New Wineskins

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This essay explores the conversion of various Christianities to an "Earth-honoring" faith with a moral universe different from the one presently at home in most heads, hearts, and practices. Such reborn faith and morality would be new cloth, new wineskins.

Thomas Berry's truth, that planetary health is primary and human health is derivative, arrives as we contemplate the end of the fossil-fuel interlude of human history. Yet planetary health as prior and primary entails changes in our self-understanding, the faith we live by, and the moral universe we inhabit. "Earth-honoring" is one way to describe this renewed faith, its morality and way of life.[1]

> He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, 'The old is good.'" (Luke 5:36–39)

While Jesus says "no one" does this ill-fated pouring and patching, some must have tried. Were it not so, Jesus would not have instructed his disciples and the Pharisees about it.

Is there need for new wineskins and new cloth today? There is. Yet most respond with "No, thank you, 'the old is good.'"

Here is the occasion for new wineskins and cloth: the planet we were born on, came to love, and to which we have grown accustomed is no longer the planet on which we live. Earth is undergoing geo-physical change, the kind that distant times associated with geological ages, but that humans have not seen. The relatively stable "sweet spot" that has harbored all human civilizations from 10,000 B.C.E. to the present is in jeopardy.

Bill McKibben, in *Eaarth*,[2] even spells the home planet's name differently, "incorrectly," to make the point. We no longer live where our grandparents did.

McKibben knows something else as he pushes the ethical question of what we ought,

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[1] Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2006), 19.
[2] Bill McKibben, *Eaarth* (New York: Times Books, 2010). See also the review of this book on p. 404 of this issue.

then, to be and do. He knows what works poorly—the "fact-based apocalypse" that climatology and other environmental sciences now provide. It does not motivate change radical enough to meet the civilizational challenge we face. Evidently, few people will die for a pie chart, no matter what it graphs. Data, even sound data, do not unearth us from entrenched ways. Fact-based apocalypse comes up short as grounds for hope and the impetus to deep change.[2]

Differently said, nobody who is scared to death is going to tap the renewable moral-spiritual energy needed for life well-lived on a new, tough planet in hard times. Those anxious about the morrow are not going to risk the right thing with new wine and cloth. Rather, to remember the words of Howard Thurman: "Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."[3]

This essay explores the conversion of various Christianities to an Earth-honoring faith with a moral universe different from the one presently at home in most heads, hearts, and practices. Such reborn faith and morality would be new cloth, new wineskins.

The pastoral question, however, comes first: what will likely be most peoples' response to the forebodings that science serves up with heightened regularity? Preaching and teaching fall on rocky ground, and do not take root, if they are not attuned to context.

Wes Jackson's book, *Consulting the Genius of the Place*, opens with this:

> [Joan] and I try not to interrupt one another when we are reading and having our coffee in the early morning. We are usually successful, unless an arresting piece of information or idea presents itself. One morning as she was reading *The History of Love*, a novel by Nicole Krauss, she interrupted with "Listen to this." The protagonist in the story, a young man, describes a woman in his village in Poland who had paid special attention to his writings. It was when Hitler's troops had entered Poland, and for whatever reason, this woman had moved from their village. Joan read aloud the following passage:
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> "After she left, everything fell apart. No Jew was safe. There were rumors of unfathomable things, and because we couldn't fathom them we failed to believe them, until we had no choice and it was too late."[4]
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> We both fell silent. We knew what the other was thinking.[5]

The Jacksons were thinking this. A different planet, human-induced climate change, the unsustainability of life lived by the industrial paradigm entrenched in every domain, these are "rumors of unfathomable things, and because we [cannot] fathom them we [do

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[2] McKibben, *Eaarth,* passim.
[3] Howard Thurman, cited from Howard Thurman Quotes, www.thinkexist.com. Accessed 9/12/2010.
[4] Nicole Krauss, *A History of Love* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 8.
[5] Wes Jackson, *Consulting the Genius of the Place: An Ecological Approach to a New Agriculture* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010), 3–4.

not] believe them. . . ." Try, for example, convincing most United States' Americans of the end of dirty fuels capitalism or global consumerism and the American Dream as a way of life. They will wonder, in anger, what you did with their country and faith. Try convincing them that the present obsession—"getting the economy back on track"—is very bad advice when they mean the same economy that brings geo-physical change. Then try convincing them we cannot "green" all this in time so as to retain this way of life on a diminished planet. The first and deepest response will be what Jesus said it would be, "the old is good." First, we will not believe, then we will deny, and finally, when we must do *something*, we will try to put the *new* wine—the reality of a tough, new planet—into the *old* wineskins of the industrial paradigm.

This condition—these are "rumors of unfathomable things, and because we [cannot] fathom them we [do not] believe them"—is *the* present challenge to faith communities. Helping one another face terrible truth and harsh reality without flinching, and at the same time tapping hope and renewable moral-spiritual energy for new beginnings, is *the* calling of faith communities when, for the first time on a global scale, *Homo sapiens* are "running Genesis backwards, de-creating."[6]

Why will new wineskins and cloth be so difficult, and "the old" so compelling? Why does the industrial paradigm and its way of life have such a lock on us?

Karl Polanyi authored a famous book in the mid-1940s, *The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. The "great transformation" is the Industrial Revolution and all that follows from it.[7] While Polanyi was prescient about what would happen in the half-century after his own work, he only told us what we now all know from experience. The benefits of the great transformation have been huge. None of us wants to back-pedal in time to lifetimes half as long, none wants to live before millions and millions were lifted by modernity from the misery of poverty, none wants to return to "the Great Mortality"[8] of the Plague and the scourge of pandemic disease. None wants to give up creature comforts even the rich of other epochs did not know.

That great transformation in Earth/human relations was made possible by compact, stored energy in the form of "dirty" fossil fuels—oil, coal, natural gas—joined to technologies that used them *en masse*. For sheer material abundance, no other epoch has come close to the one begun with Thomas Newcomen's new engine—a steam engine—in 1712.[9] Yet, industrial technologies coupled to vast new quantities of accessible stored energy allowed several illusions. They still have their hold on us. We still live by them.

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[6] McKibben, *Eaarth*, 25.
[7] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon, 1944), passim.
[8] What we call "the Plague" was at the time called "the Great Mortality." Muslim nations, who lost a portion of the population similar to Europe's, referred to it as "The Year of Annihilation."
[9] L. T. C. Rolt and J. S. Allen, *The Steam Engine of Thomas Newcomen* (2nd ed.; Ashbourne: Landmark Publishing Ltd., 1998).

Fossil fuels let humans bypass the rhythms and requirements of nature that pre-industrial populations of necessity had to observe season in and season out. We could, we thought, create our own built environment as our own preferred habitat. It would be a world created in our own image on our own terms. Soon we did not even bother to ask about the rest of nature's demands for regeneration and renewal on its own complex, leisurely, non-negotiable terms. Humans living confidently in this radically transformed world seemingly forgot that every human economy is always and everywhere utterly a dependent part of nature's economy. Earth's economy is always substructure for the human economy as superstructure. When the latter is not matched to the former, trouble looms for both. Yet, we snubbed the substructure and its needs. Earth, air, fire, water, and light made no moral claims upon our lives; they evoked no responsibility.

Bypassing nature's rhythms and requirements for its own regeneration on its own terms linked arms with a second illusion—the conviction that humans could bring nature under their control and liberate humankind from futility and toil. Assuming nature's unlimited abundance and obedience, humans could design their world with Promethean purpose. Or so we thought. We now know differently. Planetary processes are not only more complex and unpredictable than we think; they are probably more complex than we can ever think.[10] They are certainly more complex than any one species can master and control.

The third illusion is that scale somehow does not matter. Anyone twenty-five years of age in 2010 lived through the era when half of all the fossil fuels in human history were burned and more than half the greenhouse gases emitted at human hands sailed skyward.[11] Anyone born in 1936 and still alive in 2003 was around for 97.5% of all the oil pumped and burned.[12] By another measure, global consumer classes produced, transported, and consumed as many goods and services in the prodigious half century from 1950–2000 as *throughout the entire period of history prior to that date.*[13]

And the beat goes on. We still act as though we can have infinite growth on a finite planet and that scale, whatever it be, can be greened and managed. Even the notion of limits offends our way of life and its capacity to meet the "world's needs" (meaning human needs). The biblical judgment that just enough is enough, rather than riches on the one hand, or poverty on the other, does not register with us.[14]

Life propelled by these illusions, when coupled with massive supplies of stored energy and the powers of modern science and technology tied to the industrial paradigm of extraction, production, and consumption for human ends, has come to mean that no precincts of

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[10] A paraphrase of Michael Crofeet as cited by Sam Bingham, *The Last Ranch: A Colorado Community and the Coming Desert* (New York: Pantheon, 1996), 345. Bingham does not give the source for Crofeet.

[11] Randy Udall, "The Big Bonfire," *High Country News*, December 21, 2009: 21.

[12] From Wes Jackson, "Where We Are Going," *The Land Institute*, p. 2. No date. Available at www.LandInstitute.org. Accessed 10/01/2010.

[13] Alan T. Durning, *How Much is Enough?* (London: Earthscan, 1992): 38.

[14] "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Prov 30:8–9).

other-than-human nature, from genes to grasslands to glaciers, are exempt from human impact and human-induced change. The rest of nature no longer has any independent life. It belongs to the empire of its most aggressive species, even though nature's citizens, like the citizens of all empires, may and do revolt.

From a moral point of view, the primary human relationship to the rest of nature has become "use" alone, just as other-than-human nature's primary status has become "object" alone, rather than fellow subject. As the ethos of the supposedly self-contained human bubble has displaced the ethos of the cosmos, nature as "it" has displaced nature as "thou," ending a long and deep relationship in which nature mediated the sacred and bore the spirit of life itself.

Nature as "it" in our consciousness has also displaced nature as "thou" in our religion and morality. Nature is no longer a salient source, much less *the* source, of moral direction and guidance. Job's counsel goes unbidden: "But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you" (Job 12:7–8). God's creatures no longer instruct us; no creatures beyond our own species instruct us. As "resources" and "capital" only, for use only, they have nothing to say. The encapsulated human self, and human society abstracted from the rest of nature, monopolizes the moral universe. Rather than, say, creation. Likewise, the first covenant, the covenant of God with Earth, itself evoked by the escalation of human violence, is lost on us as basic moral obligation and a touchstone of faith (Gen 9).

The uninvited blow to all three illusions—that we can wholly know and control nature, that its own rhythms and requirements on its own terms can be bypassed or bent to our design on our terms, and that scale does not truly matter—is every major life system in decline. Another consequence is the rude appearance of that very wild card, accelerated and extreme climate change. What restructuring the climate system means for the future of all life systems we only perceive through a glass darkly at this point, despite initial impacts.

The tumultuous activity of the industrial age (some simply call it "modernity") has brought us to the threshold of yet another transformation of Earth/human relations. Thomas Friedman calls it the "Energy-Climate Era";[15] Thomas Berry dubs it the "Great Work" of moving from the "Technozoic" to the "Ecozoic" Age.[16]

Every civilization and people has its historical project. In Berry's account,

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[15] See Thomas Friedman, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need A Green Revolution—And How It Can Renew America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

[16] See Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).

> the Great Work of the classical Greek world [was] its understanding of the human mind and the creation of the Western humanist tradition; the Great Work of Israel [was] articulating a new experience of the divine in human affairs; the Great Work of Rome [was] in gathering the peoples of the Mediterranean world and of Western Europe into an ordered relation with one another. . . . The Great Work [of India was] to lead human thought into spiritual experiences of time and eternity and their mutual presence to each other with a unique subtlety of expression. . . . In America the Great Work of the First Peoples was to occupy this continent and establish an intimate rapport with the powers that brought this continent into existence in all its magnificence.[17]

And our Great Work, the task of this and the next several generations is to effect "the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans [are] present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner."[18] For Friedman, this means moving from global flattening, global warming, and global crowding in a "bright-line" historical moment—ours—to "new tools, new infrastructure, new ways of thinking, and new ways of collaborating with others."[19]

But this assumes that the next great transformation is underway. That is doubtful. What is underway, instead, is the replacement of modernity with eco-modernity. What is underway is new wine in old wineskins.

To see this at work, consider the striking full-page advertisement in the June 2, 1998, *New York Times*—the same day the American Museum of Natural History inaugurated its Hall of Biodiversity. The ad displays an eye-catching selection of flora and fauna from around the world and across the top in large letters is the sentence: "We believe in equal opportunity regardless of race, creed, gender, kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, or species."[20] The creatures then tumble down the page, followed by smaller-lettered text:

> All life is interconnected. So without a supporting cast of millions of species, human survival is far from guaranteed. This variety and interdependence of species is what's called biodiversity. And it matters to Monsanto in particular. Our business depends on making discoveries in the world of genetic information. Information that is lost forever when a species becomes extinct. Information that offers solutions in agriculture, nutrition, and medicine never before thought possible. For a population that's growing. On a planet that's not.[21]

The logo—a growing plant—then appears next to the name and trademark: "Monsanto: Food Health Hope." The last line is: "Monsanto is honored to be a sponsor of the Hall of Biodiversity at the American Museum of Natural History. www.monsanto.com."[22]

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[17] Ibid., 1–2.
[18] Ibid., 3.
[19] Friedman, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, 26–27.
[20] *The New York Times,* June 2, 1998, A4.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

This ad is unthinkable apart from recent sciences and their impact: genetics, molecular biology, ecology, and computing sciences, especially. Its thought-world appears to be holistic thinking based in good science. The awareness of complex, living interdependence seems central. At the outset, the ad even strikes a notion of egalitarian bio-democracy worthy of Saint Francis. But as the text trails off, we are keeping company with the soft utopianism and secular promise-and-fulfillment theology of so much industrial science and technology, and not least the new biotechnologies: "Monsanto: Food Health Hope" and "solutions in agriculture, nutrition, and medicine never before thought possible."[23] We are also keeping company with human subjectivism in ethics. This moral universe not only assumes that human beings are the sole moral arbiters, it assumes that in the end the only actions that truly matter are the ones affecting human beings. No court of appeal beyond the human subject exists. And by the very bottom, right hand corner of the page, we have placed good science and a viable way of life ("Food, Health, Hope") firmly in the hands of global eco-modern business.

This sounds like new wine and new cloth, but in fact it is eco-modernity. Modernity worked with a set of famous dualisms, those long-standing boundaries of mind and matter, human culture and resistant nature, and the sharp distinctions of humans from other creatures. These have now been erased in favor of "equal opportunity regardless of race . . . phylum…class…genus, or species" in a world where "[a]ll life is interconnected."[24] Modernity also mirrored a largely mechanistic understanding of how things worked. Now ecological language has replaced the mechanistic. In short, this is new knowledge, new perception, and new vocabulary—new cloth and new wine.

Yet eco-modernity's biases and morality remain modernity's. The day-to-day practice of science, technology, and industry features human mind and culture as the creators, controllers, and high-tech bio-cowboys who work ecosystems and genomes as they would their ranchlands. Furthermore, the creatures are generic, not particular. They are not even truly creatures, as biological individuals; they are, categorically, and simply, "information" and "resources." Humans are thereby re-centered as masters without qualification, despite a web of interdependence; ecology, molecular biology, genetics, and evolution itself find themselves, as practiced science, in the employ of a morality that views "all things bright and beautiful," "all creatures great and small," even "all things wise and wonderful,"[25] as information, resources, and property—in short, as pure capital. So in only one striking page, what begins as a confession of bio-democracy ends as (indispensable) user-friendly exploitation that promises, yet one more time, to do good by doing well, for profit and without

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] The phrases are from the hymn "All Things Bright and Beautiful" by Cecil Alexander, 1848.

(human) sacrifice, and all by way of processed nature, a parallel of processed food.

To say it differently: genetics as a science may render us kin to roundworms, to say nothing of giraffes and bonobos. Ecology may map in gratifying detail the awesome webbing of life. And Evolution with a capital "E" may present a dynamic universe still on its pilgrim way, with us a stupendous expression of it, even if only a wink in its regime of time. Such is indeed the new cloth and new wine of recent discovery. Yet these sciences are captured by the present political economy for an ethic that retains modernity's hubris as that is married to entrepreneurial courage and engineering confidence. ("The old is good.") Life is chiefly a production, management, and security problem, subject to technological remedies based in rigorous science and the magic of the market. Life is not a species problem, or a problem of the human soul or spirit, or a matter of evil and injustice and things going wildly awry on a regular basis by incremental means. The eye is still the arrogant eye.[26]

The clincher is an irony we may miss, precisely because we live encased inside the industrial paradigm. Monsanto's advertisement is an expensive endorsement of biodiversity, which is worthy of its own hall and the public's education. Yet Monsanto's very purpose is to capture as much of the market as possible for a very small number of seeds they control. The purpose is to simplify the stock, not diversify it, for the sake of market control and profit. So rather than, as the company says, proudly supporting the new hall that is making the case for preserving local biodiversity, Monsanto's practices undercut it. The eco-modern vocabulary of the advertisement speaks ecology's language, while the company's practices fail to learn from and support evolution's way of adapting to changing conditions (preserving and enhancing biodiversity).

This frame of mind and industrial drive was already present in 1963 when the classic book that launched the environmental movement was published, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.[27] Monsanto, with its confidence in human knowledge to control nature, issued a parody of Carson entitled "Desolate Spring." It pictured America, not laid waste by pesticides, as Carson suggested, but laid waste by insects "on and under every square foot of land . . . and yes, inside man."[28]

Monsanto need not be singled out. It is only one illustration and only the tip of the iceberg. Scolding this version of "Food, Health, Hope" avails little if we do go no deeper, to the underlying way-of-life assumptions. They support far more than Monsanto. If we undertake ethical analysis and ask what is the culture of modernity, eco-modernity and industry—"the power industry, the defense industry, the communications industry, the

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[26] "The arrogant eye" is a theme in Sallie MacFague, *Super, Natural Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).
[27] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
[28] Reported in "Starting Over," *The New York Times Book Review*, 2 September, 2007: 12. It was not only Monsanto, however, but also the chemical industry as a whole that berated and attacked Carson's work. See Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came Into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming* (New York: Viking, 2007).

transportation industry, the agriculture industry, the food industry, the health industry, the entertainment industry, the mining industry, the education industry, the law industry, the government industry, and the religion industry," to use Wendell Berry's list[29]—as a way of life, the answer goes something like this.

It is certainly a dream and a promise—to supplant poverty, disease, and toil with an abundance that permits the good life as enriching, expanded choice. That dream, promise, and partial success has been irresistible. And while it remains the lure, it roots in assumptions that the planet's condition forces us to scrutinize and then weed out. Here are the assumptions:

> Nature has a virtually limitless storehouse of resources for human use.
>
> Humanity has the commission to use and control nature.
>
> Nature is malleable and can be reconfigured for human ends.
>
> Humanity has the right, perhaps even the calling, to use nature's resources for an improvement in the material standard of living.
>
> The most effective means to elevate material standards of living is ongoing economic growth.
>
> The quality of life itself is furthered by an economic system directed to ever-expanding material abundance.
>
> The future is open, systematic material progress for the whole human race is possible, and through the careful use of human powers humanity can make history turn out right.
>
> Human failures can be overcome through effective problem-solving.
>
> Problem-solving will be effective if reason and goodwill are present, and science and technology are developed and applied in a free environment.
>
> Science and technology are neutral means for serving chosen ends.
>
> Modern science and technology, coupled with democracy, have helped achieve a superior civilization.
>
> What can be scientifically known and technologically done should be known and done.
>
> The things we create are under our control.

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[29] Wendell Berry, "Does Community Have a Value?" in *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 179.

> The good life is one of productive labor and material well-being.
>
> The successful person is the one who achieves.
>
> Both social progress and individual interests are best served by achievement-oriented behavior in a competitive and entrepreneurial environment.
>
> A work ethic is essential to human satisfaction and social progress.
>
> The diligent, hardworking, risk-taking, and educated will attain their goals.
>
> There is freedom in material abundance.
>
> When people have more, their freedom of choice is expended and they can and will be more.[30]

In sum, the "great transformation" of the past 300 years displays the same frame of mind and same anthropocentric universe, whether in modern or eco-modern form. This fossil-fuel interlude mirrors the arrogant eye and cultural chauvinism of one-way domination ethics, human subject to useful object. It conceives all things, living things included, as capital, information, and resources. Though no modern would admit it, this is the continuation of a master/slave ethic, with nature the slave.

But let us assume that the terminus of the industrial era and our way of life on its terms is in sight. What then do we face as poignant reality, and what transitions move us from "here" to "there" as the Great Work? Consider this summary.

- We do not see the world as it is; we see the world as we are. Creatures of symbolic consciousness—the kind of creature we are—have no unmediated apprehension of nature, their own nature included. Our notions of nature, not raw nature, shape our response. This holds for our apprehension of other humans as well. How do we gauge the other? Do we join, ignore, or dismiss him? Is she friend, foe, or immaterial? Is she means or end, sometimes one, sometimes the other, or both together? We do not understand the world we have and our way of life until we interrogate our perception at these deep levels—the underlying assumptions, common biases, and reigning desires about the human and the more-than-human world. Because we see the world as we are, not as it is, there is a vital link between faith and cosmology. How would an Earth-honoring faith apprehend creation and the world becomes the next question, albeit not one that can be pursued here (except for the questions at the end of this essay).

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[30] This is an adaptation from the list Bruce D. Birch and I used in *The Predicament of the Prosperous* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 44–45. I also used it in the volume with Daniel C. Maguire, *Ethics for a Small Planet* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 88–9.

- The planet is not aging gracefully. New basic works are mandatory (new wineskins). To cite Gustave Speth, "all that we have to do to destroy the planet's climate and biota and leave a ruined world to future generations is to keep doing exactly what is being done today, with no growth in the human population or the world economy."[31] Apocalypse requires no more than leveling out the trends of 2000 C.E. and pushing on from there. But of course they are not leveling out. The curve still climbs. It took all of human history to attain the economy of $7 trillion reached in 1950. Now $7 trillion is added each decade. The logic of nature's economy has been no match for the logic of industrial capitalism's.

- The planet is small and natural systems do not grow. There are not more rivers to discover and dam, more oceans to fish and drill, more land masses to settle and till, more atmospheres to breathe and pollute. Yet human impacts grow larger relative to the planet's natural systems. We already use so much water that too little is left for the rest of life. We already capture 40% of nature's photosynthetic output, leaving too little for other life. Deforestation and topsoil loss exceed reforestation and soil formation. Nature begs for new first works.

- The god of the world's secular religion since the Industrial Revolution has been material economic growth, whether sponsored by socialism or capitalism. It has been a blockbuster Broadway show with an unlimited run. Yet, unless triumphant capitalism can be wholly "ecologized," and nature's economy made its foundation, capitalism will destroy that upon which it depends. Unfortunately, Mother Nature does not do bailouts.

- New technologies in energy, transportation, construction, and agriculture are vital. So is wringing large efficiencies from what we already have, together with some preemptory conservation of resources. But how far and how fast revolutionary technologies can come on line for widespread use, in the face of entrenched resistance on the part of people and companies who are threatened by competition and obsolescence, means that it is foolish to trust blindly in technology and plead in desperation (or dance) at its altar. Multiple strategies, including significant changes in human desires and habits, are required.[32] How significant? Thomas Berry says the task is to reinvent the human at the species level.[33]

- Doing first works over entails several long-haul transitions.

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[31] James Gustave Speth, "Towards a New Economy and a New Politics," *Solutions*, Issue No. 5, available online at http://thesolutionsjournal.com, n.p.. Accessed 11/07/2010.

[32] All these bullet points except the first combine the discussion of Speth with my own. Even when not quoted directly, they draw from Speth, "Towards a New Economy and a New Politics." *Solutions*, Issue No. 5, passim. Accessed 11/07/2010.

[33] See the chapter, "The Viable Human," in Berry, T*he Great Work*, 56ff.

A perspectival transition in which we understand ourselves as a species among species no longer inhabiting the same planet *Homo sapiens* have known for a very long while. Altered perception includes a certain reenchantment that counters the "disenchantment" of the world (Max Weber) by which nature was rendered little more than a repository of resources for human use. Reenchantment restores to human consciousness, feeling, and morality nature as a community of subjects, the bearer of mystery and spirit, the ethos of the cosmos itself.

An economic transition in which economics and ecology become "eco-nomics." Economics embeds all economic activity within the ecological limits of nature's economy and pursues the three-part agenda of production, relatively equitable distribution, and ecological regenerativity. Growth as a good is not precluded, provided it is ecologically sustainable and regenerative for the long term, reduces rather than increases wealth and income gaps, and bolsters rather than undermines the capacity of local and regional communities and cultures to nurture and draw wisely upon their cultural and biological diversity. In all events, "the first law of economics must be the preservation of the Earth economy."[34]

A demographic transition in which human population levels off or slowly declines and the negative per person impact on the rest of nature gives way to mutual enhancement with other life.

A polity transition in which the basic conception of democratic capitalism shifts, if indeed democratic capitalism is retained. It shifts from a) a society that fosters virtually unrestricted liberty to acquire and enjoy wealth, in which the right to property and its uses is more basic than the right to use government as an equalizing force, to b) a society that fosters the common good through the process of democratizing social, political, and economic power in such a way that the primary goods of the commons—earth, air, fire, water, and light—are cared-for requisites of the common good, a good for both present and future generations of humankind and otherkind.

A policy transition in which policies are as integrated as nature itself. Climate change, poverty, energy, food, and water are all interlaced in the planetary economy. They, and the wicked problems they represent, cannot be siloed and targeted separately for either analysis or solutions. Integrated policies need to mirror the systemic char-

[34] Thomas Berry, "Conditions for Entering the Ecozoic Era," *The Ecozoic Reader*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter, 2002): 10.

> acter of nature's own integral functioning, just as human technologies must cohere with the technologies of the natural world.[35]
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> *And a religious and moral transition* in which, because planetary health is primary and human well-being derivative, the center of ethics shifts from the encapsulated human self and society to the ecosphere as the relational matrix of our lives and responsibility. Human creatures, embedded as nature in nature, are inseparable from the rest of nature from which we have evolved, upon which we depend, and whose fate we share. The center of ethics is no longer the self. Nor is it even the human cast over against nature, as though these were separate, distinct entities. Creation and Earth's economy are the moral bottom line, with us and our welfare and power responsible to it and its God. This makes planet-keeping the common calling of all religions in the same moment that the moral framework stretches beyond a fixation on the human species so as to include responsibility for the societal, the biophysical, and the geo-planetary, together.

It may seem feeble to finish this essay by posing questions. Yet these are faith questions. More precisely, they are the questions of a faith matched to our responsibilities before God at this time of hard transition on a tough, new planet. They are the questions of an Earth-honoring faith.

What kind of faith is life-centered, justice-committed, and Earth-honoring, with a moral universe encompassing the whole community of life, the biosphere, and atmosphere together? What kind imports the primal elements—earth (soil), air, fire (energy), and water—into the moral universe and centers them there? What kind interrogates past traditions of spirituality to ask for their contributions to new first works, new wineskins and cloth? What kind alerts us to past pitfalls? What kind uses a single stringent criterion—contributions to an Earth ethic and robust Earth community—as the plumb-line that measures all impulses and aspirations? What kind illumines our responsibility, offers well-springs of hope, and generates renewable moral-spiritual energy for the hard season ahead? What kind is savvy about the play of power and privilege in light of the creatures we are and the world we have? What kind offers the type of security that permits risk when we are absent the firm plateau and sure confidence we had when Earth seemed endless and nature free for the taking? What kind welcomes the end of the dirty fuels interlude and despoiling consumerism? What kind honors creation as God's?[36]

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[35] Thomas Friedman, "Connecting Nature's Dots," *The New York Times Week in Review*, 23 August, 2009: 8.

[36] A book-length treatment of these questions and replies to them is part of a book in preparation: Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press, 2012).