

The New Human



Erin Virgil

Members of this site are watching an eight-week video series on Eight Agreements for An Emergent Culture. The series could also be called Eight Agreements for Personalization in Spiritual Communities. The reason I developed these is that over my 28 year career in church, it was my experience that people are under-resourced when it comes to presenting ourselves as fit for community life. And that church general speaking makes a fundamental assumption that humans are born, not made. But we evolve into our humanity, and we shouldn't take it for granted. This assumption leaves many congregations floundering because too many of our folks don't possess the fundamental competencies for what constitutes a truly human being. What follows is an excerpt from a new chapter in my book, The Emerging Church, which is being re-printed with new content (scheduled for fall 2014).

French priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was among the first scientist-theologians to intuit within the evolutionary process itself a biased trajectory in and toward the Christ Mystery, made known in Jesus. Another word he uses for this is that Jesus was the full "personalization" of the

cosmos. What was happening in Jesus' incarnation, in his view, was that evolution's purpose was being revealed in the human domain. The cosmos was being completed, or perfected (to use a Pauline metaphor), through Jesus, who was the fully personalized expression of evolution after 13.8 billion years. Jesus represented the new Human (what Ezekiel called "the son of the Human").

Paul called this the second Adam, a new human for a new age, wherein a New Humanity, which Jesus inaugurated by his life, death, and resurrection, was emerging. In evolutionary theology, the core transformation of those who follow Jesus is to be "personalized" – to consciously incorporate, yet transcend the First Adam into a new Humanity. We could playfully call this the Human 2.0. Teilhard believed that in Jesus we get a glimpse of where the universe is headed – what he called the "amorization" of the universe, or the fulfillment of love. St. Paul intuited this evolutionary trajectory with his quite remarkable statement that all of creation prior to the human was like a mother eagerly "longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Romans 8:20). This "eager longing" of creation comes to full conscious awareness in the human ones, who are offspring of creation's evolutionary process, with a new and glorious capacity to feel from within, and to be animated by, a holy longing to realize the New Human inaugurated by Jesus.

I recently watched the film Hannah Arendt, which looks at a four year period in this philosopher's life, during the trial

of Adolph Eichmann, a Nazi bureaucrat who “processed” Jews for extermination. Her courageous and very controversial conclusion was that evil was “banal”. It was much less dramatic than the popular notions of Satan possessing unsuspecting souls. Evil grows in those who refuse personhood, or personalization, as Eichmann refused to think for himself, and simply carried out orders. The system, the hierarchy, G_d, the church, the corporation, the state, each of these can act as substitutes for our humanity, and where they do, evil grows.



All of creation, Paul says, has been waiting patiently for and participating in the birth of the sons and daughters of God. Our unique function and capacity as humans is to participate in the longing of all creation, come to conscious awareness in us, for the New Human. In short, our fundamental vocation is to listen to this natural, sacred yearning within us to be more. The goal of creation, says Teilhard, is not simply *bien-être* (well-being), but *plus-être* (more being): more love, more justice, more beauty, goodness, and truth. The first steps in becoming the New Human, prefigured in Jesus, are to feel, trust, and consciously activate this holy longing consciousness within us, and then to organize our lives around this yearning. This is the presence of the evolutionary impulse within us. Using theological language, this is how we experience the Holy Spirit. To feel this longing and to honour it by letting nothing get in the way of its expression and realization is what it means to be “in Christ” in evolutionary theology. We are animated from within, and drawn by a future

promise, to become the New Human. This is the mission of the emerging church.

What this means is that congregations or spiritual communities are domains of creative emergence. We consciously create the conditions in which the One who “makes all things new” and in whom a novelty that opens up new futures receives our allegiance. And, in particular, churches are a domain where the New Human, shaped by the Heart of the Christ Mystery, known in Jesus and in other illuminated souls, is formed. This is what it means to be “raised with Christ.” We die with him, says Paul, in order that we might also be raised with him as exemplars of this New Human.



Alex Grey

But as I've stated earlier, this kind of Human is made, not born. We live in a materialistic, consumerist culture that has inherited much trauma. The New Human, the resurrected Human, will emerge only in communities that intentionally counteract the cultural conditioning that leaves us disconnected from our true, or essential natures. It is my experience that while we use the traditional language of being the “Body of Christ,” which is simply another way of talking about the New Human, so much of our potential is wasted on the egoic posturing and

dramas of the small and contracted self in the context of congregational life. The culture-shifts I describe in this book need to happen, not just at the structural or systemic levels, but also at the personal and interpersonal levels. By “culture” I simply mean our shared core agreements and values about how we show up *for* each other and *with* each other as communities of faith. Agreeing to and enacting the following eight core agreements supports what I am calling an “emergent” or evolutionary culture. This is the kind of culture that honours the holy longing to be become Human, which is committed to organizing for evolutionary transformation of social systems, and which is dedicated to supporting the spiritual evolution of souls. This is one way in which the Christ Mystery is enacted in the 21st century.