

Deborah Asberry

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***Called to Love: A Charism for
21st Century Mystics and Prophets***

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In my heart, I have taken the vow of Love. That pretty much covers it for me. (A friar attending a Sisters of Providence Focus Group in 2000 that I was facilitating in Terre Haute, Indiana)

As our human family lives into this third decade of the 21st century, I am reminiscing on two significant events of the past decade that significantly shaped my practice as a consultant. The first occurred in August of 2011. I was attending a weeklong course offered by the Cape Cod Institute. Meg Wheatley was the instructor, and she presented a theory of organizations as living social systems. She insisted that we needed new language and new frameworks for thinking about organizations and their life cycles. She spent the entire week describing what has come to be known as the *two-loop* framework for understanding the life cycle of organizations from a living systems perspective.¹ I was mesmerized by the content of that workshop and immediately began using the two-loops in my work as a consultant. I subsequently attended two other summer workshops facilitated by Wheatley in 2012 and 2014 where she continued to build on this framework and her thinking.²

Then in 2013, I read *Movement of Grace: Religious Life and the Evolution of Christ Consciousness* by Sister Gail Worcelo.³ Sister Worcelo traced the historic expressions of religious life as an evolutionary unfolding of Christ consciousness; as religious communities evolved over the centuries, Worcelo proposed that each manifestation embodied greater complexity and depth of consciousness. Drawing on the writings Ken Wilber and echoing the writings of Pierre de Chardin, Worcelo posited that this evolutionary unfolding of religious life was moving into a new form of mysticism that she calls a “We mysticism”⁴. She explains that the evolution of the mystical traditions allows for the possibilities for greater relatedness and connectedness of humankind. Her article was compelling.

In the article, Worcelo talked about ‘moments of grace’ that occurred over the two-thousand-year historical span of religious life. She states that these moments of grace are “one-time events in which something radically new is born into existence.”⁵ She hypothesized that the chronological and evolutionary trajectory of religious resulted in successively advanced expressions that were more integrated and complex. This spiraling outward into greater complexity was both in “outer form and inner consciousness.”⁶ She states that these moments of grace are evolutionary leaps of understanding relative to the “Christ Event” which started with the solitary quest of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Worcelo goes on to state that the

¹ Wheatley, Margaret and Frieze, Deborah. *Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live The Future Now*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco. 2011

² I wrote an essay describing Wheatley’s work, *Complexity, Emergence and Co-Evolution: Notes From the Field*. CommunityWorks, Inc. 2020 www.cworksindy.com

³ Worcelo, Gail, *Movement of Grace: Religious Life and the Evolution of Christ Consciousness*. The Occasional Papers, Winter 2013. Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Silver Spring, Maryland.

⁴ Ibid. p 5-6

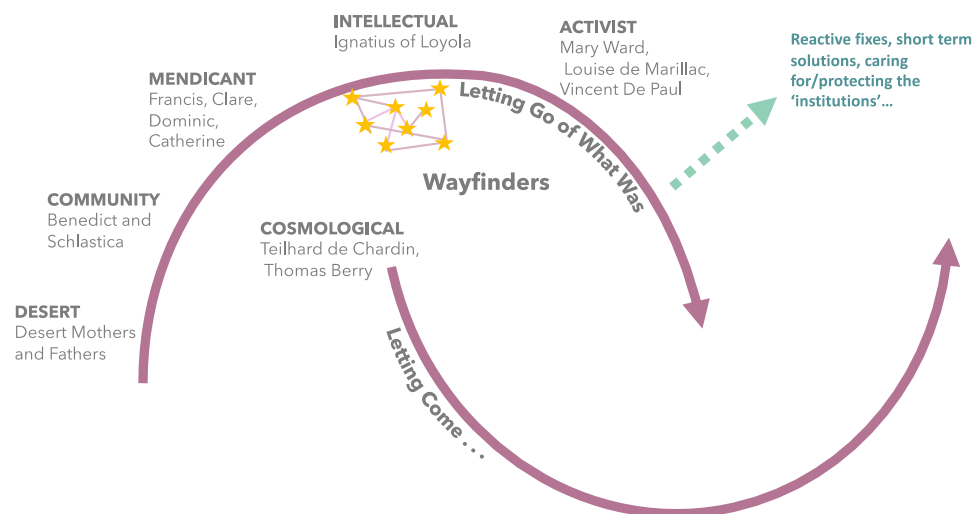
⁵ Ibid, p. 4

⁶ Ibid, p. 4

tradition is continually being pressured from within to go beyond and manifest ever deeper dimensions of the Christic pattern layered into its fibers—self-giving love, justice, mercy, wisdom, and truth.”⁷ The ‘Christic-pattern’ necessitates an evolving theological consciousness which sees Christ as archetype who was incarnated in the historic person of Jesus of Nazareth.

The timing of Worcelo’s article and Wheatley’s thesis of living systems seemed more than just a coincidence. Both women were drawing from the same theoretical wells, drawing inspiration from systems theories and evolutionary consciousness. I was curious about how Worcelo’s chronology might compare to Wheatley’s two-loop model. I couldn’t help myself and began mapping each successive stage of religious life onto the two loops. I had no idea what I was doing, nor did I have any sense of what that mapping would reveal. I can say that as I navigated my way along the top *emerged loop*, traversing the arc of history past the Desert Fathers and Mothers, Benedict, Francis, and Clare, following the arc to Dominic and Catherine of Sienna, moving to Ignatius, Mary Ward, Louise de Merillac and Vincent de Paul, I could NOT write Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin on the same arc as the others.

My pen refused and I intuitively placed them onto the tip top point of the *emerging loop*. It was so clear to me that the theological understanding of interdependence, unity, and cosmological connectedness transcends anything that has previously existed, including now. If the institution of religious life had collectively taken that leap and embodied it in practice and praxis, everything would have changed. It would have caused a seismic shift across the institutes and in the church not unlike Martin Luther hammering his 95 Theses to the door of Wittenberg’s Castle Church. My early renderings of the mapping experience looked mostly like this:



Adapted from Meg Wheatley’s two loop cycle and Gail Worcelo’s SGM article in Winter 2013 Occasional Papers. Deborah Asberry 2013

⁷ Ibid, p. 4

Both Teilhard and Berry proposed a Christology that sees Christ as both archetype and a historical figure. As Richard Rohr has said in numerous articles and publications, “Christ is not Jesus’ last name.”⁸ Worcelo’s evolutionary explanation of religious life includes the cosmological, unitive understanding of an archetypal Christ that transcends religiosity and doctrine. That revolutionary understanding of an evolutionary Christ doesn’t square with the doctrines or theology of the Institutional Catholic Church. My pen refused to include the cosmological on the emerged arc because this evolutionary understanding of Christ is *still emerging within and among seeker of all faiths as an inner consciousness*. The *outer form* of a Christic-centered consciousness is not evident in our current institutions. This consciousness has been *foretold, but not yet fully realized*.⁹

I shared this original document with several clients over the next couple of years, always feeling trepidation as I explained my theses. I worried that my words would be heard as heretical. The distinction that I try to make is one of individual versus collective consciousness. Evolutionary Christ consciousness is a belief that exists within the hearts and minds of *individual people* and groups of people within the church. However, as previously stated, the collective, institutional awareness *does not exist*, nor is it universally accepted in the creeds and teachings of the *institutional* church. The more I thought about it, the more sense it made. Teilhard de Chardin was a contemporary of Carl Jung, Albert Einstein, Gregory Bateson and other seminal thinkers of the mid twentieth century who were prophetic in their respective fields of study. Chardin’s understanding of a mystical and cosmic Christ is a *theological leap of consciousness*¹⁰ that influences how we see ourselves as spiritual beings. This Christ consciousness has profound implications for the evolution of the Christian prophetic life-form that originated with the Desert Mothers and Fathers. The ‘we mysticism’ that Worcelo talked about hasn’t found a home within our existing institutional structures. *Form follows function*. So, it is not heresy to suggest that Chardin and Berry offer the world an evolutionary consciousness that transcends existing doctrine and creed of the hierarchical Catholic church. It is just a matter-of-fact statement that points to an emergent unfolding of the spiritual and prophetic traditions that do not exist within our existing systems. The *systems* have yet to emerge. That’s how evolution works.

⁸ Rohr, Richard. Center for Action and Contemplation. Daily Meditations, *The Universal Christ: From the Beginning of Time*. Monday, December 3, 2018. <https://cag.org/from-the-beginning-of-time-2018-12-03> . (Rohr further develops this thesis in his book *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, And Believe*, published in 2019 by Center for Action and Contemplation)

⁹ It is important to note that some Christian denominations do embrace this consciousness including the Episcopal Church, many Lutheran churches with the ELCA synod, and progressive non-denominational churches. Fundamental evangelical Christian churches and the Institutional Catholic church promote more dualistic and salvation-centric theologies. Pope Francis’ encyclicals and sermons point to a new consciousness but his words and witness are most often met with resistance within the clerical hierarchy.

¹⁰ Ken Wilber and Clare Graves research suggest that this is a ‘2nd tier’ consciousness that involves a momentous leap crossing a chasm of unbelievable depth of meaning. This 2nd tier integral consciousness exists in less than 2 percent of the population. See *A Theory of Everything* by Ken Wilber, Shambhala Press, 2001

Although Chardin and his contemporaries wrote several generations ago, their contributions to our post-modern era are still relatively recent when considering the evolution of thought over the span of centuries. And while we might take the decline of our familiar and beloved institutions personally, from a historic perspective, it is really just a nano second on the cosmic calendar. If we take Wheatley's framework and think of it as spanning eras, the two-loop framework repeats itself over the arc of history. This repetitive cycle of growth and decline would look something like this:



My youngest son, Drew, helped me see this several years ago. He was videotaping me with his iPhone duct taped to a tripod in 2011. I was making a short video for a client explaining the connection between Wheatley's two-loop framework and Scharmer's Theory U.¹¹ When I finished drawing Scharmer's U and Wheatley's two loops on the flipchart and we had concluded the taping, Drew said, "you know Mom, what you just described could be thought as occurring over time. If you could think of it that way, the two loops would look like this....and he proceeded to draw the above image on the flipchart paper. He explained that the image is called a *parsed sine wave*, but he encouraged me to think of it holistically within a historical perspective. With that, he drew what a parsed sine wave would look like over time. The 'disconnections' of each cycle would blend into a continuous rhythm of life and recognizable as a 'sine wave'.



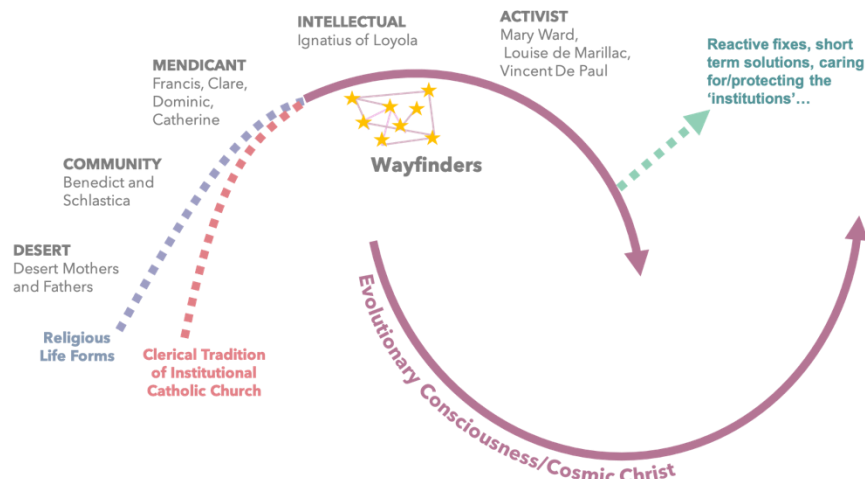
His matter-of-fact insight was pure grace. Using his analogy, it became clear how for those of us living during times of disruption and massive institutional decline, the shift feels seismic and chaotic. Living within systems and institutions that are crumbling from decay, irrelevance or natural diminishment is disorienting. The search for transformational response to the collapse is confusing, frustrating and can be both exhilarating and exhausting. If one is able to just zoom out and take a historical view, the disruption fades into a continuous, life affirming sinus rhythm. The life cycle of living systems indeed.

¹¹ I created this presentation for the Sisters of Loretto as they prepared for a congregational meeting October of 2011, just two months after I first learned of Meg's new framework. www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHZbOqrmNlw. I am deeply grateful to Drew for his technological genius and his understanding of parsed sine waves. For Theory U, see Scharmer, Otto. *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*. 2007. Society of Organizational Learning, Cambridge, MA

Learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else. Leonardo da Vinci



I continued to tinker with the idea of how religious life had progressed over the past fifteen hundred years and began connecting more contemporary scholars and theologians such as Ilia Delio and Richard Rohr to the two-loop framework. One day, in late 2013 or early 2014, I was working with a Franciscan leadership team who had been elected to lead the community into a re-founding moment. I thought the two-loop framework with Worcelo's chronology might be relevant, so I started drawing it onto the flipchart paper. I put the black tipped marker onto the crisp white paper of the flip chart pad to begin drawing a single loop for emerged systems when I realized that I was consistently referring to this emerged loop as both the *chronology of the Institutional Catholic Church and the chronology of religious life within the church*. Again, my pen stopped as soon as I began to draw the first loop. Perhaps it was a 'moment of grace' or just a lightning bolt of the obvious. I turned to them and said, "You know, I have no proof of this, but I suspect that the Institutional Church and the life form that we now call religious life most likely emerged at about the same time but on parallel tracks." Being Franciscan, they had NO argument with that line of reasoning. At that moment, black marker in hand, I revised my working model to look something like this:



Adapted from Meg Wheatley's two loop cycle and Gail Worcelo's SGM article in Winter 2013 Occasional Papers. Deborah Asberry 2013

Trusting my intuition, but wanting to be grounded in historical fact, I consulted with several Franciscan and Benedictine scholars to test out my hunch. They confirmed that there was indeed a 'clerical tradition' of the early Christian church that was initially separate from the communities that emerged out of the Desert Mothers and Fathers. Eventually, as the patriarchy of the church became more powerful and dominant with the Catholic tradition, religious orders were subsumed within the church. History tells us that this was not always a pleasant nor sacred endeavor. In many instances, it was a hostile power grab by the clerics. Distinguishing the genesis of the clerical traditions separate from the early monastic movements that spawned religious life is an important distinction. It untethers us from thinking about the structures that hold this life-form that we have today. This difference in my evolutionary understanding of the origins of these two systems is an example of what Gregory Bateson referred to as the *difference that makes a difference*.

This is the book of the rhyming couplets and it is the root of the root of your faith. Rumi

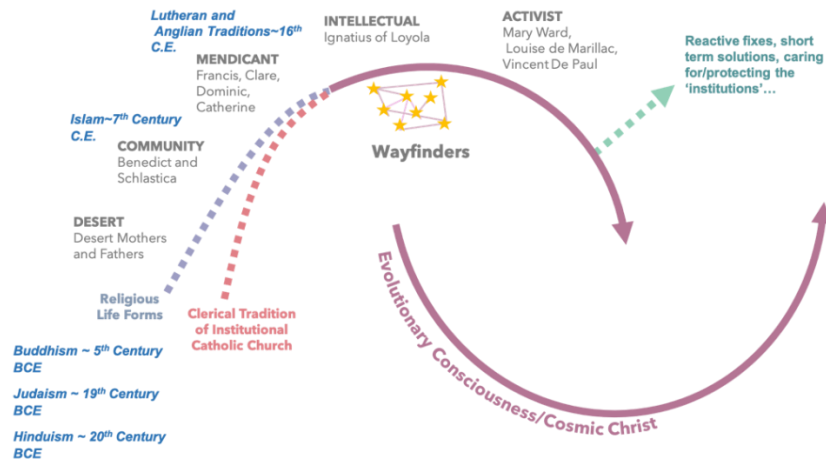
In 2019, I read Nora Bateson's *Small Arcs of Larger Circles*, a collection of stories, poems and essays illuminates for the reader what it means to be a citizen of this complex, interdependent, and emergent universe.¹² Her writing helped me see how important it is to 'see' how our social systems are nestled within interdependent, mutual, complex, and co-evolving ecosystems. This is true of every social system that exists (families, churches, communities, schools, economies, democracies) and at every scale. If we, as a human species, cannot fully understand the implications of what this means, we do so at the peril of our very existence. Climate Change, global pandemics, mutating virus, and collapsing democracies are just a few examples of the complexity and interdependence that exists across our systems and what happens when we respond to complex issues from singular and fragmented mindsets. If we are going to use the language of evolution as it exists within religious traditions, then we must do so with wide eyed understanding that these religious traditions co-evolved in relationship with other social systems and the environment in which they existed.

Religious and spiritual traditions co-evolved in response to the cultural environments of their time and are interdependent with other social systems that co-existed with them, including the political, economic, and educational systems.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers came out of a Christian tradition that we know had its genesis in the Jewish tradition. Along the evolutionary trajectory of the chronology of religious orders within the Catholic Church, other world religions existed, and prior to Moses and Jesus, there were spiritual traditions that informed and influenced the evolution of humankind. Religious and spiritual traditions co-evolved in response to the cultural environments of their time and are interdependent with other social systems that co-existed with them, including political, economic, and educational systems.

Most of our world religious and spiritual traditions evolved out of a resistance to the dominant systems of their time and promoted justice, compassion, and wholeness in response to the tyranny or injustice they witnessed in the dominant cultures. The more I grew to understand complexity, evolution and interdependence, the less pleased I was with how I had only included on the two-loop framework the Catholic traditions of religious life as they grew out of the early church over two-thousand years ago and now the graphic looks more like this:

¹² Bateson, Nora. *Small Arcs or Larger Circles: Faming Through Other Patterns*. Triarchy Press 2016. (Nora founded the International Bateson Institute which explores the intersectionality and interdependence of ecology, economics, health care, education and art. She writes brilliantly about what it means to live in complex social systems. See batesoninstitute.org)



Adapted from Meg Wheatley's two loop cycle and Gail Worcelo's SGM article in Winter 2013 Occasional Papers. Deborah Asberry 2013

Remain true to yourself, but move ever upward toward greater consciousness and greater love! At the summit you will find yourselves united with all those who, from every direction, have made the same ascent. For everything that rises must converge. Teilhard de Chardin



The year 2020 brought us a global pandemic that literally shut down the world. Hundreds of thousands of people died across the world, economies crashed, authoritarian leaders heaped pain and suffering on top of pain and suffering, and our climate emergency continued to spiral unchecked and unheeded. In the United States, the murder of George Floyd ignited the growing *Black Lives Matter Movement* and their protests in Minneapolis, Minnesota ricocheted around the globe. Leaders in this movement taught us new words like intersectionality that helped us to see the interdependence of injustice as it cuts across race, gender, climate and culture. As our world faces a universal upheaval of failing democracies, hideous economic inequalities and climate catastrophe, movements are springing up across the globe made up of young activists on fire with social justice and institutional reform.

It seems to me that movements such as these have been the genesis of what we now understand as our mainstream world religions. The Christian tradition began as a sect of those who resisted the Roman empire. Early Christians were martyred and considered a threat to the dominant culture. The Jewish tradition grew out of a resistance to the Pharaoh's of Egypt. Martin Luther instigated a protest movement against the corruption and indulges of a political dynasty with the institutional Catholic church.

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan friar, author and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation shares that he "believes that the Spirit of God works everywhere to bring and restore aliveness—through individuals, communities, institutions and *movements* (emphasis mine). Movements play a special role."¹³ In this daily meditation he went on to explain how Moses led a movement of liberation among the oppressed slaves, then came the Hebrew

¹³ Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation, From the Center for Action and Contemplation. Week Forty-Eight: Spirituality and Social Movements, *A Faith Created by Courageous Movements*. Monday, November 30, 2020

prophets who launched a series of movements based on the promise of a coming Messiah. A few centuries later came John the Baptist, loincloth and locust eating notwithstanding. A young man named Jesus was drawn to this non-conventional prophet and his rag-tag movement and soon assumed his rightful role as the leader of the counter-cultural movement. Rohr continues,

“Under Jesus’ leadership, the movement grew and expanded in unprecedented ways....It rose again through a new generation of leaders like James, Peter, John and Paul, who were full of the Spirit of Jesus. They created learning circles in which activists were trained to extend the movement locally, regionally, and globally. Wherever activists in the movement went, the Spirit of Jesus was alive in them, fomenting change and inspiring true aliveness...”¹⁴

In his 2021 daily meditations, Rohr has continued to explore the themes of movements and social transformation. More recently, he wondered about how we ‘save’ the world, drawing on the cruciform pattern of Christianity as being a symbol of how we are all called to live in a world that is full of contradictions. He suggests that the resurrected life is a life that can hold the tension of the opposites. “The people who hold the contradictions and resolve them in themselves are the saviors of the world. They are the only real agents of transformation, reconciliation, and newness.” These “saviors” exist in every period of time and in every faith tradition. At times they exist even with no “faith” at all, beyond a consciously held belief that solidarity with all of life is, in fact, the meaning of life.”¹⁵

Rohr’s insights about the role of movements throughout history both within and beyond ‘religious’ boundaries confirmed my sense that the movements emerging in this century are indeed ‘spirit led’. The young activists of today are animated by a vision of justice and global transformation and are fully legitimate as modern-day mystics and prophets as are any canonized saints of any world religion. Micah White, a young activist and founding architect of Occupy Wall Street offers a “unified theory of revolution” in his book *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution* when he writes:

“So what does this new paradigm of activism look like? It is defined by a shift away from voluntarism and structuralism toward subjectivism and theurgism. Activists of the future will target the mental environment to spark collective epiphanies that achieve real-world victories. Protest tactics will be chosen for their potential to trigger a species-wide metanoia—from the ancient word for “a turn-around”—capable of releasing the tremendous forces necessary for social revolution...The contagious collective epiphany is the one force capable of conjuring a political miracle.”¹⁶

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditation, From the Center for Action and Contemplation. Week Twenty: Choosing Love in a Time of Evil. *How Do We “Save” the World? Sunday, May 16, 2021*

¹⁶ Micah Whyte, *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution*, 2016. P 43 (It is important to note that a meme that emerged from the Occupy movement was ‘the top 1%’. That has become a galvanizing term for the progressive political movement)

Activists like White propose that massive social change—the kind that will forestall climate catastrophe, that will resist the global rise of authoritarian and decline of socialized democracies and authentically respond to the economic and social injustice that permeate societies across the globe—will require more than traditional direct-action activism. A people’s revolution will require a spiritual component as well, a sense of miracle that can truly inspire, and will stretch over time sending out ripples of change and transformation that are iterative and non-linear. In describing his view on how the Occupy Wall Street movement was successful in a non-conventional way, White goes on to say that “Future movements will re-conceive their activism in timescales of centuries, not seconds, by focusing their meme warfare on provoking epiphanies in people who are not yet born. In terms of a long-term vision, today’s protests aren’t failing: our protests are setting in motion a victorious process that will take generations to unfold.”¹⁷

White’s words echo the tone and tenor of ancient prophets and his writings sound like a modern riff on the Psalms. There is a mysticism and spiritual component to his work that doesn’t require the endorsement of any religious institution or spiritual tradition.

Many young people today resonate with the vision and passion of White and other activists. The co-founders of the Black Lives Matter Movement, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullors¹⁸ for example, or Greta Thunberg, and David Hogg (Parkland School massacre survivor), as well as the young activists who were successful in stopping the Keystone XL Pipeline. Darnella Frazier, the teenage who filmed the murder of George Floyd, is an example of what happens when one person courageously gives witness to the abuse of power and sometimes can change the world. Grace Lee Boggs was as an activist, author and a key figure in the Asian American movement, which has now grown into the AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) Movement. Boggs wrote until she was in her nineties and mentored young 21st activists like adrienne maree brown.¹⁹ The *Movement Generation* is a justice and ecology project that inspires and engages in transformative action towards the liberation and restoration of land, labor and culture, this network of activists has influenced young people across the country in movements for social justice and collective action. They work in low-income communities and communities of color to create vibrant, resilient, sustainable, healthy, life affirming local economies.”²⁰

While I do not personally know any of the above activists, I have been privileged to meet and work with a group of spiritual seekers and social activists who also offer a new narrative for activism and what it means to be ‘called’ to a life of spiritual practice, community and on-going

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 188-189)

¹⁸ The three co-founders of the BLM were given *Time 100, The Most Influential People of 2020* award

¹⁹ adrienne maree brown is an activist, author, facilitator and doula. She is the author of *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. She worked in Detroit with Margaret Wheatley in community development and writes in her forward a loving reference to Grace Lee Boggs.

²⁰ See movementgeneration.org

conversion, the *Nuns and Nones*.²¹ This is a young group of spiritual seekers who connect with and often times live in intentional communities with religious Catholic nuns. They are doing amazing work and are offering a radical new narrative to what it means to live a committed life and counter cultural lifestyle. Like the young social activists mentioned previously, they offer new models for community, and work to promote regenerative economies and sustainable practices that seek to put the ‘common’ back into our understanding of the common good. They have created resources for intergenerational conversations such as the “A B C’s of Course Correction: A Zine”, and an organizing toolkit for young seekers who want to connect with spiritual elders, especially Catholic nuns, for conversation and ongoing conversion. They make my heart sing!

This past April, I was in a conversation with a member of their coordinating team, Katie Gordon. Katie is one of the founding members of the *Nuns and Nones* and writes brilliantly about this movement. We were talking about how their members intersected with the evolutionary unfolding of ‘religious life’. I suggested that perhaps we needed ‘new language’ for describing this evolutionary process---that our words often fail us when we try to give language to what is yet to emerge. I proposed that the term ‘religious life’ is a term that has described what has come to be over the arc of history, beginning with the desert fathers and mothers, but that perhaps what is co-evolving comes out of a broader ‘eco-system’ beyond what currently exists solely within the institutions of the church or religious congregations. To ask ‘what is the future of religious life’ feels too narrow and particular. I mused that perhaps what was co-evolving was a committed, spiritual life-form that comes out of the ancient mystical and prophetic traditions, not out of an existing institution or institutions. I also suggested to her that it was my belief that this co-evolution involves the intersection of social movements that are erupting across the globe. This re-framing seemed important to both of us.

In Katie’s most recent newsletter, she describes a weekend conference of about “220 fellow monks and seekers” that occurred virtually²². Sister Joan Chittister was the keynote speaker and described the distinction between what it means to “be” a Benedictine as a card-carrying member of the institution as compared to “Being Benedictine” ...as “a call and identity that reaches far outside any particular monastery.”²³ This seems like an exquisite example of finding the right words to ‘hold’ an emergent phenomenon.

There are other groups who are asking similar questions and who feel called to a committed life dedicated to Gospel principles or spiritual practices, who are committed to ongoing conversion and a new evolutionary consciousness. There are Franciscans from across the globe, vowed men and women connecting with others committed to living a Franciscan life outside the

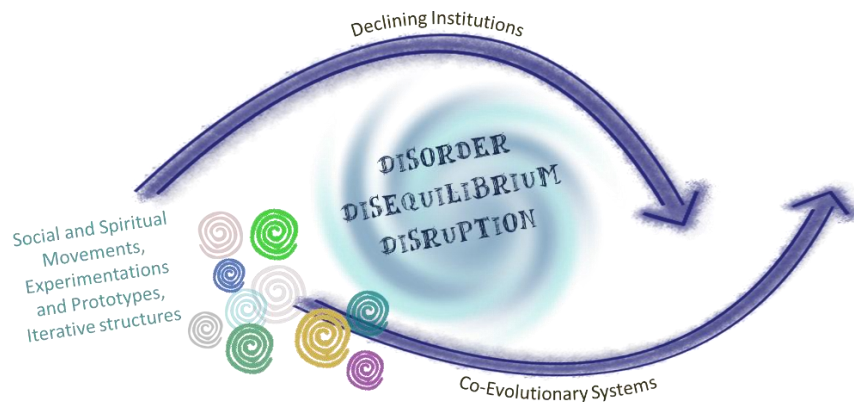
²¹ Nuns and Nones, www.nunsandnones.org; “An intergenerational, spiritual community dedicated to care, contemplation and in service of life and liberation. In their own description, they say the *Nones* are progressive millennials, none of whom are practicing Catholics, and the *Nuns* are ‘radical, badass women’ who have lived their lives devoted to social justice.

²² Gordon, Katie, *Following the Monastic Impulse*, July 2021 email letter describing *Being Benedictine in the 21st Century Conference*

²³ *ibid*

traditional vows. There are young spiritual seekers and lay leaders animated by the life and legacy of Nano Nagle, foundress of the Presentation Sisters, who seek to live a life animated by the charism and values of the congregation. The Sisters of Loretto have experimented with alternative forms of commitment beyond the traditional roles of sister or co-member. Other orders across the globe are engaged in similar conversations and experimentations. There is most definitely a growing consciousness of new possibilities and iterations beyond what currently exists.

The image I use to describes the co-evolution that exists across social and spiritual movements and the conversations and experimentations occurring across religious congregations looks like this:



This image is a stylized adaption of the two-loop model. It attempts to show how the disorder and disequilibrium that comes out of the declining systems is giving rise to the movements and experimentations we are seeing across a wide range of diverse interests and groups of people. There is an intersection and interdependency that exists across the various movements, conversations, and experimentation.

Worcelo's description of 'moments of grace' that gives rise to greater relatedness and connectedness is happening trans-institutionally and trans-contextually intersecting a wide range of diverse groups, movements, initiatives and institutions. There is indeed a new form of mysticism emerging, a 'We-mysticism' that has many faces and transcends anything that has previously existed. Evolutionary theory tells us that the new is more complex and novel than what preceded it and comes out of the disruption and disorder of 'the old'. In the early stages of emergence, there are false starts, trials, disruptions and failures—all of which creates a rich humus for continued growth and more iterations. The seeming 'failures' of the early Occupy movements, the starts and stops of the Black Lives Matter Movement, the attempts to demonize movement leaders by those in power; the resistance to progressive ideas and ideals, the number of religious institutes coming to completion are to be expected in times of upheaval and emergence. If we are faithful and enough of us commit our lives to what is trying to emerge in these movements and iterations, these 'failures, endings and false starts can give rise to

greater complexity, greater wisdom and greater clarity about the next iteration. This is the messiness of evolution.

The past few years have inoculated us into this swirling existence of disequilibrium. We are all struggling to keep our balance in an ever shape-shifting world. Let us ask the right questions, connect across our differences, weave webs of relationships, create loving communities and be open to epiphanies! Let us work together to create the 'breakthrough' of an evolutionary consciousness and resist the forces hell bent on breakdown and division. We are all in this together. Each of us has our own inner work to do and we must connect with likeminded, spirit filled, neo mystics and uncredentialed prophets to create webs of love and transformation. In the words of Grace Lee Boggs, "transform yourself to transform the world." The world needs us, and we need each other.



About the Author



Debbie is a Senior Consultant at CommunityWorks, Inc. She is a facilitator, educator, activist and writer. Her activism and volunteer work focuses on democracy reform and voter rights. She lives in Indianapolis with her husband of forty-eight years. She has two adult sons who keep her young and provided emergency tech support as needed. In her spare time, weather permitting, she is most often found sitting on her front porch.