Discussion re new narrative

From email list:

The grand new human narrative continues to emerge. And it is a wonder to behold. Lets all take part in shaping this thing, along with all the rest of the human family.

Out little JBAS venture actually expressed a lot of what this narrative is all about (Clem, we had this discussion group years ago called JBAS- Joshua Ben Adam Society after the name of the historical Jesus). This new narrative is emerging out of the contemporary transition to a post-religious future. It involves the discarding of old gods and their religions for something new and quite different (remember Karen Armstrong’s argument that atheism has often been the discarding of gods that no longer work for new ones).

I like to view this great time of transition to something new in terms of Joseph Campbell’s comments that our human story is about overcoming the animal in order to live as human. The struggle against those base drives we have all inherited, the struggle to conquer them so that we may live as  more truly human. And what does it really mean to be human? This question is central in a time when being human is devalued (humanity is just another species of animal and a curse on the earth). Ray de Souza recently stated that “The heart of every culture is its attitude to the big question of human life and existence”. The Canadian ethicist (Margaret somebody) also noted that the greatest error of the modern age was this devaluation of human persons as just another species- the loss of human uniqueness.

And in the great transition away from old religious expressions of meaning we have all seen that the same themes of the old religions have re-emerged in new forms such as the environmental religion with its green apocalyptic. Things were better in the past (nature was pristine before greedy humanity came along- original paradise), sinful humanity has defiled the world and will be punished (an angry GAIA will punish our excess), there has been a cosmic rupture between humanity and the divine that can only be restored by the violent suffering and sacrifice of an innocent victim, and the end is coming for the unrepentant (environmental collapse). Same old themes regurgitated once again. Its all getting worse and heading for collapse and ending. Repent the end it nigh. Return to a morally superior low consumption lifestyle.

All of this embodies the worst features of religion- the devaluation of humanity as a cursed, impure, defiled thing; destructive, and deserving of the worst forms of punishment. Divine rage toward human imperfection and divine coercion, threat, domination, and ultimate retribution. These themes play to fear of retribution, punishment, guilt for enjoying life, terror of some horrific apocalyptic ending of all things. The dissolution of society and order into chaos.

And then we have witnessed the emergence of this startlingly new and liberating narrative of reality and life. Information on this narrative comes from all over- from historical research (yes, Jesus Seminar material plays a part as does Bob’s Scandal of JBA series), from neuroscience and consciousness research, from quantum theory, from NDE (Near Death Experience) research, and so many other places.

The new narrative points to some fascinating things- that nothing defines being human more than unconditional love (emphasis on unconditional in all its glorious light). And this was at the core of Jesus’ teaching and parables (historical versus Christian Jesus). Religious people continue to facilely employ this term unconditional but void it entirely with a theology that is all about darkening conditions of the most horrific kind (infinite requirements to satisfy an angry and demanding deity).

We have seen in the new emerging narrative that God is indeed love and light and this is at the heart of all reality and life. There is no coercion, domination, threat, judgment, payback, or any other form of fear-engendering retribution coming from Love and Light. And with this new view of deity as indeed unconditional Love, we have seen death in an entirely new light as not encounter with Grim Reaper but as encounter with Being of Love and Light. Death has lost its sting and its darkness and its ability to terrorize and enslave humanity.

So the core themes of a new narrative are liberating human minds in new ways unimagined just decades ago. These themes get to the very heart of being human and human existence. They liberate people to more fully embrace and engage life to make the world something better. They liberate us to continue the progress of human civilization (creating order and complexity) to new increasingly new heights. The future is indeed infinite in all directions.

All evidence shows that all reality and life have been on a rising trajectory of improvement, advance and never ending progress from the very beginning. Now we can understand better why all has been rising toward something better- behind all reality is infinite Love and Light. And how this leads to a new valuation of being human. We are a wonder as embodied consciousness with its basic impulses to compassion, freedom, learning, exploration, innovation, improvement, and so much more that expresses our core nature as light. We are the light of the world. We are all expressions of Light and Love incarnated. This leads to an entirely new appreciation of being human and to new self-imaging, self-affirmation and so on. It is no small thing to be consciously  human.

But let me continue more later. Lets get this discussion roaring again. And lets bring in lots of others to enjoy this new narrative that we are all responsible to shape.

What do you say Bob, Julia, others?

Just to add a bit to this theme of ‘The wonder of being human’ (borrowed from John Eccles book of that title). A man said this after his Near-death experience, “(The Light)...it was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. I just went into it and it was just overwhelming. It was like all the love you’ve ever wanted, and it was the kind of love that cures, heals, regenerates....Now I came to this with  my negative view of what has happened on the planet. So as I asked the light to keep clarifying for me, I saw in this magnificent mandala (circle symbolizing the universe) how beautiful we all are in our essence, our core. We are the most beautiful creations. The human soul, the human matrix that we all make together is absolutely fantastic, elegant, exotic, everything. I just cannot say enough about how it changed my opinion of human beings in that instant....I said, ‘Oh my God, I did not know how beautiful we are’. At any level, high or low, in whatever shape you are in, you are the most beautiful creation, you are. I was astonished to find that there was no evil in any soul. I said, ‘how can this be?’. The answer was that no soul was inherently evil. The terrible things that happened to people might make them do evil things, but their souls were not evil. What all people seek, what sustains them, is love, the light told me. What distorts people is lack of love”

This reminded me of the Hindu woman who after her NDE came to a new realization of the wonder that people were.

Clem, If it is not too much of a shock to your system, let me give you a bit of background on my journey over these past decades, since leaving Mindanao. It is a journey that has benefitted immensely from interaction with varied others along the way. It has been a journey toward ever-increasing hope and there is nothing like hope to steel one’s spine and drive out the darkness. Hope has always meant more to me than faith.

As I recount these things I would emphasize the importance of being open to all evidence no matter how upsetting it might be to one’s personal worldview. Most people look for things (anecdotes not long term trends) that will affirm their beliefs and commitments and most people abhor change, especially too radical change. I like to think I have remained open to radical change if the evidence supports it no matter how discomfiting it may be.

Years ago numbers of us read Joseph Campbell on the history of mythology and religious ideas (also Mircea Eliade). We also read much of the Jesus Seminar research on the historical Jesus. Others we imbibed included Karen Armstrong on the history of God ideas. Much of the belief system of Christianity derives from the same body of mythology that has informed all world religions and other belief systems. These myths (and I don’t use myth disparagingly) include themes of a former golden age or perfect beginning, a subsequent fall and separation from the divine, an angry god evident in the destructive forces of nature, sinful people that have defiled the world, sacrifice to appease the angry god/gods, coming calamity as punishment for sin, a time of cleansing, ending and restoration to original paradise. This narrative is now seen as distorting the actual story of the cosmos and life and many of us have abandoned it. Abandoning such mythology also involves abandoning many other related religious themes- that Jesus claimed to be God (he claimed to be only human- the human one, son of humans), that he believed he was a sacrifice for the sin of humanity, and so on. Out of the Jesus Seminar we got a clearer view of the core teaching of this fascinating historical figure. His followers mistakenly tried to explain him in terms of the themes of the old narrative of fall, separation, sacrifice, and apocalyptic ending.

Others like Thomas Sheehan helped us to see there never was a God above in heaven, a male king ruling over life. We took this and clarified further, recognizing that there never was a separation of God from humanity, there was no rupture to be restored, not broken relationship to be healed. God never left us. God is manifest in human emergence since the beginning. This is where God is seen and known most clearly. This is not a story of original perfection and fall but rather a story of imperfect beginning and the slow progress toward something better, something more conscious, more advanced, and more humane over time. God is evident in the emergence and growth of love in human society over the millennia. God is evident in the never-ending development and improvement of human civilization. The old narrative and mythology did not see this and missed it, opting for an apocalyptic narrative of decline and decay and coming destruction.

The most profound insight in our journey has been to see more clearly the absolute supremacy of love. This is the essence of being human. This is the fundamental nature of reality and life. This is behind everything. And not just love, but unconditional love. An incomprehensible, scandalous, and even offensive love that forgives everything, includes everyone, offers everything freely to all, and simply overwhelms with its brilliance. This is what divinity is all about. This is what life is all about. This is what humanity is to be all about. There is no divine anger at human imperfection but rather infinite patience with the freedom and development of  humanity as a whole and with the progress of each individual life story and venture. In that love there is no desire for payback, punishment or revenge. There is no demand for correct belief as some sort of condition for acceptance. There is no coercion or control from above with such love.

We also learned that justice according to the OT prophets did not mean payback and punishment for wrongdoing. It meant liberation and scandalous generosity. And of course common sense tells us this does not mean permitting people that cannot control their basest impulses freedom to harm others. Love and justice mean the protection of the weak and ensuring the safety and freedom of all others.

Others helped us refine our thinking on such issues as human suffering and the presence of evil in life. We discovered there was no intervening, controlling deity managing the affairs of people or rushing in to save us from the devastating accidents of nature. We discovered that Love values freedom above all. Without genuine freedom there is no genuine goodness (absolute freedom of choice to be human). But such freedom also opens the way for free choice for evil. And that can devastate others. This is still an area of confounding mystery. A God of love exists everywhere sustaining every atom in existence every moment, yet does not coercively interfere or overwhelm the freedom of life and humanity. Earthquakes surprise and kill thousands. Yet the tectonic plate movement that produces such devastation is also necessary for the development of life (creation of mountains with their beauty and their effect on climate which impacts life and its development). And such disaster inspires people to find solutions to such problems which are then passed on to succeeding generations to their benefit.

So this is a rough introduction to the great transition to a new grand narrative.  The new narrative embodies the growing human awareness of what it means to be truly human. This is all about our advance toward light and love. The old narrative embodied the themes of an animal-like past- domination, exclusion, separation, destruction, payback. The new narrative expresses the themes of our human future- unlimited forgiveness for all, inclusion of all, radical freedom for all, no separation of humanity from the divine, and no fear of coming retribution or destruction.

These themes need to be absorbed into human consciousness and sub-consciousness more fully. To drive out the darkness engendered by the themes of the old narrative. These new themes will liberate human consciousness more fully. They will truly enlighten in the truest sense of bringing light. Embedded at the core of human consciousness, these new themes will take humanity to even new heights of liberation and progress.

So you asked Clem how the revolution was going. Its just getting started. This above is just a taste of some of the themes of a new emerging human narrative. Its all about a revolution of hope, light, love. May it spread like a wildfire through public consciousness.

Wendell

Let me add that the historical Jesus got the new narrative quite well. His core teaching and parables emphasize unconditional love like no one ever before him- scandalous inclusion of all, unlimited generosity toward all, unlimited forgiveness toward all, no payback, no retribution or punishment, and no requirements to be met before experiencing unconditional love. This theme of unconditional love is so central and so primary and so absolutely essential to the new narrative and understanding what it means to be human (the central issue of all existence and life). This is what the cosmos, life and human experience is all about. We exist to learn and experience unconditional love. The entire cosmos exists to provide an environment for us to learn and experience this within. It explains the purpose of existence and life like nothing else does.

All the writing on near death experiences also affirms this insight. The ones that clearly see this are most helpful. Others also see this but then interpret it in terms of their own religious beliefs which often end up distorting this core element. But that is divine freedom. We are not overwhelmed or coerced into suddenly changing our beliefs, not even in the next life. We still learn and grow and develop within divine patience.

Julia, thanks so much for this. I’ve shared it with Clem as I want him to be in on all this discussion and will draw in others also as we move along. Humanity as a whole has suffered too long and too much under all this darkness of the old story/narrative.  All the endless terrorizing of apocalyptic scenarios that are endlessly battering the public consciousness- global warming catastrophe, killer flu pandemics, economic catastrophe, potential war scenarios (note how some tried to whip up the Korean crisis) and so on. We were visiting friends over the holidays and they had two movies running in the entertainment room- 2012 (a story of the catastrophic end of the world based on the Mayan calendar), and The Book of Eli which is another post-apocalyptic story. The Book of Eli was filmed in a greyish, dark color throughout the movie. Such darkness and gloom and fear mongering. And this is from our major story-telling centers such as Hollywood. Such dark narratives, yet this stuff resonates with so much in human sub-consciousness. That we are a curse on the earth and deserve punishment and destruction and the divine is going to get us. What a monstrous, miserable worldview. And as Clem noted, our religions affirm all this darkness.

I was wondering around over the past year trying to figure out where to go next and this kept coming back to grip my imagination and fire my spirit. We have been making some absolutely amazing discoveries over the past few years and it has all been coming together and toward this insight of the past year- conquering the final monster and enemy, death. We have been given such light and liberation. And it is very much a reality based narrative- liberation to live fully in this material world and fulfill the mission or purpose for which our Creator has embedded us here for this short experience of life. To learn something of unconditional love.

We have this great  story to tell, a story of light, liberation, love. I so much want to get on with this in this new year. And to bring others along for the joy ride. As with so much else, and I affirm Clem’s point on this- it can seem daunting at times, all this radical change and transition, not quite knowing where it is going and the old emotions and guilt and fears sometimes resurface (there are giants in the land ahead). But lets keep focused on the great story we have. A story we know in our hearts to be true. It is based on the fundamental reality that is behind all else, behind all material reality (whatever this is), behind all life (all this emergence toward growing order and complexity), and behind this great movement of human civilization toward something better (physically better, mentally better, spiritually better, better in all ways). Our story is all about infinite, incomprehensible love and light- one and the same core reality and at the core of the universe. Remember the physicist who argued that light was the core reality behind all else. Others argue it is love behind all. Both are the same brilliant reality. And love and light that we can’t even begin to comprehend. This will drive out all darkness and despair. This is what the new narrative expresses through its varied themes.

I can hardly wait to get going again.

Clem- Julia is related to Bob Brinsmead (his niece) and she has been so kind as to share some thoughts from Bob below. Julia has been a fellow adventurer with the rest of us on this great journey of  hope. Also, her mother was with us in earlier ventures  (named Hope). I have always been impressed with the spirit of exploration and adventure in the story of the Brinsmead clan. They express such a sense of mission and excitement- of journey toward a promised land. This is something that humanity as a whole needs to experience, a sense of hope and adventure and liberation toward a grand open future of limitless possibility and unlimited progress.

So lets see what forms in the coming months and years. We are always just getting started toward a better future. And as Bob is always reminding us- its all about the fun of the journey. We don’t take our selves overly seriously, but see the great jokes along the way. Human frailty and fallibility and imperfection continue to provide a lot of fodder for a good laugh along the way.

**From:** Julia Tyack [[mailto:jhtyack45@hotmail.com]](mailto:[mailto:jhtyack45@hotmail.com])   
**Sent:** January-02-11 1:34 AM  
**To:** [wkrossa@shaw.ca](mailto:wkrossa@shaw.ca)  
**Subject:** Bob's on going dialogue - he will reply soon.

Wendell,  Update on today’s visit with Bob.

Bob said, “I’ve been into the Emails and read Wendell’s journey article – isn’t Wendell just great!!!.  It has fired my imagination for the emergence of A Grand New Narrative.   I’ll reply, a new grand narrative is essential for the emerge of a humanized future. This is the discussion we need to be involved in. Others have had this vision of hope, like Campbell and the author of the “Emergency of Everything”, but human society is still living by the old narratives of the last two thousand years.  A new narrative has not yet emerged in the human arena. Everything from Christianity, to Marxism (this includes all world religions including Islamic religions and world political movements) are rehashes of the old narrative based on myth and apocalyptic.

A new grand narrative will be based on reality not myth. It will grab the human imagination bringing hope and universal unconditional love. It will not be new wine in old bottles.  Religion of any form cannot hold the new narrative.  All religion puts conditions on love and acceptance.

Our first discussion needs to be why we need a new narrative.  We need to discuss the negatives of the old narrative in order to appreciate and understand the grandness of the New Narrative.  The New Narrative will excite the human imagination and humanize human existence. It will bring in a new human order. It will take away all fear of death while delivering contentment to live life to it’s fullest while serving in this physical state of existence.  Like those who have had an NDE human society will have an experience of ultimate love and know that everything being alright in the end.  It has been well documented how the fear of death holds humanity captive.  The new narrative will deliver people from this fear of death.

My daughter Sarah was swimming in Bob’s pool with her husband and children.  She heard the discussion and came out to listen.  She asked, “What is a new grand narrative and is God part of this narrative? Has this grand narrative ever been told before?”

Bob, “Yes this narrative was told in a local sense by the OT prophets. It was based on the exodus. The prophet’s story was a vision of hope not because of what was but because of the potential of what could be. They told their narrative against the backdrop of oppression and discouragement. Their story was of the God who acted on behalf of the oppressed. The land this oppressed people were given was a stony desert like country with the Jordon running through it like a miserable creek compared to the mighty Tigris or Euphrates of the other prosperous nations. This vision of the prophets for a better future eventually spread to the other nations, the Greeks had their vision etc.  Socrates died because he tried to dispel the Greek myths in order to have a more realistic narrative. Now another illustration of a narrative is my father coming to Queensland years ago.  You know to be human is to live in story. For humanity to progress to a more human future it must live in story and they need a Grand New Narrative as Wendell said.  I see even in the news papers this end of year there is comment that this Government doesn’t have a narrative to catch the vision of the people.  Well back to us coming to Queensland.   Pop came back to us in Victoria from his visit to Queensland with a grand story of a land flowing with tropical fruit and mighty potential. He packed us all up and in a hired truck sitting on a mattress with us boys in the back and Mum in the front beside the driver and we drove for two weeks to come to the bush farm in Numinbah.  The road got rougher and rougher and we eventually arrived to find rugged, stoney hills and a bush shack with two rooms.  Mum shook her fist at Pop and said, “You old brute what have you brought us too.”  He told her again of the Grand story, it was a story of potential, of hope, of what could be.  The Grand Story of human potential is a story against what seems hopeless. This is a story against the dark backdrop of evolution. It is the negative that makes the Grand Narrative shine so brightly and grab the imagination. This is a story of the God who disappeared in the human arena to bring human society to its grand potential against all odds.

The Jewish history then became a history of discouragement that the Narrative of the prophets was not happening.  So apocalyptic was born to explain the disappointment and redefine the narrative as only having potential at the end of the age.  This apocalpytic movement was born based on a story of a fall, a separation from God that destroyed the vision of the prophets.  Jesus rejected this apocalyptic and re-ignited the prophet’s narrative of human potential and rejected the notion of humanity separated from the Divine.

The world is waiting for the emergence of a new story.  Religion has been shown not to produce any better behavior than  non religion.  Love and discipline is seen in the non religious who don’t have the Christian narrative. You remember when we were running institutes in USA a Baptist guy was the care taker and asked me did I believe in Hell.  When I said no, he was wild and responded that if what I believed was true then he might as well have all the fun he wanted.  His narrative controlled his behavior through fear of not pleasing a vengeful God. This coercion can’t humanize for a future of human potential and freedom.

Another:

Clem, as we see what will form over the next while, I want to give you some more background on where we have been and what issues we have been engaging over the past decades. Some history if you will.

I hope we can bring in lots of diverse people to a new discussion- whether as participants or listeners. I think of Matt Ridley’s point here (The Rational Optimist) that very little discovery comes from the top, from academics or scientists or governing elites. Most discovery comes from average janes and  joes, tinkerers at the bottom in workshops. This is where  movements democratize and spread. This is where new things grow and spread. With just average people. And this is not to say any discussion should be limited to any demographic or section of society. It should be open to all, whatever their training or specialty or lack of.

We now have a basic outline of a grand new narrative or worldview and need to move on to the next phase. How to put it all together and get it out more. What sort of communication strategies work, ways of relating to public consciousness, what sort of communicable concepts and phrases that will resonate with a general public (participation in the free marketplace of ideas). And I am all for freedom in doing this. Exploration, diversity, innovation, testing. Never settling down. Our journey or mission here doesn’t end till it moves on to some higher stage elsewhere.

Some more on Bob’s point of why we need a new narrative. One reason is because many people have simply not abandoned the old one but keep searching around for something new and end up in just another version of the same old, same old. For instance, back in the 80s I left Christianity or so I thought. I used to joke that I thanked God for saving me from Christianity. And I left religion entirely, or so I thought. Then I went off to graduate studies at the University of British Columbia under the directorship of Bill Rees, a top Canadian environmental icon. Awarded the Order of Canada, in TIME magazine, world traveller, and recipient of numerous other awards and accolades. A leading environmental thinker and theorist. And I got caught up in environmental apocalyptic under Rees. That nature had once been pristine (original paradise), but fallen humans had come along and destroyed nature, and now it was all heading toward collapse. Punishment for human greed and desire for something better. So repent, the end is nigh. Turn to a low consumption  poverty oriented lifestyle.

I had not really abandoned the core beliefs of the old narrative. The new environmental beliefs were just the same as my old religious ones. And these beliefs are at the core of human consciousness (sub-conscious even), they shape our deepest levels of imagination and feeling and govern our responses to life.

At about that same time I got in touch with an old revolutionary, a rabble rouser, a trouble maker, a shit stirrer....oh, I cannot say enough good things about the man. Accolades fail me. But he tossed some hand grenades right into the depths of my consciousness and they began to explode and tore my old worldview to shreds. He had been doing this for decades before. Clem, remember those Verdicts that I gave you in Davao. Yes, Bob Brinsmead. Well, our little venture in JBAS was more of the same. What a liberating experience but also traumatic at times. Even frightening. It is no small thing to experience the disintegration of one’s worldview and to feel one is in no man’s land, lost and not sure where to turn. Fun, liberating, and sometimes frightening too. What you shared Clem is something the rest of us have felt also. You spoke to the same things many others have faced and are still facing. The sometimes trauma of radical change. Change at the very core of our being. This can be profound stuff. And many simply cannot face it and out of fear retreat to the supposed security and comfort of the old. To some old rigid belief system buttressed with claims of divine authorship. But we know they aren’t. They are just human creations claiming the divine validation. Hiding under the canopy of the sacred.

Finding a group of similarly minded free spirits can help anyone in making this transition or journey toward an open and free future. The journey toward a radically new worldview, a new narrative.

So many things come to mind and pardon my wandering a bit here. I think of how the old myths have enslaved so many human minds. Many people fear trusting average people with freedom. They don’t really want to set people free and hence expend much effort to control and constrain others. Note again the environmental religion. It fears freeing people to innovate and improve life and enjoy life. So it terrorizes people with the claim that such freedom will destroy nature and the world. People innovating and improving life are called a threat to nature. They are the enemies of the Green God, nature (based on the old pagan worship of nature). But no, people living as free are simply expressing the core light and love that is our authentic nature as humans. They are trying to make life better. To make the world better. By improving the living standards of all people they are also protecting nature. Matt Ridley shows this as do Julian Simon (Ultimate Resource) and many others. Ridley shows that our use of fossil fuels has led to a small human footprint and saved nature from unnecessary damage. Renewables are actually more damaging to nature and have a larger footprint. This is only one example.

But the environmental religion is just another version of the old enslaving religions many of us were trying to escape from. It believed that the past was better (original paradise), that humans are a curse and destructive force, that we are defiled and we defile paradise, and we need to be controlled and constrained and punished with coming calamity. Its all about the same old threat and fear and guilt and shame and despair. Bob shook me up from my environmental religion and helped me see that liberation entailed something even more profound. So we gave ourselves to understanding the history of mythology and its central themes. We had to understand where we had actually come from and what that was all about, before we were ready to embrace a radically new worldview or narrative. Something that was genuinely liberating and would put us in touch with our true humanity, our truest selves. We had to find out what it really meant to be human.

And what a process of discovery  and adventure this has been. Don’t ever lose the sense of excitement and pure joy at this venture. Sure it can be frightening at times as the old emotions resurface with all their fear, guilt, shame and despair. But get a good grip on the essence of this new story and you will find you don’t ever want to turn back again. This new story is at core about the most amazing love and light and hope and freedom and so much more. Your own spirit will resonate with it and give you an intuitive sense that this is what truth really is about.

So yes, why do we need a new narrative? Because the old one still (even in its many new variations such as environmental or green religion) dominates public consciousness and still enslave too many people. The old narrative still engenders fear and despair and darkness and constrains human freedom. Imagine what humanity could achieve if truly  liberated from the old narrative. The prospects are infinite in all directions. Wendell

This is my style Clem. I stop by the computer and jot a few ideas down then off to do whatever I was doing before. I do this throughout the days I  am home.

I wanted to add this in response to Bob’s comment about why we need a new narrative. So many of us hang onto elements of the old narrative/worldview and this can seriously distort the themes of a new worldview. I think of Einstein and his stubborn refusal to let go of Newtonian theory even as his own quantum theory emerged to replace the old Newtonian view of reality. And his arguments against the new theory were all religious. God doesn’t play dice, God doesn’t employ telepathy. He felt comfortable with the old and didn’t like the new and consequently became marginalized by the physics community as irrelevant.

Back to  our worldviews and their distortion of truth- you hear a lot from Christians about unconditional love. But they then explain this in terms of the old theology of payback and sacrifice and divine requirement and all this distorts unconditional entirely.

So also in many NDE accounts- especially those by Christians, Mormons, and so on. They see and even feel the unconditional love but then move on to interpreting their experience in terms of their religion and all its stages, levels, demons, and numerous requirements. I have no doubt they see the things they do and that simply shows the power of a mind shaped by its belief system. It can create a lot of strange things. And too often it distorts the unconditional love that is at the core of all.

So a good look at the elements of the old can help us see what are those themes of the old and what have they produced in human consciousness and life and history. This helps in comparing and contrasting with the themes of the new narrative. Darkness setting a backdrop for light. Making the light all the more brilliant. This can be a real useful educational approach.

Clem, just some more regarding other insights we have been discovering over the past decades. One important one is this issue of divine authority over humanity. To put it quite bluntly- the Bible is not the Word of God. This is especially important for those of us raised in a Biblically based tradition like Evangelicalism. It is the crux around which so much else spins. The Jesus Seminar was helpful in tracing the  historical process in which the NT was formed. It revealed what motivated the various writers as they interpreted the Jesus story and how they manipulated that story to advance their own varied causes and beliefs. In doing so they often distorted entirely the core message of Jesus. They were all quite willing to claim God had told them or spoke to them to validate whatever they wanted validated with divine authority. Once you claim something is from God it is hard for your opponents to counter that. They have to just shut up and submit to whatever you are pushing on them. We all know the effect of that from our own experiences.

So this issue of divine authority is critical to rethink. What, if anything, is to be in authority over humanity? I would argue that nothing is to be in authority over the individual human person. And this too has to do with authentic divine love. Let me add to Paul’s list of ICor.13- love does not coerce, love does not dominate, love does not threaten, love does not control, love protects freedom. Without genuine freedom, human existence is absolutely meaningless. The cosmos is pointless. There is no authority outside or above our human consciousness. The point of our life story is to discover or learn what is human and what is not human (what is love or what is not love) and to follow that ourselves whatever goes on around us or whatever the cost may be. And sure, we learn from the experience and wisdom of others around us, but that is not some final and closed authority over us. And even more we need to beware any claim of divine authority from another. Just as those early British Liberals understood the danger from the monarchy and government, so we extend that danger to divine forms of authority. What misery that has caused in human history- so many claiming a word from God and then leading others lemming-like over cliffs.

So yes, God is a democrat in the sense of Love valuing freedom supremely. There is no coercion or control with such love.

Related to this I think of the comments of Charles Templeton, the former associate of Billy Graham, turned atheist who then wrote an insightful little book on why he abandoned God. I don’t agree with all  he concludes as atheism always seemed just another form of extremist belief that comes to absurd and incoherent conclusions about reality and life. It battles too much with straw gods. But Templeton said that God is not like Idi Amin, demanding constant praise and worship and affirmation of his greatness. Think of this. When we hear of someone like Kim Sung-Il of Korea demanding on pain of punishment worship and praise and affirmation of his greatness, we rightly recoil with disgust at such pathology and sickness. Yet without blinking billions of people assume God is like this pathological self-centeredness. They project such onto God. No. God is genuine love. John and others stated this clearly. And true love doesn’t demand such inhumane subservience and humiliation. Such love is not self-centered but self-forgetful. Jesus gave us some sense of what God is like. Washing the feet of the other. Serving the other. And Bob has some good material on John’s gospel which presents a very different view of Jesus from that held by the man himself.

With our free individual human consciousness we now approach a whole raft of issues from an entirely new perspective. We look at a lot of things validated as divine imperatives in the Bible and reject them as inhumane. Most of humanity now accepts that something like slavery, even though affirmed by luminaries like Paul, is simply inhumane and wrong, no matter how many Biblical texts approve of it. So with texts advocating the subservience of women to men. Our common awareness of what it now means to be human leads us to new perspectives on what is true and right today. We now reject a lot of “God said” for entirely new views of what is human. We now recognize that people like ourselves wrote the texts of our holy books and claimed it as revelation from God but they were often acting from base motives to advance causes dear to them at that ancient and backward time.

So a new approach to this issue of divine or biblical authority liberates from the whole package of Bible theology or mythology. And that has all been about some ancient cosmic separation from God that had to be healed. A relationship that had to be restored. But did that breach ever occur in the first place? No. God never separated from humanity. In the Evangelical version it was claimed that Adam became curious about knowing wrong from right, a very innocent and healthy curiosity. So he ate a fruit. And this resulted in the Fall. And especially important to note was that death entered life at this point. There had been no death before. But a quick check of the fossil strata shows that death has been here from the beginning of life in its most simple forms. Long before humans entered the scene. So this causes a real problem with Romans 5- death entered by one man and life by another man. If one part of this parallelism fails, then the other fails too. At Wheaton College they were discussing accepting evolution as beyond question and reconsidering the Biblical creation story as myth. Then someone noted this problem it would cause with Romans 5 and the entire basis of Christian salvation theology. So they backed quickly away from that like they had just seen the end of their religion. Oooops.

We can see now that God never separated from humanity but has been inseparably involved with the rise of life and humanity since the very beginning. Instead of perfect beginning, Fall, and subsequent decline toward a disastrous ending, we now see the story of life as one of imperfect beginning and subsequent progress upward and onward toward something better, something more complex and advanced.  This is God manifest in life and especially in human life and civilization. Here we have found helpful such books as James Payne’s The History of Force which shows over the long term of history that humanity has gradually moved away from violence toward more peaceful existence. There are exceptions still today but note that the murder rate in the West has fallen over the past 7 centuries from about 20 per 100,000 people to just 1 per 100,000 today. And that is just one trend. There are many others that show similar advance and progress. This is love manifesting itself. Not rushing or pushing things along but gently persuading and inspiring toward something better.

And in rejecting the religious salvation theology I do not reject the very human desire behind it all. The desire to be rescued from a current situation that seems so less than perfect and to be carried away to something much better. I affirm that very human desire. But the biblical mythology of separation and salvation misses entirely what has actually happened in human history and it subjects all humanity to a dehumanizing system of theology- a system of thought control and behavioural control that distorts our humanity. It claims there was some perfect origin (Eden, paradise), a fall, humanity became cursed and destructive and even demonic, and it offers a plan to save via the violent sacrifice of an innocent victim (planned first degree murder in modern understanding). This is about violence and suffering to infinite degree, and horrific retaliation toward any who reject all this (eternal Hell). And the coming destruction of all the good humans have created on the earth (Revelation). All because some naked dude got curious and tasted some fruit long ago. What a sick God. Far worse than Idi Amin or Kim Sung-Il. It is all about divine payback to infinite degree. And the bible is full of verses about the biblical God taking vengeance and punishing those who disagree with him.

The historical Jesus saw through this salvation theology and offered an alternative based around unconditional love. There is no payback or retribution or threat in his core teaching. Note Matt. 5 and similar passages in Luke 6 and elsewhere- do not retaliate, do not payback, give freely without expecting return, without first getting repentance or request for forgiveness. Its is teaching that is offensive to most of  us with our sense of fairness and demands of tit for tat. It offends our sense of what is right just as the workers in the vineyard were offended with the generosity of the owner. And the older son was offended with the same generosity of the father toward the prodigal. In such love there is no requirement to first make a sacrifice or payment for wrongs done. There is just total forgiveness, acceptance, generosity without any requirement being fulfilled first. No payback demanded. And get this- Jesus says that if you act like this then you will be like your Father in heaven. This is what God is like. So where then does the God of Pauline theology come from? That God is all about divine payback, retribution, and punishment and conditions and requirements being first met before any mercy is shown. There is nothing of unconditional love with that God.

And as Bob has said, A God who first demands payment before he will forgive (the sacrifice of an innocent savior), is a God who knows nothing of genuine forgiveness.

Now Bob also contends that the OT prophets had some glimpse of insight into a new version of  justice that rejected payback thinking and advocated instead justice as liberation of the oppressed. But that teaching was soon buried and distorted by a surrounding culture and theology of the old pagan sacrificial payback mentality. Unconditional was lost or completely distorted within that context. So even the message of the historical Jesus in this regard was distorted and buried by his own followers who found it too offensive to the prevailing thinking of their times. For a good summary of all this see Bob’s series The Scandal of Joshua Ben Adam.

Then to close this up Clem, you said something brilliantly- that you felt you had lost touch with your humanity. That was beautifully state. Thats it. What are we as human beings? What does it mean to be genuinely human? We intuitively sense and know it has to do with love. This as Albert Nolan said (Jesus Before Christianity and Jesus Today) is our authentic selves. Compassion or love. This is what we are most essentially. This is at the core of our consciousness. And we all struggle to express it in our lives.

I felt the same during my experience in religion- that I was often obligated to act in ways that violated my sense of being human. I was obligated by divine authority to do things that made me wince at times. Like the time I was riding a jeepney from Tagum to Davao and an elderly man told me that even though we were different religions we were all brothers. I responded Evangelically that no, we couldn’t be brothers because we had to first be born again as true Christians (Evangelicals). I rejected his kind overture and offended him out of a sense of obligation to my religion. I acted inhumanely toward an expression of love and acceptance from another human being. And my religious experience was too full of such nuttiness.  So yes, God did save me from Christianity. And hopefully from all religion. Or more correctly, I saved myself from it all with divine inspiration via others. As Jesus was want to say, your faith has healed you. Not God’s or mine. You did it yourself, and you are now free to return to your life. I don’t want any followers starting some new religion in my name. God back to your village or wherever and heal yourself. You are free and independent.

And there is so much more, but enough for now. Hope this gives some sense of some of the insights we have been playing with over the past years and how they related to one another.

Just some thoughts on getting into shaping something more clear on this new grand narrative. During the 60s there was that bursting forth of peace and love that swept people along with excitement at what many could not articulate. As Paul McCartney said about the Beatles’ contribution to that excitement, “I’m proud of our music, it was all about peace and love”. It got to the core of what we as humans are. But it was not expressive of anything overly coherent in the sense of being based on some larger clear narrative of reality and life. It was a lot of good feeling.  And without elaborating clearly on exactly what was happening in the sense of what we were leaving and where we were going, much of that feeling dissipated over time. Bruce Springsteen said later that he regretted the loss of the idealism of the 60s. Yes, where did it go?

This is what Bob was getting at in suggesting that we need to know more clearly why we need a new narrative. If we don’t clearly understand what we need to leave and where in contrast we need to go, then a lot of excitement and hope can dissipate into thin air or once again get sidetracked to more of the same old, same old. I see this in the wake of 60s excitement over peace and love. Many people at that time even abandoned their religion or the religion of their parents. But what then? Decades later TIME noted that many of these Baby Boomers later in life returned to the religion of their parents. Many others moved toward New Ageism and related beliefs. And again many of these same people found themselves swept up in the Green religion of modern environmentalism which from 50,000 feet up differs hardly a hairs breadth from religions like Christianity. When you don’t understand clearly what you are leaving then how can you clearly grasp where you need to be going in the future? You are likely to end up in just the same old.

So much if not most of humanity today continues to feel the impact of those ancient barbaric mythical themes that have shaped all world religions since ancient times. Themes of a better past, a fall due to sinful humanity, a separation from ultimate reality (abandonment, rejection by that which matters most in the larger scheme of things), a sense of fear/foreboding about the future, a sense of coming calamity due to our greed and destructiveness, guilt over any success or real embracing and enjoyment of life, and more. And few have actually broken free of the felt need to please, serve, appease some ultimate reality, a sense of cowing obligation to a vengeful, payback deity (whether God, GAIA, or nature). There is a lot of constraining fear about really embracing life due to residual fears, guilt, shame, despair. These old narrative themes have been hardwired into human consciousness over millennia.

Now how do you challenge all these people to take a closer look at what they really believe in the depths of their consciousness and how damaging that has been to them and to all humanity. And that leaving that old mythology is not leaving truth or right but is leaving something pagan, barbaric and harmful. And that all that old mythology has nothing to do with reality, with a true divinity, or with love. It was all based on a straw God.

How do we take that very common human intuition about peace and love and focus it on a reality that more truly expresses what genuine peace and love are about? We need to show the true nature of all that old mythology and challenge human thought to more clearly grasp what love really means.

The good thing about introducing a new narrative focused on this primary value is that it will resonate with people’s intuitive sense about this. People instinctively know that humanity is to be about something better. This is what we are meant for.

Bob has suggested some themes that might express what a new narrative is about- the OT theme of exodus for instance. Liberation or freedom and moving into a free and open future. The limitless potential of the future (Freeman Dyson- Infinite In All Directions).

I see another theme in this most common of human values- love. Everything, and I mean everything, seems to be heading toward love. And this is a form of love that none of us can fully grasp or elaborate on. The NDEers give some sense of the overwhelming wonder that this is. But all the cosmos, all life, and all of human civilization are heading toward this. Toward something more truly human or humane, something more truly loving. This appears to be the point and purpose of all the progress of life and humanity. It is all rising toward love and this rise seems to explode exponentially on the liberating transition from the material to whatever comes after.  This material venture seems to be a  preparation, a learning time, a practice for that ultimate experience of love.

And the learning and experience of love is a vastly diverse thing. It is evident in Norman Borlaug’s long years of sweating in the Mexican sun trying to find the best combination of genetic offspring to make a hardy new wheat grain that would save the lives of billions of people. It is evident in the many labouring in labs trying to find new combinations of drugs to improve human health. To find new machines to make human life more prosperous and easier. To start new businesses that will employ more people. And on and on. It is a many splendored thing.

Despite the worldview that prevails at any time, many people will find a way to engage life and make it something better. Despite whatever despair they might feel about things. But wouldn’t it be even more liberating to see people freed of all that constraining burden of old mythology and really liberated in the depths of their consciousness with the themes of a new narrative? That ultimate reality is  actually something good, not something to be afraid of. That we are surrounded by and sustained by something that is actually  love and light in the best sense of what these mean. That there never was a  perfect origin, there never was any separation, rejection or curse, that we are love and light ourselves, not darkness and evil, that the future is not to be feared or dreaded. It is not going downhill but rising steadily toward a better future.

Another:

Bob, Julia, Pardon my slowness in finishing Ridley’s Rational Optimist but I am just going through his section on pessimism near the end. This is amazing. And this speaks so profoundly to why we need a new grand narrative. This is where the battle- the battle that really matters on this planet and in human history- this is where it is. This is the real monster to slay, the greatest of all monsters. This is what we are fighting for- to defeat this monster of pessimism which is simply a summary concept that expresses fear, worry, gloom, despair, and all the rest of the dark things that drag people down. This is the emotional expression of the belief in apocalyptic. Our new grand narrative is the weapon to slay this monster. The Love that is behind all has endlessly manifested itself in the never ending progress of life and humanity in particular. This spirit of love cannot be restrained from endlessly breaking forth through human innovation, invention, work, trade, and all the rest that is progress.

So our story must come to grips with this thing of pessimism, this fear of change and fighting change, and longing for stasis. Why do we feel so safe with the familiar, and believing the past was better. Why the gloom over the new, over the open future? It is change itself that makes the future better as Ridley notes. Innovation. This leads to solving problems and takes us forward to something even better, even though we may not imagine exactly what that will be in the future.

Yes, our narrative must incorporate all this evidence of historical progress. This is the antidote to the cloud of pessimism that darkens human consciousness and causes many to seek to retreat from change and from an open future. The undeniable history of progress over the long term is the best evidence of the love that is at the core of all reality and life. Progress is the manifestation of love.

In his Rational Optimist Ridley notes the grand sweep of human history and how progress has been central to this history. But there is still the need for an overarching narrative to explain this progress, a larger story that will penetrate human consciousness and sub-consciousness. A narrative that will deal with the big questions people wonder and ask about, questions of why and meaning. This overarching narrative will inspire and enable even more of this progress.  It should deal with the themes of the old narrative, exposing their fallacy and damaging impacts on human consciousness and behaviour. It will offer clear alternatives. It will get even more to the root of things.

Contrasting themes of grand narratives

Below are a list of contrasting themes of grand narratives (just a sample)- one the dominant narrative in human consciousness from the past (Old Narrative) and the other a new narrative based on what humanity has discovered over the past few centuries to be the true nature of reality and life. These themes express the background ideas that shape the basic human orientation toward life and influence human emotions, thinking, and responses to life.

Central to the new narrative is the long trajectory of the rising progress of life toward something better. This is undeniable. All of the history of life is evidence of this, as is the history of human civilization. Why life rises and progresses toward something better will make sense in terms of people’s varied philosophical positions. Matt Ridley explains the rise in terms of his views of evolutionary theory. He notes well the varied steps and developing practices that promoted the ongoing rise. Others will explain the rising progress in terms of love seeking something better or the fundamental human desire for something better than what exists now. This impulse is behind all creativity and innovation. To find some solution to some disease or problem and to make life easier and better for oneself, one’s family, and one’s community or for humanity as a whole. Goodness, generosity, and love (expressions of a similar basic impulse) seek expression through improving life and the human situation. This primal impulse cannot be contained. It will burst forth somehow to continue the rising progress of life toward something better than what exists now.

To put this in metaphysical terms- the core of reality and life is some transcendent Love that must find expression in life. This is the most plausible explanation. There is nothing angry, malicious, threatening or frightening at the core of reality and life. This too is central to a new grand narrative.

The list of contrasts below is to help show what exactly it is that we need to leave in terms of basic themes that inform our consciousness and sub-consciousness and shape our orientation toward life.

1. A. Old Narrative- Perfect origin, then a fall and subsequent decline toward something worse.

B. New Narrative- Imperfect origin, no fall, and subsequent continued rise toward something better. This progressing rise has been slow but steady over the long term. One can understand this further in terms of freedom. There is no coercion, but divine toleration and patience with human development (no Noahic impatience and destructive anger with human imperfection). People are free and responsible to make something better out of life. And it is always a work in progress. Such progress involves suffering and struggle as essential to learning. It is a free process because only genuine freedom can produce the genuine moral choice and goodness so valued by divinity.

1. A. Old Narrative- Devalues and demeans humanity as responsible for the fall and decline of life. Humanity is defiled, corrupt, dark and selfish, and destructive. This is the essential nature of being human.

B. New Narrative- Humanity as embodied consciousness is a wonder that is essentially love and light. Human persons are most essentially compassion (this is our true self). People are creative on balance, not destructive. We have not caused any fall or decline in life.

1. A. Old Narrative- Humanity as corrupted is responsible for causing a cosmic separation from the creating Source. This has led to rejection of humanity by that Creator. If human rejection by parents/family  has devastating impacts on people’s psyche, how much more devastating is the belief that human being are rejected by their Creator/Father.

B. New Narrative- There has never been any separation of humanity from God, no rejection by God. There is absolutely no evidence of such a separation accompanied by the ruin of nature (the sudden simultaneous emergence of death, thorns, sweat glands and crawling snakes in the fossil strata).

1. A. Old Narrative- The ruptured relationship with the divine requires a salvation scheme. This involves sudden divine intervention to restore what was ruptured based on theories of atonement (that blood sacrifice- violent suffering and death of innocent victim- is required to appease infinite divine requirements). Lost original perfection will be restored from outside of humanity. God will restore by overpowering action to clean up the mess humanity has made of things.

B. New Narrative- No salvation is required because no rupture has occurred. Life has since the beginning been about slow steady improvement, advance, development, and progress. Humanity is genuinely free and responsible for the improvement of life and the world. There will be no outside salvation scheme (divine intervention to rescue). Humanity has done just fine in ‘saving’ life.

1. A. Old Narrative- Life and the world will soon end in some catastrophic collapse as punishment for the sin of humanity.

B. New Narrative- There is absolutely no evidence of any coming catastrophic collapse of life. All evidence points to ongoing rise and progress. All the long term trends support this trajectory of progress.

1. A. Old Narrative- Engenders guilt, shame, fear, pessimism and despair. It leads to hatred of self (being human), hatred of life and the world, rejection of these, risk averseness and endeavours to escape life. The old narrative fosters the attitude of longing for the past, preferring the old, preferring stasis to avoid further decline.

B. New Narrative- Engenders hope, confidence, self-acceptance as a wondrous creature, embracing of life, love, hope, confidence in the future. The new narrative fosters the attitude of seeking change and something new as essential to furthering progress into the open and limitless future.

Wendell Krossa

Julia, there is something yet needed to tie all these themes and ideas together. A brilliant light to make sense of it all. Julian Simon, Lomberg, Goklany, Ridley and others all bring renewed hope with their lists of facts on human progress. But they lack a greater narrative to tie it all together and make the fullest sense of it. The NDEers offer glimpses of light and love but also often wander all over and get lost in other things like their interpretations in terms of their own narrow religious views and such..

Unconditional love may be the one element to tie all this together in the grand narrative. It is behind all reality. It replaces the ideas of darkness behind reality (even in modern science darkness reigns in human perception- heat death of the universe, dark matter and energy, eventual collapse and ending- this differs little from ancient perceptions of dark forces behind reality). But this light and love explain the rise that Simon and others noted. Here is the meaning of it all. And it all rises toward love, unconditional love. This is the purpose, goal, end, point of it all. It comes from this, exists to experience and learn this, and moves toward this goal and end.

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Julia, one possible approach to this issue of prologue or backdrop is in terms of discovery. We can set forth the entire old narrative in all its darkness as the backdrop, a narrative that has burdened humanity for millennia. And then present the new in terms of a discovery via our modern science and rationalism.

We have been told in the old narrative that there was something dark and threatening behind life, and it was all declining toward disaster. The early fears of people that the order of their existence would fall back into chaos and disorder, hence the yearly ritual to maintain order. Or the Sumerians believing things were getting worse (2 millennia BC). Or Zoroaster (circa 1000 BC) making his formal statement of apocalyptic- good conquering evil in some end time purging, a catastrophic ending. This type of thinking has been prominent for much of human history. That angry gods- angry with human imperfection- were going to bring it all to a disastrous and punishing end, a time of purging and restoring to purity and perfection.

But in the modern era with rational science we have seen a different story- that it is all rising toward something better. Science did not discover this but enables us to see it. In the story of the Cosmos, in the story of life, and the story of civilization.

Now, what does this rising progress mean? It points to love, generosity, goodness behind all reality and life. Light. Here also, you can introduce themes of exodus, freedom, conquering the animal to live as human (Campbell), progress toward unconditional love, and other related ideas to explain the rise.

Just to summarize some thoughts re a new narrative. Its about the relationship between these core ideas of rise/decline and the nature of ultimate reality or what is at the core of reality and life. This gets to core human concerns and human sub-consciousness and the historical Jesus said some interesting things in this regard.

The  very central distinction between the old narrative and the new narrative of reality and life can be expressed in these terms/concepts of rise or decline. At the heart of the old story there is a worldview of decline from original perfection toward something threatening. Science has shown us that this is not true- the cosmos has become more complex and advanced over time, life similarly has become more complex and advance, and so also with human civilization. This is progress or rise toward something better.

And this speaks to the nature of core reality- that which sustains all in existence and inspires it forward. There is something good behind all reality, not something dark, threatening and fearful.

You can trace out the development of the old story in many places. Recently, I went online to check new sources on ancient beliefs and they pointed to old well-known scholars such as Edward Tyler and Friedrich Muller on the origins of religion and their argument that the ancients believed spirits dwelled in the objects and forces of nature or that the forces of nature had human qualities such as good or bad temper and people transformed these into deities. Then research on blood sacrifice affirms more of this- that earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, floods were the work of angry gods. So sacrifice became a way of appeasing that anger- calming the anger, seeking good from the gods (one Australian site even suggested female menstruation had some part here- blood and life). All this sacrifice affirmed that what was behind all was dark, capricious, malicious, dangerous, frightening, threatening. The core reality was dark. This also fed apocalyptic thought and the idea of decline. Things could fall back into chaos if humans did not work constantly (new year’s rituals of appeasement) to keep the angry gods pacified and fearfully maintain order. Despite such efforts, all was headed for ultimate decline and disaster anyway. No  matter how hard we tried. You could not win.

The new story goes to the core of this worldview, this decline thinking. We know life is not fragile and easily destroyed or subject to quick reversal to chaos. It is resilient, it rises, it progresses and at this stage (last 100,000 years) it has human mind and consciousness to take it to even higher levels of development, advance, progress. Evolution could only take it so far, now it needs human input and thought. It needs human creativity to humanize it in entirely new ways. We are here to humanize life with our fresh perspective on what it  means to be human. And our civilization expresses this with its orientation to human rights and values. The potential and future are now unlimited- no longer restrained by the principles of evolution and the dark drives and forces of evolution and nature. It is a brand new era. And it seems to be rising exponentially now as Ridley suggests.

But to return to my linkage of rise/decline and what is at the core of reality and the ideas of Jesus. That man saw some fascinating things in nature that spoke to him of what lies behind all reality and life. And I won’t get into all the debate over what was his original sayings and what might be later additions. I refer more broadly to the Jesus tradition where there a many good insights whether he discovered them or not. For instance, he said that the blind man was not born blind because his parents sinned. This was not punishment for sin. There was not some threatening, punishing, angry beast behind all taking vengeance on imperfect people. This is a vital part of the challenge to views of what lies behind all reality. Is it really dark and threatening or is it light and love? Further, he noted the fundamental goodness and generosity of the ultimate reality behind all by showing the bounty of sun and rain freely given to all alike- good or bad in human perspective. Inclusive, not separating and excluding. All get the goodness of nature.

So what horrible things happened in life were not due to some threatening, vengeful deity. Jesus saw beyond all that mystifies people and confuses people (evil) to see essential goodness, love, inclusion at the core. He pointed this out to people in terms of mundane, daily, common evidence of good things given to all.

So life rises and progresses and does  not overall decline because the sustaining reality is good not vengeful. This is an essential difference between the old narrative and the new- light vs. dark.

And because he knew love was at the core of all Jesus could tell people don’t be afraid, don’t worry. Everything is going to be all right.  Despite the horrors going on around him he could reassure people to not worry or fear. Others and forces of nature could harm the body but not the core reality which our consciousness shares. This core is entirely different from the dark things in life.

And you can see this core reality manifest in such mundane daily things- small things like grass, birds being fed, sun and rain (regular patterns of nature or laws of nature).

So this new narrative venture is about purging consciousness of all that is dark and threatening and bringing in this light of infinite love, generosity, inclusion, forgiveness. It is about discovering a core reality that is quite entirely different from all humanity has perceived over the past. And this is something we can center on in dark times, something that reassures and keeps us strong in the face of much darkness in life. That at the heart of everything is this infinite, transcendent love and light. This overrides all else in terms of understanding what reality and life are all about.

Is this point clear? This connection between the decline/rise views and what is at the core of reality?  Love is manifest in rise and progress, vengeance and anger expressed in the old decline myths. This is central to getting the difference between these narratives. And it is a fundamental change in worldview that is simply huge in its impacts on human consciousness and well being. It is radical change.

Here’s another facet of a new narrative that has links to the old narrative. The real story of God is here on earth, not in some heaven. It is a material story. A physical story. A story of life and history. And this material historical story expresses love in that there is no rushing, no pushing, no outside intervention by spirits but rather those internal, inherent impulses that inspire and motivate to a similar expression of love. And love always values freedom above all. Freedom with its random accident, its learning and struggle.

The evidence of meaning comes from the material and physical also. Again, the Jesus tradition where evidence was found in daily mundane nature. He reasoned from the positive- rain and sun given freely, birds and grass clothed. And he reasoned from the negative- he was not born blind because of sin.

We add to this material, physical facet today. The evidence is not of decline to worse but rise to better. We argue from the evidence in nature. And we meet green religion on its own ground of nature. We see no scarcity but generous abundance, endless resources without limits. As Ridley said, there are endless new configurations of atoms we can create. And “the amount of oil left, the food-growing capacity of the world’s farmland, even the regenerative capacity of the biosphere- these are not fixed numbers, they are dynamic variables produced by constant negotiation between human ingenuity and natural constraints”. And even the Second Law is not a fixed overall constraint. We beat it all the time and progress ever more.

So yes, its about real history, and grubby physical reality. This is where the God story is taking place and where we make sense of it all. Wendell