

The Life of the Future

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Over the past 20 years, I have developed the habit of working with affirmations. An affirmation is a positive statement, made in the present tense, and anticipatory of a good result, one that adds to one's happiness and experience of well-being. So I would like to open my sermon today with two of my favorite affirmations concerning the New Year:

1) "We must not have fear for the future. I see that the future is bright with promise. It beckons me forward into a more complete realization of my own worth and my rightful place in the Universe. All of my tomorrows will be happy and filled with harmonious occupations."

2) "I look to the future with great and pleasurable anticipation, knowing it will expand my opportunity for radiant self-expression. I love my past and my future, and understand that they are but continuations of the one unbroken chain of life. There is no future to be afraid of and no past to bring discord into the present."

A. I realize that given last year's election ugliness, and the election of what looks like a person who is filled with negativity in both ideas and plans, and an incoming cabinet filled with the worst possible choices to lead key positions in government, that my two affirmative statements may seem like those of what once was termed a "cockeyed optimist." However, the great spiritual minds have all pointed out that whatever we give our attention to grows. Jesus is reported to have said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Buddha was reported to have stated, "Whatever you think about all day, you become." And subatomic particle physicists have discovered that the smallest subatomic particle's behavior is determined by the observer, and they now use the term, a "participatory universe."

B. During my first year of ministry in Visalia (which was in 2003), I invited a gentlemen by the name of Steve Bhaerman to entertain at an annual church fundraiser known as Autumn's Opulence. Mr. Bhaerman is a comedian who uses comedy to get to a higher truth, to break down the mind's defenses in order to provide a different perspective about things. In the 1960's, he was a political science major and a social activist. He's really quite a brilliant man and he calls his comic persona Swami Beyondananda. His comic material is usually about politics and religion. One of his quotes is: "I have good news. There will, indeed, be peace on earth...I sure hope humans are around to enjoy it."

1. You have no doubt noticed that:
 - a. More weaponry doesn't bring peace;
 - b. More prisons don't reduce crime;
 - c. More expensive health care doesn't make us healthier; and
 - d. More information doesn't make us wiser.

2. Albert Einstein once famously stated that a problem couldn't be resolved at the same level it was created.

C. The reason I bring up Steve Bhaerman aka Swami Beyondamanda is that he and a very famous biologist and author, Dr. Bruce Lipton, wrote and published a book together in 2009 entitled *Spontaneous Evolution*. In that book, they observed that, "Our civilization is presently in a state of disorganization and disintegration. We are currently in need – in dire need – of evolutionary advancement and [we] don't have time for a slow, gradual evolution."

1. They point out that folks used to imagine getting "away" to a mountain retreat or some other remote place to live in "quiet sanity."

2. Mr. Bhaerman recalls meeting an individual who was a world renowned expert on communal living and that, unfortunately, no one could stand to live with him.

When we look at the current world situation, we see that there is no "away" to get to. The air we breathe and the water we drink are all part of an interrelated ecosystem. It was once suggested that when a butterfly flaps its wings, somewhere a hurricane occurs in another part of the world. We are all in the "project" together. Radioactive fallout from a nuclear disaster such as Chernobyl or air pollution from China or medical waste dumped in the ocean all travel across borders and pollute.

Most of us feel powerless to do anything about the huge challenges facing humanity. We clearly see the need for dramatic change but don't see how it is going to happen soon enough to avoid disaster. However, here is a very important point: **crisis ignites evolution**. In their book, *Spontaneous Evolution*, Dr. Lipton and Mr. Bhaerman cite two examples of rapid shift – of seemingly impossible change.

1. Spontaneous remissions from supposedly terminal disease and the transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly:

2. They state, “While we often perceive examples of *spontaneous remission* as miraculous healings that happen by the grace of God, looking a little deeper we see something else at work. Quite often, these fortunate individuals actively participate in their own healing by consciously or unconsciously making a key, significant change in their beliefs or behaviors.”

“The story of a structure failing and something else rising is a familiar one that plays over and over again in the biosphere. Life is in a constant state of perpetual re-creation. If you find it hard to believe that we can ever get from the crises that we are facing now to a more loving and functional world, consider the tale of another world in transition. Imagine you are a single cell among millions that comprise a growing caterpillar. The structure around you has been operating like a well-oiled machine, and the larva world has been creeping along predictably. Then one day, the machine begins to shudder and shake. The system begins to fail. Cells begin to commit suicide. There is a sense of darkness and impending doom.

“From within the dying population, a new breed of cells begins to emerge, called *imaginal cells*. Clustering in community, they devise a plan to create something entirely new from the wreckage. Out of the decay arises a great flying machine – a butterfly – that enables the survivor cells to escape from the ashes and experience a beautiful world, far beyond imagination. Here is the amazing thing: the caterpillar and the butterfly have the exact same DNA. They are the same organism but are receiving and responding to a different organizing signal.

“That is where we are today. When we read the newspaper and watch the evening news, we see the media reporting a caterpillar world. And yet everywhere, human imaginal cells are awakening to a new possibility. They are clustering, communicating, and tuning into a new, coherent signal of love. Love, we will find, is not some mushy-gushy sentiment but the vibrational glue that will help build this new flying machine and manifest our destiny as humanity – what we call “humanifest destiny.”

“Chances are you are among the evolutionary imaginal cells who are contributing to the birth of this new version of humanity. Although it may not seem evident now, the future is in our hands.”

1. We are, each one of us, part of the new breed of imaginal cells;
2. Our job is to contribute to the birth of a new version of humanity;
3. To secure the future, we must empower ourselves with the knowledge of who we truly are and what our real power is to heal ourselves and the planet by changing our beliefs and behaviors;

4. We must participate in the next evolutionary step by seeing things from a new perspective. One of my favorite Steve Bhaerman Swami Beyondananda statement is, “I believe we were created to evolve. Otherwise, Jesus would have said, ‘Now don’t do a thing until I get back.’”

5. We evolve by understanding that we are part of a larger body – humanity – that appears to be in the caterpillar-falling-apart stage. A quote by Dr. Ernest Holmes says, “There is no sin but a mistake, and no punishment but an inevitable consequence.” The “mistake” is not knowing who we truly are: expressions of the Divine, sacred and one with the whole. The “evitable consequences” of that not-knowing are the destructive acts against ourselves and others and the earth.

6. Again, as Swami Beyondananda would say, “The Truth will upset you free.”

So, in spite of our current state of crisis, I do believe that “with a firm understanding of how our programming shapes our lives, and the knowledge necessary to change that programming, we can rewrite our destiny...A miraculous healing awaits our planet once we accept our new responsibility to collectively “tend the Garden rather than fight over the turf. When a critical mass of people truly own this belief in their hearts and minds, and actually begin living from this truth, our world will emerge from the darkness in what will amount to a spontaneous evolution.”