

The World Network of Religious Futurists



Note

This was first published on paper in 1996. Some information that is no longer accurate has been removed or amended to avoid confusion. Where no other copyright is claimed, this document is copyright © 1996, 2005 WNRFF. All rights reserved. This edition is designed to be printable on both Letter and A4 size paper.

Disclaimer

All views expressed in this magazine are those of the author, not necessarily of the editor or officers of the Network. Any remaining spelling mistakes are the fault of the editor; any grammatical errors are probably the fault of the author.

Editorial

In this issue we continue exploring the foundations for peace in the twenty-first century, we hear about some plans for celebrating the millennium and the Chairman gives his report. At the turn of the year, there are fragile signs of peace in many places where conflicts have followed religious divides - Bosnia, Northern Ireland and the Middle East, for example (although making comments like this is often asking to be overtaken by events!).

It is my hope that we may continue to build foundations for peace throughout the coming year. Enjoy the magazine.

Gordon Arthur

Spirituality, Religion, and Peace: Exploring the foundations for inner-outer peace in the Twenty-First Century

by Linda Groff and Paul Smoker

Part II: Further Explorations of the Esoteric/Inner and Exoteric/Outer Aspects of Religion and Culture

A. Alternation Between Ideational/ Spiritual/ Inner and Sensate/ Materialistic/ Outer Forms of Western Culture: The Work of Pitirim Sorokin

1. Functional and Logico Meaningful Integration of Cultures

The previous section of this paper described some of the new paradigms which are emerging in a range of areas. It can be argued that it is no accident that these holistic paradigms have developed at this time. Indeed, one of the founding fathers of peace research, Pitirim Sorokin, suggested some 60 years ago that this would be the case (Sorokin, 1931). Sorokin, in his classic text, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, elaborated a theory of socio/cultural evolution that can be summarized as follows.

In any society or social system, there are four ways in which integration can occur.

Two of these are for our purposes here quite trivial, namely spatial integration (when entities simply occupy the same space and nothing more) and external integration (when two or more entities are linked to each other through some other entity, for example grass and flowers may grow together at the same rate because of the external factors of sun, soil and rain). The third, functional integration, is far from trivial. This, for Sorokin, describes the interlocking interdependencies we now recognize as crucial in complex systems. Indeed for many scientists "functional integration", or its modern cybernetic equivalent "syntegration", – the dynamic interdependence of entities that are in symbiotic interaction with each other – is of the utmost importance. Whole societies, whole systems, are held together by their mutually interdependent functional interactions and, following Wright's model, any changes in one will need changes elsewhere in the system to restore dynamic equilibrium.

Sorokin also proposed a fourth level of integration which, in his view, was the highest form of integration. He called it "logico meaningful integration", to try to describe the underlying idea that things are held together because of what they mean, because of deep values in the culture. Sorokin argued that this level of integration not only provides coherence in life to individuals

through the underlying meanings in their culture, but also results in these deep values being manifest in all aspects of a culture, from science to religion. For Sorokin, a culture at its peak will be integrated in both functional and logico-meaningful ways. He approached the problem of meaning in the following way.

2. Sensate/Materialistic, Ideational/Spiritual, and Idealistic/Mixed Culture

Sorokin argued that the macro cultures in Western

Civilization evolved through stages that could be understood in terms of their central meanings. At one end of a continuum, these underlying meanings were essentially sensate, that is reality was defined entirely in terms of the physical world and the truth of the senses. At the other end, reality was “ideational”, by which Sorokin meant spiritual in the sense that the eternal, infinite, spiritual reality is real, while the material world is an illusion. In this case truth of faith is the only truth. Halfway

along this continuum was the “idealistic” point, where truth of faith and truth of senses were balanced through “truth of reason.” Sorokin identified seven types of culture mentality on the sensate-ideational continuum. Table 1 (below) gives the main elements of the sensate, ideational and idealistic forms.

| | Active Sensate | Ascetic Ideational | Idealistic |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reality | Sensate, material, empirical | Non-sensate, eternal, transcendental | Both equally represented |
| Main needs and ends | Manifold and richly sensate | Spiritual | Both equally represented |
| Extent of satisfaction | Maximum | Maximum | Great, but balanced |
| Method of satisfaction | Modify external environment | Self modification | Both ways |

Table 1: Three Types of Culture Mentality (Sorokin): Active Sensate, Ascetic Ideational, and Idealistic (Combining Both)

Note: Sorokin elaborated seven types of culture mentality. The three listed above are the two extremes - Active Sensate and Ascetic Ideational, as well as a middle point, the Idealistic culture type.

Table 2 (overleaf) outlines the logico meaningful consequences of the three types of culture mentality for weltanschauung (or worldview), power and object of control, and activity. For Sorokin, the “logical satellites” are aspects of the culture that follow logi-

cally from the central integrating principle of the culture. In Sorokin’s words, “each of them (the logical satellites) is connected logically with the dominant attitude toward the nature of ultimate reality.” Thus the active sensate culture is based on “becoming”, based on a full blooded sense of life and continual change. Ideas such as progress and evolution are central to such a viewpoint. In addition, the dominant ideas on control stress control of the external sensate reality and

hence activity in the outer world. In contrast, the ideational culture is based on “being”, stressing lasting value. In addition, self control and repression of the sensual person and of self lead to a focus on the inner life. Idealistic culture for Sorokin is an attempt to balance both worldviews, to live in both the inner and outer world, and balance being and becoming, control of the external environment and control of self.

| | Active Sensate | Ascetic Ideational | Idealistic |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Weltanschauung (or worldview) | Becoming: Transient values, full blooded sense of life, joy and grief; dynamism and endless readjustment; progress, evolution | Being: Lasting value; indifference to transient values; imperturbability; statism | Both equally represented |
| Power and object of control | Control of the sensate reality | Self control, repression of the sensual person and of "self" | Both equally represented |
| Activity | Extravert | Introvert | Both equally represented |

Table 2: Three Types of Culture Mentality (Sorokin): Weltanschauung, Power and Object of Control, and Activity

Table 3 (below) details how each culture mentality affects what is meant by "self" and what is defined as knowledge in each type of culture mentality. Both the sensate and ideational types are highly inte-

grated around completely different reality definitions. The sensate culture is associated with a view of the self as a material entity dissolved (or living totally) in the immediate physical reality. Under this

view the material world provides the basis for everything, and materialistic models of reality are likely to be dominant in all compartments of culture.

| | Active Sensate | Ascetic Ideational | Idealistic |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Self | Highly integrated, sensate, dissolved in immediate physical reality; materializes self and all spiritual phenomena; cares for integrity of body and its sensual interest (sensual liberty, sensual egotism) | Highly integrated, spiritual, dissolved in the ultimate reality; aware of the sensual world as illusion; anti-materialistic | Both equally represented |
| Knowledge | Develops a science of natural phenomena and technical inventions; concentrates on these; leads to arts of technology, medicine, hygiene, sanitation and modification of people's physical environment | Develops insight into, and cognition of, the spiritual, psychical and immaterial phenomena and experiences; concentrates on these; leads to arts of education and modification of inner life | Both equally represented |

Table 3: Three Types of Culture Mentality (Sorokin): Self and Knowledge

| | Active Sensate | Ascetic Ideational | Idealistic |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Truth: its categories, criteria and methods | Based on observation of, measurement of, and experimentation with exterior phenomena through exterior organs of sense, inductive logic | Based on inner experience, “mystic way”, concentrated meditation, intuition or prophecy | Both equally represented (Scholasticism) |
| Moral values and systems | Relativistic and sensate; hedonistic, utilitarian; seeking for maximum sensate happiness for the largest number of human beings; moral of rightly understood egotism | Absolute, transcendental, categoric, imperative, everlasting and unchangeable | Both equally emphasized |

Table 4: Three Types of Culture Mentality (Sorokin): Truth, and Moral Values and Systems

Mechanistic models of the universe and materialistic biochemical models of health are typical examples of the sensate view of reality, a view that stresses caring for the physical body, sensual liberty (for example, sexual freedom) and sensual egotism (for example, cultivating the body beautiful). Such a worldview will naturally develop physical and biological sciences that study and manipulate the external world, and in so doing will develop technology for this purpose. In contrast, the ideational culture type searches for the inner self, which is experienced as dissolved (or existing totally) in the ultimate spiritual reality. The external material world is seen as an illusion, and knowledge of the spiritual, psychical and immaterial reality becomes the basis for knowledge. Using meditation and other self ex-

ploration approaches, knowledge of the inner self, including inner peace, becomes central. As in the case of Table 2, the idealistic culture mentality attempts to balance both approaches.

Table 4 (above) illustrates the approaches to truth and to moral values in the three culture mentalities. Thus the active sensate culture is based on “truth of the senses”, where truth is validated through observation of, and experimentation with, the external environment. The five human senses are ultimately the basis for establishing truth, and inductive logic is used to relate the evidence from the senses to models of reality. The moral value system of the sensate culture is relativistic and utilitarian, based on maximum sensate happiness. In contrast, the ideational worldview is based

on “truth of faith”, whereby the inner experience of the ultimate reality, the mystical experience discussed above, is achieved through concentrated meditation, intuition, revelation, or prophecy. This ideational culture mentality is based on absolute, transcendental values, values that are God-given, imperative, everlasting and unchangeable. The idealistic culture mentality stresses both “truth of the senses” and “truth of faith” in a truth system that Sorokin calls “truth of reason.” Greek culture around the 4th and 5th centuries BC and European culture around the 12th to 4th centuries AD are seen by Sorokin as examples of this balanced cultural form. Idealistic culture similarly includes a both/and approach to moral values, incorporating both perspectives in its value system.

| | Active Sensate | Ascetic Ideational | Idealistic |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Aesthetic values and systems | Sensate, secular, created to increase joys and beauties of a rich, sensate life | Ideational, subservient to the main inner values, religious, nonsensate | Both equally emphasized |
| Social and practical values | Everything that gives joy of life to self and partly to others: particularly wealth, comfort etc.; prestige is based on the above; wealth, money, physical might become "rights" and the basis of all value; principle of sound egotism | Those which are lasting and lead to the ultimate reality: only such persons are leaders, only such things and events are positive, all others are valueless or of negative value, particularly wealth, earthly comfort etc.; principle of sacrifice | Both equally emphasized: live and let live |

**Table 5: Three Types of Culture Mentality (Sorokin):
Aesthetic Values and Systems, and Social and Practical Values**

Table 5 (above) illustrates the characteristics of the three culture mentalities as these relate to aesthetic values and social values. In the sensate culture, art and aesthetic values are based on increasing the joys and beauties of a rich sensate life, while social and practical values give joy of life to self and partly to others. In particular, they stress the value of monetary wealth and physical comfort. Prestige in society is in large measure based on these factors. In conflicts, physical might is more important than being right in the moral sense. The ideational culture type sees aesthetic val-

ues as being servants to the main inner values, which are essentially religious and nonsensate. For social values, only those which serve the ultimate inner spiritual reality are of value, while materialistic values, such as economic wealth, are seen as ultimately worthless. The principle of sacrifice is an integral part of the ideational social value system. As in the above cases, idealistic culture attempts to balance sensate and spiritual concerns.

Sorokin and his helpers collected and coded huge amounts of information on various aspects of Western macro culture, including indicators of

sensate and ideational world-views, in art, science, mathematics, architecture, discoveries and inventions, philosophy, ethics and jurisprudence. Using this data, he argued that there was a tendency, over long periods of time, for Western macro culture to swing from one end of the continuum to the other in their central meanings, and that these changes in central meanings are manifest in all aspects of an integrated culture. A crude summary of his findings is presented in Table 6 (overleaf).

| Period | Classification |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Up to the 5th Century BC | Ideational |
| 5th and 4th Centuries BC | Idealistic |
| 3rd to the 1st Century BC | Sensate |
| 1st to end of 4th Century AD | Transition & Crisis |
| 5th to 12th Centuries AD | Ideational |
| 12th to 14th Centuries AD | Idealistic |
| End of 14th to 15th Century AD | Transition & Crisis |
| 16th through 20th Centuries AD | Sensate (Active, then passive, now cynical, entering transition) |

Table 6: Fluctuation of Truth Systems in Graeco-Roman and Western Civilization (Sorokin)

The still evolving Western civilization, in Sorokin’s view, had achieved overripe sensate status (with too much stress on materialism and an almost complete disregard for spiritual values) and was now in crisis, swinging back towards the ideational pole. Such a swing would inevitably manifest itself in the emergence of “new holistic paradigms” in many different areas, as illustrated above, as well as in the re-emergence of ideational, religious or spiritual worldviews. It will also, in Sorokin’s view, lead to a period of turmoil, crisis and catharsis, from which the new ideational or idealistic culture will emerge.

3. Relevance of Sorokin’s Ideas to the World Today:

Every model of reality – including Sorokin’s – is a simplification of reality to some extent. In various ways, the global situation today is more complicated than Sorokin’s model suggests, since the world is also more complex than when he wrote. There are, for example, multiple interactions between different cultures occurring in the world today, which are not in So-

rokin’s model. Despite this fact, it is nonetheless interesting that a number of new, holistic scientific paradigms and worldviews are emerging today in a number of different areas – just as Sorokin predicted 65 years ago would happen as part of a return to more spiritual values in Western cultures today. There is, however, within the scientific community itself, some difference of opinion over whether the new, holistic scientific paradigms deal only with the physical world, or whether they also parallel holistic spiritual values and experiences of reality. The latter view was the thesis of Fritjov Capra’s book, *The Tao of Physics*, for example, but not all physicists agree with Capra.

Similarly, the Gaia Hypothesis is interpreted by some in a purely “functional” integration sense and by others within a spiritual framework, suggesting “intentionality” and an “intelligence” behind the way Gaia operates. (Ruether, 1992; Badiner, 1990) Paul Davies, who has written various books popularizing the New Physics, also asks: “Why are the laws of nature mathemati-

cal?” and why can nature everywhere be explained by mathematics, thereby allowing science to understand nature? To Davies, the fact that we can study and understand the universe at all, and that science is even possible at all, implies that the universe is not a random event, but rather that intentionality and purpose are behind its creation and design. (Davies, 1992) Other scientists also note the extremely low statistical probability of life – including self-conscious, self-aware, intelligent life (as represented by humans) – evolving on earth, which to some scientists implies an intentionality or purpose behind our physical universe, its creation and the design of its evolution. The fact that life itself seems to evolve towards ever more intelligent self awareness – whether in human form on earth or other possible forms elsewhere in the universe – implies a designer behind the design to some scientists. In summary, new holistic, scientific paradigms are emerging across a variety of fields, and increasing numbers of people are seeing connections be-

tween the spiritual and material aspects of these paradigms.

In looking at Sorokin's two opposite types of cultures – sensate/materialistically-based cultures, and ideational/spiritually-based cultures – and his thesis that Western history has alternated back and forth between these two extreme cultural types, with periods of balance between them during certain transitional times, several interesting questions and observations arise in regard to how these two opposite cultural types, and the transitions between them, relate to the contemporary world and to the world of the 21st century.

(1) First, it is amazing how Sorokin's two polar opposite cultural types – sensate and ideational cultures – which alternated in Western history, seem to perfectly describe what we commonly think of (at least in a generalized, archetypal way) as characteristics of Western cultures (sensate/materialistic) and Eastern cultures (ideational/spiritual).

(2) However, if we now think of Western cultures as predominantly materialistic, but note that Western culture has also had non-materialistic, spiritual periods in its history, then perhaps Eastern cultures, which we tend to think of as more spiritual, have also had periods of materialism and a predominance of sensate values at certain periods in its history as well. Sorokin's work focused primarily on Western cultures, so further research needs to be done by others today on this question. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the

work that Sorokin did do on Eastern cultures tended to describe them predominantly as ideational/spiritually-based cultures. As Sorokin himself concluded: (Sorokin, 1957, p43)

...the Ascetic ideational culture mentality comprises not an island but several of the largest continents in the world of culture. The systems of mentality of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Sufism, early Christianity, and of many ascetic and mystical sects, groups, and movements (e.g., the Cynics, Stoics, Gnostics, and the devotees of Orphism) have been predominantly Ideational, Ascetic ideational at the highest level, Active Ideational on a lower, and Idealistic and Mixed on the lowest.

(3) if we tend today (in our common images and stereotypes) to think of Western cultures as primarily sensate/materialistic, and Eastern cultures as primarily ideational/spiritual, then it needs to be noted that the actual world of today is more complex than this. Indeed, there are powerful forces of change sweeping the planet today. In many ways, Eastern cultures (represented especially by Asian countries) are undergoing rapid economic development, technological growth, and increasing materialism as a result. This has led many thoughtful people to be concerned that the whole world is perhaps becoming Westernized and materialistic. But an equally strong counter current is also occurring within

Western cultures today, where the achievement of a certain level of material comfort often leads people to seek other values in life, especially spiritual values, in an effort to find meaning. Spiritual and religious movements of various kinds are thus having a comeback – especially in cultures and countries that have undergone the greatest degree of material development, i.e., North America, Europe, and Japan.

This is no accident. Indeed, it can be argued that both Western and Eastern cultures, in their pure or extreme forms (to the extent that they did actually at times represent one of Sorokin's two opposite cultural types), have traditionally both been out of balance, and that today, for the first time our increasingly interdependent world is providing the conditions for both Eastern and Western cultures to become more in balance, in terms of honoring both spiritual and material values, inner peace as well as outer peace values, and group as well as individualistic concerns and perspectives, and that this is indeed the most promising development occurring in the world today, in regard to creating the foundations for a global culture of peace – for both East and West-in the 21st century.

(4) Nonetheless, it needs to be pointed out that periods of transition – when the underlying values on which a culture and civilization have been based are undergoing rapid change and being challenged – are very disruptive to people's lives and to the effective functioning of one's societal insti-

tutions. And indeed, we see that this is happening today. Crime and violence are on an increase everywhere. Fanatics of the left and right – including religious cults promoting violence in the name of God or spirit (a total contradiction in terms) – are multiplying. The transition period does not guarantee an easy ride. But change is inevitable, and it must be dealt with as constructively and consciously as possible, so that we can get through this transition period with as little real catastrophes and violence as possible.

(5) Then, assuming that such a new, balanced culture of peace can be created in the world in the 21st century (a big assumption, we grant you), how long could such a balanced inner-outer, spiritual-materialistic, female-male balanced culture be able to endure? Sorokin's work suggests – at least based on his analysis of the alternations in Western cultures historically – that such balanced Idealistic periods usually lasted about 200-300 years. In non-Western cultures, Sorokin saw Confucianism and much of Ancient Egyptian culture (which lasted 3,000 years) as good examples of the balanced, Ideational form. As Eastern and Western cultures increasingly come together and interact with each other, now and in the future, perhaps such a balanced period could last for a long time – drawing on both Eastern and Western cultural values for its maintenance and sustenance. If that were to become possible, then the so-called "Golden Age" (prophe- sied in various religious and

spiritual traditions) could indeed become a reality.

(6) A less desirable alternative to this balanced scenario would be if Western cultures move increasingly towards an ideational, spiritual value system, while Eastern cultures move increasingly towards a sensate, materialist value system, with East and West, in effect, changing places! This might be more likely if both Eastern and Western cultures could continue to develop in isolation from each other, but in our increasingly interdependent world, this seems unlikely. The more preferable, balanced scenario, however, would be for the East to increasingly develop economically – as it no doubt will do, with many economic observers having called the 21st century the "Pacific Century – while still maintaining and preserving its rich spiritual traditions and values, and for the West to increasingly further an interest in spiritual, inner peace questions, while still maintaining a decent materialistic life-style and concern with social justice issues in the outer world.

(7) We will no doubt have to wait and see what we all individually and collectively decide to create. The transition period of getting there may indeed be rocky. But a peaceful world, based on attention paid to both inner peace and outer peace, including social justice questions, is indeed one possibility for the 21st century.

Bibliography for Part 2A

Badiner, Allan Hunt; "Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in

Buddhism and Ecology"; Berkeley; Parallax Press; 1990.

Capra, Fritjov; "The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern physics and Eastern Mysticism", Third Edition, Updated; Boston; Shambhala; 1991.

Davies, Paul; "The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World"; New York; Simon and Schuster; 1992.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford; "Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing"; San Francisco; Harper; 1992.

Sorokin, Pitirim; "Social and Cultural Dynamics: A Study, of Change in major Systems of Art, Truth, Ethics, Law, and Social Relationships"; New Brunswick; Transaction Publishers; 1957. This is a one volume 1957 edition of an earlier four volume 1931 edition.

Wright, Quincy; "A Study of War"; Chicago; University of Chicago Press; 1941.

Building on Anno Domini and Common Era 2000

by Jay Gary

As an observer, I have listened with keen interest to these discussions about the turn of the millennium. I have been asked to make some comments as an evangelical on the question, "How we can make the Millennium Moment our own?" To do so, I would like to draw from the rich tra-

dition of Anno Domini, the “Year of Our Lord.”

My journey to make the “millennium moment” my own began in the 1980s. From 1986 to 1989, I had the privilege of working as a congress planner for the Lausanne movement, a network Christian leaders founded by Billy Graham. During those years, the awareness of A.D. 2000 became indelibly imprinted upon thousands of leaders from around the world. Never before in the history of the church had it seemed that God had spoken so clearly about such a specific period of time, as he did about the coming “decade of evangelism” in the 1990s.

This millennial vision of evangelizing the world by 2000 began as a brush fire, and quickly spread worldwide in an uncontrolled fashion to encompass practically every major church confession and outreach. It was then that I realized I had been so consumed by what the church should *do* by A.D. 2000 and beyond, I almost missed the *Who*.

By 1990, I felt the Lord Almighty whispering to me, “Don’t forget to invite my Son to his birthday party.” The turn of the millennium became something far more than the dropping of a ball at Times Square. I realized that its attraction came directly from the miracle at Bethlehem’s manger square, when 2,000 years ago God became flesh and dwelt among us, through his only begotten son.

It was at that time I began to call the year 2000 the *bimillennial.* “Bi” meaning

“two”, and “millennial” meaning one thousand. First and foremost to me, the year 2000 will be the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ.

And what family, if their grandmother were approaching her 100th birthday wouldn’t put aside all their quarrels and “do something great for Grandma” come her centennial. So likewise, the followers of Jesus have begun to make the turn of the millennium their own by preparing a marvelous “tribute 2000” to salute the redeemer of the world.

I went on to write “The Star of 2000” (Bimillennial Press, 1994). It carries a simple inspiration message. Remember how in the political campaign of 1992 Clinton’s advisors kept telling him, “It’s the economy *stupid*!”? Well my message on talk radio and in pulpits across this country has been, “It’s the Person, not the party, who is the star of 2000!”

We may be approaching the biggest New Year in 1,000 years, but a greater star is on the horizon. Like those first Magi, it is leading us again to Bethlehem. I believe it is time to remind the world of the “reason for the season” as we approach Christmas 2000.

Unfortunately fear, rather than faith has marked the church as it has looked toward the year 2000. Most believers seemed be to gripped with “apocalyptic fever”, rather than anniversary feeling at this time. That is why people call me the “Millennium Doctor”, to call us back to our roots. Rather than engage in speculation about the Second Coming, I say it’s time to look back at

the First Coming, and honor the person who split history into two halves, B.C. and A.D.

I am not just a single voice in the wilderness to herald this historical anniversary of the Incarnation. The Pope is making plans to visit the Holy Land. Israel has begun preparations to welcome four million visitors in 2000. They know that people all over the world will want to walk where Jesus walked. Also the mayor of Rome is preparing to welcome ten million pilgrims to Rome to commemorate the Holy Year of the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation of Our Lord.

The hallmarks of this growing “tribute 2000” movement are repentance, spiritual renewal and reconciliation. The Pope has urged Catholics – as individuals and as church – to reflect on and repent of “past errors... slowness to act... intolerance and the use of violence in the service of truth” before “crossing the threshold of the new millennium.”

That should be good news to all religious leaders. We face a unique season in inter-religious dialogue from now till the year 2001. If we respond the right way, it could be a God-given, a God-graced moment for all of us. If we turn away from this opportunity, it might be centuries before it comes again.

I believe we need more, not less inter-religious dialogue in our communities as we approach the third millennium. It is timely that these roundtables now discuss the subject of the turn of the millennium. But in doing so I urge you not to let Jesus be the “absent

presence” as we have done so far in this dialogue.

I am sure you will remember how we approached the Quincentennial Year of 1992. Around the world, people didn’t know whether to protest or parade. Rather than bring repentance and reconciliation, the 500th anniversary of Columbus awoke centuries of suppressed feelings of racism, intolerance and aggression, without offering a path for healing between Europeans and Indigenous Peoples.

We must not let that be the pattern for the bimillennial. Whether by providence or accident, the Great Calendar will now give us an opportunity to consider afresh the life, the legacy and the lordship of Jesus Christ. I mention the “lordship” of Christ unapologetically, because whether you revere this poor Man of Nazareth or not, surely he reigns over a universal empire of the Spirit, that is flourishing as we enter the third millennium.

The stock of the institutional church’s reputation may have fallen over the past three centuries, but the esteem and reverence for Jesus has skyrocketed among people of every nation.

Though many of his followers have failed to stay true to his spirit, this humble Jewish carpenter has touched and enriched practically every sphere of human greatness. Few if any have inspired more art, literature, music, or charity than Jesus. His message has shaped almost every aspect of human life, and society. His triumph over suffering has brought hope to those who carry heavy

crosses of their own. Jesus of Nazareth has been the most moving figure during the past twenty centuries.

Ask yourself today, “What if Jesus had never been born?” If the cradle in Bethlehem was empty and the shepherds had not heard the angels sing, we would be living in an altogether darker, more rigid and more ruthless world.

This past week, before I left Colorado Springs, I made it a point to visit our local rabbi. As we talked about the opportunity the year 2000 presents to us, I shared how Jesus has certainly been central to the western tradition. Rabbi Hirsch interrupted me, and said, “Not just central to the western tradition, but central to the Jewish faith.” Far from a confession of Jesus as messiah, the Rabbi was honoring the memory of Jesus as a man and a great prophet of Israel. Then wistfully, he looked up to ceiling and said, “Imagine what our world would be like if every Christian acted like Jesus.”

It is time for us to open the door of inter-religious dialogue to the “absent presence” and talk openly, honestly and frankly about Jesus. Christ is far too important a figure in world history just to be left to the consideration of Christians. You need to ask me, “What is unique about Christ?” And I need to ask you, “What is universal about Jesus?”

Far too many historical anniversaries in our age leave us more divided than united. Why? Because we do not seize the opportunity to talk openly, directly and honestly about its essence and how that has di-

vided us. Instead we carry on “counter-commemorations”, which might give us a public voice, but further estranges us from each other.

Let’s put an end to this post-modern pattern of twisted celebration. Let’s say no to making the year 2000 into some kind of P.C. Jubilee, shallow and devoid of meaning. Rather than divide society and relive the pain of the past, let us say yes to building a better future, and do it through the binding treasure of Jesus.

Come Christmas 2000, your community may not sing, “O Come Let Us Adore Him”, but you can surely honor Jesus’ memory during the 2,000th anniversary of his birth. We need to affirm whatever is noble, what is right, what is pure and what is praiseworthy in each other’s traditions.

While Christ must surely top our discussion list during this bimillennial season, I do not suggest that Christology, or Christ’s impact on culture be the only year 2000 topic. Other millennial topics for inter-religious dialogue should be millenarianism, religious freedom, religious fundamentalism and extremism, human rights, and economic development.

“How to make the Millennium Moment our own?” I am compelled to build on the tradition of Anno Domini to see the year 2000 become an authentic “tribute 2000” to Jesus of Nazareth.

Beyond the tradition of Anno Domini, all of society shares a common universal calendar which regulates travel, trade and inter-governmental affairs. The

world has never celebrated the turn of the century, much less the turn of millennium, on the basis of a shared universal calendar. We need to ask, "How can we make the Millennium Moment for all?"

Rather than commemorate Christmas 2000, Common Era 2000 calls us to build upon New Year's Day 2000. Through A.D. we mark the anniversary of the Advent, but through C.E. we mark an anniversary of human aspirations. Whereas A.D. 2000 is focused on "tribute 2000", C.E. 2000 is focused on the calendrical "threshold 2000." If Anno Domini is built upon the liturgical and reformation traditions, Common Era comes from our enlightenment heritage in both Italy and France, and now encompasses the creative and cultural heritage of all humanity.

Already preparations are underway to make the new millennium threshold, 1999 - 2001, an extraordinary celebration of civilization. During this season, some 300 million people worldwide will celebrate Earth Day 2000, some 40 million will visit Expo 2000 in Hannover, Germany and near to 4 million will visit Australia for the millennial Olympics.

To maintain a perspective on this anniversary of time, this past September I teamed up with Dr. Stephen O'Leary, associate professor of communications at USC's Annenberg School of Communications to launch a global e-mail town meeting on the turn of the millennium. We call it Talk 2000. It is a free, on-line electronic

conference for anyone with an e-mail address.

Already some 200 people are talking daily about how to draw upon the tradition of Common Era to celebrate the arrival of the next millennium in thought, as well as action. Our stated focus is the folklore, the festivities and the future of the year 2000 on society.

We must go beyond just talking about 2000 to using the emotional energy of this era to build a more humane world. In his insightful book, "On the Eve of the Millennium", Connor Cruise O'Brien paints a startling picture of our modern world (Free Press, 1995, p132):

This is the metaphor of the lifeboat, in a sea full of survivors of a shipwreck. The hands of survivors cling to the sides of the boat. But the boat has already as many passengers as it can carry. No more survivors can be accommodated, and if they gather and cling on, the boat will sink and all be drowned. The captain orders out the hatchets. The hands of the survivors are severed. The lifeboat and its passengers are saved.

All the leading indicators, from population to energy, point to a growing gap between the North and the South, between the first and third world. Within 100 years, the capacity of the lifeboat "planet earth" will be far surpassed.

I do not want to leave the legacy of a Nietzschean world to my children. In facing the third millennium, we have two

choices. We can continue with business as usual only to let some future Führer order out the hatchets. Or we can call out the hammers today and tomorrow begin to build a better, bigger boat, a more shipworthy planet earth, a more humane society.

We must make the turn of the millennium a great turning in terms of human responsibility for our neighbors.

Each of us is accustomed in one way or another to making resolutions on New Year's Eve. I wonder, when humanity crosses the centurial threshold in five years, what will it have to say?

What new millennium resolutions will we make? How serious will we be as religious communities, as corporations, as educators, as nations to keeping these promises to our grandchildren?

The answer to this question might well determine how human we are in the coming third millennium.

JAY GARY lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA and is president of a consulting group called Celebration 2000. This talk was given in Chicago, November 1995, to a millennial round-table of religious leaders, sponsored by the Council for a Parliament of World Religions.

The View from Seattle

by Richard Kirby, international chairperson

On May 1, I took up my position in Seattle as director of the WNRF Research Center.

Thanks are due to Dick Spady and the Forum Foundation for sponsoring this work. The position of Stuart C. Dodd Chair in Social Innovation, which Mr. Spady created for me, has made it possible to link systematically futures research and social innovation.

Now that I have been here a little over six months, I am sending a first report to the editor of Global Visions.

The main work of the research center is, of course, to do research. That work is flourishing. My colleagues and I from coast to coast are pursuing research initiatives in fields as varied as technology, civilization building, aesthetics, medical and financial intelligence, and of course, varied theological traditions. The next step is to develop the physical environment of our offices here to make them more meditative, in order to link spiritual and scientific method and community.

In the new year, I plan to appoint an executive director to take over daily management of the Network's affairs so that I can devote more time to research.

1996 will be a big year for us at the World Future Society, when it meets for its Triennial Assembly in Washington, DC from July 13 - 18. I've been appointed to the Program Committee of this Assembly, and have also been elected as chairman of the Youth Program Committee. I have been working with the WFS staff to create sessions on religion and the future, health, and civilization; also the future of the spiritual academy. We also

have two business sessions scheduled during the Assembly. Within the main WNRF session, we will also present the annual Earl Award for Religious Futurist of the Year, 1995.

In 1996, meetings will also take place in India and England. These will be part of a wider inquiry into the wisdom schools and their contributions to religious futures studies. This inquiry has been inspired and is being led by Reverend Carol Parrish, dean of Sancta Sophia Seminary in Oklahoma, with whom we are jointly holding these meetings. The outcome of them will be a systematic statement about the partnership of exoteric and esoteric traditions in the design of the religions of the twenty-first century.

I'm also establishing new branches of WNRF in Japan and in New Zealand. I expect to be a speaker on the Temples of Tomorrow in both countries in 1997.

In 1996, a General Council of WNRF will be formed with a cyber-conference room. Its composition will probably be as follows: all national officers, Earl Award recipients, newsletter editor, all executive staff, and approximately half a dozen co-opted or ex-officio members. I would be pleased to hear any nominations for the latter category.

Starting in January 1996, I plan to reactivate the Seattle or Pacific Northwest chapter of the World Future Society. We hope to provide a common meeting ground for the folks of Oregon, Washington State, and British Columbia. I plan to of-

fer my home for monthly meetings, many of them quite informal. My longer-term goal is to have a futurist drop-in center - and I wouldn't be surprised if it ends up as a kind of Cafe Des Artistes. Breaking bread and breaking resistance to new ideas seems a happy combination.

I would like to remind all our members that we are hungry for your unique contributions to our shared heuristic life. Do let Gordon Arthur, editor of Global Visions, hear from each and every one of you.

A very happy New Year to us all.