

What in Heaven is Going On?

Pamela Gray: Two weeks ago, we spent a magical hour in the language of music, appreciating the interplay of harmony and dissonance, and correlating it with what is occurring in the world today. Sanford began with a purpose statement: *We are here to create the world.* I would like to continue in that current of thought. I'm always aware when we gather like this of the potency of radiance our collective presence brings. And each of our lives are full of creative responsibilities and interests. One of mine is youth—children and young adults in the world. I extend a radiant embrace of connection into this arena through my work in the public school system and through my own interest in what they're doing in the world because of their presence and their calling.

We're at least somewhat aware of what the media reported as having occurred in the recent 26th Conference of the Parties, COP26. Those reports highlighted promises and pledges for deadlines to comply with slowing climate change and the devastation to the environment of our planet. There were significant agreements reached, but the organization I'd like to recognize today is the Global Shapers Community. They're a new generation of change makers—14,000 visionaries under the age of 30, all around the world in 147 countries. For over a decade this network of volunteers has influenced legislation that has led to changed policies. They've planted over a million trees, led massive cleanup projects and gone into villages, townships and cities, meeting with people and respectfully listening to local needs. Working side by side, their shared vision is realized.

As former President Obama commented, "They have a youthful impatience and a willingness to speak truth to power which is necessary to [affecting] climate change." Later he made the comment that they should "stay angry and get involved." In my listening in on their forums over the conference, there wasn't a tone of anger or a feeling that they are victims of what they've inherited. Rather, I viewed them as passionately involved, and their intelligent and empathetic presence is having a significant impact all over the world. Because these peaceful activists aren't tied to a political party or have to answer to demands of constituents, they are free to gather in dialogue to create solutions and join together in community to implement them. It's a grassroots movement. As I was listening to a panel describe where they are and what factually is being accomplished, I thought of the world leaders of their countries trying, after the conference, to implement agreed-upon commitments, while this unifying root

system of young people is spreading in villages and cities all around them and actually doing the work. A woman from an Alaskan tribe said, “We have a shared view that waters and lands are connected”—a consciousness of the earth as one whole, not divided parts to be possessed or defended. I mention this community of spirited activists for our care.

In my work in the public schools as a substitute teacher now, I take the opportunity to pause in a history or science lesson and pose questions to the class as to how they would resolve a world problem by bringing it down to a local situation. They’re all anxious to finish the PowerPoint and answer the factual questions required and move on. But think? Think together? I recently posed some questions to a class of fifth graders: How would you handle the trash problem we see along our freeways, or what solutions can you come up with as a team to address our local city’s homeless population? That’s why I still teach: to inspire thinking and reasoning together in this vital young population at this crucial time, to help them learn to create their world.

I was thinking of William Shatner’s experience of going briefly into space, anticipating the wonders of the great beyond, yet his epiphany came beholding our precious planet earth as a jewel that needs our presence and care. He described it as, “a blue blanket of comfort,” yet so fragile. Amid the popping of champagne corks as the media interviewed other astronauts, he continued undistracted to attempt to convey his profound experience that defied adequate words. Perhaps he actually had the experience of touching the face of God in his own consciousness.

Such dawning awareness is occurring everywhere. There is a rising up in youth and others who seek like-minded and like-spirited colleagues to care for and tend Mother Earth, our home. What is rising up isn’t just a desire to find solutions and fix things; it’s a remembrance of *home*. The sensing of this comes as there is disengagement from self-centered, self-serving plans and goals, and openness to the magic of music, the music of the spheres. This universal vibration is the magnetic power that recreates and regenerates the world.

The earth needs this stewardship. It doesn’t need saving. “The Earth *is* the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” [Psalm 24:1] Later in David’s psalm is, “This *is* the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face...” [Psalm 24:6] God needs a face on earth. As we know our own oneness with His spirit, we each are that face.

That’s why we gather: to collectively provide radiant support to this rising spirit that’s occurring all over the earth—that all may be one, and returned to the One.

John Gray: The worldwide youth movement Pamela spoke of—Global Shapers Community—involves thousands of young people acting on their highest visions, in concert. It is one of many examples of something right with the world. Their enthusiasm is inspiring and influential. By the way, you may know the Greek roots of the word enthusiasm mean *inspired and possessed by God*.

We readily recognize that a lot of human behavior is self-destructive, both individually and collectively. This is not at all new, but it is hugely exacerbated in today's world. Jesus was recorded as saying two thousand years ago, "And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." [Mark 3:25] This verse was quoted by Abraham Lincoln in a famous speech he gave before he was U.S. President, speaking of America's deep division over the issue of human slavery. Lincoln was a man of great stature. I like to think he intuited, if not knew, that a house being divided against itself is an inevitable effect of humanity having divided itself from God.

The divisive state of humanity is plain to see—it's more than divided, it's fragmented into small shards. People know there's something wrong here, but how many see there is so much more that is right? *What's right is the starting point, what's wrong is beside the point*, to paraphrase Uranda. Being against what's wrong does nothing to promote what's right. "Anti-attitudes" are worse than futile.

We're neither blind nor numb; we can see, and we feel in ourselves the world and people's frustration and anger, grief and despair. These symptoms of division are impossible to avoid, but we're present to shine our lights on what's right and illuminate a way that is born of wholeness from well above the fragmented state of common human experience.

A social acquaintance, referring to news reports of current events, recently muttered, "What on earth is going on?" It was a rhetorical mutter, and I was glad he didn't expect an answer. However, I thought, and kept it to myself, that this isn't the primary question. From a spiritual perspective, the more important question is always, "What in *heaven* is going on?" Perceiving the current and character of what is emerging from the invisible infuses our consciousness with a fuller perception of what are truly current events. I think the right question about current world occurrences is, "What is emerging in the current out of heaven?"

For many millions of people, the word *heaven* signifies an article of faith in something distant and imaginary. The word has survived centuries of religious abuse, but long before it took on the guise of a place to go after death its original meaning was, and remains, "sky; firmament." I'm reasonably sure the oldest usages of the words that were translated into

English as “firmament” and “heaven” are found in the Book of Genesis, the Biblical book of beginnings. “And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven.” [Gen. 1:7-8]

“What in *heaven* is going on?” This is the vital question. What is coalescing in and through the firmament—in the gradated connecting medium between the invisible realms of design and the world of earthly forms? The Latin roots of “firmament” carry the meaning *to prop, to support, to make firm*. In the description of creation in Genesis we note that heaven comes first and then the earth. The heaven embraces, permeates and holds the earth.

A lot is written and spoken these days about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: PTSD. A blurb on the cover of the 2014 book, *The Body Keeps the Score* by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk begins, “Trauma is a fact of life. Veterans and their families deal with the painful aftermath of combat; one in five Americans has been molested; one in four grew up with alcoholics; one in three couples have engaged in physical violence.” The author writes of trigger events that can recall trauma memories so vividly the experiences are re-lived as if real in the present.

There is immense trauma in the collective experience of humanity, much of it from long before historical times. The story of what’s called the fall of man in the Bible carries residual connection to unspeakable horror and profound fear and shame.

Individual traumatic events have individual effects. Collective trauma has collective effects, and they’re more deeply buried. World wars don’t involve a majority of humanity at a time, and the Covid pandemic, though global, doesn’t affect everyone directly. But the planetary climate crisis is of a scale that affects the whole earth and eventually everyone on it—and thus is perhaps today’s trigger event for deeply buried memories of collective trauma. Traumatic memory doesn’t emerge first as a recollection of events so much as the associated feelings, notably fear, and under that, shame. To people sensitive to ancient worldwide trauma the global climate crisis may trigger feeling memories which raise loud internal alarms. Yes, “the body keeps the score”—and the *body* is the body of humankind and the body of the earth itself.

We share some recognition that a spiritual regeneration of humanity is well underway, proceeding from an altogether different level, and that we are here to play parts in that mission’s ultimate success. Sometimes the words “restoration of the divine state” have been used to refer to this, but let’s be clear that such restoration isn’t about going back to what was long ago before the fall, whatever that was. No. It’s giving our hearts to what *is*. “What in

heaven is going on?” Restoration isn’t a do-over. It’s an all-new creation, a new state coming down from invisible God out of heaven to be given form through human beings, through us.

The anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, which he gave on November 19, 1863, was commemorated two days ago. Most Americans and many more the world around know the opening line, if not more: “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” I calculated that were Lincoln giving this speech today he’d open with, “Twelve score and five years ago...” but it’s still not universally agreed that the “all men” who “are created equal” includes all men and women and children of every race and color and nationality.

The closing of the Gettysburg address is as stirring today as it was those scores of years ago. Here’s a part: “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us... that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

The word “nation” is usually assumed to mean a country, the United States in this case, but its root in Latin means “birth,” from the verb “to be born,” and suggests to me a far larger and more inclusive government.

The true government for the whole earth and its people is the government of God. “The earth *is* the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” My earth, your earth, is the Lord’s, and is rightly governed in exactly the same way. Humanity is designed and equipped to be the Lord in action on earth, not to arrogantly lord imaginary superiority over His world.

“What in heaven is going on?” We perceive the answer moment by moment because it’s going on in us. Notwithstanding external appearances of dire events, let’s be steadfast in our enthusiasm!

The coming of the new eradicates the old—no more trauma, no more PTSD! As foreseen and promised in the last book in the Bible, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” [Rev. 21:4]

And we are here, now, present in the midst of this very process.

After several comments:

John Gray: The great works that are being accomplished today are being accomplished in heaven on earth. This doesn't require a great deal of outer activity... but it is where the work is done, and how we fulfill what we're here to be.

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Introductory Music

Saturday Night Waltz

Composed by Aaron Copland and performed Anderson and Roe

Concluding Music

C'mon C'mon (Original Motion Picture Score) - short excerpt

Composed and performed by Bryce Dessner & Aaron Dessner, featuring Feist