



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

CANADIAN MEMORIAL CHURCH
& CENTRE FOR PEACE

Preached by Rev. Bruce Sanguin

John 1:1-8

October 4, 2009

18th Sunday after Pentecost

“The Pull of the Possible”

This morning friends, I am going to do a very unusual thing. In fact, in 22 years I've never done it. But it serves our core Purpose and Vision so directly that I decided to go ahead with it. What I am going to do is to read a blog-posting from a teacher and leader of an intentional community that is focused on the same core purpose as we are, but from a non-Christian perspective.

That leader is Andrew Cohen, and he is what is called in Eastern traditions an enlightened guru. He's also the senior editor of a magazine called EnlightenNext. It's one of my favorite magazines out there. These folks did an hour-long podcast with me a year ago. They featured me because they were intrigued by my own vision of evolutionary Christian spirituality.

(<http://www.enlightennext.org/magazine/unbound/media.asp?ecp=unb-111008&id=247>)

Andrew is not “enlightened” in the traditional sense of that word. For him, enlightenment includes, but is more than, being “present” to the Now, a la Eckhart Tolle. It includes, but is more than, Union with All That Is. The particular dimension of enlightenment that is a gift of the West, and is often neglected by the

East, is what he calls “evolutionary enlightenment”. This is the unmistakable and irrepressible yearning to evolve in this world, in this time, in our particular culture so that we may gain the adaptive intelligence to actually co-create a new future, a more compassionate future, and a new species of human being. In other words, enlightenment is not just about being; it's also about becoming.

Andrew Cohen's words resonated so deeply with me that I felt I wanted to share them with my community. It seems to me that what he is describing is what we are about as a community of faith. This is what Jesus was about, and when the writer of John's gospel writes about the Logos or Word of God, we can imagine that he is referring to this evolutionary principle that is driving our divine becoming – the evolutionary process within and without. I will read his blog, and from time to time intersperse my own comments when I feel that interpretation would be helpful. I begin:

A.C.: Aspiring to create the future is a big deal indeed. In the new post-traditional Enlightenment that I teach—called Evolutionary Enlightenment—creating the future is

the sole point, purpose, and fruition of higher inspiration and spiritual experience. In other words, the very reason that one chooses to live a spiritual life in earnest, in the context of Evolutionary Enlightenment, is so that through one's own moral, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual development glorious higher creative potentials can and will emerge. When this teaching is being lived in concert with others who share the same lofty aspirations, a spiritually enlivened worldspace is born—a worldspace that is humming and thriving with the unique vibrancy that is the authentic expression of what I call the Evolutionary Impulse. I'm referring to Eros, that powerful vertical thrust in the cosmos, which created and is still creating the entire universe, including you and me.

Comment: What Andrew Cohen calls Eros, our tradition has called Logos or the Word – that “powerful vertical thrust, which created and is still creating the entire universe, including you and me”. “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos (or Word) was with God, and the Logos was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelled among us (John 1:1-2). It has also been called Wisdom in our tradition. Jesus was an occasion of Eros, Logos, the Word or Wisdom incarnate. To be “in Christ” is to open into this mind or creative intelligence through which we bring forth new futures. These new futures Jesus called the Kin-dom or realm of God. Andrew Cohen calls this realm a “worldspace”. Creating this future is the sole purpose of our life in Christ.

The primary way that we do this is to attend to our own evolutionary growth, and as we do, the world God intends, in our relationships and in our political and social systems grows in clarity. From within, we grow in our desire and capacity to co-create this world.

A.C.: When we awaken to the primordial movement of this impulse at the core of our being, we become aware of a part of ourselves that is untouched by anything and everything that has ever occurred within the sphere of our personal psychological and emotional experience. This part of ourselves is always ecstatically and urgently compelled towards the as-yet-unmanifest future and is ever-focused on that alone. When we awaken to this evolutionary impulse, as the magnetic pull of the future tugs at our awareness, slowly but surely we drop our attachments to our personal history. No longer so distracted by the past and the present, no longer overwhelmed by the instinct to survive and the perpetual desire for security and comfort, we now see and feel an uncreated future potential that previously we simply were not aware of.

Comment: So, in the language of our faith, he is talking about being in Christ, or surrendering to Christ, a dimension we can discover within the depths of our own consciousness that transcends our personal identities. It's not that we no longer enjoy the roles, images, ideas, values that we associate with our personal selves – we do – it's just that we drop our attachment to

them as transitory representations of a deeper Self that is being revealed to us over time. Our more authentic, expansive Self emerges as we surrender our attachment to our more contracted selves. As we loosen our attachment to our historical identity that we've constructed over our lifetime, we are liberated to focus on what Jesus called the Kin-dom of God – the sacred dimension of existence that can be located within our own personal lives, our relationships, our natural world, and our social and political systems.

Manifesting this sacred realm eventually becomes our core purpose. The ego, which at lower stages of development, serves a critical function of organizing our experience into a coherent whole we call “the self”, begins to drop away. Our Purpose to “teach and practice evolutionary Christian spirituality” unites us along the path of both developing our ego-strength and then witnessing, and then discovering in time, that the projects of the ego are less important than the project of manifesting the kin-dom of God.

One more thing: did you catch that last line of the paragraph... “we now see and feel an uncreated future potential that we simply were not aware of”? This is so important. Evolutionary Christian spirituality is not merely a big idea. It's an actual experience of awakening to vast potential, and a previously unrealized responsibility to bring forth the future. Simultaneously, it is an awakening to an inner power – again, we call it Christ or Christ consciousness – that

supplies the energy and creativity to be about this work. The point is that it's an experience, not simply an idea. We are developing practices and maps to help our community personally experience this evolutionary impulse.

A.C.: After our profound awakening to the Evolutionary Impulse, we can never really go back to the way things were before we experienced its magnetic and ecstatic promise. We can't go back to the unenlightened values and convictions of the personal self, nor can we continue to be spiritually inhibited by the powerful materialist convictions of modernity or the persuasive relativistic assertions of postmodernity. That's because now we see and feel the pull of the possible and it will not let us rest. Because of what is becoming visible on the horizon of our inner vision, we are captivated by the immediacy of the potential within our reach. And that in and of itself is quite marvelous, wonderful, and spiritually enlivening indeed.

Comment: Here Andrew Cohen is describing my own experience of the evolutionary impulse – we might call it the Christ drive. I believe this is what Jesus was referring to when he told his disciples that he had no place to rest his head. He wasn't complaining about being homeless. He was saying that the Word or Wisdom of God was so powerfully present, that he was taken up with it in every moment of his life. The future he was called to create was so immediately present to him that it became his sole purpose.

I loved that little phrase, “the pull of the possible”. This pull actually helps us to transcend the agenda of the personal self. When Andrew speaks of the personal self, he is not denigrating it in the least. But he contrasts the personal self with the “Authentic” self. As we inhabit the mind of Christ, and surrender more and more to Christ’s presence – as the love that created the world and the evolutionary pull of the possible - we are animated by a restlessness. Martha Graham called this restlessness, “blessed unrest”. This is the call of Christ to fall in love with what is possible and to give ourselves unconditionally to the emergence of that future – the Kin-dom of God.

A.C.: But the seeing and the intuitive sensing of what is possible is very different than the ability to actualize or materialize what it is that is being seen. That is infinitely more challenging. That’s why aspiring to create the future is such a big deal. Two oft-heard quotes from deeply inspired visionaries elucidate this point: Albert Einstein’s, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it” and Mahatma Gandhi’s, “We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” The enormous (and thrilling) challenge of this new Evolutionary Enlightenment is to make the bold leap to a higher stage of development and to become a living manifestation of that higher potential.

To make all of this a reality, to take the leap from an inspired vision to an actual emergence, there is very hard work to be done. We must strive to

conceptualize and make tangible what our higher philosophical, moral, and psychological structures would look like. We also have to make the sustained effort to clarify what more evolved shared cultural values would actually be. Only when we are supported by higher structures and shared higher values will a new world be able to emerge through us. Indeed, without them, most individuals will neither be able to attain a higher center of gravity nor authentically become the change we wish to see in the world.

Comment: This is the challenge that has always been before the church – to actually materialize Christ’s vision. This is the hard work. In other words, if we’re not just playing at being Christians, if we’re actually serious about the work we’ve been given, we need a way to translate the ideal into reality. We need to a community of people who are dedicated to doing this work – in our tradition Jesus called them disciples, those who seek to manifest the realm of God in a disciplined and passionate way.

We’re in the midst of a feasibility study for a capital campaign with the hope of going forward into the second phase of the actual campaign. We’re hoping to raise just over one million dollars. At first, this amount may cause us to take a deep breath, or gulp. It seems like a lot of money. Once we get the vision that we have set the intention to manifest the Kin-dom of God, once we center ourselves in the mind of Christ, once we identify with the sacred evolutionary impulse itself, and are lit

up by it animating our life, then the money is incidental.

The money is there. It's locked in the vault of our limitless potential that is born of the very creative powers that brought forth this universe. The combination to the vault is yours alone – you know the combination. Perhaps we've been afraid to open the door to that vault because we don't want to squander the tremendous treasure

locked within. Perhaps we've been waiting for a compelling enough vision to induce us to actually go into the vault and invest that treasure in a sacred future. Perhaps we've always thought that this kind of vision arises elsewhere, in other people, in other parts of the world. Well, friends, it's here, it's now, and it's coming through us. If not here, where? If not through us, then through whom?