

CONFERENCE to SAVE OUR FUTURE: Motivating Scientific *Logos* with Religious *Mythos*.

By Paul H. Carr, www.MirrorOfNature.org

Futurist Ruben Nelson of Foresight Canada enjoins us to co-create a new form of civilization by yoking scientific and technological *logos* with religious motivation and meaning, *mythos*. This is in response to the three-fold challenges:

- (1) weather extremes from global warming,
- (2) starvation from the exponential population explosion, and
- (3) depletion of critical resources such as fossil fuels on our finite planet.

The 130 attendees of this Institute of Religion in an Age of Science Conference (www.iras.org) came from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Spain, India, and Pakistan. It was held at the Silver Bay Conference Center, Lake George, NY, July 28 – Aug 4, 2012. Physicists Robert Bercaw and V. V. Raman were the co-chairs. The chapel speaker was Dr. Richard S. Gilbert, Minister Emeritus, First Unitarian Church of Rochester. Jacqueline Schwab, well known for her music on Ken Burn's TV, was the pianist.

Henry N. Pollack, professor of geophysics emeritus at the University of Michigan and author of "World Without Ice," spoke on the earth's changing climate. This is evident in the receding snow caps of the Himalayas, which feed major rivers in China & India. The water supply of two billion people is threatened. This is also evident in the US. The Colorado River, whose source is the snowcapped Rocky Mountains, no longer reaches the sea. Dwindling fresh water supplies and draughts are limiting the fruitfulness of our agriculture. Arctic sea-ice is melting more rapidly than IPCC (United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) models have predicted. The Arctic could be having an ice-free summer by 2030.

Global warming by 2030-2039 could shift agricultural production from the South to the presently too-cold climates of the North. When Ruben Nelson was asked, "Should US citizens move to Canada?" his response was, "Get in line! We already have people who find the southwestern US too hot summering in Canada. In addition, we have a universal health care system." The Canadian banking system was the most stable in the Western World, after US and European banks crashed on 2008 due overinvestment in toxic mortgages.

Janet Ranganathan, vice president for science and research at the World Resources Institute, confronted the challenge of feeding two billion more people in her talk entitled, "The Great Balancing Act: How to Feed Nine Billion People while Sustaining Ecosystems in a Changing Climate. She stated, "Since the global wild fish catch has leveled off, fish farming must increase." Strategies for

responding to these challenges include restoring degraded lands, reducing food waste, and reducing competition for food crops from fuels.

Jorgen Randers in his book "2052: A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years (ref 1)" predicts that the world population will peak at eight billion in 2040. The population explosion in underdeveloped countries is being moderated by the Bill and Malinda Gates Foundation's investment of four billion dollars in birth control technology. The population of developed countries has stabilized. Randers forecasts that food production could crash after 2052. There will nevertheless be enough food for those who can pay.

Physicists V. V. Raman's talk was "Energy: Some Perspectives from Physics" and Robert Bercau's "A Brief History of Growth and the Challenge of the Fourth Era." Paul H. Carr's workshop, "Can Technologies Save us in Time?"(ref.2), described advances in non-carbon-emitting technology.

Brian Czech, president of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy, advocated this economy to prevent environmental degradation of our water, soil, plants, and endangered species. A steady state economy is preferable to periodic depressions.

Developed countries are trending toward such an economy according to Jorgen Randers (ref 1). The current dominant global economies, particularly the United States, Europe, and Japan with a population of one billion will stagnate. China and BRISE (Brazil, Russia, India, South Africa and ten leading emerging economies) with a population of four billion will progress. Their demand for limited fossil fuels and limited metal resources will increase, as they strive to make their per capita Gross National Product comparable to that of the developed countries. Fortunately new knowledge-based information technology does not stress natural resources as much as material manufacturing. Better software propelled Google's spectacular growth.

Bron Taylor, Professor of religion and environmental ethics at the University of Florida, gave a hopeful talk "Green Religion: On the Possibility that 'Reverence for Life' Ethics Might Help Secure a Flourishing Future." He advocated significant religion-resembling cultural innovations that consider nature sacred and intrinsically beautiful. Similarly Brian Czech recommended that the Happiness- Satisfaction index should be considered with the materialistic Gross National Product. The best things in life are not things.

The workshop "Stealing the Fire of the Gods and Healing the World" by psychiatrist Albert Levy and his son Maxwell showed how moral principles were communicated in ancient Greek myths. These and the biblical stories that strive for creative conflict resolution can lead us to a new moral science.

Rachel Carlson's "Silent Spring (1962)" helped launch the environmental movement that awakened the world to the ecological threat of DDT, resulting in its world-wide ban. Compelling stories such as this could create the new religious *mythos* needed to save our planet.

References:

- (1) Jorgen Randers, 2012. "2052: A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years"
<http://www.lastcallthefilm.org/en/blog/jorgen-randers-presents-2052>
Randers was 3rd author of "Limits to Growth," 1972
- (2) Paul H. Carr, 2012. "Can Technologies Save Us in Time?"
http://www.mirrorofnature.org/IRAS_CAN%20TECHNOLOGY%20SAVE%20US2.html