

Our Progressive Understanding of the Universe

THE FIRST WORLD ORDER: (The earliest beginning of our human understanding of the universe)

INTRODUCTION: (Centuries Before the Common Era - BCE)

As we look back to the understanding of the universe at the beginning of the Common Era, along with the centuries BCE wherein we have records of a variety of gods and writings regarding religion, therein we have an example of a "progressive understanding of the universe." Each of an eclectic variety of gods and their customs for worship and engagements with humanity abounded while many faded away and ended. Given the three core values of the universe - change, diversity, and equality - change is constant, diversity provides for the variations of change, and as times moves forward an appropriate equalization occurs.

Even though the term "pantheism" was not clearly identified until 1705 by John Toland, I do believe this term fits the overall conception of identifying god(s) with the conceived world in which people lived. Religion is the term we customarily use to consider a variety of superhuman agencies, ritual observances, moral codes and customs in the conduct of human affairs.

Pantheism: (definition) "any religious belief or philosophical doctrine that identifies God with the universe."

The adjective "pantheist" was introduced by the Irish Deist John Toland in the book *Socinianism Truly Stated* (1705). The noun "pantheism" was first used in 1709 by one of Toland's opponents. The term "panentheism" appeared much later in 1828. Although the terms are recent, they have been applied retrospectively to alternative views of the divine being as found in the entire philosophical traditions of both East and West.

[Pantheism - Encyclopedia Britannica]

Religion: (definition) "a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs."

Regarding religion, "no consensus among scholars concerning the best way to study religion has developed, however. One of the many reasons for this failure is that each discipline enlisted to study religion has its own distinctive methods and topics, and scholars often disagree how to resolve the inevitable conflicts between these different intellectual perspectives. Another reasons it that questions about origins and functions of religion have often been conflated with questions about the truth of religion, and this has led to controversies that tend to hinder the development of common concepts, methodologies, and problems.

[Study of Religion - Encyclopedia Britannica]

In these beginning periods of civilization religion was primarily based on imagination, inspiration and revelation. Different religions had their own understandings about their gods utilizing these three primary areas of

information for developing their beliefs and traditions in respect and relationships to their gods and to one another. The majority practiced sacrificial offerings to their gods to insure their favorable actions toward individuals and the community. Their god's behaviors were thought to be impulsive and punitive causing fear with a consistent need for respect and worship. Should the gods become angry there would be retribution, punishment and even death.

In the first world order it took many centuries to notice any dramatic and consistent changes in the progress of human understanding of the world. People and groups of people wondered about as hunter gatherers and formed rather informal communities. Eventually, as people adapted tools and more sophisticated social awareness, they were able to stay longer in settled places with crops and animal grazing for their necessary provisions for living. As they found areas with good climates, water, and other natural resources, they began to stay in places and formed more organized ways of living and working together. In the few centuries before the beginning of the Common Era, major territories formed with well organized forms of polity for controlling their large territories. It wasn't long before the development of territorial fighting began as more resources were necessary to maintain their individual success as a people. Wars were a primary source of capturing people whom they could enslave to do their own work for advance and control.

Astrology: (Early beginning of astrological sciences)

Man's interest in the sky is at the heart of three separate stories - astronomy, astrology and the calendar.

Astronomy is the scientific study of sun, moon and stars. Astrology is a pseudo-science interpreting the supposed effect of the heavenly bodies on human existence. In early history the two are closely linked. The sky is the home of many of the gods, who influence life on earth. And the patterns in the sky must surely reflect that influence. [<http://historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistoriesResponsive.asp?historyid=ac32>]

Now Astronomy is the primary interest in our world today as this science is able to observe, study, and produce actual theories about the universe as a whole. With telescopes and radio telescopes here on earth, along with telescopes like the Hubble Telescope and other specialized equipment orbiting in space around our earth, we are able to produce and accumulate verifiable facts with a fascinating knowledge about our universe now and in the future. "Galileo was considered the father of observational astronomy. He was among the first to use a telescope to observe the sky and after constructing a 20x refractor telescope he discovered the four largest moons of Jupiter in 1610. This was the first observation of satellites orbiting another planet."

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_astronomy]

Early Growing Awareness: (Counting backward from the Common Era)

Mesopotamia and the Babylonians: from 3000 BCE:

Astronomical observation begins with the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, where prominent constellations (the patterns formed by stars in the galaxy) are recognized and named soon after 3000 BC. Similarly the sky-watchers of Mesopotamia identify the five wandering stars, which with the sun and moon form the seven original 'planets' (Greek for 'wanderers').

Within Mesopotamia the Babylonians, flourishing from the 18th century BC, are the first great astronomers. The minutes and seconds of modern astronomical measurement derive from their number system. And it is the Babylonians who introduce the useful concept of the zodiac.

The Babylonians realize that the zodiac - the sequence of constellations along which the sun and the planets appear to move in their passage through the heavens - can serve as a yardstick of celestial time if divided into recognizable and equal segments. They select twelve constellations to represent these segments, many of them identified by the names of animals. The Greeks later provide the term for the zodiac when they describe it as the 'animal circle' (zodiakos kyklos).

The zodiac links constellations with times of the year; and the constellations have their own links with the gods. So scientific observation of star positions merges with speculation about divine influence. The zodiac, as a concept, is of use to both astronomers and astrologers.

The Greeks: from the 6th century BCE:

The Greeks make significant advances in the fields of both astronomy and astrology. In astronomy their analytical approach to the heavens leads to early insights of great brilliance, even though they eventually blind European astronomers for more than a millennium with the elaborately observed but entirely false Ptolemaic system.

Meanwhile astrology benefits from the range and vitality of the Greek gods. Linked with the planets and constellations, these very human divinities make astrology dramatic and exciting. And Greek interest in the individual extends the astrologers' range. Evolved originally to help in affairs of state, the art finds its lasting role in casting the fortunes of ordinary men and women.

India and elsewhere: from the 1st millennium BCE:

India has had its own system of astrology from perhaps as early as 1000 BC. With Greek influence, during the Hellenistic period, the western version of the zodiac is introduced.

The same pattern recurs elsewhere at other periods of history. The spread of Arabic scholarship, bringing forgotten Greek texts to medieval Europe, results in much work for the astrologers - until the age of science and the age of reason somewhat reduce the appeal of the ancient art.

In most parts of the world astrology is thriving again in the 20th century. In countries such as India it has never lost its appeal. No important step in life can be safely undertaken unless the signs are propitious. No marriage will go ahead without horoscopes being drawn up.

In western countries the ancient art is perhaps viewed rather more as light-hearted self-indulgence. But most popular newspapers still find that it pays to keep a resident astrologer.

[<http://historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistoriesResponsive.asp?historyid=ac32>]

In these prior times religion and science were co-mingled without a great deal of differentiation between them. It would take about another 1000 years before a clear and noticeable distinction is made between Religion: imagination, inspiration, and revelation and that of Science: observation, hypothesis, and theory. It was in this period of a lack of distinction that most religions were formed along with their writings and scriptures. The three major religions, even the ones which still continued during the second world view, Jewish, Christian, and Islam, were organized and basically finalized during this period and time of The First World Order. The adjective "pantheism," that was not formally introduced to us until 1705, was the foremost concept that formulated religion.

The dictionary definition of Pantheism, "a doctrine that equates God with the forces and laws of the universe," was the primary focus of religion. This belief and worship applied to all gods as they were all identified with the universe and its phenomena.

THE SECOND WORLD VIEW: (Gradual changes after the beginning of the Common Era - CE)

Panentheism, "the belief that God is a part of the universe as well as transcending it."

The second world view began to take an effective hold by the end of the Middle Ages around the 15th century, especially after Galileo (February 15, 1564 - January 8 1642), who was an astronomer, physicist, engineer, philosopher, and mathematician who played a major role in the scientific revolution of the 17th century.

Galileo Galilei (Italian pronunciation: [ɡaliˈlɛːo ɡaliˈlɛi]; 15 February 1564^[3] – 8 January 1642) was an Italian polymath: astronomer, physicist, engineer, philosopher, and mathematician, he played a major role in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century.

Galileo's championing of heliocentrism and Copernicanism was controversial during his lifetime, when most subscribed to either geocentrism or the Tychonic system. He met with opposition from astronomers, who doubted heliocentrism because of the absence of an observed stellar parallax. The matter was investigated by the Roman Inquisition in 1615, which concluded that heliocentrism was "foolish and absurd in philosophy, and formally heretical since it explicitly contradicts in many places the sense of Holy Scripture." Galileo later defended his views in Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems, which appeared to attack Pope Urban VIII and thus alienated him and the Jesuits, who had both supported Galileo up until this point. He was tried by the Inquisition, found "vehemently suspect of heresy", and forced to recant. He spent the rest of his life under house arrest. While under house arrest, he wrote one of his best-known works, Two New Sciences, in which he summarized work he had done some forty years earlier on the two sciences now called kinematics and strength of materials.

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo_Galilei]

By the time of the Enlightenment, around the beginning of the 18th century, during which a new beginning of understanding with the growth of science, the beginning of industry and new employment opportunity, as well as The Reformation, a new era began. It was a period of new birth for all people of body, mind and spirit that might be equated with the teen age years of our moving into maturity. In emerging religious thoughts is the introduction of the term Panentheism around 1828. Here is a reference from [<http://theosophy.net/forum/topics/panentheism-the-ultimate-root-of-theosophy>] (Theosophy: "teaching about God and the world based on mystical insight).

The idea of Panentheism sometimes strikes me as an ultimate theosophical position. It places connections between everything, explains the Hermetic axiom "As Above so Below; As Below so Above." It can even be used to explain entanglement in Quantum Physics, one of the greatest mysteries known in Physics. It is even said to be in the Religions of Egyptian Ikhnoton (1375–1358 BCE), the Vedas, Christianity, Jewish Mysticism (Kabbalah), Taoism (Lao-Tse), Native American Religions and the list is huge.

(note) the definition below is from the beginning pages in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry.

“Panentheism” is a constructed word composed of the English equivalents of the Greek terms “pan”, meaning all, “en”, meaning in, and “theism”, meaning God. Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world. It offers an increasingly popular alternative to both traditional theism and pantheism. Panentheism seeks to avoid either isolating God from the world as traditional theism often does or identifying God with the world as pantheism does. Traditional theistic systems emphasize the difference between God and the world while panentheism stresses God's active presence in the world.

Pantheism emphasizes God's presence in the world but panentheism maintains the identity and significance of the non-divine. While panentheism generally emphasizes God's presence in the world without losing the distinct identity of either God or the world, specific forms of panentheism, drawing from a different sources, explain the nature of the relationship of God to the world in a variety of ways and come to different conclusions about the significance of the world for the identity of God.

One of my favorite Christian writers is Marcus J. Borg. He was an active member of the Jesus Movement of the Westar Institute [<https://www.westarinstitute.org>] and his books portrayed a scholarly but humble and simple way of explaining theology that was open to everyone to understand. In chapter 5, entitled GOD, the term we use referring to the Devine, he writes with scholarly eloquence using simple terms and descriptions.

To affirm both—that God is transcendent, more than the universe, even as God is also immanent, a presence pervading the universe—is the ancient biblical and Christian referent of the word God. To use a modern term coined in the early 1800s, this way of thinking about God is called panentheism. The Greek roots of the word mean “everything is in God.” This is the orthodox and authentic meaning of the word.

PERSONIFYING GOD

Problems occur only when personifications of God are understood literally or semi-literally. When this happens, the result is supernatural theism, with the limitations inherent in that view. Avoiding the language of personification can easily create the impression that the word God refers to an “it”—a reality less than personal, an inanimate reality—and the etymology of inanimate means “un-spirited,” without Spirit. But another option is seeing God as referring to a reality that is more than personal, not less than personal. This reality is sometimes known, experienced, as a presence—as having more the quality of a “you” than the quality of an “it.” Thus personal language for God is appropriate, so long as “the one in whom we live and move and have our being” is not reduced to “a person,” a supernatural person about whose existence one can argue. Reality, “is-ness,” “what is” is. The question is not whether “is-ness” exists, but what it is like. Personal language affirms that this reality is more than personal, not less than personal.

This understanding is deeply embedded in Judaism and Christianity. As Moses experiences the sacred in the bush that burned without being consumed, he asks, “What is your name?” The answer is, “I am who I am.” The sentence is a tautology; the second half says the same as the first half, and thus says nothing at all—except that God “is” and is beyond all names. The Jewish prohibition of images of God makes the same point, as does the prohibition against saying the most sacred name of God. So also do the voices of Jewish and Christian mystics when they say that the one, the sacred, is ineffable—beyond all language. Thus humility and reticence in our language about God is called for. No concept of God, no way of stating the referent of the word—neither supernatural theism nor panentheism—is adequate. Yet the latter is better. More expansive and less constricting, it avoids the limitations that have made supernatural theism problematic or impossible for many.

[Speaking Christian, Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power—And How They Can Be Restored, Marcus J. Borg, ending of chapter 5]

Richard Rohr, in a meditation called "Everything Belongs" said:

God is always bigger than the boxes we build for God, so we should not waste too much time protecting our always too small boxes. It is very hard for people to enjoy their objective, pre-existing union with God until they have an adequate sense of identity, boundaries, and at least the first beginnings of a sense of awe and humility. Basically, they need a container to hold such precious contents. The Ark of the Covenant is a metaphor for the sacred seat of God’s presence; the Israelites went to great lengths to construct it perfectly and carry it wherever they went (Exodus 25:10ff).

THE THIRD WORLD VIEW: (A Growing understanding of Today's Universe - with Religion and Science)

It seems that the first world view was the beginning of our "inner space" (spirituality) of being human in a world that was getting bigger than we could imagine. It was a unique beginning as we contemplated God - Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier and sensed compassion, love, and grace.

The second world view was a continuing story of expansion, not only in gradually inhabiting the whole of the earth but in trying to live together as we expanded and grew. The struggle was in discovering who we were as individuals and how we came together as family, community and nationally.

In a meditation in November 2016, Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, commented on the belief that God's Goodness was reflected in Nature. He used this concise quote from Thomas Aquinas to summarize the diversity of God's creation:

God brought things into being in order that his [sic] goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because his goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, he produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided. —Thomas Aquinas

Fr. Rohr then continues with this summary of the Prime Event - The Big Bang - to show an overall time relationship with the beginning of all things and where we are today, some almost 14 billion years later.

Nature itself is the primary Bible. As Paul says in Romans 1:20, "What can be known about God is perfectly plain, for God has made it plain. Ever since God created the world, God's everlasting power and deity is there for the mind to see in all the things that God has created." The world itself is the primary locus of the sacred, and actually provides all the metaphors that the soul needs for its growth.

If you scale chronological history down to the span of one year, with the Big Bang on January 1, then our species, Homo sapiens, doesn't appear until 11:59 PM on December 31. That means our written Bible and the church appeared in the last nanosecond of December 31. I can't believe that God had nothing to say until the last nanosecond. Rather, as both Paul and Thomas Aquinas say, God has been revealing God's love, goodness, and beauty since the very beginning through the natural world of creation. "God looked at everything God had made, and found it very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Acknowledging the intrinsic value and beauty of creation, elements, plants, and animals is a major paradigm shift for most Western and cultural Christians. In fact, we have often dismissed it as animism or paganism. We limited God's love and salvation to our own human species, and even then we did not have enough love to go around for all of humanity! God ended up looking quite miserly and inept, to be honest. [Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM]

Slowly Coming Into a New Age of Understanding:

It seemed difficult for many to comprehend and contemplate the growing awareness of such an extensive span of time and space, especially without familiarity with many of the scientific principles and laws developed in more recent centuries. We often forget how recent we are as a species to appear in the universe and on planet earth. Humans only began on earth about 200,000 years ago and realize that it less than 4000 years ago when writing appeared.

It is generally agreed that true writing of language (not only numbers) was invented independently in at least two places: Mesopotamia (specifically, ancient Sumer) around 3200 BC and Mesoamerica around 600 BC. Several Mesoamerican scripts are known, the oldest being from the Olmec or Zapotec of Mexico." [History of writing - Wikipedia]

The beginning of the Common Era was just over 2000 years ago when there was growing knowledge and interest in the heavens and the earth and when large territories were forming in organized ways to build an interdependence within humanity. It may be that we are just now beginning to enter into what may be called the Third World View. A view that senses the togetherness of the entire universe and that calls us beyond the earth itself into the heavenly realms all around and about us.

Here are two quotes from a familiar and leading scientist Neil deGrasse Tyson; born October 5, 1958, an American astrophysicist, cosmologist, author, and science communicator. Since 1996, he has been the Frederick P. Rose Director of the Hayden Planetarium at the Rose Center for Earth and Space in New York City. The center is part of the American Museum of Natural History, where Tyson founded the Department of Astrophysics in 1997 and has been a research associate in the department since 2003.

- "The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it."
- "We are part of this universe; we are in this universe, but perhaps more important than both of those facts, is that the universe is in us."

The God Factor: From - [<http://scienceillustrated.com.au/blog/science/discovery-of-god-particle/>]

Scientists believe that they may have caught their first glimpse of the Higgs Boson, or "God particle", a subatomic unit that is a vital factor in science's understanding of the universe.

Physicists Fabiola Gianotti and Guido Tonelli of the Large Hadron Collider's two largest experiments, Atlas and CMS, announced the discovery of signals that point to the appearance of the Higgs boson at a seminar on Tuesday at the Organisation of Nuclear Research (CERN) near Geneva, however there is not enough data to claim a formal discovery.

The Large Hadron, described as the "Big Bang Machine" is the worlds largest and most powerful particle accelerator. Located on the French-Swiss border, the \$4.4 billion project functions to attempt to recreate the conditions at the birth of the universe by accelerating protons to collide at the speed of light.

The Higgs boson was predicted nearly 50 years ago by a British physicist, Peter Higgs, as a crucial element to explain the origin of mass. It is a missing link in current theories of physics.

According to the Higgs theory, shortly after the big bang many particles had no mass until interacting with Higgs field - an invisible energy field that fills the vacuum of space throughout the universe. When some particles move through the field they feel drag and gain weight as a result. Others, such as light or photons, feel no drag and remain without mass.

Scientists have no hope of detecting the field itself, so instead search for the Higgs boson, which would essentially prove the field exists.

“While these results do not provide conclusive proof of the existence of the Higgs boson, the fact that broadly similar hints have been seen by two competing experiments using several different complementary techniques is very suggestive,” said Dan Tovey, professor of Particle Physics at the University of Sheffield and spokesman for ATLAS.

“With much more data due next year it won’t be long before we can answer this question once and for all”.

This brings to my mind a scripture in Colossians 1:15-17 (GW): (referring to Christ, the title given to Jesus)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. He created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether they are kings or lords, rulers or powers— everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything and holds everything together.

From the beginning of our humanity we developed what we call religion, based on imagination, inspiration, and revelation. This was the forte for understanding ourselves and the world around us in the First World Order. Although we had no way of proving the content of our religious beliefs they supported us in understanding our bodies, minds, and spirits and the earth-centric world with the heavens above and the nether world beneath.

Then we entered into the Second World Order and began to incorporate another more credible form of believing that was verifiable called science, based on observation, hypothesis, and theory. Bringing together the first world understanding with the additional knowledge and understanding of the second world order remains a struggle, to say the least, as we continue to struggle accepting these progressive revelations of information, knowledge, and understanding.

As humans we have a keen sense and awareness of our past, a quest for understanding our present, and are very inquisitive about our future. The Third World Order has gifted us with many educational opportunities for continued advancements to feed our thirst for more and, having reached our 21st century, it appears that we may now be entering a new period of maturity as a species. Very early in this century we have begun to focus our attention on the magnificence of the universe and what it may have to offer for our future. After 40 years have passed since our landings on the Moon there is now a revival of new frontiers in outer space, especially to go to Mars. Here is an interesting article "40 Years After Moon Landing: Why Is It So Hard to Go Back?"

[<http://www.space.com/7015-40-years-moon-landing-hard.html>]

In 2016 there is a growing interest in the planet Mars. NASA has sent equipment to Mars to look and test as preliminary investigation has begun. Other nations and private companies have shown a growing interest in moving forward to possibly try to send humans to form human habitation on Mars. According to the CQ Roll Call located in Washington, DC, this was released in their Political section, "Aiming for Mars, Obama Announces Deep-Space Work With Industry - Outgoing president sees humans on Red Planet by 2030s" - See more at: [<http://www.rollcall.com/news/politics/aiming-for-mars-obama-announces-deep-space-work-with-industry#>]

Continuing Knowledge of Vastness of the Universe:

<http://www.space.com/6716-major-space-telescopes.html>

The granddaddy of space telescopes, Hubble has been observing from Earth orbit for more than 19 years. Hubble, the first of NASA's Great Observatories, has revolutionized astronomy, providing stunning images of countless cosmic objects and giving astronomers their most distant views of the universe with the Hubble Deep Field and Ultra Deep Field. Hubble has shed light on the scale of the universe, the life cycle of stars, black holes, and the formation of the first galaxies. Currently receiving its fifth and final makeover, Hubble is expected to last at least another five years, hopefully overlapping with its successor, the James Webb Space Telescope.

There are at least dozens more telescopes in orbit around the earth that enable research in a variety of fields investigating the universe. They each have their own specialty like IR (infrared) detection for nearby objects, powerful IR detection to look for water, both in nearby comets and faraway dust clouds, and will also peer into the womb of star formation to catch a glimpse of baby stars in the act of forming. CMB Cosmic Microwave Background concentrating on the microwave radiation of the universe. Planet-hunting telescopes that will specifically be searching for other Earth-like planets in the galaxy. Gamma ray Telescopes can reveal some of the most energetic and mysterious events in the universe, including dark matter, black holes and spinning pulsars. There are of course other missions being pursued by NASA, ESA and other space agencies; some are already up, while others are just in the planning phases.

One of the big missions scientists are anticipating is the James Webb Space Telescope, which will be the successor of Hubble. In fact, "it is designed specifically to build on Hubble's legacy," said Jon Morse, NASA's Astrophysics Division director.

It will search for light from the first stars and galaxies which formed in the universe after the Big Bang to better understand how stars and star systems form. The project has met some delays and cost overruns, and the telescope (was recently launched) in 2013.

"That will be a decade of frontier astronomy with JWST," Morse said. But JWST isn't the only telescope in the works, and Morse expects this golden age to continue for some time. "There will continuously be interesting things to do with missions of all sizes, so I look forward to an exciting portfolio well into the coming decades," Morse said.

Making Progress Toward Our New Future:

And I Saw A New Heaven And A New Earth!

Is this 21st century revealing a new awareness of life and living as never before? Many people interpret the scriptures literally and may be missing the real "revelation" of change, diversity, and equality of all life and stages of living. Was the author of the book of Revelation, at the end of our Christian scriptures, witnessing a new beginning, or is it continuing to happen?

Revelation 21:1-4 (GW) "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and earth had disappeared, and the sea was gone. Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "God lives with humans! God will make his home with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won't be any more death. There won't be any grief, crying, or pain, because the first things have disappeared."

When we bring together Religion (imagination, inspiration, and revelation) and Science (observation, hypothesis, theory) We discover the unimaginable process of life, LIFE [Living Into Future Experiences] in very vivid and concrete ways. Perhaps it is more a transition than a new beginning or an end? With all of the writings of the human species, both sacred and secular, could it be that those who were "prophets" among us saw it both ways? Might this 21st century be another transitional century of such momentous changes that we evolve into a spectacular new era?

A New Time and a New Day:

Throughout our Judaic Christian history we have witnessed many who have "seen" or who foresaw new times. Some allude to actual happenings while others are presented in myth, story, allegory and metaphor, but all assist in pointing to change, diversity, and equality in presenting a new time and a new day.

- Joseph: Interpreting dream of Pharaoh - (predicting and solutions for a time of severe drought) Genesis chapter 41
- Book of Esther: "Tells how Ester, a young Jewish girl, delivers the Jews in Persia when they are threatened with extermination but Haman, the chief minister of the Persian king." From opening notes, page 501, *The Oxford Study Bible*.
- Job: Summary: "A gifted poet, ... challenges the Deuteronomistic theology that goodness is rewarded with material prosperity and wickedness is punished with temporal suffering;" from the opening notes of the book of Job, page 510, *The Oxford Study Bible*.
- Daniel: (explained to the king that the statue represented four successive kingdoms beginning with Babylon) Daniel chapter 2. Stories and visions are set in the Babylonian and Persian periods.
- Jonah: The story of Jonah and the "big fish." "The book's message of God's universal concern is borne along by the irony of a petulant prophet who is disappointed by the success of his preaching." From opening notes, Page 960, *The Oxford Study Bible*.

These few and many more from the entire Bible, especially not neglecting the many parables recorded in the Gospels about Jesus of Galilee in the 1st century CE. In fact, the Gospel of John claims that Jesus said, John 14:12 (GW), "I can guarantee this truth: Those who believe in me will do the things that I am doing. They will do even greater things because I am going to the Father." In the 1st century in Galilee they referred to these things Jesus did as "miracles" and here are some similarly remarkable things we are able or are becoming able to do today: From: [<http://www.viralnova.com/medical-miracles/>]

- After a tackle gone wrong in the NFL's 2007 season, Buffalo player Kevin Everett was left with a catastrophic spinal injury. He was left unable to move or feel his body from the neck down. Though there was only a 20%

chance that he would walk again (at most), doctors tried the controversial treatment known as "cold therapy" on Hixon. This involved flushing the blood vessels with cold water to reduce swelling. The procedure worked, and Everett was able to walk again, although it took some time.

- 14-year-old D'Zhana Simmons suffered from a weak and enlarged heart, requiring a transplant. Sadly, the donor heart didn't take, and had to be removed. This meant that for nearly four months, Simmons' blood was pumped not by an organ, but by two artificial blood pumps. The experience was harrowing, but she survived and received a second, successful heart transplant after 118 days with no heart.
- After suffering grievous injuries in a car crash in 2009, 17-year-old Katrina Burgess's bones were put back together with the help of 11 titanium pins in her neck, spine, and leg, as well as a screw to support her neck. After five months of operations, she made a near-full recovery and is currently signed to a modeling agency.
- After a near-fatal accident, a man was left in a vegetative state for six years, unable to communicate, swallow, or make coordinated movements. One day, in sort of a last-ditch effort, doctors attached electrodes to his thalamus, which manages sensory perception and regulates motor function. That was apparently the kickstart the man needed; after the procedure, he was able to talk, feed himself, and communicate with his family.
- Builder Martin Jones was blinded 12 years ago in an accident, and was unable to see until a bizarre procedure restored the sight in his remaining eye. The procedure involved removing one of Jones' canine teeth and repurposing it as a lens-holder. After some preparation, it was inserted into his eye, and today, Jones has near-perfect vision in his right eye. The best thing about having his vision restored? Jones was able to see his wife, Gill, who he married after the accident, for the first time.

Projected Medical Possibilities:

From [<http://medicalfuturist.com/top-10-most-popular-digitalhealth-stories-of-2016/>]

- At Vanderbilt University, scientists are building an artificial kidney that they envision will one day be a standard of care over dialysis. The end result is expected to be a microchip about the size of a natural kidney, small enough to be implantable and powered by the body's own blood flow.
- A groundbreaking new therapy in which white blood cells were reprogrammed to attack cancer cells is showing great promise after more than 90 percent of terminally ill leukemia patients had their symptoms disappear completely. Immunotherapies are shaping up to be a key element of eventually defeating cancer.
- Only disruptive innovations will be able to transform the status quo in cancer, leading to patients getting more personalized cancer care faster, while letting physicians do their job more effectively. Here are the technologies and trends that could help achieve the "moonshot" of curing cancer.
- A drug which appears to reverse Huntington's disease, a neurodegenerative genetic disorder that affects muscle coordination and leads to mental decline, is being trialled in humans after proving successful in monkeys and mice. The new drug, called IONIS-HTTRx, silences the gene known to be responsible for the production of a protein which causes Huntington's, a previously incurable disease.

Videos you can watch:

Regenerative Medicine: Re-Growing Body Parts

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwcT1ViM-hw&feature=youtube_gdata_player

The Skin Gun

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXO_ApjKPal&feature=youtube_gdata_player

What can happen when we become PEOPLE OF HOPE:

HOPE [Habitually Opening Progressive Exploration]

Making a habit of being open to new truth because of the consistency of normal daily changes is what brings progress to best understand what our explorations bring to us. Scripture and all life experiences should never be taken literally. Even those deemed as events are worth more than just the event itself. When we are able to interpret all of life as metaphor, allegory, and myth we can enjoy much more of the value and comprehensive fullness of the passing of time.

In a meditation series recently by Richard Rohr entitled **Everything Belongs**, he shared this conceptual understanding of The Cross:

The cross is a perfect metaphor for what we mean by “Everything Belongs.” The rational, calculating mind can never fully understand the mystery of the cross. These insights can only be discovered through contemplative seeing:

God is to be found in all things, even and most especially in the painful, tragic, and sinful things, exactly where we do not want to look for God. The crucifixion of the God-Man is at the same moment the worst thing in human history and the best thing in human history.

Human existence is neither perfectly consistent (as rational and control-needy people usually demand it be), nor is it incoherent chaos (what cynics, agnostics, and unaware people expect it to be). Instead, life has a cruciform pattern. All of life is a “coincidence of opposites” (St. Bonaventure), a collision of cross-purposes; we are all filled with contradictions needing to be reconciled. This is the precise burden and tug of all human existence.

The price that we pay for holding together these opposites is invariably some form of “crucifixion.” Jesus himself was archetypally hung between a good thief and a bad thief, between heaven and earth, holding together both his humanity and his divinity, a male body with a feminine soul. He was a Jewish believer who forgave and loved everyone else. He “reconciled all things in himself” (Ephesians 2:14-18). Jesus really is an icon of what Carl Jung called the whole-making instinct.

The demand for the perfect is the enemy of the possible good. Be peace and do justice, but don’t expect perfection in yourself or the world. Perfectionism contributes to intolerance and judgmentalism and makes ordinary love largely impossible. Jesus was an absolute realist, patient with the ordinary, the broken, the weak, and those who failed. Following him is not a “salvation scheme” or a means of creating some ideal social order as much as it is a vocation to share the fate of God for the life of the World, and to love the way that God loves—which we cannot do by ourselves.

The doctrine, folly, and image of the cross is the great clarifier and truth-speaker for all of human history. We can rightly speak of being “saved” by it. Jesus crucified and resurrected is the whole pattern revealed, named, effected, and promised for human history. Jesus did not come to found a separate or

new religion as much as he came to present a universal message of vulnerability and foundational unity that is necessary for all religions, the human soul, and history itself to survive. Thus Christians can rightly call Jesus “the Savior of the World” (John 4:42), but no longer in the competitive and imperialistic way that they have usually presented him. By very definition, vulnerability and unity do not compete or dominate. The cosmic Christ is no threat to anything but separateness, illusion, domination, and the imperial ego. In that sense, Jesus, the Christ, is the ultimate threat, but first of all to Christians themselves.

Summing it all up in his Gateway to Silence: "All things work together for good." —Romans 8:28

Closing Summary: The metaphor of the Cross is the Summary of the Law - God's Covenant!

Luke 10:27 (GW) "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as you love yourself." LOVE is the key! Mark 10:45 (GW) "It's the same way with the Son of Man. He didn't come so that others could serve him. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people." The metaphor of the Cross is how we live; when we die to selfishness and come alive to a life of service in Covenant With God!

It's All About **Behavior** - Not Beliefs! "Actions speak louder than words."

In closing may I share with you one of my favorite songs that my mother, a popular soprano soloist, often sang:

Words and Music: Clara H. Scott, 1895

1 Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes; illumine me,
Spirit divine!

2 Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth thou sendest clear.
And while the wave notes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears; illumine me,
Spirit divine!

3 Open my mouth, and let me bear

gladly the warm truth everywhere.
Open my heart, and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.

Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.

Open my heart; illumine me,
Spirit divine!

Gerard A. Pisani, Jr.