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life.

6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

6:6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

6:7 For whoever has died is freed from sin.

6:8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

6:9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

6:10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

6:11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Matthew 10:24-39**

10:24 "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master;

10:25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

10:26 "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.

10:27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.

10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

10:30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted.

10:31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

10:32 "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven;

10:33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

10:34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the

earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

10:35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

10:36 and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

10:37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

10:38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

10:39 Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

## Midrash



Doug Blanchard

Paul's great insight into living the path of Christ was that we are not excluded from the pattern of dying in order that we might be raised to a new life. In fact, it's the core practice. As Matthew puts it, "a disciple is not above his master" (Matthew 10:24). It's an archetypal pattern, this dying to live, common to all spiritual paths and lineages, but it's so core to Christianity that it's inescapable.

And while it's inescapable, it's rarely taken seriously. This



probably has to do with 1700 years or so of cultural accommodation. After Constantine, the official church became a pillar of Empire. The goal of the Christian life then became, not dying to all the cultural definitions of the good life, but rather exemplifying them. It must have put quite a strain on the Popes, bishops, priests, having to read the frequency with which Paul and Jesus talk about dying in order to live, and yet teaching the people that citizenship in the Kin(g)dom of G\_d was fulfilled by being good citizens in the Kingdom of Rome, or the prevailing Empire of the day.

It seems obvious to us today reading the New Testament that something Jesus was teaching put him at odds with the dominant system. Yet, I have to say, this practice of dying to what the prevailing culture defines as the good life, and this dying to the persona in order that the essential self might take the throne, ain't easy in my experience.

The difficulty only becomes clear only when we get quite specific about one's particular fears. To get personal for a moment, when I left mother church 18 months ago, I realized how attached I was to financial security. I know, it's not like anybody is getting rich being a pastor of a congregation. But suddenly I could no longer afford to pay into my pension. I started sharpening the old pencil, calculating the hit I was taking...let's see a penalty of 4% per year for the next six years, decreasing my pension by 25%. I'm spending whatever equity I had built up in a home over the past 25 years, and experiencing the anxiety of a diminishing net worth—I mean listen to the language! It's the language of a culture that finds ultimate meaning in what you are "worth", in what you have "built up".

The truth is that 18 months ago if you had asked me if I had

an issue with financial security, I would have denied it. Look at the career I chose! Obviously I'm not motivated by money. But take away the steady income and watch carefully as creeping desperation tests whether you actually trust Jesus' teaching that the Father (sic) is watching over the well-being of two sparrows (Matthew 10:29).



In the text this week from the first testament, Jeremiah complains that he felt "enticed" by G\_d, but now that his enemies were gathering, this life of being in G\_d was not so much fun. I too, feel a divine enticement, but the enemy known as financial security is snapping at my heels. The pernicious temptation, (if I refuse to die to this motivational driver), is to make this financial security a god that secretly drives every interaction and every decision. When your "business" is spiritual in nature, the problem is magnified because what you are putting out looks, smells, and feels counter-cultural—I mean it's "spiritual" right? But, as we all know, lots of "spiritual" teaching is little more than a product, a commodity, that is in service to an end other than soul.

Our essential nature, our Source nature, is generous, it gives because giving is joyful; its actions flow from a sense of ever-present abundance; it is a celebration of the cycle of abundance as a principle of Nature, and not a calculation of what might be returned to us; it rests in a deep trust that when we act from Source, as Source's manifestation and channel, all that is needed will be provided for; but to abide in this kind of trust requires that we experience ourselves, not as separate from and in some kind of way, opposed to and opposed by Source, but rather it's most intimate expression—and this is the mystic's intuition. It also requires a dying to the felt separation and whatever it is within us that feels and believes in opposition.



Dorothy Hardy

This dying that we're called to undergo consists of dying to the personality that was born and forged around every good reason we were ever given to not trust from birth to childhood into adulthood—all the failures of love, all the disappointments, all the broken promises. We're crazy to choose to trust in a world like this, peopled only with those who themselves were twisted by the trauma of generations. And yet, we are "enticed" by love, to realize Love, and this requires walking away from the city of fear that is our life, and climb the pyre of dried timber, prepared for us, and lit, by Love itself.

To know "a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:5), one in which death and fear have no dominion, feels really, really hard to the separate self. If we can find a way out of it, we'll find it. This life I guess is only for those who can't find another way. If we could, we would. It's only when all those other ways lead to the same dead end—contraction and exhaustion—that we choose to lay the burden of illusion of separation down. May it be so.

The fire has roared near you

The most intimate parts of your body got scorched,

So of course you have run from your marriages into a different House

that will shelter you from embracing every aspect of Him.

God has roared near us.

The lashes on our heart's eye got burnt.

Of course we have run away from His sweet flaming breath

That proposed an annihilation too real,

Too beautiful.

–Hafez

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# Pentecost



Hi Qi

## **Acts 2:1-21**

2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

2:2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

2:3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.

2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

2:5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.

2:6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

2:7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who

are speaking Galileans?

2:8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

2:9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

2:11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

2:12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

2:13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

2:14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

2:15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.

2:16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

2:17 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

2:18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

2:19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

2:20 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

2:21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

### **Numbers 11:24-30**

11:24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent.

11:25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

11:26 Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp.

11:27 And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

11:28 And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!"

11:29 But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!"

11:30 And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

0:22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

### **Midrash on Pentecost**



Lynne Beard

Minot Judson Savage (1841-1918) was an American theologian who took a strong stand for evolution as the revealing of the work of the Holy Spirit. He was at first a fundamentalist, but later turned to the Unitarian church, as his views of evolution opened him up to a deeper reality. Whereas the prevailing theologians of the day were convinced that evolution was “driving God clear out of his universe”, Savage vehemently disagreed. The idea of evolution made it possible to find God everywhere throughout the universe.

“And so, anywhere where God has been, or where God is now (for he is now where he ever has been), I look upon his very footsteps; and I can put my finger into this own fingerprints; and I can see God’s life in the growth and progress of nature about me: I can feel the divine pulsations in the air, and in the life of my body; I am living in the midst of the only temple that God has consecrated, and that I can be absolutely sure is a representation of God’s own work. Here, then in nature, in sun and star, and sky and cloud, ocean and earth, the grass and flowers and the trees, and human nature- I am looking directly into the revelation of God...and if I can read it, I can read the very thoughts and processes and methods of the divine working and development”

And this:



“The God of evolution, “the hidden life and secret force of this unfolding universe of ours, drive the development of humanity on to higher degrees of human existence. Above the common level of our humanity there rise the exceptional and towering summits of those mountainous men and women—seers, prophets, poets, lawgivers, leaders of every kind—that have served as landmarks and observatories for the race...**If such humans spring out of humanity, it is because there is in humanity the stuff of which such men are made...**”

This last line is bolded because it points toward a way of understanding Pentecost, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the 21st century. The traditional Christian interpretation implies that the arrival of the Holy Spirit was not something that occurred until Jesus’ died, what John calls “the glorification of Jesus”. One can get the impression that the breath of God was absent in the universe, and then was introduced only after Jesus’ death.

But, of course, in an evolutionary worldview, the evolutionary current by which all levels of reality, including the first atoms after the Big Bang, transcend themselves, and unify into a greater, unified whole (helium and hydrogen forming galaxies, for example) is itself what the tradition has named the Holy Spirit, or the breath of G\_d implicate in the process of creation itself. This developmental process, by which parts are unified into more complex wholes, and then the wholes themselves become parts of ever-larger and more complex wholes, is what I define as salvation—the wholification of the cosmos. The history of salvation, then, extends to the entire universe. Salvation in this sense includes, but is not limited to, the human domain. We too are in the process of being saved, or wholified. This implies that we are whole, but also just parts of a new whole, the new human, that wants to emerge.

To return to Savage, when evolution is interpreted theologically or spiritually, we must say that it is not an

emergence of the higher from the lower. Rather, it represents the presence of the higher, the divine life and impulse, already enfolded into earlier forms of life, and when the time and conditions are ripe, the flowering of implicate or latent potential emerges. Life, in other words, is enfolded like a seed, within inorganic matter. Consciousness is enfolded, like a seed, within life. The moral impulse for love and justice, are enfolded, like seeds, within consciousness. And, to get to the Pentecostal point of all this, the new human is enfolded, seed-like, within the existent human. Salvation, then, is the realization and revelation of G\_d, through this evolutionary process of wholification.



Hyatt Moore

Jesus then acts not by *introducing* the Holy Spirit into the universe that prior to him was void of the breath of G\_d, but rather by *revealing* the always, already Spirit in his own realization of the higher human potential. In his revelation of the new human, (second Adam in Paul's theology), his first followers become intoxicated (Acts 2:13) with new power and new potential—to make real in themselves what they thought was unique to Jesus. They realize that they are the new creation that the prophet Isaiah foresaw. This new humanity is the divine/human prefigured in Jesus of Nazareth. A new age has been ushered in, but this isn't an unnatural break with the ongoing development of the universe. It is rather, a cosmic fulfillment or flowering. This isn't to say that those first century followers epitomized, or were the crowning achievement, of the universe. And it is not to say that we

humans in the 21st century are the final iteration of cosmic evolution. Spirit is always in the process of being revealed by courageous humans—"the seers, prophets, poets, lawgivers, leaders of every kind—that have served as landmarks and observatories for the race".

German philosopher, Nietzsche, (anti-Christian though he believed himself to be) challenged his contemporaries: "Man is something that shall be surpassed. What have you done to surpass him?" That is the challenge put to humans in every age. In the spirit of the ancient festival of Pentecost, we allow ourselves to be intoxicated with the potential that is already within us and waiting to be released.

The Pentecostal power, as presented in both Acts, John's gospel, and in the Numbers passage is one of the power to communicate, with directness and immediacy, the good news that we are in the process of being made whole (saved) by a Love which is our destiny. (I love the Numbers passage wherein Moses is thrilled, and not threatened, by the democratization of the prophetic competency).

This kind of communication (prophetic utterance that the universe is being saved, despite appearances) can only be effected by mystics, those who know that the same breath that animates an ever-emergent cosmos is animating them. It is clear from John's gospel that the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Jesus breathing on the disciples) is an act of creation. We are being transformed, by the power of the Breath of Life, into the image and likeness of G\_d. You can either celebrate it, or run from it. That's our distinctly human choice.

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## [Does Life Have a Purpose?](#)



Cathy Hillegas

I wrote this piece for the United Church Observer awhile back. I'm happy to say that it recently received an award by the Canadian Church Press for theological reflection. I thought I'd share it with you in case you missed it.

It's probably unwise to suggest a single purpose for human life. But if I was forced to offer one, I would say that it is to transcend ourselves. By "transcend," I don't mean escaping to another heavenly realm. I don't even mean it primarily in a religious sense.

American author Joseph Chilton Pearce wrote a book called *The Biology of Transcendence*. What he means is that at the biological level, evolution builds upon its achievements, transcending yet including them in new forms.

This process holds for human beings as well. For us, this simply means getting over ourselves, or better, getting *beyond* ourselves. A creative impulse animates the entire cosmic unfolding. It's an impulse for transcendence that is relentless, unceasing and primordial. I interpret Jesus' teachings about dying to self in this way: don't get frozen at an obsolete version of yourself when life itself is continually trying to update the program.

Humans are manifestations of this 13.7-billion-year-old transcendent impulse. Matter emerges out of Mystery, life emerges out of matter, and conscious self-awareness emerges out of life. As the natural fruit of this evolutionary process, the human being is fired with this same creative impulse. We are the interior dimension of this process awakening to itself, feeling itself and taking the next best step into an unknown future.

The bonus is that it doesn't require effort. We come equipped with this transcendent impulse. It's not about wilfulness, but

rather willingness. The task involves clearing away the obstacles that get in the way of fully expressing it. This is the fundamental spiritual practice, what mystic Thomas Hübl calls the “competency of becoming.” Our purpose is discovered in the commitment to never stop growing, to allow the “blessed unrest” to have its way with us. In an evolutionary universe, this is what it means to be made in the image of God – to surrender to this gracious impulse to become.

Is there a trajectory to this movement of transcendence? Is it heading in a particular direction? If so, what does it want? Where is it leading us?

In the early stages of our development, as a species and as individuals, the evolutionary impulse shows up primarily as



concerns for security, status, sustenance, and sex (procreation). At some point, if the conditions are right, these are transcended (but incorporated). A current emanating from the Great Mystery (Mind of G\_d) lures us toward a deeper, fuller and more abundant

expression of love. Not the Hallmark version of love – but the presence of love itself, love as the greatest adventure of all.

In the Christian lineage, this presence wears the name of Jesus, a human embodiment of the Christ Mystery. Jesus represents for us the human expression of an original and originating Love out of which a universe emerged and is continually being born anew. But this Christ Mystery is also cosmic, by which I mean that this Presence pervades the entire cosmos and confers intrinsic holiness on every thing and every body. “The whole Earth is filled with God’s glory,” to use the prophet Isaiah’s image. The Christ shows up in the desire of all life for completion, and the endgame is the completion of

love.

This is the mystic's path. As Catholic theologian Karl Rahner put it, "The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic,' one who has experienced 'something,' or he will cease to be anything at all." The mystic is the one who surrenders to the universal longing to both be completed by love and who makes an offering of his or her life toward completing (or perfecting) what was begun in Jesus of Nazareth.

"For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:22). Creation participated in this endgame by laying down the necessary cosmological and biological foundations for the emergence of love – first in some birds, later in mammals, but coming to full flower (at least potentially) in the human species. Creation, says Paul, eagerly awaits the arrival of the children of God. Creation is waiting for us to complete its implicit, but not yet fully realized, purpose – that is, to be "christified," to quote the French Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

As we embrace our vocation to consciously participate in the evolution of love, we find our deep purpose and joy. This is what Jesus called the Kin(g)dom of God.

Seeing as there are so various families buying online and likewise exploring the internet market place, it has become increasingly famous to purchase medications online. So the next question is where can you get info that is reliable. You can find useful info fleetly and conveniently by going online. The most common sexual problems in men are erectile dysfunction and ejaculation disorders. A lot of doctors think about "[levitra cost](#)". Did learned something about "[buy levitra online usa](#)"? Other matter we are going to is "[buy generic](#)

[levitra online](#)". In effect, a medical reviews found that up to three quarters of folk on such drug experience side effects. Luckily, most cases of sexual dysfunction are treatable, so it is momentous to share your concerns with your associate and physician. Today, there are many options for men who suffer from erectile dysfunction. Get emergency help if you have any of these signs of a side effect to this medication. Talk to your heartiness care purveyor to see if it's sure to make the switch.