

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



EMISSARIES
OF DIVINE LIGHT

A FRESH START

18 JULY 2011

At stroke of midnight God shall win.

(William Yeats / From "The Four Ages of Man")

People from many places around the world are collaborating in a spiritual context because somewhere deep inside them they know that there is an opportunity to let something uncommon happen here and now. To take advantage of that opportunity, a person has to have the courage to be fully present in the here and now, to face whatever it is that is before them, and allow the victory of the Creator to be known. When the expression *the Creator* is used it is usually thought of as something separate from us. When we say that God wins, that too can easily be seen as something apart from ourselves. But there is a magic in the process of transformation, so that when we surrender as human beings and allow God to win, we find out that it is *our* victory, that we have won, that in fact we are present as the creator in our world, here to be fully responsible for what happens.

I've been reflecting on my life and noticing a tendency to believe that the current circumstance is a result of my own failure in some way, and the failure of people in my world. One way or another, that is not an uncommon view. This is the view that either you or I did something terribly wrong, or maybe all of us did, and the circumstance that we are living in today is a result of that error. Of course, religiously speaking, that is the story of original sin.

There is undoubtedly some truth to the view. I've done things in the past that won't bring the best results, that had error in them. And I'm pretty sure other people in my life have. Looking at the

world at large, it does seem that the whole body of humanity has been woefully off track in important ways. It does not seem like a very good idea, in retrospect, to put nuclear power plants on geological fault lines, as they did in Japan. What would make a culture do something like that? In so many ways, humanity seems hell-bent on self-destruction.

So undoubtedly humanity has been flawed and out of alignment with the natural design. We are certainly living with the results of the flawed actions of the past, our own and other people's. But is that our defining reality? That is really the question. Will we be continually overtaken by the factors of circumstance in which we find ourselves, continually overtaken by the results of things that have been done in the past by ourselves or other people, and even our ancestors? Or are we available to be fully present now, at this "stroke of midnight," to bring the fresh and the new and have a different experience, to participate in God's victory here and now?

Many of us are familiar with a verse from that wild and magical last book in the Bible, the Book of Revelation. The verse goes like this:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.
(Revelation 21:1)

The verse challenges the traditional ideas of heaven. I do believe it's talking about consciousness, not particularly about clouds and angels and harps, or what happens after you die. This heaven refers to human consciousness, the heaven that's present in the human world and the earth that's created from that heaven. "I saw a *new* heaven"—I experienced a new state of consciousness, because the first state of consciousness was passed away, and so was the earth that went along with it. Somehow, all the results of whatever has been done in the past have faded from view. And they must fade from view so that what can be seen and experienced is what is of the now, the new heaven, a fresh state of consciousness, letting new earthly forms appear.

I think if I was talking to God about all this, aware of the error of humanity over the millennia, I would be asking for a chance to start over. I would be saying, "Yes, we know we've made some mistakes along the way—I know I have too. Isn't there some way we could start over here and now and get a fresh start?"

Earlier in my life, I had the opportunity to work with large corporate bankruptcies. I learned that there is a notion built into the bankruptcy code that if a person runs out of money, we shouldn't throw them in prison. They used to do that. If someone was unable to pay their debts they were

thrown into debtors' prison for the rest of their life. Somewhere along the way, society woke up to the idea that the debts weren't going to be paid if the person was in prison.

So in the law today there is the idea that if a person runs out of money and is unable to pay their debts, they get a fresh start. The slate is wiped clean. They do their best to address their obligations, but the slate is wiped clean and they get to move forward in their life, and they become responsible for their obligations from that day forward.

If I was before God, pleading the case for humanity, I might be asking for a fresh start. "Can't we just start over again and find some way to deal with the results of all the past error? Yes, we know the greenhouse gases are liable to pile up for a few years, but certainly there must be a way through that."

When people have considered this verse that talks about a new heaven and a new earth, and the old heaven and the old earth passing away, it has largely been looked upon as a one-time event.

I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.

To someone who is beginning a process of spiritual transformation, it can look like a one-time event. All the bad things that have been in a person's life will be left behind, and now there is the rosy future. No more challenge, nothing else to deal with. At first, the spiritual journey looks like a one-time event: "I've been reborn!" Martin Exeter used to say that it is very well to be born again, but once you are reborn, there's a lot that happens after that. You have to develop spiritually.

Is it possible that the passing of the old heaven, the old way of thinking about things, the old way of encompassing things, is not just a one-time event? Doesn't life invite us to experience that in every moment? Isn't that the nature of what it means to be truly alive and truly in the present moment? For me, if I consider the community that I lived in twenty years ago, the people I hung out with, what was real and important to me, and I look at those same factors in my life today, they have changed radically. How about you? Are those things radically different?

The old heaven has passed away, and certainly the forms of twenty years ago have passed away. The forms of last *week* have passed away. The passing away of the old heaven is a constant experience. And yet there is this horrible tendency for people to be fixated in the past, comparing what is happening now to something in the past. Do you find yourself doing that at all? Looking at what's happening today, and saying, "Oh, it's different now—it used to be like this... The way I used to think about things was like this, and now it's like this. Why are things different?"

Can we truly let the old heaven and the old earth pass away? If we are willing to let today stand on its own, we see what life is creating now, and how it is being created. We can acknowledge the people in our life and in our world through whom it is happening. That is available to us when we land fully in the present, when we take heart in hand and say, “I’m here for this.”

For me, when I am in that place of being fully present, fully responsible for the creation in my world today, now, I tap into a creative capacity inside me which is immense. Have you noticed that when you show up with other people—I mean *really* show up with them, when you are really willing to be in their life—that you have an uncommon capacity for creative influence with that person? Stand back, keep yourself at arm’s length from the people around you, be all caught up with the people of yesteryear—“Oh, I remember...”—you’re not likely to have very much influence with that person right in front of you. Being willing to be fully present, the magic of creation is on the move. There are creative opportunities that are present at every step of our life, and particularly whatever step we are in right now. There are creative opportunities that are present with us that we will not see if we are comparing today to the past.

I’ve been noticing recently how the pattern of my humanity asserts itself at every step along the way. I’m fifty-eight, and I can feel the pattern of human culture that speaks in my ear from time to time: “You’re getting older. Better start thinking about your retirement—it’s coming around the corner. Time to start winding it down. Find something comfortable to do in your life.” Do you find that the dictates of cultural expectation assert themselves, at whatever stage of life you are in? You may be a young person who thinks, “Oh, the biological clock is ticking—better get married. Better have kids. Better save for retirement!”

I notice that people don’t get a reprieve from the whisperings of cultural expectation just because they are on a spiritual path. You might think that would all go away, but often it is still present for people. We can be moving in a path of conscious evolution, but the human pattern is present also, barking at our heels at times.

It requires conscious choice, at every step along the way, if a person is to fulfill their destiny. In essence, a person must say, “No, I choose to be present here and now.” And we can observe with compassion if there is a part of us that is small and puny and thinks in puny ways. There isn’t necessarily anything wrong with retiring, having children, or any of the other activities that society may expect of us. But who is running our life? The primary thing is that I am here, as the creator of my world, to bring creative magic, to let this world come alive, to be truly free to be the creator of my world.

“At stroke of midnight God shall win.” Wherever we are around the world, let’s be present for that, here and now. Let’s find a way to make a fresh start, and invite the people around us to do the same. As we do, we participate in the victory of the creative process that is at work all around us, and through us in every phase of our life. This is the stroke of midnight for us, if we let it be so.

It is good to be together with people around the world, finding that as we are fully present ourselves, we are together with others who are having the same experience, and that together we inherit the magic of creation, we inherit the power to manifest new earth, new form.

Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (*Matthew 24:35*) Is the significance of this statement that we can keep reading the words of Jesus in the Bible forever? The statement becomes more meaningful if we think about it relative to ourselves. This heaven and earth shall pass away, this awareness that I have now will pass away, and these forms of my life now will pass away. In fact, they are starting to right now. But my words will not pass away; my expression of the creative spirit will not pass away. That is eternal and is present always. As long as that is true, there is a new heaven where I am. When there is a new heaven, there is a new earth—the forms of my life are alive. So may it be.

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