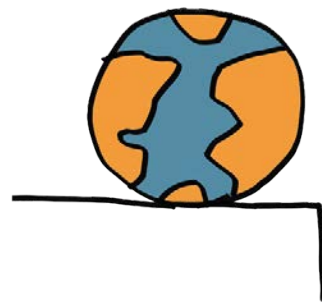


SEIZING AN ALTERNATIVE
Toward an Ecological Civilization
June 4-7, 2015
Section I: The Threatening
Catastrophe:
Responding Now



Discussion following Rick Clugston's presentation

Unidentified male speaker: One of the biggest problems is, as I showed on the footprint, how do you deal with the problems of developing countries? You have unemployment in some of the countries of 20 to 40 percent. And, not surprisingly, there's a lot of unrest over there. To be able to make the argument about ecology, the typical solutions just don't ring true with those kind of people. How do you deal with that in a way that makes some sense in a larger world?

RC: Well, obviously, it has to do with a lot of education. Part of that, we hope, will come thru their houses of worship and their spiritual traditions. A lot of the work is bringing together people who represent different faith and religious communities. Get them opposed to greed, and get them much more on board. The Roman Catholics is a good example. Greek Orthodox has been way ahead of it. The Patriarch is really behind this. Even in Islam and Buddhism, working with these groups, teaching and modeling is part of it. Part of it is also strengthen the voices within the government that get the need for transformative change. They're going to adapt a pretty good set of goals. Not rigid, universal, and integrated. And then next year, the big task will be to develop indicators, that is how we're going to measure them, as well as the financing.

DG: One of the big issues that underlies the problems that we've been talking about is world population. And so, is the Catholic Church going to be taking a leadership role from what you've described, with respect to embracing goals, legitimizing, dealing with problems that has occurred over the past few hundred years, have, through its policies, perhaps, has inadvertently been a major factor in the development of the problems that we have today. So, is there anything that the church is thinking about that is going to deal with this aspect of these global challenges?

RC: As transformative as Pope Francis is, there's a few issues he's not been very out front on. That's certainly one of them, the gender issue, also. The gender equity issue. The most he's done, he's kind of said, let's not focus on these; abortion, birth control, reproductive rights. Let's just focus on some things that are really pressing right now. But, if you look at population in raw numbers, it's the wealthy people that are creating vastly more of the problem. Often, population becomes a scapegoat. We will get up to 13 billion by 2050.

Unidentified male speaker (33:05) Your question, was it courage when the Pope got off the plane and said, "we don't need to breed 'like rabbits'." Maybe it's not in the Encyclical, but it may be offering a hint he's thinking about population.

RC: I think that's true.

Unidentified male speaker: Seems like one of the arguments for growth, though, is in order to bring all these people out of poverty, you need growth. The more people there are, the more growth you need.

RC: Yes, in the language of the sustainable development goals — no one is saying we can't have growth, but it's inclusive, it's sustainable. Part of what needs to happen is a lot more efficiency. 30% of food, for example, is wasted in the world food system, so cutting back on that while shifting to a completely renewable energy system. To have growth be sustainable means a need to transform the system so that people can earn more. The big issue is giving them much more justice, the distribution of money — and that one's a tough one to tackle. I think the number is between 40 and 60, the number of people who own have the world's wealth (someone offered 80 as the number). And the big question for them, is, how do they get the

rest. (laughter). So, dealing with all of that inequitable stuff is so foundational. That really is the trickiest part of all of this.

Unidentified male speaker: Speaking of American politics, the reality is, in the 1970s, EPA came into existence because of the Republicans. I think now, it would be amazing if you found one. Deal with that, and then you have the complexity that some Democrats come from Pennsylvania, and there's just no way they're going to vote against coal. And so, there is a solid block of people that are going to say NO to anything in this area.

RC: Will part of it, the part I'm more focussed on, is getting strong religious leaders from evangelical, Roman Catholic, to say to their parishioners, this is a real thing, and we have the moral responsibility. And, actually, there are quite a few evangelicals that are breaking ranks, if you will, and beginning to look at a lot of these issues, not just climate change in a different way.

DG: You say, you're focused on making that happen. How do you make that happen, in your role? What can you do to get them to do that?

RC: Well, part of it is what we're doing here. Pull people together, and work on joint statements. Develop packages that people can take to their temples and congregations, and help provide support for that. Hopefully, they can weigh in politically. Media is another big thing, of course.

Unidentified female speaker: I was XXX by the book by George Marshall, *Don't Even Think About It*. In the book he coined this phrase about not talking about climate change, but at the end of the book, he said, people don't want to talk about it if there aren't a lot of practical things that, without leadership, they can do about it. So, I guess the question is, do you think the Encyclical will start to wake people up in the political world?

RC: Yes, and just to give an example. I've been working for twenty years with the archdiocese of the Catholic University of Florida in Miami. Back in the early 1990s, we got environment as part of their mission. Then, it got taken out. The reason it got taken out is the Trustees went to the President and said, all this stuff about climate change is a pagan, communist idea, and we can't have it at a Catholic university. So, now we're doing a conference and there's an Encyclical, putting it back in. Most religions aren't organized like the Catholic church with an infallible guy on top that can tell people what to do.

Unidentified male speaker: Say, come Monday morning, tomorrow morning, we all represent organizations, cities. Can you give us some concrete ways we can join with you, collaborate with you, specifically, with our churches in this city, to organizations on out, something to act on in a meaningful way.

RC: Well, one thing coming from the track that I'm in, which is Mobilizing Inter-religious Movements to deal with the eco-crisis, that's one of the outcomes we're trying to create, put together a pamphlet on how you can be involved, what's going on in Paris. I'll send that to your group.

DR: What's the best website for your organization.

RC: It's Center for Earth Ethics, centerforearthethics.org So, we're redoing the Road to Paris too. There's a Pilgrimage to Paris that people are putting together, from now until during the Summit.

Unidentified male speaker: I think, in many ways, Martin Luther King and what he did, could be a model. Make use of some of his ideas. And, one of the most important things is, what do you do with the media. The civil rights movement wouldn't have been possible if it wasn't for

television. What are you doing to get television, and other media, turned on, excite, so they can have images that make people cry, and therefore voting the right way?

RC: I'm not doing much. But, we do have at Union Theological Seminary, people working on that towards the Fall.

Unidentified male: Are you involved in any of these movements to create a climate change university as part of COP21?

RC: No.

Same male: Well, that came out of the Tunis group, and also it came out of a Bonn group. So, you might want to look into it. That could be a powerful thing to educate a lot of people.

Unidentified male: Will Pope Francis be attending the COP21?

RC: Well, he certainly hasn't committed to doing it.

Unidentified female: Why do you think a religious approach is the best way to address this?

RC: That just happens to be my field. The way I look at it, people who are deeply religious, or deeply spiritual but not religious, deep humanists, deep values, often, the moral side of what this is all about hasn't been brought up powerfully enough, or effectively enough. Discussions of climate change have tended to sit more with technical, scientific, and economic issues. But, what we're seeing now, since so little progress is being made, even government leaders are reframing it more as a moral issue. Most people on the planet claim to be part of some religion or on some spiritual path, and that's where they get their moral guidance. And so, it's important to mobilize that constituency. There are lots of activities like the Citizens' Climate Lobby, or Climate Reality, or Climate Action, that are much more secular.

DG: Well, in making a presentation of your own to such a group, where they say they have a sense of spirituality, but they haven't really lifted up the moral dimension. What things would you emphasize?

RC: Well, it depends. If you're a Christian, and you look at Jesus' teaching, as Saint Francis did, it would have profound implications for how much wealth you had accumulated when other people didn't have much. You're supposed to give everything you have to the poor. So, a lot of it is pulling from the different traditions so, as religion and ecology does, so whatever elements in those traditions that actually call us to care, like community, and future generations. There are a lot of them, it's just that that voice hasn't been focused well enough for people to go, Man, the way we've structured our economics is so incompatible with what our core deep beliefs are, what the call of our traditions are, we better change this.

DG: Okay, you're talking either to Buddhist group, or Confucianist, then you think they're not doing this? What things would you do to lift up their faith? Would you say, have you thought of this? Say, Buddhist, for example.

RC: Well, in Buddhism, the groups are interconnected. All things are Buddhist, so all things have a quality or consciousness. And, that's true of Native American and a lot of indigenous traditions. When you are in a in-soul world, or a live world, not a dead mechanistic world, that carries certain implications for how you treat nature, animals and other people.

DG: So, if you decide we are all interconnected, everybody is a Buddha or a Dao, so what concrete moral stances would that imply?

RC: I think it would imply on the life style, my choices about how I live, what I eat, what I drive, and all that. I would be much more conscious about how I lived, so my carbon footprint was low

enough in a way that everybody can live. That personal life style dimension. The community dimension, at a university or community, or neighborhood, would be working together to actually do the same thing. Our collective carbon footprint at a low level.

Unidentified male: There's a book called *In Manchuria* by an American journalist who lived in a village in Manchuria, and the argument is essentially about the alarm of some people over the imposition of industrial agriculture in what used to be Manchuria. The video last night in the Plenary sort of lightly dealt with that, but I noticed that in the writeup in program, it was a little clearer. This group is kind of alarmed about developmental industrial agriculture. It was like a Confucius movie, so that group here at the conference apparently is very much against this.

RC: Who was the group? I wasn't able to be here

Several: Sheri Liao, from China

RC: And that is the whole struggle, and part of the conference. How do we preserve sound local ecological biological cultural systems? Without destroying them in the short term.

Unidentified male: I've written a book on some of these comparisons, and on the interfaith comparisons. That's one of the things I am, an interfaith minister. When I look into it, there is a wing of each religion, very strong in terms of what you're saying. And then, there's a wing that is not very strong at all. So, obviously what he has to do, is appeal to that set of folk, and reinforce them, and encourage them, and try to work together in a collective basis. But they're there. I can think of the *Apologist* (??). If you can figure it out after reading the *Apologist*, then you're kind of stupid. There's no question it's doable, it's just a matter of targeting it, and giving it the time to (unintelligible).

Another unidentified male: It seems like some of the work you are doing is encouraging a moral reorientation among world religions. I know it's not necessarily your area of expertise, but are there similar efforts among secular communities, and are there organizations there that are working along these lines?

RC: You're right, there isn't that institutional structuring. There are a lot of humanist organizations, but most of the people that have this moral sensibility work thru environmental or social justice or political organizations.

Unidentified male: The Humanist Hall in Oakland, California, has a representative here.

RC: Cool. And when they did this survey at Harvard, the religious affiliations is really interesting to look at. The growth of the Inter-spiritual or humanist/agnostic, humanist/atheist, are certainly increasing in all that spiritual but not religious category.

Unidentified female: Is there going to be anything on values? of world religions about climate change?

RC: Yes. We're organizing a Plenary, a whole track .

DG: As you are not going to be with us tomorrow Dwain summarizes the presentations, when we wrap up this effort, what would you say, from what you have presented, and our task in this group, in this track, to come up with concrete recommendations about things that can be done in the relatively short term, five, ten, maybe fifteen years. What would you think from your presentation that Dwain should emphasize?

RC: This is all focused on carbon neutrality and climate justice, right? That would be the outcome of doing these things. I would think of it on those three levels: What can I, and my family do?, and, what can the institution (church) do? [the policy level would be the third]

On the institutional level, let's say a higher education institute. There are major shifts that can take place, both on the operational side, and also with the curriculum. And the hiring, tenure, and promotions. Suddenly, this can't just be out on the fringes, but has to become central. Consciousness change, and motivations to do these sorts of things. So, pushing our institutions, to sign the President's Climate Pledge that the American Association for Sustainability in Higher Education promotes. Doing education about carbon ecological footprint. All those kinds of things, institutional reform.

And then, at the policy level. It's pretty clear some pretty transformative policy changes weighing in on them. Part of that is demanding a binding treaty. More than that, probably some kind of a weighing in on a fee and dividend strategy for promoting the carbon fee. Fee and dividend is the alternative to tax and spend, right? And the dividend goes to the people most disadvantaged by the transition. So, it is a just transition.