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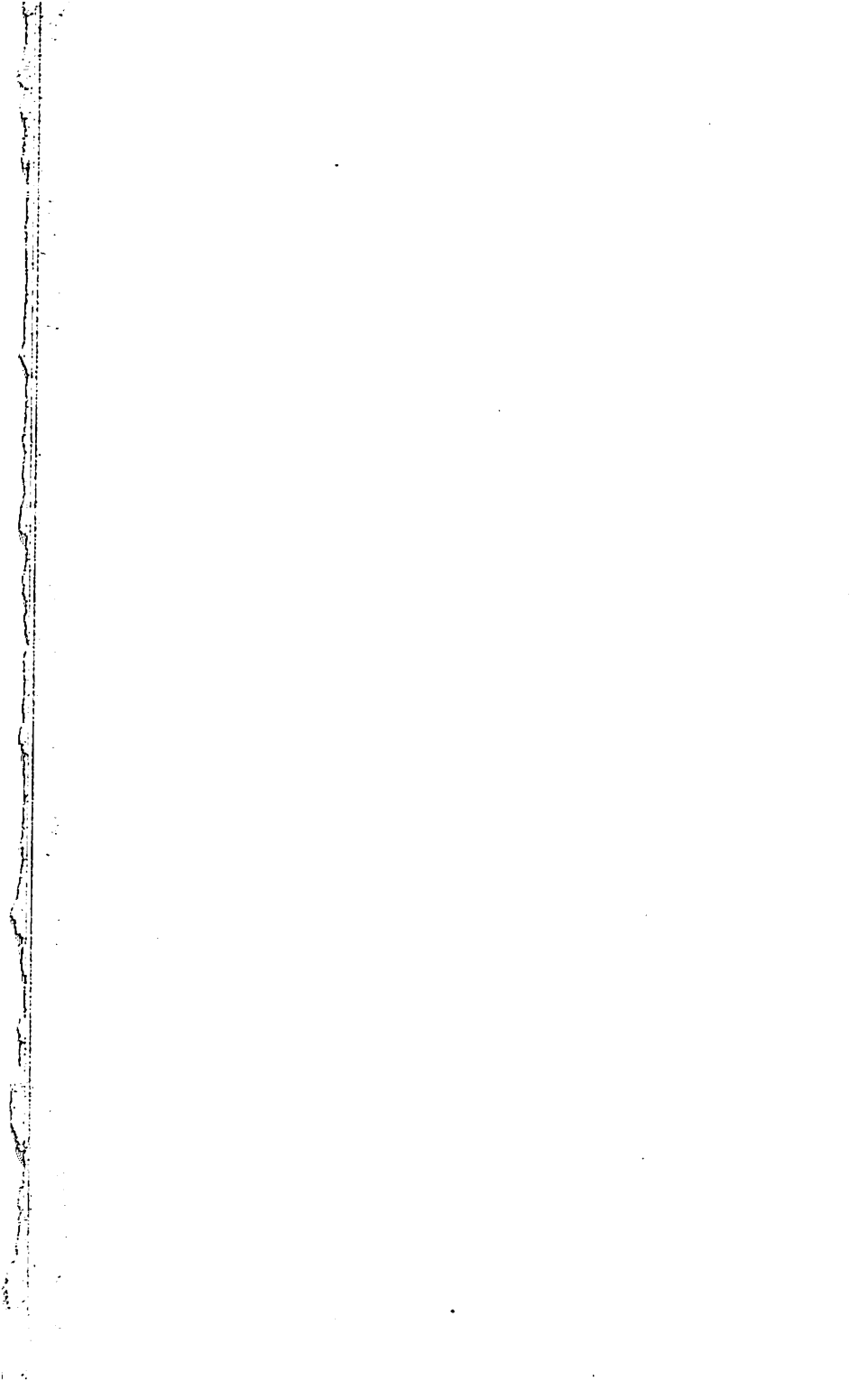
# BY COSMIC DESIGN

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## Spirit Poems (1974–2006)

deep speaketh unto deep  
inspiring evolutionary care

John P. Cock



10/3/07  
By Cosmic Design

The human venture  
on behalf of  
the earth venture  
on behalf of  
the cosmic venture.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

By Cosmic Design

Spirit Poems  
(1974-2006)

by  
John P. Cock

transcribe books

*By Cosmic Design: Spirit Poems (1974-2006)*

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First Edition

Printed on recycled paper

ISBN 0-9665090-8-0

Dedicated  
to  
Universe Citizens  
All

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## By Cosmic Design?

*At Timberlake watching young people  
gape as they hear Thomas say  
the U.S. Constitution is destructive,  
declaring only human rights;  
or hearing him ask  
now that western civilization  
has passed through its religious  
and humanist phases,  
What next?*

On the way forward from our past,  
this cosmological age  
highlights awesome seasons  
that birth rituals  
and daily sunrises and sunsets  
that spiritize existence,  
sanctifying early mornings  
with meditation  
and late evenings  
with reverie:

parents reading to and  
cuddling with their children,  
answering big questions,  
rubbing backs and humming  
as the little ones slip into  
earth's dark, sacred night

Are we not spiritual  
by cosmic design  
and for cosmic reason?



# Preface

I've been a poet ever since I memorized Psalms in Sunday school and the poem "Trees" in public school. My Granddaddy Cock used to quote poems when we'd visit him at his home or office.

Poetry's in the blood. But not only mine. We're all poets. We're crazy about songs, secular or religious. Think of all the poetic lyrics swirling in our beings, and at the strangest times popping up into consciousness and straight to tongue.

Later I got attached to the poems of D. H. Lawrence, Nikos Kazantzakis, e.e. cummings, Tagore, Lao Tzu, Rumi, and others. These poets tell a lot about me and what I like in poetry: substantial images about the transparent meaning of life, about what makes the world go round.

All language is poetry - even if it's prose - transmitting conscious reflection upon what's happening in creation. I like poems that have big contexts, deep insights that lean toward heart over mind - and sometimes poems written in lines that sing themselves.

When I read a Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, I know my spirit has been juiced. When I read a Tagore poem I know I'm bound to the mystery. When I read Kazantzakis' *The Saviors of God*, my will collides with the will of my ancestors. When

I read Thomas Berry's writings I think in millennia terms. When I read a Jim Harrison poem I expect an image shower. And, for me, Mary Oliver's poems jump out of the heart of creation .

My poems are particularly about *spirit*, the most real thing there is (small "s" to mean we only commune with it in creation - not in some other world - and italicized to differentiate it from my spirit and all the other ways we use "spirit"), and how *it* occasions our great awakenments; our great preparation; our great work of care for the earth community; our great journey, that never-ending spirit journey we're all on.

Am I spooky religious? No. Am I "new age"? No. Am I liberal? No. Am I conservative? No. Do I dislike labels? Yes. I was raised in the western Christian tradition. It is my central stake, out from which I now swing in articulating the meaning of existence. But I'm not now traditionally religious, unless I say I'm from all the traditions of all my ancestors - therefore all traditions.

I'm just a human being who's aware of being on the great journey and wanting to share what I see and understand as the truth. Do I possess the truth? No. But I've received enough to live a rich and full life. Enough to share, I trust.

We can describe the century we've come out of as a time of getting clear on existence, life, creation - the way life is. The eye of the needle for us 20<sup>th</sup>-

21<sup>st</sup> century folk is *experience*. We have dared to see life as not some pre-created set of meanings to be believed and lived out, but of-the-moment experiences to be reflected upon deeply.

For me, then, good poetry comes out of one's swirl of experience, called his or her life in relationship with "10,000 things" (Taoism). What is my relationship to what's going on right here in front of me or way up in the atmosphere, and what do I name that mysterious power at the heart of all relationships in creation? Poetry, in large part for me, is about describing and naming that power as best I can, for it's the center of my experience and all reality.

You and I have had primal experiences that have revealed what life is all about. I have been convinced by these experiences that life is good, that life is on my side, that I'm especially glad to be here in my skin as who I am, that the total sweep of history has brought me to this point and therefore I'd rather have it as it is than not, and that ongoing, evolving creation gives me hope. This is the stuff of poetry for me, variations on these fundamental themes of truth. It's easy for me to say poetry is a profound medium.

A word about how this particular collection of poems is stitched together: for the most part, the poems come from my books in order of writing and publication (except the "9/11 Poems," which

have not been printed in my books). Also, some of the poems are revised from their original publication. Some poems are new, born out of the prose of the book in that section.

Finally, these poems are compiled as a legacy for my children and grandchildren – and theirs, for a total of at least seven generations, I trust. I hope the poems will provide them a way to dialogue with the “old man,” all their relationships in creation, and *spirit* at its heart.

July 2006

John P. Cock  
Greensboro NC  
USA

# I

from *Called To Be:  
A Spirit Odyssey*

## Mama Dotte

She bore me  
She nursed me  
She cuddled me  
She disciplined me  
She exemplified strength  
She listened to me  
She supported me  
She trusted me  
She loved me

## What I Learned In the Order:Ecumenical

To live simply  
To love structure  
To live on behalf of  
To celebrate our living  
To reflect on the mystery  
To serve the shattered earth  
To dream the impossible dream  
To build the earth, the common earth

Joseph W. Mathews

called me  
trained me  
pushed me  
priested me  
assigned me  
mystified me  
motivated me  
challenged me  
emboldened me  
communes in me

# Marching Through the Night

Tune: *Les Bicyclettes de Belsize*

La, la, la . . .

O when Dark Night assaults my soul  
and nothing's presence fills the All,  
And when the fire burns out my love, I suffer  
death before I die.

I am marching through the Night, silence and  
stillness, blackened light,  
Trusting that Heaven will come at last and  
vanquish Hell.

Wounded so deep by awe I swoon, oppressive  
weakness seals my doom,  
No place to hide, no will to live, I suffer death  
before I die.

I am marching through the Night,  
silence and stillness, searing light,  
Mystery has won the war in me,  
I melt away.

I hear a voice, "You are my son;  
you are well-pleasing, blessed one!"  
I am the one who's come to life,  
born of the fire before I die.

I am marching through the Night,  
    silence and stillness, filled with light,  
Assured that Heaven has made  
    its shrine in darkest Hell.

And now Dark Night and I are friends;  
    I trust the Long March never ends,  
For now I see by fire of love;  
    I've found the Way before I die.

I am marching through the Night,  
    silence and stillness, blazing light,  
Leaping as one consumed by fire,  
    my passion born.

La, la, la . . . .

~Paris, 1974



## This Understanding of Life

I am coming to understand that I do not have a  
soul, but exist in the soul of the creation;  
that creation is blessed although we can destroy  
it, in part;  
that science, in its materialistic deliberations,  
has left out the universal journey of con-  
sciousness and awareness of *spirit*,  
and the consequent I-we-it worldview  
has devalued our lives;  
that *sin* is separation and parochialism;  
that *salvation* is communion with what is;  
that we humans are not the pinnacle of creation  
but share in the equality of all beings;  
that the universe is always regenerating;  
that revelation's been happening for billions of years  
and that the universal *Christ event*  
is at the heart of that revelatory process;  
that grace motivates the universe,  
and faith in that grace is the  
authentic response of the creature;  
that the communion of all beings is the universal  
sacred body, of which each institutional  
religious entity can be a microcosm -  
but is not automatically;  
that love - the gift of grace - glues the universe  
together;  
that the essence of love is sacrifice  
on behalf of any part of the universe.

Yet, I keep reminding myself  
- lest I devalue the way life *is* and relapse again  
into humanism thinking that I-we-it is all there is -  
that everything has its context, even the universe.  
And that the ultimate context will always be  
the *numinous*, eternal *spirit*,  
which alone has *no* referent.

This understanding of life seems quite enough.

## Called To Be

I have rehearsed my life and found it good,  
rich in experience,  
planetary in orbit,  
profound in depth,  
wonder-full.

Do I wish I could live it over?  
No, for what would I add?  
Money, fame, things?  
I have had love,  
vocation,  
collegiality,  
adventure,  
and  
communion.

What is my secret?  
No secret, but  
from everlasting to everlasting  
*I Am* called:  
I am called to be.

~1997

## II

### from *The Transparent Event: Post-modern Christ Images*

#### The “No-Messiah Messiah”\*

Stop waiting on another messiah.  
Stop waiting for a miracle.  
Stop waiting for anything.  
The *Messiah* has already come.

This is *spirit's* mysterious and gracious trick:  
if you're waiting on something to happen  
before you start really living,  
then “Guess what.”

There is no messiah coming to save you,  
and that fact is the *Messiah*.

It has already come.  
It is here.  
Lest you die waiting,  
pick up your life and walk.  
Now.

\* Phrase from J. W. Mathews' *Christ of History*

## I Wait for No Other

We are left with a big decision:  
to live our given situation to the hilt  
or to wait for some other.

*Blasphemy* is waiting on some other god to save us,  
not believing that our one, true *God* already has.  
*Blasphemy* is saying *no* to our life as it is,  
saying *no* to our situation as impossible, hopeless,  
saying *God* is not present here,  
saying *God* does not have the power,  
saying *Christ* may have redeemed the earth,  
but it sure missed me and my situation.  
*Blasphemy* is mocking *God*:  
“*God* created my life and afterwards left,  
saying, ‘It’s all very bad.’”

But we can say *yes* . . .  
It’s Etty’s prayer [in the concentration camp],  
“*God*, take me by Your hand;  
I shall follow faithfully and not resist too much.”  
That’s what *Jesus* meant when he said,  
“Into thy hands I commend my spirit.  
You and I, *Father*. We shall overcome.”

We have the advantage over *Jesus* in our dying.  
He’s shown us the way of faith up to and in death.  
And, too, we are sure *God* will be faithful to us  
and present with us even as he was with *Jesus*.

This is the great promise:  
possibility and hope in every situation,  
even death.

The *Messiah* is come,  
born again in our lives.  
Therefore, life is always possible.  
I can say *yes* to my life as it is  
for *God* is with me.  
The *Messiah* is here.  
I wait for no other.

## It Happens

Ever since *God* formed  
the way life is,  
the transforming *Jesus Christ event*  
has been happening –  
once and for all and ever again.

When it happens to me,  
I experience reunion  
with *God*  
and Neighbor  
and self.

When it happens to me,  
my corrupted faith  
is transformed into  
radical faith:

faithful only  
to the one, true *God*,  
for the very good creation.

All this is  
the quintessence  
of gracious existence.

## Trinitarian Epilogue

The *mysterious power* as *he, she, or it*  
is heresy, making *God* an object,  
making *God* in our own image.

Christian heresy is making *Jesus God*.  
*Jesus* re-presents *God* but is not *God*.  
We cannot swap faith for magic.

The *freedom* of *Jesus*, the *faith* of *Jesus*, and  
his *passion* are our possibility:  
to be as human as he was.

Yet, *Jesus the man's* not as historical  
as the transforming *Christ the event* of  
every person's existence.

Now the holy *spirit* *Jesus* promised is here,  
always already at hand and always  
coming to transform ev'rything.

## The Historical Christ

I'm not as interested in the historical Jesus –  
Objective facts that will not turn my life around –  
As I am in tracing my life-changing journey  
Through my hundreds of historic christ events.

The happenings of such events in my history  
Burst illusion and heal deepest despair,  
Saving me from the sin of separation from all,  
Off'ring the word of acceptance, just as I am.

Many are the ways christ events transformed me:  
Frank Laubach's presence impacted my youth;  
JFK's death tore me apart in graduate school;  
My first grandchild's birth deeply reunited me.

They come in personal and world-shaking ways,  
In 9/11 and earth evolutionary ways,  
In learning-to-deal-with-my-aging-body ways –  
Bringing me to sight in my blindness, always.

In the beginning were universal christ events  
Bringing creation to its knees and its greatness.  
From everlasting to everlasting, and now,  
They stand as the crux of our historical journeys.

Here's to the power that changes all!

~july 2006



### III

## from *Motivation for the Great Work: Forty Meaty Meditations for the Secular-Religious*

### Why I Am Turned Off

I'm turned off by "John 3:16" at ball games,  
By someone saying, "Only humans have rights!"  
Or "All the Earth belongs to all!" usually meaning  
Humans, at best, & the % of us with the most,  
at worst.

Why am I turned off by sexist language for *God*?  
Choosing "he" or "she" seems we leave out "its,"  
Obviously a bigger category than "she" and "he."  
Speaking universally, we forget *God* loves  
everything.

Definitely "thou" is a more appropriate word,  
Experiencing that she/he/it are *thou* and not *it*,  
That is, if grace still happens and unites us with  
"God above God," all beings, and with our very  
own selves.

Thanks be for the depth of spirituality,  
Beyond religions and no-religion,  
That keeps on happening the way it happens,  
Verily, for the next 5 billion years and more.

## The Universe Is Where I'm From

What's going on . . .

the yearly cycle

the seasonal cycle

the monthly cycle

the daily cycle

sunrise

sunset

moon and stars shining

clouds forming and moving

dew, rain, snow, sleet, hail

wind at all velocities

smells of plants, flowers, and foliage

sounds of birds and wind in the trees

sight of mountains and oceans

feeling of cold and heat

We know we are a part of the universe.

Fundamental gifts to humans from the universe:

form

breathing

senses

brain power  
reflecting  
talking  
singing  
walking  
dancing  
will power  
being loved  
loving  
being forgiven  
forgiving  
being cared for  
caring

With these gifts we can build up or destroy . . .

our body  
our mind  
our spirit  
our family  
our organizations  
our neighborhood  
our town or city  
our region  
our nation  
our united nations  
our planet  
our universe.

## *Spirit* Does Not Promise

*spirit* does not promise . . .

long life  
good health  
financial security  
a marriage that works  
loving children  
a nice house  
a solid job  
sweet dreams  
no pain  
a good education  
kind in-laws  
responsible government  
safe cities  
no taxes  
good neighbors  
and world peace

but *spirit* does promise . . .

grace sufficient for every need  
forgiveness in spite of  
mercy without question  
peace that passes understanding  
balm for the deepest grief  
comfort for the greatest pain  
a calling whether we want it or not

purpose when we've lost our way  
courage in spite of fear  
more freedom than we can handle  
refuge amid raging storms  
rest for the weary  
hope against hope  
light in the darkest night  
joy unspeakable  
welcome home with open arms  
resurrection in this life  
love that will not let us go  
*its* eternal presence

*spirit* does promise  
all this abundant life,  
but not as the world promises or giveth

and, believe it or not, *spirit* does promise  
ways to end poverty, stop wars,  
and save the earth

~printed in "The Catholic Northwest Progress," 11/22/01

## The Prince of Darkness

Coming out of a friend's house into the dark  
a good sized tree limb blind-sided me  
and brought blood.

I have a nice scab on my forehead as I write.  
Yesterday I took my grandson Nolan's virus,  
and has it been a whopper:  
aching joints, pounding head, and swollen throat.  
Dragging through the apartment with the fever  
I bumped into a chair and broke my toe.

I went to the emergency room this morning -  
my little toe on my right foot has turned indigo  
blue and is pointing to right field.

I sat in the hospital from 5:45 a.m. till 8:30,  
feverish, aching, and disgusted  
with the bureaucratic mess,  
and waiting on the doctor to take his sweet time.

On the way out of the emergency room,  
struggling up the steps to the parking lot,  
I guess I looked like brokendownness itself,  
hobbling in a new toeless shoe on my right foot,  
carrying one shoe, wearing my eye patch,  
sweaty and unshaven, mussed-up hair,  
sporting a scab on my forehead, and muttering.

An old black man coming down the steps  
looked me up and down and said,  
"Ya know, suh, they can kill da body

but not da spirit, less you let 'em."

That stopped my world.  
I looked round but he was gone.  
I quit muttering, got in the car,  
drove home with his words sounding in my deeps.  
On the way Luther said, "The body they may kill.  
'One little word shall fell' the Prince of Darkness  
when he's standing on your neck  
in charge of your consciousness."

The old man said that "one little word" to me today.  
So, with *word* in hand,  
I rose and beat hell out of the Prince of Darkness  
and decided to try it again tomorrow  
because it felt so good.

~june 2006

## The Mystery of a Child

The presence of the Messiah is a mystery. . . . There is something surprising, unexpected about the appearance of salvation, something which contradicts pious opinions and intellectual demands. The mystery of salvation is the mystery of a child. . . . A child is real and not yet real, it is in history and not yet historical. Its nature is visible and invisible, it is here and not yet here. And just this is the character of salvation. Salvation has the nature of a child. . . . Only he who can see power in weakness, the whole in the fragment, . . . can say (with Simeon): Mine eyes have seen thy salvation. ~Paul Tillich, "Has the Messiah Come?" *The New Being*

Grandbaby Kaitlyn has mesmerized us  
since November 14th.  
We see the miracle of her  
through father Jeremiah's countenance  
and announcement - "It's a girl!" -  
as he carried her out of the delivery room.  
She is brand spanking new,  
filling us with wonder and awe.  
She comes ready or not,  
forcing us to respond to her  
in all her utter vulnerability  
with our fumbling care.  
She tries to see us who are loving her,  
but accepts our love blindly.  
She does nothing useful;  
no one asks her what she does for a living.



She knows almost nothing;  
no one judges her for her lack of education.  
She is sheer being,  
just there to be cared for and loved.  
The miracle is that her "job" of just being  
transforms those around her:  
relatives that were alienated are reconciled;  
strangers become friends;  
great-grandparents are rejuvenated;  
grumpies show compassion;  
judges show mercy.  
Where did she learn to do all this?  
She has mysterious power.  
She must be a bit of being itself  
- like all God's children -  
bringing with her a bit of the new creation  
and new being.

*The mystery of the messiah comes into our world  
anew in the birth of a baby,  
whoever it belongs to,  
whatever gender, nationality, color, or religion.*

*It comes to us who think we do not want it or need it.  
It comes to us hardened cynics who have given up  
on new life ever happening to us again.  
It comes to us who think we have learned to live with  
separation and have given up on reunion.  
It comes to us who have shunned religion;  
yet, it rattles us with deep spiritual rumblings.*

*It comes to us who are following every wise man  
and every star, looking for that  
which we will never find  
and which was never promised.*

*The mystery of the messiah comes as it wills,  
where it wills,  
when it wills.*

*Sometimes it wills to come in the form of a child.*

*The Messiah has come.*

*Be ready or not for its coming again.*

What a joy to me every time I am with her.  
I have told Jeremiah, in a not unserious way,  
she is the greatest thing he has done till now,  
for she reconciles everything in her sphere.

~1995 Christmas letter

## That I May Rise and Serve

That event, set off by that bullet  
- by whomever -  
turned me inside out  
and changed my life forever.  
Later, I learned the dynamics  
of what was happening to me:

- an external event happens . . .
- occasioning interior crisis . . .
- sometimes opening me to reality . . .
- and leaving me great possibility . . .

to elect existence as it is given,  
to make a new decision  
to do what's necessary.

This event of the *mysterious power* comes to all  
and leads to crisis, to truth, to new decision,  
and new life.

It is so real we can hardly stand its power.  
We call upon religious metaphor  
to describe the terrible,  
awful experience  
that causes us to tremble  
and yet brings new life.

Why is birth so excruciating?  
John Donne\* answers:

"Batter my heart . . .  
to o'erthrow mee, and bend  
Your force to breake, blow, burn,  
and make mee new. . . ."

And all for what? Donne says  
the *great event* births in me *new life*  
". . . That I may *rise*, and *stand*."  
That I may rise and serve!

\* Holy Sonnet XIV: "Batter My Heart, Three-Person'd God"

## Gracious Freedom

Because of the gracious events in life  
and in my life

I am freed *from* having to be saved  
from the fear of failure  
from the fear of death  
from having to believe anything special  
from finding meaning in anything I do  
from finding meaning in any relationship  
from having to go searching for love  
from trying to be loveable  
from having to do anything at all  
from having to know anything at all  
from having to be anything at all  
from worrying what others think of me  
    from securing my future  
    from having to win  
    from justifying my past  
    from fulfilling my calling  
from guilt  
from anxiety  
from sin  
from having to be right  
from having to be righteous  
from being responsible to the world  
from having to be myself  
from trying to get to heaven

I am even *freed from* having to be free.

I am freed *for* loving *thee*  
for loving *thy* creation  
for obligation and responsibility  
for creating the future  
for fulfilling my destiny  
for being my mystery  
    depth  
    and  
    greatness  
for reduplicating the deed  
for following my bliss  
for seizing my vocation  
for being my happiness  
for deciding and doing *thy* will  
    for living in the ghettos  
    for living among the poor

for cleaning the air and the rivers  
    for helping the lame to walk  
    and the blind to see

for telling the life-giving story  
    for serving *thee*  
    and *for* praising *thee* forever.

~january 1989

## The Movement Needed

The movement needed is

the intercommunion of creation.

But if the movement of those who care for the  
universe is not grounded in *spirit*, it will fail.

If grounded in *spirit*

there will be no force great enough to stop it.

Who can stop a movement on which  
every being's life depends?

Who can stop a movement that is history long,  
universe wide, and *spirit* deep?

Who can stop a movement with  
a membership of all beings,  
all peoples, all cultures, all religions,  
and all sectors?

Who can stop a movement that's out  
to protect every being's home,  
every being's rights,  
and every being's best interests?

Who can stop a movement that is  
the big tent for all caring movements?

Be careful in trying to stop this movement.

Be enhanced by advancing it.

It's a movement whose time has come.

It's a movement worth body and soul.

This movement of *intercommunion*  
is the *great work*.

The *spirit*, the call, the story, the mandate  
- all these, and we,  
are creating this movement.

May we be so inspired . . .  
so motivated . . .  
and remotivated.

~printed in *The Ecozoic Reader*, Summer 2001, Vol. 1, No. 4

## Radical Equality

As 20<sup>th</sup> century born I am not better  
As a male I am not better  
As the last of the Cock children I am not better  
As a small town boy I am not better  
As an educated person I am not better  
As a Virginian I am not better  
As a southerner I am not better  
As an American I am not better  
As a westerner I am not better  
As a Caucasian I am not better  
As a Christian I am not better  
As a rich man I am not better  
As a human I am not better  
As an earthling I am not better  
As a creature of our universe  
I am no better than any other  
creature in creation



## IV

### 9/11 Poems

#### Emerging Peace?

my heart imploded  
with the buildings  
in New York and D.C.  
and is buried now in grief  
for our fallen innocents

I began to seethe  
and want retaliation  
because that's the way  
I've been raised by my  
eye-for-an-eye tribe

I could well understand  
media and leaders  
raised the same way  
saying into the night  
that America will

retaliate, get revenge,  
no one gets by with this

we'll hunt 'em down  
and erase the evil ones  
from the face of the earth

but as I tried to sleep  
with whirling images  
these lines came to me  
"if others are not at peace  
then neither are we"

up came the question  
how do we bring to peace  
people of Libya and Sudan  
Iraq and Afghanistan  
Saddam and bin Laden

not by any military means  
they will always find a way  
to maim our body and soul  
their commitment seems to be  
much deeper than most

we are pushed to the wall  
our military and defense  
do not work like before  
so let us fast and pray and  
spend the zillions on peace

~september 12, 2001

## On Their Behalf

eleven days later  
a deluge of dialogue  
has pushed me to account  
for being an American

who am I to blame  
those around the world  
reflecting on their  
love-hate for America

if they envy  
our freedoms and good life  
they seem to loathe  
superpower ego

have we tyrannized  
peoples and the planet  
with maneuvers of greed  
instead of global care

all in the name  
of our national interests  
have we justified  
by whatever means

I am asked what  
shape my repentance

will take for America's  
terrorizing deeds

under the emerging truth  
that we are one planet  
and cannot tolerate  
any terror at all

let this our tribute be  
to those buried in NY and DC  
that on their behalf  
we stop the violence

on their behalf  
we stop on earth  
covert and overt terror  
letting America go first

on their behalf  
we pledge new allegiance  
to *all* nations "under God  
with liberty and justice for all"

"on their behalf" . . .  
a good idea or  
that without which  
none will survive?

~september 22, 2001

## Global Dreaming

I had a dream the other night  
about our needed plan  
to save our world from terror  
and unite our global band

as leader of the earth  
I assigned all the leaders  
of two-hundred plus nations  
to gather and be readers

of their nations' lists  
of heinous crimes against  
humanity and the planet  
for all to consense

listeners added to  
each nation's awful list;  
with "no rebuttal rule"  
the readers did desist

Archbishop Tutu led each session  
as he did in TRC days  
pronouncing absolution on  
those confessing apartheid

the leaders of the earth  
then produced a ten-year plan

to care for all the planet  
knowing they must and can

remembering the universe story  
and the meaning of vocation  
they took the global plan  
to their respective nation

two-hundred national assemblies  
heard the litany of crimes  
and every last town meeting  
built implementing schemes

to enact by next year's gathering —  
on behalf of the population  
and planetary species —  
of Global Truth and Reconciliation

~september 24, 2001

## Nonviolence

as I grieve over September 11  
I fear for the future  
remembering what happened  
to Japan after Pearl Harbor  
(3,457 killed, wounded, missing)  
immediately and sometime later

though there was Doolittle's raid  
on Tokyo within a few months  
if Oppenheimer had been ready  
there would have been bombs  
that will live in infamy  
dropped then instead of four years later

first on Hiroshima, August 6, 1945,  
(130,000 killed, wounded, missing)  
days later on Nagasaki, August 9, 1945,  
(75,000 killed, wounded, missing)  
I wonder about Gandhi's response  
to all the sophisticated killings

I must read what he wrote in his diary  
and if our bombs had something to do  
with his reaching out to the Muslims  
for he died January 30, 1948  
from a fanatical Hindu's bullet  
because "Gandhi is a Muslim-lover"

I also wonder what history  
will say was the best policy  
sophisticated killings or nonviolence  
that freed India through fasts  
freed Poland through strikes  
and freed Americans through sit-ins

not very sophisticated  
but very (what is the right word)  
civilized or evolved or . . . or  
respectful of the enemy  
assuming their take on good and evil  
is not absolutely wrong

~september 25, 2001 (published in *Poets Against War*)

### *Sic Semper Tyrannus*

when i am tyrannized by massa  
i sometimes hear the truth and overcome  
when i am tyrannized by the future  
i sometimes hear the truth and overcome  
when i am tyrannized by crucifiers  
i pray to hear the truth and overcome  
*à la* jesus' deciding no one takes my life from me  
'cause i freely give it  
at such times tyranny is overcome

when i am tyrannized by hitler



i hear the truth and try to kill him  
on behalf of 6 million jews & future generations  
*à la* bonhoeffer who prayed  
not to be tyrannized by a nazi hanging

*à la* rosa parks on the bus  
who prayed not to be tyrannized by white  
alabamians

*à la* gandhi who prayed  
not to be tyrannized by englishmen and  
religious fundamentalists

does this make any sense  
is this in some testament  
yes in the testament of life  
tyranny is overcome  
thank you jesus dietrich rosa and gandhigi  
we shall overcome  
freedom is as freedom does  
or is it freedom does as freedom is

and what about the tyrants  
sometimes we have to put a foot on their necks  
and a spear to their hearts  
as on my virginia flag  
saying *sic semper tyrannus*: thus always to tyrants  
but sometimes we let them up  
if we think they finally understand

~september 27, 2001

## V

### from *Our Universal Spirit Journey: Reflection & Verse for Creation's Sake*

#### Where I'm Coming From

*Spirit* is the inner dimension of everything.  
*It* is "always already" present,  
For creation is transparent to *spirit*.  
*It* is the dynamic of communion within creation,  
Sustaining, wakening, forming, engaging, uniting.  
*Spirit* is making all things new.

*It* founds but transcends religions and cultures.  
*Spirit* is our primal universal symbol.  
All are spiritual, being on *its* immense journey.  
The *spirit* movement abounds.  
Deny, resist, or respond to *its* call,  
Never doubt it eternally sounds.

## Traditional *Spirit* Words

Whither shall I go from *spirit* – *it* is always here  
*spirit* was, is, and ever shall be  
*spirit* loves and gives *itself* to and for the world  
all are sons and daughters of *spirit*:  
    the stars, mountains, and creatures  
*spirit* promises and gives abundant life to those  
    who are aware of *its* presence  
the wind of *spirit* blows where *it* will  
*spirit* is reconciling the world  
*spirit* dwells among us, full of glory  
*spirit* is making all things new, rough places plain,  
    and crooked ways straight  
*spirit* is like a refiner's fire  
*spirit* is the way, the truth, and the life  
no one comes to fulfillment except by *spirit*  
*spirit* is all about sacrificial love  
*spirit* is resurrection power  
*spirit* is always coming again  
*spirit* never leaves us comfortless  
*spirit* is where two or three are gathered in *its* name  
great things will the children of *spirit* do  
*spirit* is the be-all and end-all

## Till All Breath Is Gone

We got Enlightened  
descended Mt. Myth  
to the Promised (flat) Land  
where there was fact and  
human progress instead  
of milk and honey.

Thousands, hundreds of years  
to climb the mountain  
only tens to come down  
for decline is faster  
than ascent; throwing  
out stories faster

Than creating great myths.  
who's to say which is  
better: mountain, flatland?  
both are illusion -  
the one otherworldly  
the other immortal  
empiricism.

Whether heavenly or  
this-worldly progress  
we are left in limbo  
for our lives are about  
seeing through to the mean-  
ing of birth and breath

Not chasing promises  
that someday will come  
in the sweet-by-and-by  
or at retirement –  
given new gold watches  
to wind going home.

So promise us some height  
some depth and substance  
right now, downtown Flatland.  
we know we're not  
*el cap'tans* of our fate  
so let's deeply breathe.

Let us have a go at  
our interiors –  
everlovin' moments  
experiencing  
wonder and fulfillment  
till all breath is gone.

'Tis

Ancient: all in *spir-it*  
Buddhism: consciousness of *spir-it*  
Christianity: transparency to *spir-it*  
Hinduism: oneness with *spir-it*  
Islam: allegiance to *spir-it*  
Judaism: awesomeness of *spir-it*  
Sufism: children of *spir-it*  
Taoism: manifestation of *spir-it*

alphabetically,  
all my religions tell me  
who I am

*spir-it* creature

we are  
*spir-it* creatures  
created by *it*  
transparent to *it*  
reflecting *it*  
creating with *it*

seamlessly  
at one  
with *it*  
eternally  
graciously  
and  
anxiously

so let us be  
who we are

thankfully  
embracing  
embodying  
announcing  
the fact  
of our lives

*spir-it is*

'Tis

## *Spirit* Makes the World Go Round

*Cabaret* says *money* makes the world go round  
politicians say *power* makes the world go round  
Hollywood says *they* make the world go round  
education says *knowledge* makes the world go round  
religion says *belief* makes the world go round

but *spirit* makes the world go round

for *spirit* encounters the big and small  
the rich and the poor  
the educated and illiterate  
the believing and unbelieving

why  
to make us all grateful  
for the way life is  
even when we ain't got no  
    money  
    power  
    entertainment  
    knowledge  
    or  
    belief



## Spiritually Correct

Does it matter  
what we call *it*  
so long as we unite

Whether we call *it*

*Spirit*

*God*

*One*

*Ultimate*

*Numinous*

*Father*

*Goddess*

*Emptiness*

we bow before mysterious power  
blowing this way and that  
sometimes at our back  
sometimes in our faces  
but always stirring  
whether we sense it or not

Words are hardly the message  
only a medium of expression  
of what we perceive

images

poetry

metaphor

our way . . .

to say something  
about what we see  
intuit  
experience

Our words are not *it*  
even holy writ  
only inklings  
and intimations

The message is always  
written on the wind  
sometimes in-  
spiring the heart

Therefore,  
to be  
spiritually correct  
unite in  
*its* presence

## Spirituality

spirituality reflects *spirit* in the pool  
of one's inner life  
spirituality reflects *spirit* in the prism  
of one's outer life

## Simply

We do not have to believe in some deity  
to live spiritually.

In fact, belief often clouds our seeing.

Simply, if we see in

...the chewing of food the wonder of taste  
...our associations the wonder of being together  
...the meteor shower the wonder of the cosmos  
...our grandchildren the wonder of their wonder  
...9/11 events the wonder of our precious finitude  
...dreaming the wonder of imagination  
...sexuality the wonder of attraction and union  
...birth and death the wonder of life

then we begin to get it,  
this thing called spirituality,  
the way of life that is intercommunion,  
for all created subjects  
given to see to the heart of what is.

Simply, spirituality is for all and everyone.

~may 2006

## Where Does *Spirit* Fit In?

**King Sisyphus** ended up in Hades to eternally roll a huge rock up a long, steep hill, only to watch it roll back down the same side. For him demands are unending, thankless, and end in unsuccessful efforts. He might well have said, "This is not fair." Or, "The gods are against me." Or, "What's the use?" For Sisyphus life is hell to live. Where is *spirit*? Just over the hill?

**King Tantalus**, another king offending the gods, also paid the price in Hades. He was condemned to stand beneath fruit-laden boughs, up to his chin in water. Whenever he bent his head to drink, the water receded, and whenever he reached for the fruit, the branches moved beyond his grasp. Thus to "tantalize" is to tease or torment by offering something desirable but keeping it out of reach. For Tantalus, too, life is hell to live. Where is *spirit*? Just out of reach?

**Rich Man** had much land, many crops, and decided to build bigger barns to store his goods. "When my barns are full I will celebrate," he said.

Anxious about the future he was not merry yet.  
Jesus said God called Rich Man a fool. Why?  
Was it because he would build ever more barns?  
Or that his life was under siege by the future?  
Or that he spent his life, now, securing the future?  
In any case, Rich Man's life was spent –  
that night he died.  
Where is *spirit*? With more riches?

*Faust* wanted a monument erected in his name.  
Aging, he heard clanking outside his window.  
Were they completing his monument, finally?  
No, they were digging his grave.  
Life was about consecrating his knowing and doing.  
Was Faust a fool for wanting his name live forever?  
Where is *spirit*? In our great accomplishments?

All these fools were from the more distant past.  
Are there any alive in our day?  
There's *Lester* (Kevin Spacey) of *American Beauty*,  
a pitiful, middle-aged man.  
Was he redeemed when he got freed up  
and did what felt good no matter whom it hurt?  
The smile on his face toward his tragic end  
was hardly the smile of one who has come through.  
Like Faust, he was caught up in his ego needs.  
Where is *spirit*? In selfish lust for freedom?

And *Melvin* (Jack Nicholson) in *As Good As It Gets*.  
He flaunted his neuroses all over Manhattan:

hating dogs, gays, women, Jews — and himself.  
But he became attached to the little dog,  
befriended his gay neighbor,  
fell in love with his waitress (Helen Hunt),  
and paid the doctor to cure her son.  
Melvin and *Carol* got awakened, event after event,  
until they began to see that their lives  
were as good as they were going to get.  
Where is *spirit*? In the little big events of life?

*Life is Beautiful*, with Roberto Benigni as *Guido*,  
is another movie that won many Oscars.  
It too is about a man who bumps into creation  
and finds a wife and a son to love.  
This outrageous man proclaims life is good,  
even in a Nazi death camp in Italy,  
in one masquerade after another to save his son.  
For Guido, all of life is a stage.  
Where is *spirit*? In the role one is given to play?

Don't forget *Erin Brockovich* (Julia Roberts),  
a fool whose life and family were coming apart  
when a legal case-and-a-half bumped into her:  
contaminated water runoff from the PG&E plant.  
She helped prove they were knowingly liable  
to tens of families living nearby.  
This woman's passion rose in relation to  
the compassion she felt for the victims.  
She became their champion and PG&E's nightmare.  
Look what she can do when motivated.

Where is *spirit*? Born of compassion?

An older Oscar winner, *Zorba* (Anthony Quinn),  
who like Faust wanted to build a monument.  
His was a conveyor from the mine down the hill  
to the coast for the minerals to be shipped.  
Trestles and railway installed,  
they cut the ribbon on the first run.  
Vibrations of wagons set off total collapse.  
It fell apart and piled onto the ground.  
End of a dream and *Zorba* broke down and cried?  
Hardly. He began the dance he's famous for –  
a more fitting monument.  
Where is *spirit*? In the celebration of real life?

*Victor Frankl* saw and reflected on how fellow  
Jewish prisoners dealt with Nazi death camps.  
Their undying spirits amazed and changed him.  
Many trusted the Sun would come up tomorrow  
or the memory of the *thou* of a loved one.  
At another camp was *Elly Hillesum*,  
a saint as she prepared to go to the gas chamber.  
Among her last words:  
"I vow to live my life out there to the full."  
Where is *spirit*? In any conceivable situation?

And *Gandhi*, a different kind of lawyer,  
confounding the government of South Africa  
on behalf of all "colored,"  
and liberating his homeland from British rule.

His nonviolent ideology and movement touched the life of young *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, as they brought the Birmingham system to heel, and helped change the laws of their homeland. Where is *spirit*? Hiding in social injustices?

Likewise, *Desmond Tutu* of South Africa, who helped conceive the most daring secular forgiveness structure of our time: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, wherein some 21,000 victims of apartheid gave testimony, and over 7000 perpetrators confessed and sought forgiveness. Thousands were changed by forgiveness. A model honoring a deeper law than on the books has spread around the world. Where is *spirit*? In forgiveness and reconciliation?

And a favorite colleague from Pune, India, *Shakuntalah Belge Jadhav*, whom I met when she was nineteen-years-old, taking human development programs across the State of Maharashtra. She has spent her last twenty-some years living with and training thousands of villagers to pick up their villages and their lives. She is now sick with cancer but has not stopped her great work. Where is *spirit*? In spending self on behalf of others?



*Thomas Berry*, now eighty-seven years of age,  
is spending his life caring for creation.  
His witness through his teaching and books  
has brought us a new vision for the earth,  
a new picture of the universe,  
a new role for the human,  
and a definition of *the great work* awaiting us:  
mutual care by all for all.  
As I write he is preparing another book.  
Where is *spirit*? In loving creation?

Human stories show us how *spirit* fits our lives.

“Where is *spirit*?”

- Just over the hill?
- Just out of reach?
- With more riches?
- In our great accomplishments?
- In selfish lusts for freedom?
- In the little big events of life?
- In the role one is given to enact?
- Born of compassion?
- In the celebration of life and death?
- In any conceivable situation?
- Hiding in the social injustices of our time?
- In social forgiveness and reconciliation?
- In expending oneself on behalf of others?
- In loving creation?

Our answer to *Where is spirit?*  
makes the difference to the way we live our lives.  
If our life stories reveal *spirit* is present,  
then it's a matter of how we bow to *it*.

## *"Spirit"* Etymology

*spirit . . .*

is the heart of creation; *it*  
never stops creating  
dynamizes process  
ennobles existence  
lets loose grace  
births holiness

creation . . .

is a piece of work; *it*  
never stops creating  
is in process  
is good  
is gracious  
is holy

life . . .

is a piece of creation; *it*  
never stops creating  
is in process  
is good

is gracious  
is holy

almost seems natural  
to love life  
and all creation

since *spirit*  
transpires  
and inspires

such is the history  
of this word *spiritus*  
'a fine wind blowing'

## Is *Spirit* Real?

Which is more real . . .

birth of my sons or death of my parents?  
love of peace or fear of war?  
scientific fact or theoretical concept?  
poetic image or meticulous description?  
truth or illusion?  
experience or intuition?  
risk or security?  
event or story?  
faith or miracle?

Which is less real . . .

proof or ambiguity?  
commitment or detachment?  
feeling or calculation?  
decision or intention?  
vision or plan?  
subjectivity or objectivity?  
light or dark?  
belief or fantasy?  
feast or famine?  
doubt or certainty?  
laughter or tears?

Which is really real . . .

mental image or photograph?  
inclusiveness or exclusiveness?  
childhood or age?  
a rose or a thorn?  
chocolates or fasting?  
a kiss or a snub?  
consciousness or unconsciousness?  
time or space?  
past or future?  
sound or silence?  
dream or actuality?

When was the last time  
I experienced something real?

Have I experienced . . .

beginning and ending?  
fullness and emptiness?  
memory and being present?  
sadness and joy?  
intimacy and wonder?  
boredom and mission?  
fear and comfort?  
power and weakness?

Have I experienced . . .

despair and tranquility?  
pain and pleasure?  
estrangement and reunion?  
it-ness and thou-ness?  
forgiveness and separation?  
dread and hope?  
heart and soul?  
greatness and depth?

Have I experienced . . .

closed down and opened up?  
freedom and imprisonment?  
dead right and dead wrong?  
imagination and vacuity?  
dead end and new life?  
last chance and second chance?

raging storm and gentle breeze?  
twilight and dawn?  
mystery and awe?

Has *spirit* happened to me in the midst of these?  
What is real?  
What have I experienced?

## The Way *Spirit* Works

The way *spirit* works  
is not the way  
the tradition says:  
A power from outside this world enters it  
and makes something happen.  
That is otherworldly magic,  
which went out of vogue some time ago.  
*Spirit* is always *of* and *for* this world — and *by*?  
I guess *it* comes from the same place  
everything else comes from.

Son John received this e-mail  
from a friend in Indonesia:

*"rella gave birth last night: aruna francisca, 44  
cm, 2.25 kg. . . . it was pretty amazing this morn-  
ing to hold her in my arms. i looked up at the sky  
last night while waiting, and i was wondering*

*if there was anything up there besides green  
-house gases. looking at her little face was like  
seeing the universe and knowing that it is good.  
~regards, jiiway"*

At such awesome moments  
of "looking at her little face,"  
We create words like "wonder" and awesome."  
We may look to the heavens, but we know  
where these phenomena come from —  
"Like seeing the universe" reveal its heart  
and "knowing that it is good."  
Gracious moments give us a peek  
at the way *spirit* works.

## Eternal Now

what is  
reveals itself  
continually  
for me  
to see

i see  
with open eyes  
joyful heart  
grateful  
to be

## Bet You've Experienced It

The meaning of "the happening of transparency?"

Let the poetry answer . . .

*I saw the light  
blind but now I see  
been to the mountain  
happy day  
the be-all and end-all  
turning point  
it all came together  
alignment  
in the zone  
meaning bleeding from every moment  
new vision  
epiphany  
sacred moment  
inspired  
transformed  
transfixed  
this is the time  
this is the place  
rang my chime  
red alert  
advent  
cataclysmic  
defining moment  
before and after  
dead man walking*



*scales falling from my eyes*  
*bowled over*  
*great god a'mighty, free at last*  
*synchronicity*  
*gestalt*  
*eureka*  
*aha*  
*wow*  
*overwhelmed*  
*assaulted*  
*awesome encounter*  
*terrifying*  
*blown apart*  
*life-changing*  
*kairotic*  
*resurrected*  
*grace*  
*took off my shoes*  
*holy ground*  
*at the center*  
*called*  
*I'm the one*  
*we're it*  
*the Hesperides*  
*kingdom come on earth*  
*strange peace*  
*miraculous*  
*the great event*

... like songwriters, we sometimes "see through" ...

*what a wonderful world  
zipadeedooda  
my or my, what a wonderful day  
goodness gracious, great balls of fire  
lightning moment, blazing spark  
the lightning of the terrible swift sword  
I'm going to Graceland  
I know what I know  
lost in a sweet place  
all is well  
I surrender  
celebrate  
wade in the water  
I found you just in time  
everything is satisfaction  
it's a grand night for singing  
the earth is aglow  
never saw things going so right  
there's wonder in most everything I see  
does enchantment pour out of every door  
there's nowhere on earth that I would rather be  
I could have danced all night  
my heart took flight  
oh what a beautiful morning  
all the sounds of the earth are like music  
on a clear day how it will astound you  
that the glow of your being outshines every star  
you can see forever and ever and evermore  
the trumpets of glory now call me to ride  
whithersoever they blow, onward to glory I go*

. . . sometimes these common, popular words  
make sense when we experience the  
    primal  
    life-changing  
    secular-religious  
    other-world-in-this-world  
events of life. . . .

“Transparency?” Yeah, we’ve experienced it.

## Sometimes . . .

During transparent encounters  
we go through some such sloop:

    focusing  
    reflecting  
    interpreting  
    internalizing  
    resolving  
    symbolizing  
    embodying  
    letting loose

leaving us to have or reject existence/creation  
    good as given,  
and bringing us to sing with Louis  
    “What a wonderful world!”

## Heart of Creation

from the heart of creation  
whether it be  
dinosaur or the latest e-

vent invading consciousness  
whether it be  
a birth or catastrophe

*spirit* is happening  
whether it be  
now or then in eternity

## Here and Now

Not only do we live in the second-story  
if we think that one day after we die  
we will go to another world,  
or that we came from another world,  
or that there is a something up there, out there,  
or back there that is finally in charge of life;  
but also we live in the second-story  
if we think there is *spirit* out there  
that we will one day grasp  
if we keep on the right path.  
Second-story reality denies *spirit* here and now,  
denies that there is only one world of reality,  
and that this is it.

We are not preparing to live;  
we are living now  
at whatever age  
or in whatever condition.  
The kingdom is now, eternally.  
Reality is present, here, at hand;  
there is only one reality  
and *spirit* is its heart.

The life question is "What's happening?"  
followed by "How do I fit in?"  
*Spirit* shouts and whispers, "Let go! Follow Me!"  
changing all *it* encounters.

Thus, to talk about *spirit*, we talk about now,  
not the sweet-by-and-by of some ideal future,  
when we finally enter a perfect state.

There is no 2-, 4-, 6-, 8-step spirit journey.  
Just our responses to what's happening:  
whether or not we give ourselves  
to *spirit's* awesome lead.

*Spirit* is going on in our lives.  
We can leap into *it*,  
shut down and flat-line,  
or do a lifelong search for *it*.  
Two of the three are illusions.

*Spirit* is always  
erupting,  
creating,  
sanctifying,  
and  
whispering,  
"Here and Now!"  
"Here and Now!"  
*ad infinitum.*

## Epiphany

creation's  
*spirit* heart  
is beating

*spirit's* good  
all is good  
life is good

*spirit's* no-  
where if not  
everywhere

celebrate  
"*spirit's* here!"  
this season

## Meeting

if the meeting is the thing  
between *spirit* and me  
I'm glad we are two  
with eventful dialogue

if we were one  
we couldn't meet  
so I promise to be  
on time and present

'cause maybe it's me  
missing the meetings  
if *spirit's* always present  
and never once late

a big meeting past  
when assassinations  
flipped my universe  
and my life's direction

or a little meeting today  
when granddaughter  
penned 'I LOV YU'  
for her first sentence



I'll look and listen  
through such events  
for the meeting next  
between thou and me

for these meetings  
illumine my life  
making the mundane  
holy comm-union

"let's continue to meet  
on the sly or  
in broad daylight  
again and every now"

# Meaning

more stuff gives meaning  
entertainment gives meaning  
long life gives meaning

they say  
no

they say  
thanks for life the way it is gives meaning  
giving life where it isn't gives meaning

they say  
don't go to school to find meaning  
don't get rich to find meaning

they say  
the meaning of life is to expend it  
expend it before the age of 33 and after

they say  
you mess up  
trying to save it

who are they anyway  
and how'd they figure out what to say

## Happy Birthday, Thomas

Billions of years ago  
more or less  
you began with a bang  
and ever since  
you've been evolving

You've had a home  
on Earth  
in the universe  
with one humongous family  
of kindred spirits  
from butterflies to Teilhard  
brothers and sisters all

You've been sustained  
even loved  
by what has been  
is now  
and is ever coming

Think about  
the next phase  
of your journey  
in peace  
flow like the river  
toward the tranquil sea  
and crashing waves

Fear not  
lest you be forgotten  
for you have been  
are and will always be  
a blessed member  
of this intercommunion

That keeps creating  
transforming  
eternally  
that has no place to go  
save *spirit* is  
already there

~for Thomas Berry's 87<sup>th</sup> Birthday  
november 9, 2001

## You Want to See Happiness?

When have I experienced . . .  
The Kingdom of Heaven?  
The kairotic moment?  
When have my *yeses* to life transformed it?

When like Buddha have I awakened to see the  
morning star?  
When like Jesus have I made the speech to Pilot  
and experienced being at one with *the mystery*?

When like Francis have I cared enough to  
kiss a leper?  
When like Alyosha have I fallen down to  
kiss the earth and risen a man?  
When like Meursault have I understood  
not "living like a dead man"?  
When have I really wanted the life I really have?

When have I experienced . . .  
The strange happiness of Sisyphus?  
Curly's "one thing"?  
Camus' "embracing the implacable grandeur  
of this life"?  
e.e.'s "everything which is natural which is  
infinite which is 'Yes'"?  
Kaz's living unhappiness as happiness?

Fulfillment is embodying happiness  
with all the happy and saying,  
"You want to see happiness, look at us!"

Blessed are the happy,  
for they grasp the power to say *yes*.  
*Selah.*

~june 2006

## Happy Death

Francis, Gandhiji, Albert, and Martin,  
Joseph, Kaye, Lyn, and Liza,  
Virginia, Margaret, and Mama Dotte —  
they lived and died the happy death  
and showed what I can do

In their lives headed toward death  
brother death became  
their lively, eternal guide  
(hardly the last enemy)  
their sanction of life  
making it holier

Of course they feared  
yes they were in pain  
yet death did not hold them captive  
he was their gracious friend  
not the darkness  
but the one who lit the way

They breathed the *yes*  
that to live or to die  
is to live eternally  
happy

O to live the happy death  
*Selahi*

## For Elizabeth\*

*Spirit* is always home,  
In life or death or beyond,  
If we have the eyes to see.  
The promise, *spirit* is with us;  
The truth, *spirit* is with us;  
The power, *spirit* is with us.

Victory is ours through *spirit*.  
Nothing in death nor life,  
In this world nor any other,  
In the universe high or low,  
Nothing in all creation  
Can separate us from *spirit*.

We come from *spirit*,  
We live with *spirit*,  
We return to *spirit*.  
We are thy children,  
Always at home.  
Blessed be thy name forever.

We sometimes stay home,  
Sometimes walk alone,  
Later to return home,  
Met with open arms  
And great celebration,  
For we are thy children.

We come from *spirit*,  
We go with *spirit*,  
We return to *spirit* –  
Never far away,  
Always already present.  
Blessed be thy name forever.

We live eternally,  
Past, present, and future:  
In *spirit* eternal before,  
In *spirit* eternal now,  
In *spirit* eternal hereafter.  
Blessed be thy name forever.

We come from *spirit*,  
We live with *spirit*,  
We return to *spirit*.  
We give thee back thine own.  
Give her thy eternal rest,  
Enfold her in thy arms forever.

In thy eternal peace  
Hold her dear.  
She belongs to thee.

Hallowed be thy name.  
Thine is the kingdom,  
The power, and the glory  
forever.

\* for Elizabeth Williams, who died much too young



## How Sense Emerged

Was it the awe  
and the wonder  
amid the flare  
and the heat?

Was it the awe  
and the beauty  
amid the sound  
and the beat?

Was it the awe  
of communion  
amid the fear  
of defeat?

Was it allure  
and attraction  
amid the dark  
of the night?

Was it the tug  
of reunion  
amid the sun's  
warming light?

How sense emerged —  
its origin?  
Aye, it came  
by *spirit's* might.

## All Things Created Equal\*

fish outswim humans  
rabbits outhop humans  
squirrels outclimb humans  
birds outfly humans  
horses outrun humans  
bees outpollinate humans  
viruses outmaneuver humans  
rocks outmeditate humans  
weather outsmarts humans  
sun outshines humans  
earth outmothers humans  
life outlasts humans  
*spirit* outmercies humans

are humans created equal to all things?  
no and yes

\* As Thomas Berry says in a letter to a magazine editor (*What Is Enlightenment*, Fall/Winter 2001, p. 13), "all elements of creation are not equal quantitatively as objects, but are equal qualitatively as subjects. . . . This comprehensive community is the supreme value, not simply the human community."

## Toward Intereverything

from separatism to interbeing  
from naturalism to intercreation  
from environmentalism to interuniverse

from nationalism to internation  
from tribalism to intercommunity  
from classism to interequality

from humanism to interreality  
from intellectualism to interrationality  
from scientism to interknowledge

from capitalism to intereconomy  
from socialism to interwellbeing  
from consumerism to intersimplicity

from fanaticism to interdependence  
from liberalism to intercompassion  
from conservatism to interpreservation

from fundamentalism to interreligious  
from secularism to intertransparency  
from spiritualism to interspirituality

don't scoff at the awkward words  
just move on out to the inter-  
communion of all things  
knowing all is one

## By Cosmic Design?

*At Timberlake watching young people  
gape as they hear Thomas say  
the U.S. Constitution is destructive,  
declaring only human rights;  
or hearing him ask  
now that western civilization  
has passed through its religious  
and humanist phases,  
What next?*

On the way forward from our past,  
this cosmological age  
highlights awesome seasons  
that birth rituals  
and daily sunrises and sunsets  
that spiritize existence,  
sanctifying early mornings  
with meditation  
and late evenings  
with reverie:

parents reading to and  
cuddling with their children,  
answering big questions,  
rubbing backs and humming  
as the little ones slip into  
earth's dark, sacred night

Are we not spiritual  
by cosmic design  
and for cosmic reason?

## Go Fly

go fly with Stephen Hawking

we will mount our wheelchairs  
decked out with mega voice  
with his smile and wit  
flying his cosmology  
far out, deep, and wide

we will get perspective  
on where we came from  
and where we go  
relearning our name  
and place

"Who am I" is a massive think  
with the deepest feel  
of "what be I"  
and mighty resolve  
of "what do I"

I am "who I am" in the universe  
so let me, myself, and I  
go fly  
and come back to earth  
I-mazed

## Nature Teaches Us

We learn . . .

awe through lightning  
beauty through flowers  
majesty through mountains  
fear through thunder  
leadership from geese  
teamwork from ants  
parenting from elephants  
visioning from eagles  
maneuvering from viruses  
communication from dolphins

We learn . . .

love through offsprings  
forgiveness from dogs  
community from bees  
ingenuity from beavers  
tenacity from squirrels  
sacrifice from crops  
wonder through spiderwebs  
contentment from cows  
curiosity from cats  
play from monkeys

We learn . . .

warmth from sun  
hard work from mules  
direction from waterways

force from hurricanes  
mystery through night skies  
power from wind  
cleansing through rain  
transformation from caterpillars  
peace through snow

We learn . . .

extinction from dinosaurs  
risk through planting  
calm from trees  
praise from birds  
endurance from camels  
terror through fires  
endlessness through waves  
relaxation from bears  
finitude through earthquakes  
defense through predators

We learn . . .

dying from Fall  
death from Winter  
resurrection from Spring  
nourishment from Summer  
interdependence through eating  
union through breeding  
connectedness through vistas  
dependence through breathing  
reflection through night  
anticipation through dawn

We learn . . .

the reverence of intercommunion  
seeing *spirit*  
through  
nature's transparent veil.

## One Big Free Lunch

Consider what's free.

Birth: here I am, free.

Breath: every breath I take, free.

Sight: every sight I see, free.

Every sound I hear, free.

Every thought, prayer, decision, act, FREE.

On and on: dirt, food, bacteria, nerve endings, imagination,  
sensuality, creativity, family, calling, grace . . . all FREE.

Our life in this universe really is one big free lunch.

Catechetical question:

What is the chief end of us creatures?

Absolutely obvious answer:

To give thanks without ceasing . . .

which is also free

and the natural therapy.

What a universe!

~november, 2005

**Note:** Thanksgiving Day began 13.7 billion years ago, not in 1621.



## Uni-verse

her pulse rate beeps and flashes  
as she lies post-surgery  
aping body universe

one beat  
one heart  
one life

beating out her rhythm  
in the citadel of time  
from the beginning till now

one beat  
one heart  
one life

humans we are not except  
as universal beings  
in the planetary rite

one beat  
one heart  
one life

gi-ven  
for all  
*en masse*

~TCC Hospital, Galax, VA

## “Just Do It” Can’t Do It Alone

Out of nothing comes something every time.

That’s the way it is, *just watch it.*

Out of cosmic crisis came the air we breathe;

Out of slavery comes freedom;

Out of death comes life.

That’s the way it is, *just trust it.*

Out of terrorism will come global unity.

That’s the way it is, *just weave it.*

Out of poverty will come equity;

Out of AIDS will come global health;

Out of biocide will come planetary care.

That’s the way it is, *just seed it.*

Out of powerlessness comes power, every time.

That’s the way it is, *just free it.*

*Spirit* brings something out of nothing,

Not by a zap but sacrifice —

Some being’s offering that changes things.

That’s the way it is, *just give it.*

*“Just do it”*  
can’t do it  
alone.

# Journeyed

As a proud human being  
I tell myself I am  
in charge of my journey.  
Like pilgrims of yore  
I do spiritual practices  
and journey spiritual paths  
that lead on the way  
to the mountain top  
and to perfection.

But when I look back on my life  
I see I have been journeyed  
by that which journeys all.  
In each encounter  
I experience beatitudes  
of the awesome way:  
reflection  
interpretation  
and thanksgiving.

As a "theologian"\* said  
in a better moment:  
    *"If it took all that*  
    *to bring me to this moment,*  
    *I wouldn't change a thing."*

---

\* Marilyn Monroe

## Gifts of the *Spirit*

Tell me why there is something and not nothing  
Tell me why something comes from no-thing

Tell me why some things are better than others  
Such as

*Being* is better than not being  
*Mystery* is better than knowledge  
*Consciousness* is better than stupor  
*Grace* is better than achievement  
*Communion* is better than separation  
*Faith* is better than beliefs  
*Freedom* is better than bondage  
*Mercy* is better than law  
*Love* is better than hate  
*Care* is better than care less  
*Vocation* is better than work  
*Community* is better than self-centered  
*Peace* is better than war  
*Fulfillment* is better than rewards  
*Happiness* is better than existing

Tell me why these are quality-of-life things  
heart desires

Not things to consume, store, and throw away

But really tell me why real things in life are gifts  
and the rest we have to buy

# We Are Spiritual Beings created . . .

\*

\*\*\*

\*

to *see*

to *care*

to *be* aware

to *live* simply

to *love* creation

to *work* on behalf of

to *celebrate* our living

to *reflect* on the awesome

to *serve* the shattered earth

to *dream* the impossible dream

to *home* on earth as one community

=

=

## I Bow To *Spirit*: *Namaste*

Through you  
I bow to *spirit*.  
*Namaste*.

Whether you believe the "trinity,"  
or "spirit" as the name for all three,

you believe *it* is,  
from the beginning till now,  
creating, recreating.

*Namaste.*

*Spirit* works *its* own way  
everyday through events,  
spoken, written, or imaged word;  
through any part of creation,  
through any person,  
or through a vision:  
*spirit* truths and lifes us.

*Namaste.*

*Spirit* is breath and non-,  
height and depth,  
edge and center,  
beginning and end,  
non-being in being.

*Namaste.*

Born of *spirit*.

In *spirit* we live, move,  
and have our being.

Blessed be we by *spirit*.

*Namaste.*

So bow to all others in *its* name,  
*Its* children all.

*Namaste.*

## Spiritually Evolved?

As we evolve do we get better?  
Are molecules better than atoms?  
Or multicellular better than cellular?  
Or bigger-brained better than smaller-?

Are things better than ever?  
What about the tens of million humans  
and thousands of species  
we killed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century?  
Which century is more evolved,  
the last one or the first of the first millennium?

What does evolution have to do with *spirit*?  
Does *spirit* evolve?  
Do the evolved become more spiritual?  
How can anything be any closer  
to *spirit* than anything else,  
regardless of time and space?

Who is more enlightened?  
is a different question.  
Can a group of humans  
come together and care  
for the masses,  
the biosphere,  
the geosphere,  
and the atmosphere?

If so, are they more evolved?

Yes.

More aware of *spirit's* presence?

Maybe.

Any closer to *spirit*?

How can they be?

Any better?

Of course not,

for *spirit* is impartial

(or absolutely partial

to everything).



## VI

### from *At One With the Heart of Creation: Reflections and Verse on the Spirit Journey*

#### Spirit Journey

*spirit is . . .*

always happening to us on *its* journey  
always reconciling us to *its* oneness  
always awakening us to *its* mystery  
always enlightening us with *its* presence  
always freeing us for *its* mission  
always calling us to *its* great work  
always fulfilling us in *its* abundance  
always creating us by *its* power  
always sustaining us on *its* way  
always transforming us in *its* image  
always reigning over us by *its* grace  
therefore . . .

all is one  
all is whole  
all is good  
all is blessed

## Lift My Spirit

I sit and wait for a movie to lift my spirit,  
for it to prick and explode my illusions  
and to leave me with a vision of new creation.

It surely doesn't have to be a box office hit,  
so violent and gruesome I scrunch in my seat,  
nor so freaky or maudlin that I want to leave.

It doesn't have to have famous stars or director,  
sensational stage craft or outlandish price tag,  
nor a blitz of TV ads coming at me for weeks.

*Rabbit Proof Fence, Winged Migration, Whale Rider*  
lifted my spirit as sisters escaped the whites,  
a species of nature soared, and a tribe was reborn.

*The Pianist* uplifted me with his spirit,  
surviving the devastations of war in his Poland  
where once he was the artist of a dying order.

So you see, it doesn't take much to lift my spirit,  
just a hour or two of a story of great life journey  
responding to *spirit* from the heart of creation.

## That Which Wakes All

I'm not sure who woke up whom  
this morning, the birds or I,  
but awake we both are, sure  
that there's something to wake up to

Their kingdom and mine are one  
as we listen to and watch  
each other's kindred spirit,  
sensing there's that which wakes us all

## O That Which Is

Oh that which sees via my seeing  
that tastes via my tasting  
that touches via my touching  
that hears via my hearing  
Oh that which speaks via my speaking  
that sings via my singing  
that laughs via my laughing  
that cries via my crying  
Oh that which dreams via my dreaming  
that creates via my creating  
that prays via my praying  
that rejoices via my rejoicing

Oh that which breathes via my breathing  
that communes via my communing  
that loves via my loving  
that serves via my serving

Oh that which exists  
via the heart of my being  
is surely more  
via the heart of all being

## Christmas

Why celebrate Christmas  
why such a hullabaloo  
she asked good questions I said  
but what answer will she listen to

Life is full of wonder  
full of love and joy and peace  
full of hope and communion  
of possibility openness

You and I've experienced  
such gifts many times and more  
bringing meaning to our lives  
filling full what seemed empty before

Remember all the times  
in spite of doubt we could not  
give into the lie of lies  
that living is just a senseless plot

Life's what we celebrate  
at Christmas the very ground  
of meaning purpose and love  
not despair and hopelessness abound

She said I've got it now  
ev'ry tiny baby's birth  
regardless whose when or where  
reveals the story of sacred worth

Yes life is so very good I said

## Easter

Then she asked about Easter  
the great Christian centerpiece  
what about eternal life  
I cannot make sense of that can you

It is hard to explain I said  
that life is resurrection  
seeds shooting up from the earth  
butterfly winging from its prison

about metamorphosing  
apartheid-ers forgiven  
Berlin walls tumble-ing down  
species from extinction's grave risen

being born a second time  
new heart beating in my breast  
scales falling from my eyes  
blind but seeing life anew and yes

miracles of reunion  
stirring ashes of our lives  
raising up the lame and dead  
by that power that's beyond our eyes

by that power that gives us might  
gives us courage to overcome  
our despair and hopelessness  
new creatures of intercommunion

This is what we celebrate  
during spring the awesome sound  
of cracked cocoons rolling stones  
and shouts of the forgiven resound

the splashing play of whales  
future buzz of honey bees  
sight for the blinded bigots  
lasting peace among earth's enemies

Nonvisible and mysterious  
power will surely raise the dead  
will inspire our breath again  
'tis the power of Easter I said

She said I think I've got it  
ev'ry time I thought I'd died  
the greatest secret of all  
revealed to me life in death does hide

Yes life is so very good I said

## Communion Within Creation

*In and through this [universe] community we enter into communion with that numinous mystery. ~Thomas Berry, "Cosmology of Religions"*

### **Awesome moments of communion with what is:**

Suckling at my mother's breast as a babe . . .

*communion with my mother*

Walking the trail in the moonlight . . .

*communion with mother nature*

Kissing the one I would marry . . .

*communion with my mate*

Looking down on my hometown from a plane . . .

*communion with environs*

Licked by Lulu, our dog, as I studied theology . . .

*communion with a another species*

Granddaughter's mercy during great pain . . .

*communion with next generations*

Seeing my Blue Ridge after an absence . . .

*communion with my home*

Staring into the eyes of a seagull at Caswell . . .

*communion with a strange creature*

Watching Nolan bend over to kiss a flower . . .

*communion with one in communion*

Hearing monks growl chants in Thai temple . . .

*communion with another tradition*



Climbing in a 5000-year-old pyramid on the Nile . . .

*communion* with my ancestors

Conversing in an India village at midnight . . .

*communion* with one of 6.4 billion locals

Hearing Mama say "I love you" as she died . . .

*communion* with utter mystery

Meditating on my breathing . . .

*communion* with breath within my breath

When communion happens

sometimes I experience the other as a *thou*

sometimes I experience the *eternal thou*

And when that happens I experience

much more than neurological sensations

as I am united with the other

embraced in the unity of being

Sometimes I believe again

because trust is reborn during communion

as I am held in being

within all my communities

Is time space matter and energy are all there is?

These four are hardly the grand total of it all

Permeating them is numinous mystery

without which they are but so much stuff

with which they are consecrated being

Great communion keeps us bowing to creation

keeps us saying I give thanks for your being

With hands pressed together at the heart

people bow to greet each other with *namaste*  
meaning *spirit's* at the heart of creation  
at the heart of you  
experienced in communion

**Communion happens in little and big ways:**

Sing a simple love song and discover yourself  
singing to all that is

Gaze at a flickering candle  
and commune with light in darkness

Watch an ant colony  
and commune with a community in action

Read the *Psalms*  
and commune with David's Lord

Hold your new baby  
and commune in unspeakable joy

See bulldozers pushing bodies into mass graves  
and commune with genocidal dying

Hear the African Children's Choir  
and commune with millions dying of AIDS

Break bread and spill wine  
and commune with the goodness of life itself

Every piece of creation is blessed is sacred

For *spirit* is revealed through each  
to be communed with

Since every created thing has a heart

Communion is the "union with" all that is  
SiddhArtha and Francis knew each *other*  
is sister brother father mother  
We experience union  
in communion  
with each and every one  
in creation

For in reality we are One  
and through *spirit's* power of *communion*  
we experience this fact of all facts

As Thomas says in the beginning

"In and through this universe community  
we enter into communion  
with that numinous mystery"

. . . at the heart of everything that is.

## Oh I Don't Know

*Two lonely leaves hanging from a limb  
tossed in the early winter wind  
considering the day of their fall  
What will happen after we descend*

Said one to the other: What if  
when we land there is nothing more  
nothing except we rot away  
Wouldn't that be an awful shame

Said the other: Oh I don't know  
From dust to dust is the promise  
and I'm sort of fascinated  
by the process of changing form

The first: Isn't *transformation*  
a word for raving romantics  
who believe in happy endings  
We're about to experience death

Said the second: Oh I don't know  
The way the word *death* comes to me  
is something like what happened when  
dinosaurs died in the 60s

and vegetation really thrived  
That is the big picture on death  
I guess it all makes sense to me

thinking of what comes after us

The first: Maybe the universe  
and the earth will figure it out  
All we have to do is be blown  
And soon they did float to the ground

The second: That was sort of neat  
an experience we've not had  
First: Yea here we are yet alive  
Is death only a metaphor

Oh I don't know said the second  
I'm sort of enjoying the view  
From down here it does give us a  
new perspective on everything

Then asked the first: Do humans think  
about what happens after death  
Oh I don't know said the second  
But they don't need to be afraid

*Two lonely leaves hanging from a limb  
tossed in the early winter wind  
considering the day of their fall  
What will happen after we descend*

~printed in *Poetry GSO* (Poetry Greensboro)

## Aussie Wisdom

What must I know before I go?  
What will I do if I have to?  
What will I be if really me?

These are the questions they tell us  
we must answer if we live in  
the world of civilization.

But you know, mate,  
they don't know their  
head from their bum.

I think it is more a question  
of seeing life's answer in the  
mystery of communion.

## Rich Is Not . . . Rich Is

rich is not  
how much you have  
or who you are.

rich is  
communing with  
the heart of creation.

## Yaaaa from a Universe Shrink

The therapy of self-acceptance  
is on the rise in self-centered cultures  
leading to delusion the poor souls  
that want to believe I can  
if I will just accept myself

But you are not created that way  
What you can do is accept the other  
outside the boundary of your skin  
be they human or non-human  
be she the universe herself

The fact is you are accepted  
by her who is not yourself  
You just show up in the flow  
of this universe on the move  
from creation to creation

That's really quite enough  
don't you think when you think  
You are at just this moment  
sublimely nestled in the flow  
of the cosmic oneness

But I don't feel accepted  
Who said you were supposed to  
Since you are now in the flow  
be that the meaning of your life

a part of the ongoing goingonness

One more time let me say  
she accepts just who you are  
Just try to get off the earth  
Try to get out of the universe  
Your acceptance is complete

So please get it straight  
Look up from your navel  
and live the way the rest  
of creation is living  
like trees cows and neutrinos

Get on with your life  
Look up and out and live  
because you are accepted  
by all that was and is and will be  
even though you don't feel like it

If you still yearn for acceptance  
let me say it one last time  
*You Are Always Already Accepted*  
YAAAA That's all you need to know  
Your self-acceptance obsession be gone

That will be \$400 please



## Amazing Grace\*

Amazing grace, ten thousand times,  
has touched the heart of me;  
I once was lost but now am found,  
was blind but now I see.

Through mighty, awesome turns in life  
I have already come;  
'tis grace that makes me whole through faith,  
and grace will lead me on.

Amazingly, since primal star,  
grace joined this voice of mine  
with all creation near and far  
to celebrate sublime.

When we've been journeyed all our days  
by grace till breath is gone,  
we'll no less yearn to sing its praise  
than when we'd first begun.

---

\* adapted from John Newton, 1779

## Love All of Nature

The universe is a swirl of nature,  
as the stars and sea and jungle adhere.

There are other parts of this cosmic world:  
we humans were into nature hurled.

A tad less than angels we humans are,  
*homo sapiens* as good as a star.

Ev'ry bit a part of the universe,  
and not one thing is in any way worse.

20k orangutan kin remain,  
begging us not to take their kind in vain.

During extinctions there must surely come  
from the heart of us humans more freedom

To care for all *a tad less than angels*,  
delighting in them, reversing farewells.

Is it not our natural role to care  
if keener awareness we humbly bear?

Mothers love most the child in greatest need  
'cause security is not guaranteed.

Center of all until Copernicus,  
humans' show no longer, except to bless.

Toynbee's line and Dietrich's prison quote,  
"world thus come of age," is very remote.

We humans have not come of age for sure  
and won't until we love all of nature.

## Intercommunion

*Intercommunion is Born of Communion with Creation*

Intercommunion . . .

is the way life is, what essentially is  
is the fundamental fact of our oneness as creation  
is interconnectedness and interdependence  
is born of an experience of communion  
is a universe-community-individual affair

*Intercommunion is Conscious Participation with Creation*

Intercommunion . . .

is a covenantal *yes* to creation  
is an I-thou, not an I-it, relationship with what is  
is a demonstration of unity, soul to soul  
is lived out in authentic community  
is an expression of deep care for creation  
is manifest in local/planetary sacrificial service  
is the lifestyle of reconciliation

In sum:

At one with the heart of creation  
– with the power of *being* –  
we experience *communion* . . .  
that motivates us toward *intercommunion*.

## Just *Yes* or *No*

I share the genes of a banana I found out on NOVA tonight and felt connected in a new way to all of life.

Found out we humans are 99 point 9 percent the same gene-wise and I felt connected in new ways to the 6 billion.

I did not find out tonight how we humans really do differ from the animals or from the other forms of life.

I think it has something to do with the way we perceive truth, how we respond, how we choose, and what are our basic values.

It is much more than species, nation, religion, education, relative wealth, power – we humans decide *no* or *yes*.

Are we better than all the non-humans, more evolved than rocks, worms, and waterfalls, more conscious than bacteria?

With the 6 billion there's hardly a difference, only color and a few other things, not enough to shake a stick at.

The *yes* and *no* don't seem to be any big deal  
till we consider the human venture  
and impact on the earth venture.

## What Gets Me Down

What gets me down these days is  
our pattern of consumption  
our use of the earth  
our abuse of the ozone  
our denial of destroying the ecosystems

plus . . .

war  
poverty  
wealth  
HIV/AIDS  
addiction  
population  
hate

But as Søren says  
authentic despair  
has within it the cure –  
possibility and necessity –  
the power of conversion  
which is grounded in *spirit*

To think we are going  
to deal with all this  
without radical conversion of  
spirit  
values  
priorities  
actions  
is the biggest illusion

Let despair intensify  
until we grieve for all  
until we believe  
and act like  
we really are one planet  
immersed in sacrificial possibility

## Is There Any Hope at All?

Is there any hope at all  
in our present situation  
or are we but doomed  
to planetary destruction?

There's nothing much to offer  
except  
mysterious fullness  
endless possibility  
and  
creative vitality.

Oh, my God,  
nothing more?



## Our Home Sweet Home

Earth is not just a planet  
not just a place in space  
x distance from here and there

Our home is the earth  
the place where our heart is  
there's no place like home

Earth is trillions of home-ones  
who live and have their being  
on and in her wondrous realm

Lord knows we love our home  
sustained and united in her kingdom  
of communion one with another

But we feel threatened of late  
by our disregard for the way  
we have treated our Mother

Thus many are losing their home  
many are being denied her riches  
many are being denied their birthright

As all her children we dare to see  
what's happening to our kin  
and are beginning to grieve and act

For we know deep down  
that if more and more lose their home  
earth for all of us is threatened

But we *can* go home again  
if we love Mother Earth  
and find our fulfillment in her's

So let's sing with Irving . . .

God bless our planet Earth  
Home that we love  
Be within her and guide her  
Through the night with the light from above

From the ozone to the humans  
To the oceans white with foam  
God bless our planet Earth  
Our home sweet home

God bless our planet Earth  
Our home sweet home

## My Neighbor Is

My biggest neighbor is Grandfather Universe  
My smallest neighbor is Little Neutrino  
My oldest and farthest neighbor is Old Fireball  
My neighbor I can't do without is Father Sun  
My most caring neighbor is Mother Earth  
My most delightful neighbors, Grand Children  
My meanest neighbors are War and Poverty  
My most fragile neighbor is Uncle Water  
My most abused neighbor is Teen Prostitute  
My most needy neighbor is HIV/AIDS Millions  
My neighbor most on my mind, Dispirited Masses

"Whatever I do not do for the least of these" . . .

"If we say we love God and hate the neighbor,  
we are liars" . . .

"The second is like unto the first . . . and thy  
neighbor as thyself" . . .

"One fell among thieves and was dying in a ditch  
Two holy ones saw him and passed by  
His enemy stopped and cared for him  
Which one was the neighbor" . . .

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" . . .

Who can think of anything  
that's not the neighbor  
Today I will make an offering  
to Brother Rain Forest  
Tomorrow I will march in the streets  
for Sister Peace  
The next day I'll meet  
New Folks next door

## I Am

"I doubt, therefore, I am,"  
Said René Descartes,  
Letting loose western humanism.

But what about  
"I dialogue, therefore, I am";  
"I care, therefore, I am"?

Or what about  
"I commune, therefore, I am";  
"I intercommune, therefore, I am"?

In any case, I am I,  
In relationship with all that is,  
I have no doubt.

## Humanism Is Bust

Merriam and Webster define a “humanist” as one concerned about . . .

*the humanities*

*literary culture*

*individual dignity and worth*

*self-realization through reason*

*a critical spirit*

*secular concerns characterized by the Renaissance*

*philosophy viewed non-theistically*

*and humanitarian efforts.*

This is all well and good, and a bit highfalutin.

But what about their meaning of “humanism” that says . . .

*a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interests or values?*

Haven't we done this definition to death?

Hasn't human-centeredness turned in on us?

Haven't our obsessive human interests and values terribly tinkered with the planet?

One more meaning they list under “humanism”:

*a philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism.*

What does humanism put

in supernaturalism's place?

Not much.

How do humanists talk about the

height and depth of human experience?  
Their jargon seems flat, without much sap.  
Whose philosophy is deeply satisfying  
the souls of us humans these days?

“Humanism” is bust,  
one of the worst of the “-isms,”  
one of earth’s major contradictions.

What about the words  
“humanist” and “humanistic”?  
Like father like sons.

Coin new words  
for creation’s sake!  
Webster and Merriam,  
re-ink your quills  
for goodness sake.

## Beatitudes

*Many say . . .*

Blessed are the rich

Blessed are the powerful

Blessed are the winners

Blessed are the armed

Blessed are the comfortable

Blessed are the consumers

Blessed are the entertained

Blessed are the educated

the developed

the civilized

the cultured

For they inherit their self-made kingdom

*But Jesus said . . .*

Blessed are the poor

Blessed are the meek

Blessed are the merciful

Blessed are the pure in heart

Blessed are the peacemakers

Blessed are they that mourn

Blessed are those like little children

Blessed are those who do my father's will

Blessed are they that lay down their lives for others

For their kingdom is heaven on earth

*And I Say . . .*

Blessed are all the children

all beings  
human or not  
Blessed are they  
not because of what they own  
not because of what they achieve  
but because they just are  
– each of value as is –  
Blessed are they  
For they *are already* the good creation



## Whichever

I bow to *spirit* at the heart of creation –  
always already present in creation –  
whether I bow to you personally,  
or to my kin on this piedmont,  
or to all Earth's creatures,  
or Sun's zillion neutrinos.

Humans have circled up around campfires  
since Mars came this close to planet Earth,  
sharing stories of their experience  
with the micro- and macrocosm,  
inventing religion  
out of spirituality:

Life happens to us and we experience it,  
sometimes making us conscious of our *yes* or *no*,  
sometimes making us at one with *spirit*.  
Down deep we all know, or can know,  
that the way life is, at heart,  
it is transparent to *spirit*.

Whether we have been asleep or on watch,  
we beings of creation have been journeyed  
univers'ly by that which journeys all –  
experiencing *communion*,  
being at one with all,  
deciding to *intercommune* –

For this purpose: that we all care for creation,  
not just for self or mine, but for everything;  
bowing to each as *thou* and not as *it*.  
Truly, holy traditions teach  
that creation is good,  
meaning "heaven is in our midst."

How to draw the line of "Who is my neighbor?"  
if all is very good and is connected,  
if reverence and compassion for all  
means responsibility for all –  
bowing to and serving  
all created heirs of *spirit*?

"The cosmos is *spirit's* and the fullness thereof";  
we who "love *spirit* and hate the neighbor"  
forget everything is *in* creation  
and forget it's all "very good,"  
forget that "the second  
command is like unto the first."

I will bow to *spirit* and will see creation,  
or bow to creation and see through to *spirit* . . .  
whichever . . .  
for *spirit's* always at the heart.

# VII

from *Journey*  
(a journey novel)

## To Begin and End the Day (*Peter's Prayer*)

I bow to *spirit*  
at the heart of creation  
and to all that is

all universes  
our universe  
Mother Earth

and to all beings  
all species  
all tribes  
my friends and enemies  
my colleagues  
my family  
and to my own being

I bow to all as *thou*  
the human *thou*

the non-human *thou*  
the *eternal thou*  
I bow to all this day  
*Namaste*

## Contemporary “Prologue”

Peter saw that the Judeo-Christian scriptures were talking about the power of the *spirit* of God and *spirit* of Christ as the presence of the *holy spirit* in any time, from the very beginning to the futuristic “omega point.” Out of this context he understood and paraphrased the “Prologue” to the *Gospel of John* (1:1-19):

In the beginning was *spirit*, the source of authentic being. *Spirit* shines from the heart of creation. Nothing has ever been able to hide its glory.

A man was called by *spirit* to witness to its power, so that all might understand the profundity of being in creation. He testified to this central fact: *spirit* is in creation but seldom seen, and if seen, seldom becomes one’s point of reference.

However, some have seen and bowed to its transforming power and have been reborn, as it were, conceived by *spirit* – thus its children – even virgin born.

*Spirit* is always already present among us, the central dynamism of creation, offering *its* grace and truth to all beings as sheer gift that never stops giving.

We all can come to know its presence and power through ones who lived at one with and became transparent to *spirit* - if you saw them, you saw *spirit*, eternally present.

And we too, bowing to *spirit*, saying "yes" to *spirit* as it encounters us, we too become transparent ones, transparent to its presence.

## That Which Will Not Deconstruct

You call it what you will . . .

*spirit* is awe-fully real  
*it* graciously fulfills  
gives wonder and passion  
*it* is true and certain  
earning our faith and trust  
*it* is the greatest loss  
run to *it* or from *it*  
all reveals *its* presence  
all's transparent to *it*  
all is therefore holy  
*spirit* permeates all  
consecrates creation  
*spirit's* primordial  
*it* is never absent  
*spirit* is here for e'er

## VIII

from *Daily Spirit Journal* (vol. I)

*December 22*    **All Are Virgin Born**

In the beginning Jesus was born,  
like us,  
that we might be like him,  
purely human.

All are virgin born,  
says the gospeler in John: 1. . . .

*December 23*    **All Are Born Again**

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;  
so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.*

*. . . where meek souls will receive him,  
still the dear Christ enters in. ~Phillips Brooks*

Dear Christ enters in –  
love is born again . . .  
the gift of heaven.

We receive it still –  
silently . . . our souls  
and hearts are filled.

All are born again –  
silently God's gift  
of love enters in.

*December 24*    **The Christmas Word**

The *word* is at the heart of creation.  
The *word* is historical.  
The *word* is in the hearts of all those  
who have said *yes* to its power  
throughout all ages  
– even before Jesus –  
and in all places –  
even where Christianity  
has never been.

*May 9*    **Solitary Bird**

. . . it aims its beak to the skies  
. . . it flies to the highest point  
. . . it doesn't suffer for company  
. . . it does not have a definite color  
. . . it sings very softly

~adapted from St. John of the Cross



*May 31*    **Getting Unstuck**

The *spirit* of the universe  
is revealing we are stuck  
– evolutionarily speaking –  
in our human-centeredness,  
devolving earth community  
and holding it back.

*Spirit* is about  
getting us unstuck.

*June 5*    **We Are Experiencing Spirit**

We are experiencing *spirit*

When something radical, total, and unconditional  
is demanded of us,

When we hear we can go on, in spite of all,  
we are experiencing *spirit*.

When related to be slave to no thing and free for all,  
we are experiencing *spirit*.

When we see and respond to creation's suffering,  
we are experiencing *spirit*.

*June 10*    **Means of Grace**

Marriage is about *communion* (deep life in *spirit*):  
to keep your *covenant* and mission of *care* alive,  
remember "home" is . . .

    a communion place

    a caring place

    a forgiving place

    a deep breathing place

    a dialogue place

    a fun place

    a healing place

    a sacramental place

. . . marriage and home are means of grace.

    ~from remarks at Spain wedding of J&V

*June 19*    ***Spirit re Relationship***

*Spirit* reveals itself

in relationship  
through grace

in disrelationship  
through judgment

both of which  
are finally gracious

*June 27*    **Resurrectional Time**

All time begins  
in a moment  
then comes the end  
The moment dead  
after dying  
starts up again

*June 28*    **From an Art Perspective**

Look at that tree.  
It's different from all the other trees.  
Every tree's a piece of art.

Look at that cat . . . and that child. . . .  
Look at that HIV/AIDS person.  
She's different from all the other . . . .

But none of these pieces of art  
will bring anything close to the price  
of a piece of art at a Sotheby's Auction.

## IX

from *Daily Spirit Journal* (vol. II)

November 3    **thou Is Thou**

I have heard it said,  
"Be at one with nature to be at one with humanity."  
And "Be at one with self to be at one with others."

I'd rather say,  
"All is one.  
Union with any  
is union with all.  
In a transparent sense,  
thou is Thou."

Somewhere it is said:  
"If you have been united with one  
of the least of these,  
you have been united with the eternal thou."

*December 11*    **How Do We Begin To Love . . .**

*How do we begin to love in such a way that births peace?*

Tell someone in your family you love them,  
    someone who would be shocked to hear it.  
Call or write someone you dislike or despise  
    and ask for their forgiveness,  
    even if you think he or she is to blame.  
Practice tonglen meditation regularly,  
    breathing in the pain of particular persons,  
    organizations, cities, nations, species, planet,  
    and then breathing out to them peace and love.  
Adopt a "leper," someone who has pieces of his  
    or her spirit rotting away.

*Christmas is the reality of love which births peace.*

~from 1994 Christmas letter

*December 18*    **The Gift Love Brings**

*Mysterious power gives life,  
takes it away, and  
loves us in between.*

Especially at Christmas *it* heals  
our broken lives with  
what we're longing for.

Acceptance is the gift *love* brings  
creating a new heart  
through *its* grace event:

In a moment the great *aha* . . .  
I'm transformed, newborn,  
snow-pure. *Love divine.*

~from 1993 Christmas letter

## *December 25*    **We Pray in Jesus' Name**

We celebrate the birth of Jesus  
with that first community of faith,  
made up of diverse worshippers –  
wise men, shepherds, and animals –  
who journeyed toward a star.

We celebrate the Jesus *word*  
with the followers of Jesus in history,  
who have embodied new life,  
demonstrated new community,  
and have championed grace and peace.

We give thanks the *word's* in history  
and has come to and belongs to all,  
because the *word* rises out of the way life is:  
meaning, all is good, the past is approved,  
each is accepted, and the future is open.

We celebrate the *word's*  
pronouncement that all creation  
is new and going somewhere,  
not old and going out of being.  
The *word* fills us with hope.

So, on this holy day,  
in this holy place,  
with these holy ones,  
we give heartfelt thanks  
. . . especially in Jesus' name. *Amen*

~from 2005 Christmas letter

### *March 5*    **So Journey On . . .**

Religions mark human journey events  
that have just evented us again:  
Wednesday we welcomed Clara into our world;  
Thursday we sent cousin Susan out.

Mystified by how we come, be, and go . . .  
we journey on.  
In eternity before birth,  
during life,  
and after death . . .  
we journey on.

How can anything in being ever go out?  
*Spirit* has more room –

the universes *it* traverses . . .  
so journey on . . .  
without end. *Amen.*

*April 16*    **“Enough! the Resurrection”**

. . . Enough! the Resurrection:  
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,  
I am all at once what Christ is,  
since he was what I am, and  
Me, Jack, joke, piece of clay,  
patch, sliver, broken piece of s\_\_\_,  
Am really a diamond . . .  
by “God.”

~adapted from Gerald Manley Hopkins’s  
“That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire”

*April 24*    **Whose Am I?**

Whose am I if none of these:  
Neither Christian, Jew, nor Moslem.  
Not of East, West, North, or South;  
Not of Nature nor the stars of Heaven.

Not of Europe nor the U.S. of A.;  
Not of this world nor the next.  
Neither body nor soul, I belong to *spirit*:  
The One I seek, call, see, and know.

~adapted from Rumi’s, “Divan of Shems of Tabriz, 31”



*May 10*    **Quantum Spirituality**

A quantum haiku for all seasons:

*imagine being  
in the actuality  
of utter oneness*

*June 12*    **Bow Down, Look Around**

You're left with yourself all the time. . . . But you've got to get down to your own god and "your own temple. . . ." [I]t's all down to you. . . . ~John Lennon

You got to bow down  
to your own god in your holy place  
to find the meaning of life.  
If that one won't sustain you,  
keep going, deeper. . . deeper.  
Or start looking around you  
till you see signs of the One  
in all this hallowed space.  
You got to bow down, look around.

*Bow down in either paradigm of spirituality. Namaste.*

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# Books by the Author

## ***By Cosmic Design***

*Spirit Poems* (1974-2006)

***Daily Spirit Journal*** (volume II)

*Quotes and Reflections for 365 Days* (2006)

***Daily Spirit Journal*** (volume I)

*Quotes and Reflections for 365 Days* (2005)

## ***Journer***

A contemporary spirit journey like unto  
Herman Hesse's novelette *Siddhartha* (2005)

## ***At One With the Heart of Creation***

*Reflections and Verse on the Spirit Journey* (2004)

with Lynda Cock; foreword by Thomas Berry

## ***Our Universal Spirit Journey***

*Reflection and Verse for Creation's Sake* (2002)

foreword by Thomas Berry

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comment by Bishop James K. Mathews

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comments by Wanda Urbanska  
and James Dodson

Co-edited

***Bending History***

*Selected Talks of Joseph W. Mathews* (2005)

John L. Epps, general editor

***Brother Joe***

*A 20th Century Apostle* (2006)

by Bishop James K. Mathews

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Printed in the United States  
68316LVS00001B/423



Poetry/Spirituality

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# BY COSMIC DESIGN

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Spirit Poems (1974–2006)

by John P. Cock

In this most recent of his writings John Cock presents his sense of how human life can be lived in a profoundly satisfying way. He has himself gone through the deepest personal and historical challenges of these transitional years as we moved through the closing moment of the twentieth century into the opening moments of the twenty-first century. So “to live, to love, to build the Earth,” “I am called, I am called, to be.” Such are endless thrilling phrases to be read in *By Cosmic Design*. John Cock may be considered one of our more significant guides into an exciting future.

~**Thomas Berry**, cultural historian and author of *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story*, *The Great Work*, and *Evening Thoughts* (fall 2006)

## John P. Cock, author and guide

His nine books include a spirit journey novel, a memoir, and musings on spirituality, religion, theology, vocation, ecology, cosmology, and this first book of poetry. He facilitates events in the USA and daily reflection via a spirit journey blog.

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9665090-8-3

ISBN-10: 0-9665090-8-0



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