



# Spiritual Light Center

**Newsletter—December 2014**

## MESSAGE FROM ARTHUR

### **Dear SLC Family,**

Our theme this month is Evolving Spirituality. In the piece by Bishop John Shelby Spong which appears elsewhere in this newsletter, Bishop Spong explains to a reader of his monthly blog why he considers himself a believer in a non-theistic God and certainly not an atheist.

He makes the point that Christianity has evolved majorly in three other epochs of time. Christianity has its roots in Judaism. As Dale Allen Hoffman repeatedly tells us, you can't understand the words of Jeshua unless you understand Judaic thought, customs and history.

When the center of culture shifted to Greece in the early Christian era, the teachings of Jeshua had to be translated into a form accepted by the Platonic-thinking Greek world. The Neoplatonism of Plotinus (third century AD) held that the soul had the power to elevate itself to attain union with the One, or the Good, the source of all things, the highest Form that contained all other Forms. This idea was embraced by Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, and adopted into Christian theology.

Another major transformation occurred in Christian theology in the twelfth century, when Aristotelian logic replaced Platonic ideals (Forms). We have Thomas Aquinas to thank for bringing Aristotelian ideas into Christian theology.

The aim of the Protestant Reformation was to incorporate the ideas of the enlightenment (basically neo-Aristotelian) into religion. Scientists like Newton, Galileo, Bacon, etc. were changing our view of the Universe and Nature.

Now we are going through another revolution in our cosmology with ideas and theories derived from Quantum Physics, String Theory, our new understanding of how the brain and body work ("As above, so below" -- and vice versa.) How will that new knowledge impact our ideas of spirituality and Christianity?

We are devoting this month to explore these thoughts as they relate to us personally and as a community (small and large). It is fitting that this month is the time of rebirth of the Light in each of our souls. Please join us in this exploration of en-Lightenment.

Arthur Cataldo, President

### **OUR VISION STATEMENT**

**The Spiritual Light Center is a peaceful and joyful fellowship of individuals, centered in love, dedicated to the God within, and honoring the many paths to truth.**

### **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

**We seek to develop our highest selves by continuous sharing of spiritual ideas, in an environment of unconditional love and respect for others**



## ONGOING EVENTS AT SLC

**Every Tuesday at 5:15 p.m. except Christmas week** - Join our group in the Hall as we watch a selected film of a spiritual nature, followed by discussion to develop our evolution. Afterward we go out to eat!

**Every other Wednesday, Dec 3 & 17, 4:30 to 6:00p.m.** – **Come to The Sacred Circle/TEA**, an open group dedicated to spiritual sharing and growth, facilitated by Tina Wardell. Contact is 828-276-6557.

**Thursday, Dec 11, at 5:15 p.m.** - Please join us for our meditation group in the Chapel led by Dr. Richard Kimball. We have an informative discussion followed by walking and sitting meditation. Call Richard at 371-3425 for further details.

**Every Thursday (except Christmas) at 6:30 p.m.** - Come join us for our **book study**. We are reading *One Day My Soul Just Opened Up* by Iyanla Vanzant. This is a very powerful book! Join us for some enlightening conversation.

## UPCOMING SPEAKERS

**December 7, 11 a.m.**

**Dr. Jim Swanson**, certified instructor of the Journal to the Self Program, long time SLC member and past board president, will speak with us on “Journaling as a Transformative Spiritual Practice”.

**December 14, 11 a.m.**

**Rita deMaintenon**, retired educator, a great speaker and fiber artist returns to speak to us on “Perpetual Gifts – A Spiritual Gift Giving Survival Guide”.

**December 21, 11 a.m.**

**Revs. Eileen Douglas & Richard Talley**, former Unity ministers who now lead PATH Ministries in and around Hendersonville, will speak to us on “Angel Sunday”. Eileen, who has produced a CD, will share her excellent singing!

**December 28, 11 a.m.**

**Arthur Cataldo**, our board president who has many years of experience in holistic healing modalities and clinical psychology will lead a discussion on “Our Evolving Spirituality”.

## FRIDAY SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

**6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall**

**December 12 – Dr. Bill Crawford**, who has done groundbreaking work in natural nutritional oncology treatment, will share a presentation on “Naturopathic Medicine and Oncology Treatment”.

**December 26 – No group due to Christmas weekend**



## OUR SLC METAPHYSICAL STORE BEGINS NEW WINTER HOURS

Our store is open with new winter hours We are selling consignment or donated items, including books, jewelry, gift and decorative items, original art, and handmade crafts and clothing. **The WINTER STORE HOURS BEGINNING DEC 1st are Fridays 12 pm to 4 pm & Saturdays 12 pm to 4 pm, and Sundays after the service.** Great place for Christmas shopping! For information please call Sandy at 828-200-2451.

### OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES


PRESIDENT.....Arthur Cataldo  
VICE PRESIDENT.....Kay Smith  
SECRETARY.....Millard Deutsch  
TREASURER.....Linda Ramsey  
VICE TREASURER.....Bill Groves  
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### SPIRITUAL LIGHT CENTER INFORMATION

80 Heritage Hollow Drive, Franklin, NC 28734  
Right behind the Gazebo Restaurant in Heritage Hollow  
828-369-3065  
slcfranklin@frontier.com  
[www.spirituallightcenter.com](http://www.spirituallightcenter.com)

What a Christmas gift this would make! A truly gorgeous 1931 Wm. Knabe Baby Grand Piano has been donated to SLC by the estate of the late Dorothy Pease in Franklin. We are looking to find a good home for it and are accepting all reasonable offers from those who are interested in making it their own. It is built of solid mahogany and was well cared for. It plays beautifully but needs to be tuned. The piano comes with a matching mahogany bench and a built in dehumidifier. The dimensions are 57" wide, 63.5" long, and 37.5" tall. This is a beautiful heirloom piano that can be gotten for a reasonable donation to the Center and the cost of moving. More pictures and information are available. Contact Bill at [billybob7@morrisbb.net](mailto:billybob7@morrisbb.net) or 371-6803.



 If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts he shall end in certainties. ~ Sir Francis Bacon

# Evolving Spirituality

## ☪ *Reflections on Evolving Christianity* by Bishop John Shelby Spong

Today, theologians speak of God as a human symbol pointing to a reality that words cannot capture. They look at Jesus, but not in the way that causes us to think that Jesus is related to God in the same way that Clark Kent is related to Superman. Divinity becomes an aspect of humanity and is found in Jesus because his was a human life that escaped the boundaries of the human and thus reflected and channeled the reality of God to us and for us. It is a fermenting, frightening, creative time in the theological world. A new explanation is underway. I believe I can experience God, but I can no longer define God in theistic terms. That makes me a non-theist believer, but not one who denies the reality of God. I pursue God inside the parameters of Christianity because that has always been my doorway, but not because I am convinced it is the only doorway. This makes me a Christian by my own definition, but I do not believe Christianity itself can contain the wonder of God and my journey will always lead me beyond the boundaries of Christianity. Into what I do not yet know, but it will be a step into a new dimension of reality for which I do not have words. Christianity has always been evolving. This will simply be the next, but not the last stage in that evolution. I claim my role in this evolution, specifically as a Christian.

This kind of radical reformation of our faith story has happened before, but perhaps in not so total a way. Christianity was born in a Jewish world and then had to translate itself into a Platonic-thinking Greek world in order to survive. A man named Augustine, the bishop of Hippo did that for us in the Fourth century. When Aristotle's thought replaced Plato's in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as the dominant way of perceiving truth then Western theology once more had to adapt. Christianity did so by translating itself anew into Aristotelian terms. A man named Thomas Aquinas did that for us. When the age of the Enlightenment emerged, there was a great need for Christianity to be translated into the categories of new scientific learning and into the emerging new humanism. The Protestant Reformation sought to accomplish that. The jury is still out on how successful that was. Today the world's intellectual knowledge and technological knowledge, cry out for what I have called "A New Christianity for a New World." Developing that "New Christianity" is an ongoing work in progress.

There are some who believe that Christianity will die if it has to change and adapt and so they resist change and entrench themselves in the formulas of yesterday. We call them fundamentalists and they come in both a Catholic and Protestant variety. There are also some who think that Christianity in none of its forms will ever be able to live in this modern world and so they abandon it altogether. We call them secular humanists.



I call myself “A Believer in Exile.” Both words are important. I am a believer. God is infinitely real to me even though I cannot define that reality. I am also in exile from the traditional understanding of my religious past. I will never abandon my Christian roots, but I do see Christianity as an evolving force and I want to be part of that evolution.

So I gather with my community of faith in worship each week. I sing the hymns that reflect our journey through history. I listen to and pray prayers that are still largely addressed to a theistic understanding of God. I listen to sermons that help me explore a new interior reality. I participate in educational activities that force me into a dialogue between faith and knowledge. In my own way, I see my life as a journey into the mystery of God. In that journey I am not able to pursue or even to contemplate that journey’s end, but I believe I walk in God and with God and that God lives in me and through me. Perhaps I am delusional, but I don’t think so. Perhaps God is the journey and not the destination.



### *Is God evolving?* By Mark Gilbert

It makes sense if you think about it... if evolution is real... and I believe that it is... then why wouldn't God be evolving?

First off, if your worldview is one that includes what I called the old myth of God (that is the old man in the sky that is external to us), then you might be thinking: “how can this all-powerful Creator God be evolving? Would not this God be outside the physical realm of man and not be subject to the evolutionary forces we see at play?” That sounds logical to me.

Secondly, if your worldview is one that says there is no God and everything is simply part of the physical universe subject to physical laws, then you might be thinking: “the question is meaningless, as there is no God to evolve”. That sounds logical to me.

Thirdly, if your worldview is one that says there is a God, and God is an infinite intelligence, an energy that permeates everything such that everything is in God, but God is greater than everything, then you might be thinking: “God or Spirit has infused everything with its energy and intelligence as well as created such forces as evolution. Hence, Spirit is not evolving, but is experiencing the process of evolution through us.” That sounds logical to me.

So then, is God evolving? The answer seems to be yes and no. Within an individual worldview, God is not evolving. But if we step back and look at the worldviews of humanity, then we can see that our concept of God is evolving in our consciousness.

The mystic Ernest Holmes wrote “We can know no God external to that power of perception by which alone we are conscious of anything. God must be interpreted to humanity through humanity’s own nature” as well as “God comes to us as we come to him/her.” What he seems to be saying to me is that who or what God is to us depends upon our level of consciousness. God shows up to us in exactly the same way that our own awareness defines how God should show up. Holmes is not alone in this viewpoint.

Robert Wright, in his recent bestseller “The Evolution of God” agrees as he makes the following points: God doesn’t evolve, we do. Our perception of God changes as our cultural needs change. That we experience continuous positive change in the quality of our lives over time shows life has a “direction”. That “salvation” works to arrange the world so that its people find themselves and see themselves more and more as interconnected, which is part of evolution’s direction.

Wright concludes: “History naturally pushes people toward moral improvement, toward moral truth. Their God, as they conceive their God, grows accordingly, becoming morally richer. Perhaps this growth is evidence of some higher purpose, and maybe – conceivably – the source of that purpose is worthy of the name Divinity.”

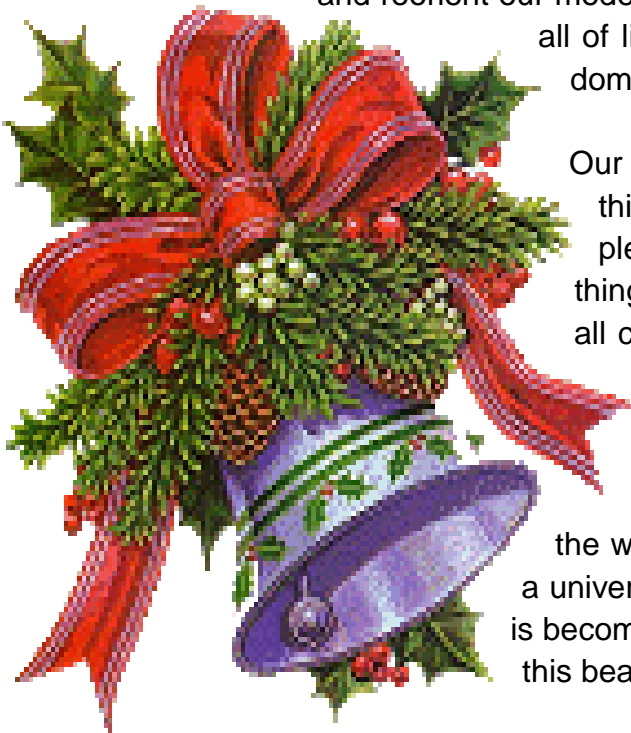
### *☞ An Evolving Spirituality: Mysticism* by Bruce Sanguin

The essential spiritual practice of evolutionary spirituality is to be able to tell the story of the universe as one’s own story: a primordial explosion of light and radiation; the emergence of time and space; galaxies form and supernova explosions in which all the heavy elements necessary for life on Earth are forged; our solar system congeals; from matter life emerges on a tiny, blue planet, and evolves in staggering diversity and increasingly complexity; out of life conscious self-awareness arises; existence is transformed into experience as these creatures ponder beauty, death, meaning and purpose, possibility, and the mystery of life itself; worldviews complexify in an attempt to solve problems and in the process create new ones to solve; we begin to ask ourselves what is this Life that is living us, this yearning for transcendence seeking deeper, more beautiful and more elegant expressions of it-self? In very recent history, some have awakened to the fact that we are the interior dimension of this evolutionary process itself, consciously evolving in, through, and as us. We feel this urge for transcendence, this fire of becoming as our most real and animating quality. For those who follow Jesus of Nazareth this fire has the unmistakable quality of love. As Teilhard de Chardin put it, in so doing, we have discovered fire for the second time in history of our species.



To own this story is to own a dimension of our mystic Self. It is to recognize that we are not separate from the creative process that birthed us into being. We are That in human form consciously evolving. We are not separate from the power of allurements that drew helium and hydrogen together, nor from the power of emergence that gave birth to starfields from the fire. We are not separate from the power that initiated a sequence of irreversible transformations that led to you reading these words. We are not separate from the bacteria that led this planetary parade of life, nor from our animal kin and our human ancestors—all our relations. This great adventure of becoming has gathered itself up in the likes of you.

To be a spiritual person in the 21st century is to embrace this story of radical belonging to a sacred narrative that bestows our deepest identity. More than this, it is to embrace and reorient our mode of presence upon Earth in such a way as to honor all of life as kin. It is to realize Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God, now imagined as a Kin-dom.



Our Christian identity involves a new interpretation of this creative life impulse. As Word (or creative principle) made flesh, Christ is the center that holds all things together, the allurements of Love that is drawing all creation toward its completion and perfection in the divine heart. This is the cosmic Christ that animated Jesus of Nazareth, but who is also present in every atom, molecule, and cell. The Absolute Divine Being and Personhood of God explodes into the world as the sacred impulse to evolve and incarnate a universe of increasing beauty, truth, and goodness. God is becoming in, through, and as us—and in, through, and as this beautiful planet of life that is our home.

Another core practice of evolutionary spirituality, therefore, is to be able to discern the subtleties and nuances of our yearning. It is to learn the art of tracking each of our longings to its Source. What is required is a community that supports us as we allow the fire of our longing to dissolve the local self, and lead us home to the heart of the divine. “O Love that fires the sun, keep me burning.” This practice is a fulfillment of Jesus' teaching that unless a seed falls into the ground and dies it cannot bear fruit. The seed that needs to fall to the ground and die is the separate self, the part of us that feels alone and isolated. This is our local self that forgot its true story of unity with God, the universe, this planet, and each other. Science has given us back our deep identity as being literally cosmic in scope. We are the presence of the universe, in human form, evolving.

Evolutionary Christian faith interprets this understanding of the evolutionary process as being the divine strategy for growing worlds, for manifesting the one divine heart and wisdom in glorious diversity. We become manifestations of the Christ for the world—the body, heart, and mind of Christ surrendered to and animated by the desire to complete what was started at the moment of Creation.

If mysticism is essentially the felt sense of being one with All That Is, evolutionary spirituality creates the space for all of us to realize our inner mystic. You could also call this expanded identity your Cosmic Self. The Christ is the unifying, creative principle, whereby the entire universe is converging, in all its diversity, toward Love. To know, in our bones, that we are one is to desire to create a future that reflects this unity. It is to consciously cultivate attitudes, beliefs, and relationships, modes of governance, cultures, and social and economic systems that increasingly reflect the uniting love of God. The beauty and the grace of the whole arrangement is that the vitality or “zest” that fuels this sacred mission is primordial, unceasing, unrelenting. This evolutionary impulse comes as standard equipment in the cosmos. To use Christian language, the Christ is always, already present in every breath and step we take. And every time we imagine a better world and a better life for ourselves, the desire to translate that thought into action is fueled and sustained by the Word wanting to be made flesh. It’s less a matter of trying than it is a matter of surrendering to an irrepressible, infinite, and natural grace.



*Perhaps the single most powerful event facing humanity today is a great awakening on a planetary scale that has been millennia in the making. We humans are in the midst of a profound advance as a species to a higher form of global consciousness. “  
Eckhart Tolle*