

Reclaimers of the Commons

Motivation for Activists

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Acknowledgments and Invitation

This set of reflections is dedicated to activists, those who have the strength and courage to address current social justice issues related to the disparity of wealth and care for the environment. We intend this to be a platform, a stimulus, and a starting point for all who accept that we can work together for a more just society. We seek common goals to help confront financial inequality and environmental problems caused by social addictions that cry out for solutions. May all citizens become concerned.

Prenote

In 1991, immediately before the start of the First Iraq War, I was so incensed about deliberate war that I went to Washington, DC to demonstrate in Lafayette Park in front of the White House. Several hundred other people were spontaneously gathering early that Saturday afternoon. Suddenly, buses of people (government busloads of 20-30-somethings) arrived, disembarked, and formed a silent line with locked arms at the west side of the Park. These goons moved slowly forward and swept protestors away without saying a word. My reaction was, "Why come 500 miles to be swept away while peacefully protesting for a just cause -- no war?" The crowd was pushed away silently and, in remaining, I was knocked to the ground mainly by a rather muscular female goon. It was embarrassing to be knocked down by a lady. My White House demonstration came to an ignominious end.

Over time, this unreported anti-war incident came back to haunt me. Why didn't I take my walking stick and swing it at those knocking me down? My rights were infringed upon, but what do we do? Return violent action? Speak out? As a seminarian in the Chicago area in the 1960s I had taken part in more organized civil rights marches (one in which Martin Luther King, Jr. participated). Those marches were well organized with proper permits; so were the numerous demonstrations opposing nuclear power plants in Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee and those against the Vietnam War in Texas. In 1969, I marched beside Joe Tom Easley, a "Nader Raider," who connected me with the Center for the Study of Responsive Law, with whom I started public interest work.

As I conclude my eighth decade of life, with half the time devoted to public interest activist pursuits along with priestly service, I know the torch is passed on to this century's marchers who must replace footsore elders. The work is still incomplete and deserves improvement. Current issues facing us today are not business-as-usual, for the health of the planet depends on public interest action. The "earthhealing" that we started on the First Earth Day in 1970 must go on, yes, it must for far more is at stake than first visualized. We must address the deeper causes of the environmental crisis.

Experience based on the first level of commitment in exposing environmental pollution in the 1970s, and at the second level of appropriate technology activism in the 1980s to 2000, evolved into a third level -- global confrontation of the causes of the crisis facing us today. Through demonstrations, websites, books, reports, and conferences, we have seen even more daunting problems facing our world today. Barriers include too little peacemaking and too much military weaponry; too little confronting the disparity of wealth in a world of a hungry billion; too slow converting from fossil fuels to renewable energy. The call is for cooperation of all people of good will to take up the issues before us. Activists must lead the way.

Introduction: We Confront the Here and Now

Activism is needed to preserve our threatened commons and to help regain what has been lost through wanton privilege and greed. The air and water belong to all; fragile land and oceans are for the use of all; the airwaves and the silent space are to be enjoyed by all; health facilities and educational opportunities ought to be open to all; travel routes and means of commerce are to be accessible to the general population; the movement of people to better environments must be a common concern of all people. Care for equality and justice presupposes care for Earth, which sustains human life. These two issues cannot be separated; they will become a singular issue.

In a democratic society, the wealthy privileged have no right to gain complete control over commercial operations, employment, areas of basic research, and mass media policy. Reclaiming our commons is basic justice, for these commons belong to the entire human family and deserve being shared by all. In this age of globalization, justice for the unfortunate becomes a worldwide concern. However, this globalization has also resulted in job losses, lack of environmental regulation, a "race to the bottom" along with massive accumulation of corporate and individual wealth through lowered or eliminated taxes on record profits.¹

Globalization can only be effectively addressed by an equally global response. We need a wide spectrum of activists who are inspired to express their concerns in a variety of ways. So be it! We need discernment for appraising our common strengths and weaknesses. We have been inspired by the noble efforts of Occupiers of Wall Street and demonstrators from many lands who are awakening to the need to confront the dysfunctional economic, social, and political structures present today. These modern day activists seek a common voice. Those who can must speak out; the unemployed must demand a livelihood; the uninsured should have guaranteed health coverage; all people have a right to affordable education without long-term indebtedness; all have a right to clean air, potable water, and silent space and access to Internet. And we cannot neglect the other threatened and endangered creatures.

There are no rights without corresponding obligations, no rights to life without respect for others' lives, no resource use without respect for the care of Earth. Our awareness of a balance of rights and duties is part of good citizenship and peaceful protests as shown by Occupiers of Wall Street and those who have demonstrated for freedom in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. It includes those who protest the Supreme Court's willingness to allow "Super PACs" to operate with impunity. Others assemble at international meetings -- G-8, G-20, UN agencies, Davos Economic Forum. Truly, change is in the air.

These activists are starting to show that redistribution of wealth is a global need, and its neglect exacerbates a basic discontent. Their discontent is heightened when well-funded financial managers continue to take bonuses, while rank-and-file citizens suffer from indebtedness, unemployment, housing depreciation, and foreclosures. People hurt; they are angry and they are willing to demonstrate in order to use the power of public opinion to make change, though their effectiveness is often called into question. However, is not skepticism itself encouraging those who hold the reins of power?

Analysis of the current situation reveals existing economic classes, exacerbated by disparity of wealth, involving haves and have-nots. To pretend diversity does not exist or ought to be overlooked is a privileged position of those who do not want to rock a boat -- and a leaky boat at that. The controlled media would have us believe that the majority likes this system; however, demonstrators and public opinion polls show otherwise. Change for the better is needed now and is only possible when all those concerned work together. An urgent crisis confronts us, but the underclass alone cannot bring about needed changes. Agents of change must challenge legislative candidates beholding to those who pay for their expensive election campaigns. Who will act?

Our own experience and the protests of today's world exemplify various ways of action, alone or with others, whether publicly or secretly. Working alone include whistleblowers and a wide variety of prophetic types. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* at the start of the American Revolution triggered action. Today, with internet, electronic books, and search engines, we await another Paine. In the past two years, Tea Party activists and Wall Street Occupiers have gained attention. Tea party advocates call for less government, even while forgetting the historic role of a cozy British relationship with tea taxes involved the first multinational corporation, the East India Company. Occupiers see a partnership of private super-rich and public protective government precipitating an economic crisis, and hope for automatic corrective measures. At least for a short span of time, these have elicited public attention -- but for how long?

A second approach involves non-public acts that affect the commons, e.g., (from modern Robin Hoods to Internet hackers). These reveal a true nature of urgency but involve obvious weakness such as purity of motivations and degree of public resistance. Again, they raise numerous questions: Is clandestine action the best route? Are change agents afraid to work with others? Is revenge a motive? Are agents afraid of media attacks or possibility of misinterpretation? Is violence to be tolerated to person or property? Will secrecy be effective because it calls for fewer resources? Do such actions add shock value and publicity potential? Is the secrecy temporary? Are others invited to help?

Many prefer public demonstrations by groups who get proper permission, seek publicity, furnish transportation and lodging, and follow up with actions. Most often activists of a wide variety of types working in solidarity strive to further democratic process within their issue areas in order to sort out benefits from weaknesses. Their goal is to encourage serious discussion about a new green economic system conceived through public participation and containing sustainable development principles. By weighing strengths and weaknesses, all may help reclaim the commons.

Some examples will illustrate. G-8 and G-20 demonstrators of the last few years call for change, but the end goal is often vague, and this causes critics to disparage their efforts. On the other hand, our age of instant social contact allows many alarms to be sounded on a daily basis. These range from approaching storms to lost children, some serious and some trivial; a school is evacuated when someone breaks a mercury thermometer -- and administrators forget to spread flowers of sulfur over the spill. While mercury exposure over time is serious, mini-alarms clutter the scene and become topics for continuous TV news coverage; they are the cacophony of sounds when twirling the radio dial or browsing the Internet. Does this progression of competing mini-alarms justify the disparaging term "alarmists" for all who speak about impending crises?

The media is partial to the culture of wealth and power. University of Chicago's Luigi Zingales has determined that research papers providing justification for high executive pay are 55% more likely to be published than those that opposed and more heavily cited by others.² Serious writers prefer to determine what is more acceptable to discuss, and they also fear being tagged as "Chicken Littles." A culture of conformity makes some hesitant to press the 911 button about serious alarms. On the other hand, corporations whose products are suspected or proved harmful will deliberately create doubt so that actions will be delayed as long as profits continue to be made (see *Merchants of Doubt*)³. For the status-quo seeker, tranquility is craved and alarms are to be avoided.

Demonstrators break this false tranquility and escalate levels of alarm beyond the jumble of daily human-interest stories. These activists say that "too big to fail" allows disparity of wealth to exist and go uncontested. They are starting to realize that the legality of possessed wealth is a product of the influence of those wealthy. What is legal may not be moral. In the United States, in 1974 the top 1% of families took home 9% of the GDP; this has increased to 23.5% in 2007 with no sign of slowing down due to existing trade and tax policies.⁴ This disparity of wealth is exacerbated by continued robot-substituting and outsourcing technologies leading to loss of jobs, diminishment of the middle class, and hampering democratic process by sheer volume of profits channeled to political campaigns and elections through super-PACs.

Current activist agitation will not go away as long as the jobless or socially concerned see basic unfairness. Radical changes are needed. George Parker⁵ says that such inequality is bad for America because: it mocks America's promise of opportunity; it hardens society into a class system; it divides us from one another; it makes one insensitive to the lives of others; it corrodes trust among fellow citizens; it provokes a generalized anger that finds targets where it can; it saps the will to conceive of ambitious solutions to large collective problems; and it undermines democracy. In election years when wealthy individuals and corporations allow their massive secretive super-PAC funds to embrace or disparage candidates, democratic process is further undermined. In 2012, this trend has become ominous.

Is America being sapped of its vitality by "legal" practices of the wealthy who do not pay their fair taxes? A weakened democracy has its own multiple ramifications including its loss of sense of community, wealthy influence replacing a will of the citizenry, a distrust of other citizens, and a breaking down of the needed civic and patriotic spirit. How do we confront this growing disparity of wealth? All too often, citizens despair that they can improve their quality of life; in turn, this promotes their escaping to allurements from drugs to Internet games, from electronic devices to novels. A spreading malaise concerns some of us. We must bring back a sense of willingness to change, a common concern for the good of all citizens and Earth herself.

We need to strike while the iron is hot, while reform is possible. As more and more challenge this dysfunctional system of disparity of wealth, we find activists offering two rather vague goals, one that has more general agreement -- to limit wealth -- and one that is still more radical and involves a future just economic/political/social system. Can we dare to seek a global structure that ensures regulation of wealth and control of the environmental crisis it spawns?⁶ From my experience, several levels of activist commitment to Reclaiming the Commons are needed.

The first level involves individuals exposing unjust financial or environmental pollution practices. Such injustice must be reasonably established and ascertained to some degree of credibility. False alarms are detrimental. Knowing whether one's claims are authentic and of importance can take effort yet it is an essential first step. I call this current situation a local "**HERE**," the environment in which responsible citizens find themselves at a given time. "Here-ness" is a quality of presence to a situation that looks critically at unpleasant practices that must be addressed (pollution, lack of safety, lack of essentials of life, etc.). The activist experiences disharmony. The HERE starts at one's local level, but it could extend outward to a region, nation, and Earth herself. HERE means presence and willingness to observe and attempt to do something about a world we know and appreciate.

Denial is a temptation for those unwilling to undergo the discomfort

of the present environmental crisis; the mind is set to refuse to accept the disharmony as actually existing. Fiction trumps reality; privilege overcomes sharing; local pride leads to denial that a problem exists. Those nurturing the possibility of a threatening practice or a potential harm to the bottom line will either address the problem in a prudent manner or use financial resources to cast doubt on the exposing activist. Defenders of the status quo may face threats realistically, or they may be susceptible to the climate created by of the *Merchants of Doubt*.³

The second level of authentic activist commitment that I have experienced involves "behind the scenes" action by activists (agents of change). They observe the unjust situation and the current urgency to act -- the "**NOW**." The activist may judge that working without fanfare will lead to positive results, which circumvents a period of rational discourse and sought-for public approval. At this level, a pattern of rational discourse appears limited, because addictive behavior is involved in the malpractice.

Excuse is the temptation of one who knows something is wrong but prefers to defer it to later or to an expert individual or group. Alternatives to unjust practices are proposed but generally remain in a proposal stage or become the arena of specialists. Advocates of change seek immediate action because to delay will be compounding a misdeed. Excusers may not deny the need for change, only that it is impractical or detrimental at this moment. Activists express urgency; they testify that deeds are needed now and cannot wait for the entire public to come aboard.

The third level of activist commitment goes beyond the first and second levels and seeks out others to join them. They become aware of the weaknesses of individuals acting alone whether publicly or in secret. The urgency of the issue brings them to join with others so that the power of solidarity with an embracing community of like-minded citizens is tapped. This search for interactive support is called the "**WE**." The **WE** seeks to be united, for in union there is strength. The broader community gives support and clarifies the manner of activism that is most beneficial in the hope of overcoming inherent weaknesses found in the first two levels.

Escape is the temptation at this level by those who know that a bad situation exists, and that someone should do something now -- but responsibility is too overwhelming for the particular individual. A psychological barrier to becoming an exposed and committed activist exists. The unsettling of the situation leads one to isolate oneself and take up some substitute activity or some allurements that removes one from a particular responsibility. "Yes, some group should do something, but it is simply more than I as an individual can handle."

These reflections are only a partial response to the concerns of these levels of involvement because mere words without accompanying deeds are limited. Words give direction, focus on issues, refute harbingers of doubt, and encourage citizen participation. However, the stark reality of acting now frightens activists who lack research tools for prompt action. Sounding alarms, calling for prompt action, discussing benefits by joining others is effective, but words do not bring change; meaningful action is required.

Deeds beckon the activist who must face cynics and naysayers; however, like others, activists minimize their weaknesses and are tempted to act too hastily, and battles develop through debate and the finesse of the last word that forms public opinion. Words become incendiary; delivery styles vary; anger can spill into uncontrolled violence. Recall the French revolution. Fiery words, dramatic actions. Prophets call for just deeds and know that prophesying is hardly ever completely effective. Today's Robin Hoods can show urgency, but they are often unable to sway public opinion. Teamwork is not always self-corrective, and differences become weaknesses that may sap enthusiasm.

Prayerful discernment is essential, and that leads us to a fourth level, namely the need for a "Higher Power" to counteract the addictive nature and power of the environmental crisis. Times are urgent and the effectiveness of the three levels mentioned are insufficient to meet the challenges at hand. If the deep-rooted problem is truly addictive (as all evidence suggests), then this requires personal conversion and, like successful Twelve-Step programs, surrender to a Higher Power -- though this comes as a shock to traditional activists. Let us confront that shock in the following chapters and discover that nothing is done if we do not follow the American motto: "In God We Trust." We need a higher power in order to confront our personal, local, national, and global problems.

Level One: Environmentalism -- A Fragile Earth Is HERE

The first level of eco-awareness is when citizens who deeply treasure their local community called "home" observe threats to their fragile environment.

Changes are occurring: air quality has deteriorated; water is polluted; local land is damaged. Simultaneously, others who are observant notice these changes but do little about them due to job security, shyness, lack of courage,

or maybe a false role of suffering patiently and without "making waves." The concerned citizen winces at being called to be patient and allow things to work themselves out; a possible future reward does not meet present demands for action. The desire for conformity is a false sense of security and this must be addressed. The local activist is born with or without collateral support.

Budding activists soon discover that others suffer with similar problems in their respective localities. Maybe one acts locally, but he or she must think and act globally to discover even broader problems. In recent years, the concerned citizen hears about **Climate change**,⁷ and about how 99% of climate scientists and all major national scientific associations agree with this global problem. Concerned scientific experts call for correct reporting of environmental practices and resulting remedial measures. This call for addressing climate change comes at the time of grave distraction, namely in the midst of financial turmoil and efforts to return to full economic recovery involving larger energy outlays. During this current slow economic recovery, the widespread emphasis is on a wholesale expansion of the entire mix of energy sources in order to meet upcoming demands and hold down fuel prices. However, this seems to have unintended effects.

Current energy policies have exacerbated the greenhouse gas problem because renewable alternatives (wind, solar, geothermal, hydropower, and some biofuels) do not have the tax advantages of the traditional fossil fuels. Global carbon emissions jumped 5.3% in 2010 (30.4 gigatons) and half again that amount in 2011. At the same time, energy demand has not been totally conserved, but is rising and expected to increase by one-third in the next quarter century. Even with current renewable energy source growth from a projected 13% to 18% of total energy use, the actual results could mean 20% more carbon emissions in 2035, or a 3.5 degrees Centigrade increase in global average temperature -- amounts that could lead to dramatic ocean level rises and other predicted global disasters before 2100. In this coming quarter-century, China alone will increase its carbon emissions by 70% (still half the American per capita energy use) and other emerging nations will follow China's pattern. America must take a renewable energy/conservation lead.

The climate change problem is symptomatic of an environmental crisis that is intertwined to economic dysfunctionality afflicting a world professing sustainable development goals. The European Union and small oceanic island nations (threatened by rising ocean levels) take this problem seriously. A host of developing nations in Africa and Latin America lack resources to take corrective measures. Unfortunately, the major carbon dioxide emitters (China, India, and the U.S.) are not giving this matter the attention it deserves. Activists sound alarms, though merchants of doubt create competing scenarios.

Continued U.S. subsidies for fossil fuel use (\$409 billion in 2010 versus \$64 billion for renewable energy) results in resource wastes, toxic emissions, and growing (not declining) carbon dioxide and methane emissions. According to

the International Energy Agency⁸, the locked-in fossil fuel capital stock could bring the world to a brink of disaster **without** any additional conversion to renewable energy sources.

Eco-humility occurs when activists voice alarm and few if any listen. Demonstrators experience a deep sense of powerlessness due to competition from competing media issues and a non-heeding addictive culture. Environmental prophets are not foretellers; however, their conditional "if things do not change" is an argument for inevitable future harm unless certain actions are forthcoming. The prophet Jeremiah stood at the Jerusalem city gate saying what inevitably was about to happen to Israel, if reform did not occur; he was drowned out by hawking street vendors and his unheeded alarm for the survival of a nation was left unheeded. This impending climate change threatens the very viability of our troubled Earth. Mini 24-7-News alarms are today's equivalent street-vendors drowning out Jeremiah's message. Is history repeating itself on a larger scale?

I hark back to 1972 when we in our small public interest group in DC were victim of the first batch of "merchants of doubt." Our book was *Household Pollutants Guide* (Anchor Doubleday, 1976). Fred Panzer of the Tobacco Institute was extremely interested in our work on domestic pollutants, for we were assembling an A to Z listing of contaminants in the home environment. For him, tobacco smoke was one of many effects and certainly not a primary one. It seemed for him that by our listing of twenty-six pollution areas we would dilute any harm from domestic tobacco smoke. Fred made frequent phone calls and visits and even offered me a can of very expensive smoking tobacco -- too strong for me. In a subsequent communication, I told Fred that evidence indicated that the major domestic pollutant was tobacco smoke. Communications abruptly terminated. Upon the book's publication, it was instantly reviewed and panned by noted columnist, James Kilpatrick, but for what other reason than our pinpointing tobacco smoke as the domestic culprit.

Deniers of anthropogenic (human) causes of climate change follow the same pattern with the same cast of characters and methods. Scientific evidence is deliberately doubted, and the message requires equal media time and delays regulatory action often for years or decades. First, it was tobacco ingredients causing cancer and then second hand tobacco smoke, ozone depletion, DDT dangers, and finally climate change. It is the same convey of hired scientists and gullible media desiring two sides on every question -- even scientifically proven ones. Tens of billions of dollars of corporate profits are at stake, and the up-front excuse is that scientific evidence is not absolute (a misinterpretation of scientific method). This deliberate doubt plays well into our global dysfunctional "free market," along with media outlets desiring controversy. In the climate change issue, doubt is voiced as to whether conservation methods and affordable renewable energy are sufficient to

compensate for continued high fossil fuel use.

Denial of upcoming climate change effects has become a political partisan issue; however, deniers have shrunk from 45% of Americans in 2010 to 26% in 2012, partly due to current extraordinary weather conditions. This doubt in climate change being of human causation absolves one from responsibility for lifestyle change -- but not from anger of future generations. Concerned environmentalists say America in company with China and India and other emerging nations is allowing conservation and fossil fuel practices to go unaddressed for the sake of continued current economic trade practices. Activists are unable to focus the public's attention on regulatory controls. All the while, fossil fuel users continue to receive governmental favors (nine times the safe renewable substitutes), toxic emissions continue even with word of harm to people, the window to climate change controls continues to close, the privileged continue with low or no taxes, legal tax havens, and luxurious lifestyles.

Sequestering wealth is contributing to an emerging global economy seeking to duplicate American and European ways. Acquisition, retention, and use of limited financial resources are part of this economic/political/social system that is becoming more globalized and more consumption-oriented for the newly affluent. Radical change must come, but unwillingness to address this change is caused by the addictive behavior of consumers who insatiably want ever more materials, from electronic devices to autos. Meanwhile, uncontrolled finances strangle democratic process and reduce a citizen's effective voice. Environmental threats go unaddressed, and our destitute African and other poor brothers and sisters lack food security. All these problems contribute to growing global restlessness and insecurity.

Strong Points in Prophetic Witnessing

The prophet is a person who sees a situation precisely as it is and where it is heading IF practices continue unchanged. The authentic prophet does not foretell what will happen, only what could happen if the current path is pursued. Our world needs prophets, for people all too often see but do not heed, hear but do not listen. Too many make the fictitious worlds of novel and movie real, and regard the real world of their own threatened lives as fiction. For them, authentic prophets are unwelcome. The real is too difficult to process, and so any imperfections of authentic prophets are quickly exposed for ridicule -- lack of delivery skills or charisma, unpopular message, ultimate ineffectiveness due to limited didactic skills, etc. Furthermore, inspired deliverers even when skilled may not have inspired hearers, and the prophetic message falls on deaf ears. The curse of Cassandra (to tell the truth but not be believed) flourishes in a dysfunctional age.

Authentic prophets cover a range of issues and are driven to speak

publicly regardless of costs. Blatant injustices give rise to "whistleblowers." Worthy messages require prophets to take risks. On the other hand, false prophets seek fame, fortune, or power, and their message is delivered within an atmosphere of self-interest. Motivation is determinant in the prophet's authenticity, and this is purified through prayerful discernment and spiritual inspiration. For spirit-driven but risk-taking prophets, to remain silent is to be unfaithful.

Wall Street and other demonstrators project a sincere message but realize that they risk being labeled as leftists, anarchists, or opportunists. They question immense banking salaries and bonuses and demand answers for the 2008 financial meltdown. They question hedge fund bonuses, lack of fair taxes on the wealthy, enormous sports salaries, transfer of wealth to children and family with virtually no taxes rendered, and the stagnation and loss of lower level incomes. A number of authentic prophets see, observe, and are willing to demonstrate and speak out; they risk being ostracized and yet find hidden hope provided they retain a sense of humor. The HERE is reaffirmed, for each who acts in public must be faithful to one's origins, heritage, and people.

Concrete actions (such as a federal investigation of the banking sector and its lack of regulations) have been demanded. In fact, the Occupier movement potentially could achieve a major success in the early 2012 joint petition by sympathetic progressive groups (with 360,000 signatures) to the White House, calling for a formal federal investigation into Wall Street and big bank practices. President Obama endorsed this in his State of the Union message on January 24, 2012: *I am asking the Attorney General to create a special unit of prosecutors and leading state attorneys general to expand our investigations into the abusive lending and packaging of risky mortgages that led to the housing crisis. This new unit will hold accountable those who broke the law, speed assistance to homeowners, and help turn the page on the era of recklessness that hurt so many Americans.*

Weaknesses and Risks in Public Actions

When Jesus drove moneychangers from the Temple, he was a prophet acting alone. Not even his accompanying disciples joined him in using whips and overturning tables of coins in justified anger. The action was shocking for all present, and undoubtedly precipitated the plot to kill him as indicated in the Gospel accounts. Down through centuries, most Christian followers would have been just as shocked if witnessing such an event. Jesus' anger was based on the merchants occupying the Court of the Gentiles for their own use and profit. However, this of all places was meant as public worship space for "all the people."

Over the centuries, too few have asked critical questions to those who

claimed the commons, and who deprived the people of free access to what is rightfully theirs. The privileged few go unchallenged. Who owns what and how did they get it in the first place? One who speaks for Jesus today reminds us once more that "the world's wealth and resources do not belong to a select few; they also belong to the poor."⁹ Current moneychanger descendants are merchants of greed and doubt; they fail to share with the commoners, the ones who were also meant by the Creator to benefit from Earth's resources. We divide ourselves into two groups: some advocate for their privileges; others ask where are the agents today with justified anger? Is bridging our differences possible?

Inherent vulnerability overshadows the public activist. However, is this a weakness or strength? Did Jesus have a weakness in taking a risk? Yes, taking risks by prophets involves arousing opposition, as a general principle. In the case of Jesus, his action was a threat to the established business order. The evolving situation ignited his critics to plot his demise, shorten his ministry, and bring on his death. Opprobrium directed at later day activities is expected just as it occurred at the temple cleansing. In 2012, police and army have harassed Russian activists and freedom fighters in Syria and lone activists in China. At the moment of demonstrated action, suspicions and criticism lead to reaction: anger, injury, and persecution. Ironically, the target issue may gain prominence precisely because demonstrations generate publicity through resulting opposition. Activism leads to future change.

Activists' weaknesses are quickly pointed out by media and fearful status-quo defenders; one criticism is lack of general organization even when demonstrations occur and are orderly. An undetermined number of the 99% of people who do not share the 1%'s super wealth may be angered, but this is welcomed in some ways. The informality and lack of organization structure is often regarded as protection against hostile groups bent on infiltrating, ostracizing, or undermining the activist cause. On the other hand, sympathizers are drawn to praise the sacrifices of activists.

Noted economist Jeffrey Sachs, in his recently published and quite informative and lucid book says, *I have no quarrel with wealth per se.*¹⁰ However, some of us **do** have a quarrel with wealth and those who control it -- and our numbers are growing. We realize that wealth, a value judgment, implies privilege and elite difference from others. Furthermore, those targeting accumulation of wealth are more than radical progressives; this group now includes many of the "99%ers" -- workers, small business people, farmers, threatened and underwater homeowners who see wealth's destructive atmosphere.

Uncontrolled wealth endangers the democratic process because it tends to become excessive (hardly ever admitted). Furthermore, the wealthy tend to abuse the power they perceive is theirs. Their privilege lead to

insensitivity and to expected favors; these lead to corrupt government, paid legislators, bought political parties, canonized billionaires (when a billion people throughout the world go hungry), subverted laws, created corporate "persons" with undue influence, resulting lower tax rates, and media control. In turn, the underprivileged "have-nots" crave wealth through unrealistic dreams of lottery jackpots, allow the act of taking what is rightfully theirs to remain criminalized, and neglect to challenge the "entitlement" of wealthy nobility. Through subservience, cowed citizens accept a society deserving of Jefferson's blunt words for King George the Third's excesses listed in *The Declaration of Independence*.

The highly individualized nature of our modern culture makes budding activists reluctant to express motivations and find companionship needed to keep from burnout and to help clarify goals. In truth, agreement with common goals can be difficult because adherents of "liberal" causes have become distracted by social issues that touch on individual freedoms and matters of regulation and choice. Some regard compromise as paramount even when compromise deals with deeply held principles and values. Yes, demonstrators experience roadblocks in uniting through differing social issues.

The justice of a cause does not purify the intentions of some champions. Self-interest runs deep in the human psyche and this is reinforced by temptations to wealth, power, and fame. In an age of materialism, desire for wealth ranges from simple schemes to reduce pollution as moneymaking ventures to accepting non-profit-organization director's six-figure salaries. Proven free market expertise and demands for higher salaried positions are attempts to prove legitimacy to funders or to the general public. Some of the power-hungry may see an environmental group or program as a stepping-stone to higher levels of "leadership" and control.

Cap-and-Trade is claptrap. A popular policy promoted by neo-liberals who champion free market capitalism involves the trading of environmental pollution "credits" from one party to another through sales of "rights to pollute." Here, opposition by the extremes of radical progressives and traditionalists arise at the same time. For radicals, the proposed practice (already in operation in some European nations) is a mark of self-righteous arrogance to concede that some have a "right" to pollute the air or water commons at the expense of the commons. However, for many free marketers, trading credits affects the bottom line of polluting businesses, and thus cause commercial instability.

For radicals, trading in what belongs to the commons is thievery; caps are limits in what the culprits can do in damage without paying fines. This "trading" is the enticement to free marketers to seek larger bonuses by raiding the commons of clean air or water. Current business is messing up this world through greed and insensitivity. Radicals ask why polluters should be

permitted to buy their way out of this mess; make them pay fines and clean up damages. For too long, exploiters of yesteryear have been protected spoiled brats in their "takings" -- whether gold, beaver furs, cod fish, petroleum, or clean air and water, and have gone unchallenged. However, activists know that polluters must conform to the best technologies for clean production of electricity or use of fossil fuels; excessive emissions risk fines. Isn't trading in the "right to pollute" an elaborate shell game?

HERE: Down to Earth Spirituality

A "spirituality" is what inspires the person to act for better or worse. An "eco-spirituality" pertains to matters of ecological significance such as the motivational force that moves people to focus on the environment. The concept of eco-spirituality is evolving at this time. At each level of environmental awareness, focus is on specific actions that demand attention in order to act in an authentic spiritual manner.

A first level, *Down-to-Earth Spirituality*,¹¹ focuses on clarity in seeing environmental damage and some movement to saving a wounded Earth. It involves a willingness to pause and prophetically expose misdeeds, which are at the local level and may stretch beyond. Authenticity involves personal experience grounded in touching one's land, recognizing local wildlife, and coming to an appreciation of the immediate nature. This approach does not depend on spiritual insights from distant erudite sources. On this level, an environmental perspective is relative to location of the observer and response is unique to the current place called home.

Some, especially the less committed to place or those committed to exploiting the particular place, may dismiss the need to be deeply rooted in one's environs. However, at home we discover damage that hurts us deeply, we take notice, and we begin to move to doing something. We confront reality for better or worse. We know where we are, what we eat, and where the horizon out there is in relation to our location, our stance, our mood, our ambitions. This is not grounded in an alien spirituality that defines how we are to save the environment through change of rational attitudes about creation. Rather nature touches me as an individual where I acknowledge guilt as a primary penitential rite. Suddenly the **HERE** faces us and we cannot deny that something must be done. If I am not an immediate culprit, at least I am a member of a tolerant community that must confront the culprits.

Being "Down-to-Earth" in a unique place is conditioned by where I am, when I live, and with whom I associate. Reality includes knowing weather conditions, wind direction when berries and fruit ripen, length of daylight, and seasonal changes. Being down-to-Earth includes a willingness to live a sustainable life using local resources. Due to my particular time, place, and association, my spirituality is unique to me, and if I move about this will

change in time. I must open my eyes and not run from the current situation, nor deny that it exists. For better or worse, I am chosen from all eternity to be present in this time and place, and regard this with both trepidation and promise. The mix of the two energizes my response to what must be done at this place called home.

Level Two: Equality -- Opportunity's Window Is NOW

Without a radical and urgent policy change direction the world risks to lock itself into an unsustainable energy future.

Maria van der Hoeven, International Energy Agency Director.

A second level of eco-awareness occurs when activists look beyond the perceived malpractice or damage, and take responsibility to bring about a change here and now.

Activists are moved by a sense of urgency and are willing to take actions that are necessary, even at some risk to go beyond the bounds of legality -- and this calls for prudence. Knowledge of the situation yields to a willingness to act. At this point, much hinges on the patience of the knower-turned-responsible active citizen. Some are moved to act with haste because of the degree of urgency; others perceive that this may be a long-term project and so they look for ways to assist in bringing this about over an indeterminate period of time. All in all, "agents of change" become more engaged than do outside observers or narrators of a given situation.

The question is to act or not act; to act this way or that, to act now or later. If the citizen is true to a sense of responsible activism, then one must go beyond taking stock of conditions that are amiss (first level), and be willing to do something about it even if others do not follow. Some sort of action must occur and the effectiveness of the pending action now becomes important. In part, this effectiveness depends on a judgment of the time needed to initiate and address the issue satisfactorily.

Long-term action is regarded as necessary at this time. For example, if fossil fuels must be phased out, then in what manner is this a long-term matter, and how can this be done in the least harmful way? Is this transition period in dispute due to the time needed to halt anthropogenic climate change effects? Does the policy of using a mixed bag of energy sources to meet expanding global needs require refinement? Should inherently unsafe energy sources be included in the long-term mix? How can

the detrimental effects of surface-mined coal be reduced by changes in technology and how can the introduction of renewable energy alternatives (solar, wind, hydro, etc.) be hastened? Do current policies of subsidies for fossil fuels and the lack of longer-term subsidies for renewable energy source exacerbate the situation?

Medium-term actions are often problematic. The situation seems dire at first, but some forms of remedial actions could delay a longer-term solution. Our efforts at reducing the surface-mining blasting effects on homes and waterwells through a national conference in 1977 contributed to national reclamation legislation on mitigating those blasting effects. A more popular example occurred in the 1960s, when Rachel Carson and others concerned about chemical pollution started sounding a prophetic alarm: the myth that World War II chemicals such as DDT were totally beneficial was wearing thin -- and evidenced by thin eagle egg shells not strong enough to ensure hatching. However, the mere alarm was not sufficient to bring solutions automatically. Through coordinated efforts and regulation, eventually DDT use was restricted.

Immediate actions can be more difficult to handle. The situation demands immediate action as perceived by the observer. From the activist perspective, the situation is deteriorating and yet to act too hastily could be counter-productive. Change must occur, but how and by whom? Many people live on a fast track (fast food, travel, drugs, cell messages, etc.). Act "yesterday." In 2008, the public observed an august American Congress and Administration become panicked by the Great Recession. Activists can have a panic "**NOW**" moment as well. A temporal crossroads means either a bleak disaster or a possible successful future. Taking decisive action means forsaking slower democratic process. Pausing to discern is regarded as either a necessity or a luxury; searching for good advice is often disregarded by individuals impatient for immediate action.

The demand is for balanced agents of change to hasten the operation just as authentic prophets are needed at the first level. How does one sort out the authentic activists from the glory-seekers, opportunists, or "loose canons"? But the search is one of utmost importance when urgent times demand action. This second level of commitment in times of emergency is more suited for the violent than the lethargic. The "when and how to act" then becomes an option of moving too fast or too slow and possibly causing further damage in either case.

A second level **eco-humility** is to lack precious time for decision-making. A discernment that lists all factors and objective considerations and implementing the better ones may not be possible. In fact, the time-impooverished activist may seek guidance as to whether to act now or wait a little while. Acting now may be the option for the long-term unemployed (now

43% of the total) who are to lose long-term assistance. Certainly, victims may phone their congressional delegations to extend benefits, but is that enough?

Some may be moved to some sort of dramatic action when this becomes a personal emergency. Those hurting from hunger cannot be advised to be patient for days; they must be fed today. At a first level, hunger conditions may make us take stock; at this second level it calls for responsible action. Budding Robin Hoods testify through deed that wealthy retention of property needed to feed the hungry is, in the words of St. Basil, a form of thievery. It is taking back what belongs to others for essential needs that takes precedence over property rights.

For many activists in circumstances of emergency, patience is in short supply. Hungry people must be fed today; they cannot patiently wait until the privileged voluntarily open the storerooms. "Trickle Down" is immoral during famine conditions; people must be fed. If they have the energy, the hungry will storm the palace, overpower the guards, and raid the storeroom. If the poor are so destitute that they lack energy, then dramatic action must come from elsewhere by those sensitive to the hungry. Destitution causes an inherently unstable condition and it fragments the social fabric of a civilization. In the 19th century Russia endured numerous peasant revolts, until all realized that liberation of serfs was inevitable -- but at what expense of time and struggle?

A "trickle up" seems gravitationally impossible, but it appears to occur nonetheless when a lower class boils up in anger or impatience. Somehow, energy is needed to bring social change but all know that explosive situations are hard to control. Hot springs of water sprout up from underground sources; artisan wells work when natural pressures are exerted. Movement can come from the bottom as much as pooling gentle rainwater can, when collected and flowing from an elevated storage space. Recall that conditions demanding change were often repressed; thus, rebels planned and worked in secret. Non-concerned political *conservatives* ought to awake to the movements among the hungry, unemployed, and homeless. The challenge is to channel those legitimate demands into non-violent paths. Revolutions in the past (the French in the 18th and the Russian and Chinese in the 20th century) led to violent change that hurt and killed many. Choices in how to deal with change have to be made by someone, anyone, everyone. Many feel an impending crisis and yet only a few know how to control their anger; thus some attempt must be made to address the situation with the least collateral damage to others living today or tomorrow.

Options for Change

Some ways are open to making change when urgent actions are called for: voluntary actions, violent actions, and legislative process.

Spontaneous volunteerism could bring about change, but that is most likely not to occur because of a sense of privileged stewardship, or of greedy hold on current privileges and wealth. Urgency demands action, and the princes in power are not inclined to change their own ways. The privileged entertain the notion that with time the disgruntled will learn to be good stewards, and with luck or proper talent rise to imitate their success. "Thus," they say, "let us give out some portions of our goods voluntarily." However, the luxury of awaiting volunteerism conducted by the wealthy means allowing them to control the resource of time, which itself is a commons to be shared by all. The mortal condition is not eternity, though we sometimes fantasize about an endless summer. In reality, the window of opportunity to change a dysfunctional economic system or for controlling climate change is closing; privileged control may not miraculously vanish.

Voluntary giving or charity involves the left hand not knowing what the right one is doing. However, "charity" as an instrument of change may do the inverse of what is intended; it may soften dissatisfaction and promote a continuation of the status quo. Voluntary charity fills needs in times of natural or human-made disasters as long as donor fatigue does not result. Most people unless totally insensitive will give to really needy neighbors. Most cultures and religions encourage such charitable practices, though some restrict neighborly help to their own kind. However, globalization brings needy neighbors to our collective doorstep.

Charity opens itself to various interpretations.¹² Those who have the excuse of acquiring a new wardrobe each year, and call the castoffs "charity," are not necessarily charitable. Furthermore, "charity" by the wealthy can be a subtle means for influence over suppressed or poor groups. Even cash-strapped non-profit organizations can complicate matters further when they cater to the wealthy as sources of funding. Such groups naively regard their own superior causes as a motivational insurance against undue influence by wealthy sources of funds; the non-profits may strive to restrict funding to neutral sources, but such neutrality deserves careful discernment, for "neutral" funders may be quite demanding in subtle ways.

Since many sources have hidden motivations, alternative options for funding are sought, such as self-employment, production of commercial products or services, or a larger series of small donations. Another approach to neutrality in funding is extreme efficiency, namely, work with the least funding possible; say "no" up front to wealthy individual donors in general and specifically to restrictive sources (both private and public). For those in a hurry, the wealthy elite appear to control money and often distribute it at rates resembling a drip-tube in a life-support system. This is an exercise of POWER, not of charity. Subtle power brokers retain enough wealth to continue control of funds. Giving the affluent a period to voluntarily relinquish their holdings is

praiseworthy, provided time is not critical.

Violence is not a viable option for activists committed to imitating the tactics of Mahandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King. So often violence plays into the hands of those currently holding power; these have access to the mass media and are capable of creating an alarming scenario to be squelched by police and military force. Those who opt for tranquility (not true peace) will be tempted to agree with violent suppression of activists and demonstrators. When anger mounts, the temptation is to strike out, and this is when autocratic control appears tempting.

Attained wealth can be contested. Wealth seen but not shared can stimulate violence, and in fact, if people have a sense that they deserve some of it, then an explosive brew results. An awakening democratic process that indicates that unshared wealth should not be left uncontested opens the door for change. This accelerates the underlying turbulence that seeks to thrash out and move people to further demonstrate their underlying anger. Controlling anger is difficult. Witness the French Revolution in the 18th century, the causes leading up to it, the hunger, indebtedness, heavy taxes, and misery of the general population, and the festering aftermath for the following quarter of a century during the Napoleonic Wars. History need not repeat itself; non-violence is effective and has worked, such as a few decades ago with collapse of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe.

Demonstrations in various parts of America and the world signal the need for change -- an emerging spirit of urgency. There is no guarantee that anger that fuels such conditions will be channeled to non-violent actions. The patience of a population cannot be measured accurately over a long period of time. If some progress is being made in lands with a history of democratic governance, then it might be expected that the public would show limited restraint -- but not necessarily. A downsized people -- long-term unemployed at historic highs, foreclosed through bank misdeeds, or overly worked -- could be pressed beyond normal endurance. They may ask why all of this wealth is being protected from the Bush Revolution of lower taxes on the wealthy and deregulation of financial institutions. Why does a wealthy nobility exist when there exists global destitution? Are not surplus financial resources to be for the common good, for essential goods and services such as health and education? To whom does wealth belong?

Answers may help defuse the temptation to violence. Defusing an explosive situation takes a social/economic/political bomb squad. When conceived in this fashion, a public movement to meaningful changes through democratic process demands steady agents of change -- those who must hasten, and yet control the speed of the reaction taking place without losing their own substantial qualities as agents. The challenge is for level-headed agents of change to channel dissatisfaction to constructive means.

Renewable energy's time has come. One culprit of our world environmental crisis is "Big Energy," being big because of our dependence on cheap energy and big because it takes concentrated resources to extract the resources and that requires billion dollar projects. Various renewable energy sources deserve the same privileges in tax-credits, loans, and incentives afforded non-renewable energy sources. Unfortunately, this will take a major policy commitment on the part of our nation and world, and much policy-making is in the hands of a wealthy nobility (owners and investors) who comprise this "Big Energy."

Individual appropriate technology projects (e.g., small-scale renewable energy applications, waste reuse, simple residential design, etc.) make excellent demonstration projects and have records of viability and effectiveness.¹³ However, when it comes to energy use, economies of scale come into play as well as the need for integrating energy sources; such integration requires interconnected grids over large distances. Individuals are limited in establishing and maintaining certain energy resource uses. Until very recently, homesteaders and friends have been limited to certain demonstration models of solar, wind, biofuel, and small-scale hydro energy.

For several decades, appropriate technology entrepreneurs have understood the urgency of the current energy situation, but they have lacked coordination skills, financial resources, or media outlets for promoting their story. Besides, the culture of consumption favors bigness, not the simple living folks. On the other hand, appropriate technology favors local investment sources and local decision-making -- this has great advantages for democratic control and hands-on applications. However, depending on a number of factors and available expertise, both small and large energy projects have certain advantages.

Strong Points in Catalysts of Change

A catalyst may be chemical, biological or human. A chemical catalyst is a substance that initiates or speeds up a chemical reaction without undergoing permanent change itself (e.g., a metal substance within an automotive catalytic converter). A biological catalyst (enzyme or yeast) facilitates a biological change and is present in fermentation and many natural processes; a key is the facility of the enzyme to connect at several points simultaneously. A human catalyst is someone who acts as a stimulus in bringing about or hastening a result. We refer to a person as an "agent of change" who influences leaders or hastens the democratic process to correct injustice.

Good catalysts work for extended periods of time and are determined to bring about permanent and meaningful change; they must know their own

limitations and reach out to talented people to support their cause; they encourage talented individuals to take a leadership role; they accept their secondary and often background role and are quite satisfied with this service for and with others. While these agents strive for change, their moral actions may exceed current legal bounds. Robin Hoods may take from the rich and give to the needy; rare political leaders may seek genuine reform in the political process; or WikiLeaks cells are determined to publicize hidden governmental information.

Behind the scenes agents are often needed. President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) was blessed with several special people including secretaries and one political manager (Louis Howe) who promoted his cause for attaining elected office and retaining relations with a vast network of politicians across America. Louis was completely trusted by FDR and did not hesitate to give him clear and sound advice; others were instrumental in assisting FDR in being mobile even with his immense physical disabilities.¹⁴ Such people often avoid the limelight but are willing to work behind the scenes even while their influence goes unrecognized.

Chapter Nine in *Reclaiming the Commons* contains a listing of qualities (wisdom, serenity, congeniality, etc.) found in agents of change. The various qualities are best found concentrated in a single individual, but that is rarely the case. The special mark of good agents of change is the ability to move freely to and from domestic, local, regional, national, or global levels of activity; the person is able to recognize the potential of needed leaders. Authentic agents have to be public spirited and not involved with self-promotion except to the degree it assists in advancing the greater cause. Persistence and willingness to undergo long periods of hard work are noted additional agent qualities.

The public interest is championed here along with acting in a non-violent fashion. In the business world, successful leaders manage large corporations and make a splendid public appearance. However, for political change, activist agents must focus on particular issues but incorporate new ones for the success of the cause. Effective agents of change champion the common good, are committed to making the world's resources available to all, and thus direct their actions to resources becoming "ours," not "mine." These agents espouse social justice in contrast to free marketers who direct efforts to particular self-interests.

Motivations for change are different; the span ranges from enlightened selflessness to total selfishness, though some attempt to champion an enlightened self-interest. Within that span may be found those seeking billions of dollars, or a chance to exert power, or to win a Nobel Prize. A moderate agent may strive for a family, a retirement income, a wardrobe, a private residence, or a garden for domestic use. Aspirations may range from

crass materialism to more spiritual goals, from selfishness to total giving for others. To be public-spirited means aspiring to see community quality and growth as beneficial to all, including the caregiving person. Selfless people serve others and find this rewarding in its own way, with eternal rewards coming later.

The public interest is certainly not a radical libertarian position, namely, every individual is left alone and untaxed, only free markets protect democracy from despotism, and that these free markets are enough to ensure prosperity. However, the more socially motivated know that human beings must work together, taxes are a way to share the excesses of some to satisfy the extreme needs of others, democratic process demands associations of concerned citizens, and left unregulated many will be excluded from economic wellbeing.

Spiritual motivation is directed towards freedom by being selflessly at the disposal of others; it welcomes regulated government that enhances the community's welfare while working for the common good. "Ours" refers to liberating wealth from the powerful grip of greedy individuals backed by their governmental hacks who support unlimited private ownership. Spiritually motivated catalytic agents strive to maximize attention to the needy and seek to enlist resources to make this happen. Authentic public-spirited agents respond to emergencies that arise and do so expeditiously and creatively.

Radical change situations tempt people to take matters into their own hands prior to meaningful but slower movement by the larger community. Successful actions depend to some degree on the agents' intentions. Will a cyber "Robin Hood" or a WikiLeaks agent act properly in today's globalized world? Is it legitimate for those considered "anonymous" to take from the wealthy or controlled store of goods and information, and redistribute this to those they perceive to be in most need? Will such motivated people undergo a discernment process to reach a good decision? We are often blinded by emotion, and urgent action could trigger overreaction, even though all know that power directed at complex systems can do massive damage.

Authentic agents of change in the public interest strive to reveal injustice in all its forms, whether arising from autocratic governments, greedy businesses, or privileged selfish individuals. The public opposition influenced by "agents of stability" who control the media may create counter reactions to the goals of these authentic agents. Some agents prefer to work in secret for they correctly see wealth transferred and used in hidden ways exerting power that can be turned against them. Ideally, agents of change act accordingly for the common good, even with inherent risks. Speed is of the essence, and democratic process is generally slow in urgent times.

Agents of change often favor **singular action** and may regard the

anticipated results to occur with or without assistance, and they perceive that this ensures agility in plans and execution. The prophetic call for needed change (first level) now takes on the activist role of hastening the change, and thus justifies Robin Hood tactics. Hunger cannot wait; act now. However, secrecy in activity hastens fear and recrimination by defenders of the status quo who feel threatened. The agent becomes emotionally involved and is handicapped by a repressive culture, lack of resources, or a failure to attract public attention. Terrorist acts draw attention, especially when a targeted bomb can do heavy damage. Moreover, publicity evokes sympathizers and copycats.

The current domestic foreclosure situation has resulted from unsophisticated and often misled hopeful homeowners being enticed into purchasing properties that they could ill-afford. Upon threats, they now occupy foreclosed properties held by banks. This imitates similar approaches taken during the Great Depression when farmers joined forces to stop foreclosure procedures. More commonly, public attention has focused on mentally unbalanced gunmen firing their way into banks, factories, or schools, and killing innocent children. Such frustrated souls speak through blazing guns.

Robin Hoods regard legitimate patterns of charitable conduct as only short-term at best. Instead, they take what they regard as needed from the privileged for the poor. These modern Robin Hoods may argue that the unjust disparity of wealth or power justifies the methods they use to draw attention to injustice. Their action, even if secretly planned and singly executed, draws public attention. However, this often triggers repressive measures by the police and an establishment with high regards for property rights. Robin Hoods may risk exposure and incarceration; however, for them purity of motivation and effectiveness demand clandestine acts.

Weaknesses and Risks in Acting Alone

What if you shout but they will not listen? Change agents run into a wall of inattention. They are generally free spirits with some command of their creative powers, but is that sufficient? Acting alone is good for speed, but bad for exchange of advice. A certain space exists for such agents to move about in secret, and so the more dramatic becomes the more enticing. Maybe the temptation to act alone comes through lack of or dislike of social connections, or a failure to place confidence in others who would be aspiring associates. Some must act alone due to external circumstances (war, repressive regimes or cultures, limited resources, etc.). Those drawn to act alone lack the benefits of corrective measures furnished by associates and advisors. In a democratic society, the ideal is that Reclaimers of the Commons are team players, not lone rangers, but circumstances may cause exceptions to the rule. How do we raise an alarm in a tone-deaf world infected by many other crises?

Inherent vulnerability. If the establishment directs its ire at prophetic public demonstrators, a fortiori, this anger will be directed at secret agents of change and even good-intentioned Robin Hoods. The person to whom the anger is directed is unknown at the beginning, thus adding mystery and fear. When the activist is discovered, this precipitates a violent response by those charged with maintaining order. The degree of interconnectedness in our world of rapid communications and transportation, and the cooperative spirit among global-policing agencies make the ongoing hidden agents of change more easily exposed. Harsh actions trigger harsh reactions. Opaque stories often become rumors that quickly spread among an aroused citizenry who demand repressive measures and may hinder the original goals of the agents of change.

Limited influence. Individuals and cells seeking to hasten change may experience a sense of frustration that colors plans and activities. Individuals can only do so much; they have limited energy, life span, and resources at their disposal. While Internet facilities have increased worldwide accessibility, still using this tool secretly seldom works for long. Furthermore, ease of access has resulted in a multitude of voices clamoring to be heard, and so a deluge of ideas appear which contribute to information overload. The airwaves are filled with a host of issues, some serious and some trivial. Competition for attention limits our ability to focus on specific economic and environmental crises.

Individual personal weaknesses color responses and cause some to thrash out on their own and without help from associates who can act as buffering agents to excesses. The "terrorist" mentality takes on individual self-righteous causes and involves the drug of ideology to the point of suicide. All who act alone, even well-meaning Robin Hoods, may neglect seeing those who must endure collateral damage. Internet nerds who insert viruses in a sophomoric fashion may not realize their damage to the public Internet highway. Just as limits to influence set up a demand for broader participation on the global level, so here individual limits require social interaction. Is it proper to sacrifice private property rights for the common good? If so, how much? If one sabotages a power plant, will the damage affect health care (lighting, oxygen pumps, treatment devices, etc.)?

Terrorism, a form of secret activism and agency of change, kills and injures innocent people. Terrorists often target innocent women and children as pilgrims, or worshipping multitudes, or those attending funerals or markets. Certainly, limited resources during terrorist acts can draw public attention -- provided the operation is done with finesse. Furthermore, terrorist actions can affect political and economic systems, stymie economic growth, and destabilize entire nations. Terrorists learn that complex societies are more vulnerable, globalization broadens audiences, fast communication shrinks neighborhoods, and fast news gives limited attention spans. Terrorists feel the power to shake

the foundations of civilization. Are we partly to blame?¹⁵

Authentic agents of change do not want to "Leave the issue to the experts." Urgency requires effective teamwork to bring about meaningful change.¹⁶ Democratic process is challenged to act more quickly and so when we say "now is the acceptable time" we can say it within a community of activists bent on a community endeavor, a healing operation. The environmental crisis situation is one that, as Sachs says, requires that we get a grip on our behavior both as citizens and as consumers. *But taking that long view is exceeding difficult since much of the economy is working overtime to encourage us to succumb to temptation.*¹⁷ This economy is consumption-oriented and leads to addictive behavior. The response is not singular actors but effective cooperative endeavors and mutually corrective measures.

NOW: The Spirituality of Compassion

The second and deeper level emphasizes responsibility that arises from the original environmental awareness and a growing sensitivity for our brothers and sisters who are victims of misdeeds. Repairs of our wounded planet call us to reclamation, resource conservation, sustainable development, and renewable energy promotion. This suffering-with-others is a spirituality of compassion that involves a growing sense of responsibility and endurance to repair malpractice. For more detail, see *Healing Appalachia*.¹³

A spirituality of compassion or "suffering with others" becomes a central motivating force. The damage hurts us and we lament a damaged creation marred of its God-given beauty by human misdeed and selfishness. We seek to show the compassion of the Good Samaritan, and give immediate assistance to the suffering -- humans and all other wounded creatures. Often our responses are imperfect, and that makes us all the more humble and willing to experiment and improve through new techniques. Compassion is a planetary experience, and our growing sensitivity moves us to do something about it right **NOW**. Urgency grows, and we are unwilling to excuse ourselves and expect others to dress the wounds of Earth. We take responsibility here and now.

Not everyone will rush to a person involved in an accident. Some are fearful and seek to leave the scene ASAP. The compassion of the Good Samaritan is our model; this allows all of us to extend neighborliness to our suffering brothers and sisters (even plants and animals in the spirit of St. Francis). Such acts of compassion are often undertaken as sacrifices (such as total caregiving for an elderly relative). Heroic caregivers reach to deep levels of sacrifice, take risks that what they do is misunderstood, and are willing to stand as counter-witnesses to the greedy and selfish who distance themselves from responsibilities. In many ways, they are exemplar agents of change.

The opposite of this spirituality of compassion is a selfish material affluence with a heavy dose of greed. This approach leads the affluent to pretend to be so privileged that they are best suited to control resources. The affluent excuse themselves for one or other reason just like the priest and Levite who passed the victim in the Good Samaritan parable. No problem, no blame, no need for pausing in the journey in pursuit of affluence. This world of undiscerned affluence encourages the privileged to be spiritually ethereal, hesitant to look at human causes, and unwilling to get hands and feet dirty. In plain language, uncontrolled affluence leads to ruin of individuals and others, including Earth herself. Insensitivity is counter to compassion and can gain a following among a surging middle class; these become hell-bent on imitating the upper affluent class at all costs and are often forgetful of those they have left behind.

In the ideal order, we take notice of those who suffer but who are still not part of our immediate surroundings. We go from observing those who suffer (first level) to caring for them (second level). But often, even the compassionate like the Good Samaritan must go on with the business of life -- and leave the victims at the inn for care by others. A degree of connectedness comes when we take a wider responsibility and ensure that longer-term care is given and monitored.

At some point for many caregivers, the question is raised as to solidarity with victims. Thus, the "they" who are drawn ever nearer become part of our community of concern. Medical doctors, technical experts, and others are cautioned not to become too emotionally involved. Since our economics and our environment pertain to us all, a deeper engagement and identification is needed. Thus, we become prepared to accept that the second level is not sufficient for a deeper awareness and humility when we are drawn to respond to the "they" becoming a "WE."

Level Three: Ecumenism -- WE Are Called to Work Together

A third level of eco-awareness involves the movement to join forces with like-minded people working as a social unit to bring about needed change through teamwork.

In the first level, air, water, and land pollution are seen as raiding the commons meant for all people. In the second level, taking responsibility involves reaching out for tools furnished in education, health and communications to evoke some remedial action to address malpractice and harm; these remedies, while well intentioned, are never perfect. A deeper level of awareness for justice demands working with a broader community to address the crisis at its roots, and not to simply tweak a broken system.

This third level is equivalent to that of St. Ignatius' third of three degrees of humility.¹⁸ The first level of Ignatian humility involves grave matters of personal eternal salvation; from a moral standpoint, we must abstain from activities that would disrupt our relationship with God. In a comparable ecological manner, this level relates to refraining from willful pollution or damage to our fragile Earth. From a social activist standpoint, this level refers to a awareness of the condition of others, namely through **observing** hunger and other injustices that are being committed; the resolve is to do something as concerned citizens, researchers, writers, critics, commentators, or eco-tourists. At this level one learns about the immensity and basic causes of the problem and becomes present and **HERE** to the situation.

In Ignatian terms, a second degree of humility involves attending to the venial imperfections of personal life and activity. In an ecological sense, this second level involves a deeper commitment to overcoming malpractice and misdeeds, and the urgency **to engage** in remedial action for the perceived situation right **NOW**. In a social sense, activists must confront inherent and evident injustices and to do so through charity and other means whether public or clandestine at one's disposal. Environmentally, at this level, we become general supporters of specific causes in conjunction with those working to improve processes and practices such as practitioners of appropriate technology. Limited solutions are needed, but our lack of support and resources are keenly felt. Note, physical *force* equals mass times acceleration, and so hastening the process requires greater mass or multitude -- and therein the second level activist is becoming aware that lack of advancement is due to failure to work with a broader team.

In the Ignatian sense of a deepening humility, we give ourselves totally to God with all of our being. A third level exceeds the first two in commitment, and this can be applied to social and ecological matters as well. The growing solidarity of a community of activists means one no longer speaks of victims as "they;" rather there emerges a sense a willingness to be regarded as one body, a **WE** who suffer together. We are drawn **to identify** with those who suffer and become one as an extended family by pooling resources and working together. This goes beyond the keen insight of a distant observer (level one), or the solutions of an experienced person prodding for change for a better world at the technological, political, or social level (level two). At this

still deeper level, involvement means joining with others in the struggle. Acting prophetically and as agents of change gives way to acting in a broader community for change through teamwork.

Eco-humility is at the heart of this third level, for it calls for the total human person -- the emotional, psychological, and rational, as well as social skills in working together. This also requires that we give up the allurements that hold us back, that reduce us to solitary escapees. Here a prayerful discernment is necessary so that we may be more open to the prompting of divine light and the sensitivity of our extended family in need. We are all too often aware that we like to do things our own way; however, at this third level we must risk to let go of some things dear to us in order to open ourselves to more meaningful activism.

Travelers on a difficult journey must forsake self-serving comfort, join forces with fellow strugglers, and pool their resources in order to complete the journey. Some are weak and need added help; some are privileged and ride along side the walkers, calling to them to move faster. Travelers are tempted to counter the riders' insensitivity by violence but that could create chaos. Somehow these journeying activists must stop the vehicle and allow those with walking disabilities to take seats, and to require the able-bodied passengers to walk with the rest. The goal is not uniformity (all walkers or all riders), but fairness, and the vehicles and other forms of technology have a role to play for the completion of the journey. Yes, there are classes, but these need shaking up -- an activists' job.

Strong Point: Citizen Participation and Social Addiction

A prospering civic community demands a sense of togetherness and a unifying set of goals. The **WE** that is sought has its foundations in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, truly praiseworthy aspirations. A common goal can be better reached by working together, whether a patriotic parade, or solving a local problem, or an organized demonstration of togetherness. Community spirit demands public assembly on certain occasions; we must interact with other like-minded people, songs, speeches, flags and other symbols, and uniform performances through cultural exchanges contribute to enhancing togetherness and needed encouragement. Citizens are drawn together by shared problems (war, natural disaster, food insecurity, unemployment, etc.) that usually afflict the poor more than higher income people.

Today, the beleaguered middle class have other concerns: stagnant income and investments, escalating costs of health and education, job insecurity, and declining and "underwater" house prices. Also at stake is the American Dream of rising material expectations, and here is where addiction enters the picture. The hint is coming to this class that parroting the mantra "No new taxes" is really a "wealthy one percent" agenda, to which they have

been inadvertently enlisted. Maybe it is time that the activist chant should be, "Fair Taxes for all."

Public participation demands **freedom of the media** both in access to information on key issues, and means of reaching an ever-expanding global audience. The Revolutionary War was initiated in a sense of togetherness by those hurting from taxation without representation. Those surprisingly literate citizens in the 18th century were burdened by slow communication, but they still had time to reflect and discern. They did not have today's burdens of information overload and the constant distraction of commercial interests vying for their precious time through an extremely noisy multimedia environment. The 18th century revolutionaries chose to read more seriously than a current populace accustomed to propagandizing TV and infantile Twitter. Addiction to the consumer culture dampens any inclination to radical change.

Affirming our freedom means reinforcing our civic insight: we have proper tools for change, but we need to be discerning and accept the HERE and NOW problems for what they truly are. Radical change is not generally on the table because every effort on the part of the general media is to retain the status quo and look no deeper. Part of this current situation is to isolate ourselves and compartmentalize our activities and aspirations. Pervasive television, Twitter, cell phone chatter, and a multitude of modern devices erode a social capital, and this is encouraged by those who are captains at the upper end of this massive disparity of wealth. Social and governmental programs are handicapped at all levels by lack of properly directed funding caused by lack of fair taxes. Corporations and the upper-one-percent are overflowing with financial resources that are meant for the benefits of all the people. Today, tax reform and financial regulation are utterly needed.

Is it fair to allow the upper-one-percent the lowest tax rates in the nation? Is it fair that wealthy proponents of "No new taxes" hold on to governmental and mass media influence, and promote and lobby the fiction that wealth generates jobs? Are the consequences of unfairness haunting and daunting? Should the super-wealthy retain residual wealth after paying similar rates to the middle or working poor? Is it further true that fair taxation may not solve a dysfunctional economic system, nor can it be effected by a dysfunctional Congress, half of whom are millionaires and beholden to special interest contributors? Is it proper to permit CEOs, celebrities, and athletes to enjoy enormous salaries while government agencies at local, state and national levels are strapped for funds to meet basic services? Should wealth itself be limited in a democratic society and redistributed? Is the problem wealth gained AND wealth retained when essentials are neglected?

Personal wealth does not extend beyond one's death, so why not a beneficial adjustment before that inevitable event? Love, not money is all that will endure beyond the great divide, and so addressing disparity of wealth

through taxation is a "commons sense" solution -- but it will take the ingenuity of activists.

Limiting wealth harks back to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in which elder statesman and true democrat Ben Franklin proposed just such a limitation. Franklin had previously favored at the Pennsylvania constitutional conventional a radical proposal that officeholders did not have to own property. *One ultra-democratic proposal Franklin made to the Pennsylvania convention was that the state's Declaration of Rights discourage large holdings of property or concentrations of wealth... That also ended up being too radical for the state convention.*¹⁹ In a similar fashion, the 1787 national convention containing delegates (mostly property holders), politely dismissed Franklin's proposal to limit wealth as senile talk. Has wealth limitation's time now come? Does our patriotism during financial and environmental crises demand joint citizen action? Should not a reformed Constitution address unlimited wealth?²⁰

The activist today must raise fundamental questions that are surfacing not only in this country but also to some degree among other nations. Did participation in two World Wars in the last century change us from isolationists to become policemen of the world? If Americans accept the UN and joint defense with NATO, why not global financial and environmental regulations? Did America's sense of a more perfect union go beyond the transition from Colonies to **these** United States, and from true civil war strife to **the** United States? George Washington and other founders came to realize that thirteen independent colonies would not address commercial and safety needs. Following in their footsteps, do we now realize that we must elevate the national sovereignty issue to global levels of mutual support and control of the multi-national corporations?

Furthermore, Abraham Lincoln realized that our nation could not continue to exist half slave and half free. Extending this insight to our globalized world, we start to realize that a safe and prosperous world cannot exist with haves and have-nots. Americans could be first in calling for efficient governing structures to handle global issues beyond that of single or groups of nations. Along with others, the U.S. could see its greater destiny in working to overcome the dichotomies of wealth -- the source of global insecurity and distrust -- and we ought to aspire to be number one, not in a quantitative role of producer or user of material goods, but as leaders in bringing about global changes and harmony through global federation -- a qualitative leadership role.

In an age of globalization and facile wealth transfer from one place to another, should something be done when the wealthy drop their loot at the Cayman Islands tax haven? Are not speed, complexity, and the hidden nature of global financial transactions erasing the barriers and controls found within national boundaries? Do havens with the least controls become legalized

pirates' nests flaunting global controls? Is not a global regulatory system in keeping with our national spirit? Perhaps the United Kingdom learned a lesson when it discovered that one cannot go alone in heavier taxing on financial institutions that can flee across the border to a protected haven. Is a global mechanism to prevent this unregulated flow of globally mobile wealth feasible? Can WE do more as a globalizing democratic citizenry and say "no" to untaxed and hoarded wealth? Can the citizens and not the privileged be the ones who determine use of vast financial resources?

When blessed with good leadership, citizen consensus coalesces in times of emergencies such as wars, natural disasters and financial difficulties. Activists know that prophets and agents of change cannot muster consensus by acting alone. Within a democratic tradition, multitudes are called to deliver the best. Now we have an emergency (environmental/economic), and isn't this an ideal time to work together at all levels -- local community, regional, national, and global? But what if the human causes of the problem are denied, and the ways to address the financial problems are not agreed upon? Political differences darken the picture and lead to paralysis to which authentic prophets and agents of change must respond. In the dark days of the Second World War, atheist Josef Stalin allowed the USSR churches to reopen for services; Russians knew they could not "go it alone." The Russian people were seeking divine assistance in prayer. In our times are we approaching this stage with an environmental crisis and an inability to attend to critical matters? Do we suffer from addictive behavior as a people?

Individual addictions may involve several levels:

"I have a problem and am in trouble," versus the denial --

"I have no problem for I am in control."

"I am addicted and must do something now," versus excuse --

"I can handle this myself in due time."

"I cannot do this alone and must get help," versus escape --

"I will find help from others."

Social addiction²¹ is barely spoken about in our society and yet it is overwhelming with its many symptoms evident to keen observers: media pressure to purchase new products; heavy indebtedness of the people and national and local governments; high unemployment that will not go away because the jobs do not exist with access to job-creating financial resources (workers are willing and infrastructure job opportunities are present); a globalizing consumer culture; and a failure to reduce greenhouse emissions significantly in the coming years and disaster to follow.

Prophets speak about troubles and agents of change seek to address them. Uncontrolled luxurious "wants" of the wealthy (and such growing "wants" by middle classes as well) manifest the lack of internal self-control, especially in a world of essential needs. The path to greater want is insatiable;

it cannot be satisfied in a permeating consumer culture by a few heroic individuals living a more simple lifestyle. Activism is demanded.

Addiction to material things creeps in unexpected and virtually always is denied at first notice. Whether it is oil, which President George Bush in a State of the Union address called "our addiction," or other fossil fuels, we can and have become an addicted people with little discussion of the subject. When we insert a gasoline hose into the car, that extension of ourselves, receives a "drug" injection. Even the seemingly welcome natural gas fracking phenomenon that is making North America move from importer to exporter of fossil fuels does not signify any improved situation. James E. Rogers, the highly influential CEO of Duke Energy (one of America's largest utilities) boasted of being personally addicted to natural gas, contrasting gas to that of coal or oil. Rogers signaled a shift from coal to natural gas, but shifting fossil fuel emphasis only prolongs the fossil fuel addiction.²²

Controlling addictions is more than a rational exercise, a commercial gimmick, a learned academic procedure. While we need to remain practical and rational, to look for assistance, and to read the latest scientific findings, we must do more. The power to change does not come automatically to the addicted; "will power" needs outside support. We wonder whether the often-disparaged ex-addicts are not prime examples of a hidden community of people who can help us; they experience the damage of substance abuse; they know they need others to assist them; they reach out to others and gain from their experience through a program and through informal communal experience. And they experience a new lease on life.

America's advertising of medicine has become a subtle way to make many drug-dependent, to lose fear of drugs either illegal or prescribed, and to be prone to abuse other substances. Food excess, involving the enticements of advertised processed foods and soft drinks, leads to obesity and related and other illnesses. Excess use of electronic devices and motorized vehicles accompanies decline in outdoor physical exercise and family time. We need a moderation in drugs, food, and social activities and yet self-control is almost a forgotten virtue. We pride ourselves in being *uno numero* in resource use, but we need assistance to rediscover simple lifestyle techniques, some that were championed earlier among Native Americans, colonists, and Great Depression survivors.

Can we Americans go it alone, or do we as a nation need to pool resources with others in a "commons of concern?" Our current financial and environmental crises are of global concern, and we need each other, a true ecumenism as well as interreligious appeals to people of all faith traditions to work together. The HERE is before us; the NOW is needed today; the WE are all of us struggling to make some sense of the global paralysis that is creeping upon us. To fail to see the problems as pertinent to us here and now renders them beyond us, or out "there" involving others, or left to be solved sometime

in a temporal distance "then," or by others more expert than ourselves who we can designate as an amorphous "they." We must take charge here and now.

Weaknesses within Our Culture

We fail to look into ourselves. Activists are not immune from the addictions that afflict our culture. All who seek to change society in some way must confront weaknesses as individuals, as groups, and as an entire culture. Perhaps one temptation at this third level is to profess a certain self-sufficiency in handling our own affairs as though to be otherwise is a sign of immaturity and utter weakness. If we cannot handle ourselves, how can we change a dysfunctional world? Perhaps the question at this level needs rephrasing: since it is impossible to pull oneself up by his bootstraps, why not work together and help each other gain self-improvement while also working together for change?

Activists are outer directed and the public domain is out there and not within ourselves. Concern about radical change on the outside tempts us to neglect our internal growth and the problems that touch us personally, and are often minimized. To be radical means getting to the roots both of our culture and of ourselves. If we do not admit our own condition, we are prone to overlook our lack of self-control. Without a serious look into ourselves, can we do little more than tweak rather than change the system? Will we be prone to soften the message of needed radical change? Interior conversion is paramount for the activist and yet may be achieved within working for a greater good.

Inherent vulnerability accompanies the work itself. Activists often crave publicity, and this weakness for notoriety has two effects: a possible broadening of support and enhancement of the cause; a possible risk of being misrepresented or misunderstood due to the rush for a better media story. Hastening to compose a good story can lead to carelessness in checking sources or to an exaggeration of one's role. On the other hand, activists individually or in groups are vulnerable to verbal or physical attack by opponents as has already been mentioned. Vulnerability is an inherent weakness that comes with the price of exposure.

Lacking complete clarity in goals may bother people on both sides of any issue, but such disarray is found in a work in progress. Believers expect eternal life to bring both comfort and happiness, but getting to that state includes the discomfort of uncertainty (even while believers find that obeying God brings happiness amid current discomfort). Failure to express clarity often is a means of allowing people to work together without being detoured by unsettling issues. Sometimes it involves being on the right track but uncertain where the track is ultimately heading.

Tendencies to disunity are always present among highly motivated individuals and groups, especially with social matters (abortion issues, gay marriage, abolition of the death penalty, etc.) and these can be regarded by some as ideological challenges that exclude joining together on certain issues.²³ Even listing this set of examples is enough to turn some readers away. Some would argue that hidden social or political goals must be manifested in order to move forward, though under a risk of weakening bonds of unified action. Friction surfaces in many ways including those presented by strong aspiring leaders, publicity hounds, social climbers, and those angry enough to pick a fight.

Overexposure is a risk in an age when issues have limited shelf space. Activists seek to compensate for this risk by timing what part of an issue is made public and what part left hidden. One temptation is to overly sensationalize an issue for broader coverage. Media representatives dislike being spoon-fed; they like to expand the basic message with a full story or one with a new twist -- and activists are enticed to cooperate. Not venturing beyond the known facts is difficult for some to handle, since an exaggerated tale gets more publicity than the bare factual account.

Failure in willingness to confront addictions is seldom admitted. Those who are somewhat successful in a career never want to admit lack of self-control in personal areas. "I can handle the situation; I am rational and can withstand any crisis." On the other hand, ex-addicts admit to a different condition, namely, that of long-term need for assistance. All are weak and that is the need for humility when we seek help from others. Our own mistaken sense of solving problems alone, and moving on an ever widening arena of assistance, is at the heart of profound change needed in our addicted world. Misunderstanding power and powerlessness threatens the vitality of Earth herself.

Ongoing assistance is overlooked. At this third level, we know we need assistance, and we are moved to seek expert advice. How do we develop a social program equivalent to an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) meeting with its ongoing reinforcement? Most are willing to admit mistakes once; but ought we to do so tomorrow and then again and again? What is overlooked is that corrective measures (repentance and resolve to improve life) take time and effort. Ex-addicts have experience but do we credit non-academic persons or lower formal educational levels as worthy "experts" in the efforts to be undertaken. Why not see this as an ongoing condition embracing all -- a precondition to global togetherness? Granted, some may challenge the AA method of treating addictions of various origins. They may find the method of solving our cultural addiction as something else. That is why this is a reflection and not a manual of change -- for the fine-tuned solution is being worked out right now by those concerned.

Citizen fatigue is a weakness that afflicts any movement over time. There are periods when the new issue has a freshness that attracts many. With the monotony of continued activities including demonstrations and organizing, citizens can find it losing popularity. When a movement is competing with other issues, the organizers must know when to reduce the intensity of the battle for a period of time, and when to return somewhat refreshed to start the next round.

Capitalism is regarded as something sacred to be treated with religious respect. It is professed to be a given, a necessity, a proven system, a state religion with its hourly stock reports, news on investment outlooks, banking fees and credit ratings, insurance bargains, and all business aspects of modern society. To question this economic system is to ostracize oneself from the mainstream. "Who can dare live outside of the prevailing capitalist system?" Amazingly, both religious believers and non-believers, churched and unchurched, may subscribe to this state religion; they worship the dollar as a god, they regard functioning financial agencies as formal services, and they ordain economists as clergy; they denounce opponents as heretics. Few dare to question the morality of Wall Street misdeeds, and regard questioning "To whom does wealth belong?" as heresy.

The Velvet Revolution that swept Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought about regime change, but certainly not that of a non-capitalistic substitute.²⁴ In Poland and the liberated areas of Europe people stopped short of establishing a radically new economic system. The World Bank and other global economic groups would not tolerate the thought of an alternative economic system. Perhaps the silence of progressive leaders at these critical moments of regime change is telling. Where are the churches?²⁵

Where do we place our trust?

A national admission of addiction is a challenge for us all. Must only some admit it, and the nation and world ignore the designation? In essence, Americans need to return to our national motto, "In God We Trust." We simply cannot trust in human efforts alone. We Americans have a motto that is worth owning and celebrating as a people; that motto is placed on every coin and dollar bill of any size. Will it endure the onward advance of secularity? If the proposal is made to abandon it, will activists object? For patriots, our motto goes back to the American Revolution or at least to the second Revolution in the War of 1812. The nation knew that it could not endure without the assistance of Divine Grace. What is needed today is the same admission; we cannot do it without God.

We believers must reject a materialistic economic system that serves as virtually a false state religion. We must break loose and admit that the current economic system causes the lust for more material goods and the

ongoing consumption of resources to support a consumption-oriented lifestyle that demands immense amounts of energy, time, and attention. This insatiable materialism spreads throughout the world with a deadening effect on the vitality of Earth herself through profound climate change and its dire consequences. Tens of millions of Asian, Africans and Latin Americans seek better lifestyles like those of Americans and Europeans. The situation is serious and causes us to turn to the God in whom we trust -- before it is too late.

WE: A Resurrection-Centered Spirituality

The magnitude of the problems facing us calls for teamwork and participation at a global level. Renewal sought involves accepting ourselves as poor and addicted, and thus shouldering part of the blame. We must deepen our journey of faith. Acknowledging social addiction moves us to trust in God and thus discover an empowerment found in acknowledging our own powerlessness and willingness to be renewed in the Lord of all.

An expanded eco-spirituality must incorporate the awareness of damage done through a sensitive insight (level one) and the acceptance of responsibility to take corrective measures by agents of change (level two). However, a deeper awareness involves confronting the dysfunctional system that is causing the environmental crisis and taking charge of the situation. This focuses on the consumer economy that entices people into the insatiable rat race acquiring more and more material goods, with its resulting expenditure of resources and environmental pollution. Materialistic greed fuels a dysfunctional economic and political system, encourages a plague of insensitivity towards those not yet consumed by the spending frenzy. Inability to tackle overuse of resources is unacknowledged social addiction. The crisis grows along with a lack of spiritual will power to delve more deeply. Thus, we search for help at a global level, for a possible all-inclusive **WE**.

In this global crisis we reach out to all; we look about; we discover our weaknesses and ask basic questions. If we begin to consider ourselves as addicts to materialism in our culture, then we are startled and ask ourselves: "Have we lost power to become self-corrective?" In this moment of malaise, we discover our social addiction. Deepening our faith is part of the evolving human spiritual quest beckoned on by the Divine. Acknowledging social addiction becomes a sacred moment of decision, a time for renewal. To heal a wounded Earth, we confront our own weaknesses and inability to do this by merely tweaking the current system. We beg for help from a Higher Power.

This growth in awareness has several elements:

- * We must acknowledge our inability to solve problems and thus accept the humble state of the poor;
- * Solidarity with others, a WE, includes integrating with the

poor and thinking alike, and ex-addicts become models;

- * An inability to do this alone makes us fall back on a Higher Power (12-step *Alcoholic Anonymous* program);
- * Reclaiming the motto "In God we Trust" gives us a new solidarity, for here we look to a Higher Power;
- * Renewal requires accepting all assistance at our disposal and for Christians this means sacramental nourishment;
- * The focus is on hope-filled believers so that they may be agents of change to bring about a new social order; and
- * A renewed spirit gives the enthusiasm needed to carry on the work in rebuilding the social order.

Level Four: Evangelization -- WE Look to a Higher Power

The growth in awareness to social change goes beyond seeing a problem (first level), seeing the urgency to change now (second level), and seeking assistance in making changes that are necessary (third level). Individually these are not failures, only incomplete portions of a total journey. Simply knowing there is something wrong does not induce people to spontaneously change; to see urgency does not hasten the process in itself; to join with others (including all the baggage associated with democratic process) does not totally address addiction that affect us all, either by involvement (commission of a misdeed) or tolerating a dysfunctional system (omission in addressing issues).

The process of addressing an individual addiction includes understanding that something is wrong, seeing addiction as a loss of control, and understanding the need for others' help. Courage to move to this deeper level takes surrender to a Higher power. When we see that help reaches beyond what those around us can give, we must reach out prayerfully to God, for we keenly experience our powerlessness when acting alone. We grasp for help and know that joint efforts are transformative events, and so we stretch cooperative efforts to their ultimate limits.

The problem is not just our limited local community; issues here are global in dimension, and (like on a personal level of addiction) only a Higher Power can help us transcend our limitations. Here is the point of hope, a reaching out for what or who is Greater -- and realizing that power is not withheld but is a source of light.

Grasping as an isolated individual for something that satisfies is frustrating. Merely associating with other creatures (human and plants and animals) is wonderful but not a total solution in itself. The AA stepwise

program involves turning to a Higher Power (with some leeway as to what this means to various participants). For those caught in the personal strength of community and social life, a Higher Power needs to be personal. As a people, we have become insensitive to the needs of others by objects of idolatry (money, cars, houses, etc.,) that attempt to satisfy our wants. However, our journey to deeper eco-awareness makes us confront the frightening and insatiable power of materialism and to reach out for solutions.

Awareness of guilt is a greater hurdle than at first suspected. Many find "guilt" as negative and retarding our journey, and is so, if allowed to continue unaddressed. Guilt is associated with the burdens of misdeeds. In order to escape guilt many are mesmerized by the disease of "affluenza" (the culture of affluent consumerism); this involves the multi-car, multi-bathroom, and electronic-device-filled homesteads -- and a subtle guilt results in acquiring, paying for, retaining, and upgrading these cultural trappings. Americans and others are materially addicted, and individuals constantly compare themselves with those who have more -- and thus are caught up in the game of wanting more and seeking to attain the more. Uneasiness disturbs the peace of mind -- and guilt persists.

Prayerful discernment may show this to be the good spirit attracting us to something greater and upsetting our complacency. We think that consumer addictions can be addressed by bargains, novel conservation measures, medicines and meditative routines, or a wild assortment of gimmicks and trivia. It is like alcoholics taking group tours of various Kentucky distilleries in order to narrow one's consumption to a little of the best brand. Greedy capitalism is a form of substance abuse and an economy that encourages this is dysfunctional. A little greed never stops; it feeds on itself.

Acknowledgment of a condition is only a first step. Continuation of sobriety and conquest of all forms of addictions are concerns for the healing community that include victims and culprits. Most do not see the fault of acquisition of added material possessions, but rather consider it as an investment in future security (the addict's quest for comfort). Over-consumption and the resulting environmental harm due to resource depletion and resulting pollution is scientifically established. So is the role of conservation of resources and use of renewable energy to curb excess greenhouse gases or polluted air. The problem is not the need for more scientific research; the problem is the greed that impels one to acquire consumer goods and excel those held by competitors. Thus, the entry of tens or hundreds of millions of aspiring middle and upper class occurs in the 21st century. Suddenly China and India become leading markets for jewelry and gold objects. The movement seems irresistible; we turn to God.

Eco-humility at this deepest level involves surrendering in a similar way in which a criminal on the loose surrenders to authorities after being tired

of running. In fact, this language of surrender is closely associated with Jewish, Christian and Moslem beliefs of approaching God. Amazingly, it is quite similar to the materialists' surrender to the urge to buy, maintain, dispose of, and upgrade an array of material goods. We need a goal that satisfies our every desire. We need someone who is truly able to help us tackle our major problems. We need help to come to terms with the perversity of greed and its addictive effects on an entire society. This involves an additional fourth level of our process:

- 1) Make the public aware of the pollution and resource depletion caused by current culture and the need for balance and **temperance** in use of material things;
- 2) Take **prudent** steps to address climate change issues now, and especially by instituting resource conservation and substituting renewable energy in place of fossil fuels;
- 3) Change an economy at the global level by reclaiming the commons with recommendations to bring forth **justice**, such as systematic fair taxation and wealth limitation controls along with redistribution of wealth;¹ and
- 4) Muster the **courage** to call on a Higher Power in whom we trust already, but not openly for our culture frowns on this.

Unfortunately, the success of any addiction program is not automatically guaranteed. Neither are these four steps in any way automatically applied by everyone. Individual addicts choose freely to abandon AA programs; they can become recidivists, and return to old ways. Just as an ex-addict recognizes the non-permanent status of a present condition and the need for ongoing assistance, so ought those at the fourth level of social addiction/environmental crisis see that acknowledgment, urgency, and mutual levels of support are necessary. We long for the Holy Other; we accept our inadequacies; we need protection from the ravages of enticing social addiction that will take us all down. We must reclaim a commons that includes Divine Assistance.

Note that the champions of greed and self-interest will struggle to retain a privileged position. Their compulsive striving for more goods is fueled by others who wish to make profits off their addictions. Here the believers in the god of money are in direct conflict with the believers in a Higher Power. With hesitancy for fear of hypocrisy, some of us dare to speak out. With all the courage we can muster we deny the ultimate power of the money "god" that has a way of paralyzing social addicts. No matter how hard the third level activists attempt to work, they must concede, "We can't do it alone; we are not in charge. God is." The fourth level confronts materialism at its very core and forces us outside the capitalistic pale to new grounds, a new Easter -- and this is where courage enters -- the championing of a new economic/social/ political order.

Good News is that there can be a person who is the Higher Power and that person is among us in the middle of this just described cosmic struggle. Acknowledging social addiction (first level of awareness) that ought to be addressed now (second level) brings us to the association needed to assist with that change (third level). It is the humanness of the association wherein strength and weakness reside. Openness to conversion is called forth. Christians say that precisely here belief adds a qualitative difference -- the Higher Power is both Divine and Human. Developing this thought is a matter of further reflection.

Simply working together with peers, associates, and experts is not sufficient for AA participants to grow in their self-control. They need a formal program: meeting places, regular scheduling, interaction with other peers; and public recognition of this Higher Power. Interestingly, to tackle the environmental crisis requires some order as well. Without a formal approach we as ex-addicted people will devolve into sub-sets of issue ideologues, each carping for a booth in the world's fair of attention. We have to surpass levels of petty friction, even temporarily transcend ambitions to convert others to our faith traditions. We tread lightly into the arena of ecumenical and interreligious relations; we must discover neutral grounds for accepting our surrender to a Higher Power -- a global AA arena or forum that need not be physical space, but rather a virtual world bonded through Internet social contacts.

Let us expand our insights: we are to be **HERE** to admit that our troubled Earth's problem cannot be blamed entirely on a distant culprit. As a social being, I am partly to blame for what I have done and for failing to stop the wrongdoing from occurring. If this is not a need, than a Creation-Centered Spirituality is sufficient with a mere expanded rational process of seeing the community of all being. But this is more than a rational insight of creation's evolutionary movement. Secular answers demand no faith except in one's self-sufficiency -- and that is part of the misdirected culture in which we live. That is not the **HERE**, a place where faith awakens differences between these readers and the deniers of the current situation.

Our problematic ability to address successfully our existing condition leads to that second aspect of our crisis, namely, when to act. **NOW** requires listening with spiritual and sensitive ears just as **HERE** involves perceptively observing the current situation. When we take notice, all threatened, suffering and dying creatures sensitize us to an ever-growing urgency. However, this does not necessarily make us successful in attracting others to take responsibility. Our failure weighs heavily upon us; we seek to be responsible and take remedial measures, but the task is too large for an individual; it takes a community and, if a global issue, it takes a global community to bring about radical change. Many crave quality education and health benefits, but these goals seem allusive in this consumer culture. To gain popularity, these critical

issues take more than voluntary largess by the rich.

Responsibility demands action, and action cannot be delayed. The **HERE** evolves into a **NOW**, and urgency makes this far more than a repetition of the same, "*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time.*"²⁶ Change must come as something different, not the tired repetition of small voluntary actions. If this is a global matter, the sacred mission must be larger than individual actions. **WE** need to work together to hear, listen to, and distinguish the cries of Earth and those in need -- and regard setting up the conditions for a global radical sharing. Often activists see personal wants unfulfilled, and peace of soul is achieved when struggling to fulfill essential needs of the poor, the hungry, and the homeless. We are short on patience in waiting for the privileged affluent to unloose the "trickle down of wealth" to the peons below. We must champion fairness in sharing resources by creating an opportunity to take what is rightfully ours. However, that can only be achieved when we firmly believe we can do it.

How big is that WE: A domestic scene? A family? A small community of faith? A Village in which we live? Our state? Our region? Our nation? A world of my brothers and sisters within the family of human beings? A planet of all creatures (flora and fauna) living in harmony? The truth is that expanding our tents involves ever-broadening arenas of people. Domestic quarters are outgrown. We "let go" and launch into the act of broadening community to include larger aggregates of people and other creatures. WE reach out for help from a Higher Power. To accept an exclusive "WE," which expands human circles of connectedness to defined limits, denies the global aspect of our current problems.

Believers of whatever persuasion must sincerely take note; the goal is not a soup mix of various religious celebrations or events; rather we must pray to have the power to work together for a common goal and to confront our current dysfunctional systems. Openness to a Higher Power is necessary, and this is the result of surrender to the will of God. This avoids a costly compromise with secularity that omits the call to a Higher Power. In truth, we must respect "respect." If global consensus is necessary, can the naysayer trump actions of the believing majority? Believers must extend a welcome to the secular world, but only if we admit our individual powerlessness.

Instruments for Spiritual Renewal

To entertain the possibility of incorporating a Higher Power calls for certain interactions by all of us. I have helped bring together and organize non-profits groups and a variety of environmental conferences, exhibits, and workshops in my earlier and more active years, but the issues discussed paled at the size of global warming and restructuring of the social/economic order

mentioned here. We face deeper and more complex issues today and observe a world of many who are paralyzed at the prospect of solving these problems. One cannot merely train people to become ex-addicts; the action takes personal commitment. It is like trying to confine pregnant women with drug problems to jail until the birth of their children. In a society that honors freedom, we are limited in the power to bend another's will; enslavement will create resentment and hatred and do little else. The heart of the problem is the heart, which is open to God's power at work in us.

Personal and Social Addictions

	Personal	Social
Level 1:	I am in trouble.	Earth is in trouble.
Level 2:	I need help for I am addicted.	The window of opportunity to do something is closing.
Level 3:	I look to all for help from those who are experienced.	We seek help from others who know the situation.
Level 4:	I must confront -- my powerless condition and surrender to a Higher Power.	We must confront -- our consumer culture and place our trust in God.

Mystery surrounds the quest for a Higher Power, and in the openness that is given to us through the graces of compassion, we are touched by divine grace that allows us the key to an ever-deepening compassionate heart. We are beggars who acknowledge our weaknesses, and realize that even the power to beg is from a Higher Power. For believing Christians, this Higher Power is a person, Emmanuel, "God with us." Awareness of our inability to handle this crisis as individuals and even in groups, directs us who are activists to seek further assistance; here the passivity of acknowledged weakness comes face to face with activity founded in a mysterious enabling Force opening opportunities for more meaningful work. Christians speak of being washed in Baptism, struck by the Spirit in Confirmation, and invited into the Divine Family as members of the "Body of Christ." When we admit we live in an addictive atmosphere, we open ourselves to divine mercy and love, for that is ultimately our only recourse.

Our gratitude takes on a characteristic of outgoing service to others following Jesus, supreme prophet, efficient agent of change, and the Lord of renewal. Spiritual empowerment is the confirmation of a union with this Higher Power. Not all need to have the same understanding in order to share it, for the **radical sharing** on the part of the Christian is to enable those who

do not fully believe in a personal Higher Power to affirm that something has worked in us -- and, by so acknowledging our own openness, they will partake of enabling power bestowed through our Baptism/Confirmation.

Must everyone hold a personal Higher Power? Since not everyone believes the same about a "Higher Power," does this endanger global cooperative endeavors? A "yes" would mean that the materialist's obstinacy could veto the process we seek to make; a "no" allows us to seek answers with our biblical tradition. Scripture expresses power exercised through chosen people and individuals, through prophets and moral leaders. For believers, the power of faith by some can bring about massive changes. But the challenge is that some must believe and activism and faith join in together. The few believing activists become convinced of the power of faith to initiate change, even though ultimate success requires broader support. The high flying but few princes are brought low and the lowly multitudes are raised up.²⁷ This moment of change, once initiated by a few, seeks the support of the many. The mission of the faithful is to initiate action with confidence that others will follow. The more we focus on the lowly (the elderly, the homebound, the sick, the ex-addicts, the prisoners, the threatened creatures of our Earth), the more profound the global healing. Catalysts inspire the lowly (the majority) and others will follow -- through some sort of indeterminate but hopefully democratic procedure.

Evangelization involves the spreading of the Good News that empowerment within our humble awareness of powerlessness-transforming-into-empowerment is a resurrection event containing a vast depth of spiritual meaning. Healing of a world in need becomes a service of spiritual empowerment. Renewing power comes through the instrumentality of the one who accepted being powerless for the sake of others. We who are aware of our former state of powerlessness, are now empowered to save and rebuild a wounded Earth. Gratitude establishes sacred space by surrendering and being open to letting go of our previous pride and the pretended power that we could control our materialism. In an atmosphere of thanksgiving, healing occurs through word and deed and expands to all parts of creation (Mark 16:16), and that includes all humanity, animals, and plants.

Qualities of the fourth level? If the pattern of individual and social addiction is similar, then our public acknowledgment of need to bring about meaningful change is imperative. This acknowledgment cannot be a single expression, but an **ongoing** public exercise wherein we look all the deeper at the justice issues that need to be addressed in this broken world. Proclaiming Good News even with lack of resources (mobility, energy, time, or talent) contains a hidden power that attracts the lowly, and especially those who hunger for justice.

Appealing to a Higher Power involves concrete healing **deeds** along

with public words of prayerful respect. Both are needed to express the faith we have in a meaningful future and our actions become an Incarnate Word to the world. The degrees of awareness **deepen** with further reflection on this fourth level. In fact, here a journey of activism becomes a journey of faith with reflection on five degrees of maturation in a Resurrection-Centered approach to Earthhealing.²⁵

Public Prayer acknowledges before others that we trust in God. In times of national crises, presidents have called for days or periods of prayer. People must express themselves in civic, political, or faith-based community gatherings both in gratitude for gifts given and in petition for assistance in what lies ahead. Trust means we are confident in God's mercy and forgiveness, and in the empowerment that we need to act here and now. Churches, religious groups and civic organizations are natural outlets for such national prayerful events, provided the activities are sincere and not opportunities for expressing some form of triumphalism.

Instruments for Physical Sharing

Social networking is at the heart of our global sharing. The influence of instant communication (cell or land phone, Twitter, or Facebook, etc.) cannot be denied. Benefits can result at reasonable expense. However, a communal sounding of alarms, hastening change, stifling violence, or gathering to reinforce similar goals and methods can have negative consequences. We need to hear each other, record and evaluate opinions, and distill creative ideas to add to the discussion. Communication becomes the glue that brings global problems to the fore, and that includes using emails. However, unsolicited blogging comments can attract naysayers who can dampen enthusiasm. Radical sharing should demand thoughtful reflection, not off-the-cuff remarks or votes by selecting the proper button on a certain political outlet.

Teleconferencing is a major part of our expanding tool kit. Serious work harkens back twenty-five years ago this summer to our work at the "North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology." That 1987 event of about 550 people attracted serious participants as well as those craving a soapbox on which to exert their influence in those pre-Internet days. Such an event may never be repeated given the tenor of the current debates as shown by current presidential and other candidates who engage in a grandiose tweaking of the dysfunctional system. Why allow multimillionaires, tax haven users, and save-the-rich advocates to rule the roost? In place of face-to-face meetings, modern teleconferencing could be a great equalizer for it eliminates high cost physical travel.

An American constitutional convention sounds quite enticing. Organizing for this once-in-a-lifetime event would be a major undertaking.

However, what are the guarantees that powerful free market advocates would not seize the opportunity to preserve their privileged position? Would they simply divert a small portion of their vast holdings to swamp the delegate-determining system with delegates beholden to them before the first gavel sounds? In late 2011, we placed an essay on our Website dealing with organizing a Constitutional Convention²⁰ for finding a wealth cap in order that more resources be available for the essential needs of the world, a tax on the rich that helps with this matter. Uncontrolled Big Money threatens our democratic process.

Should corporations lose presumed "rights" and personhood?

Are these powerful institutions merely creatures of the state? Does not limiting excessive wealth start with limiting corporate influence? Should there be a constitutional amendment to revoke the 2010 Supreme Court "*Citizens' United*" decision? Why should the henchmen of these corporations have a power to overwhelm the election process with super-PACs? Some argue convincingly that getting rid of these super-PAC abominations will return (not restrict) free speech and preserve the democratic process so threatened at this time.

New Political Parties? Is a two-party system too limited to the status quo to effect meaningful change? The question is being raised ever more frequently. Will the power of the large-scale donors be broken in order to achieve election reform? Recall Ross Perot (with millions of his own dollars) and Ralph Nader (without a sugar daddy but still with sizeable support in the hundreds of thousands of voters) are candidates who offered voters alternative presidential choices. A new political party that addresses national financial and environmental problems could breathe new life into a sterile political system. Grassroots organizing is far superior to a top down effort and yet such local organizing takes immense amounts of time and resources. Certainly, a truly conservative party would challenge the Republican Party and a radically liberal one the Democratic Party as well.

Conclusion: In God We Trust

Reclaimers of the Commons are activists, for those who retreat from the title are hardly fitting for the task ahead. Thinkers, by all means, but not thought apart from action, for thought leads to better action and imperfect action triggers deeper thought. The Reclaimer must become the champion of profound renewal, and in the effort to break out of our addiction, we become aware all the more of the length of the road still ahead. We can speak of a real struggle that is going on of light and darkness, good and evil, kingdoms clashing²⁸; however, unless activists are spiritually prepared, this cosmic struggle seems overwhelming and beyond engagement.

We have grave issues facing us: climatic change is coming in all its predicted dimensions (severe weather, melting glaciers, air and water acidification, rising ocean levels, etc.), unless action is taken soon. A new economic system with global controls is imperative; fair taxes and limits on wealth are needed. We must acknowledge our own social addictions and take collective steps at least on the part of believers to address these. Economic and environmental problems are so intertwined that they must be tackled simultaneously -- and the complexity of such a mission moves us to call upon a Higher Power. Enlisting "lowly" ex-addicts and others allows us to see our current situations and gain expertise to assist in our current conditions. A crash program to conserve resources and switch to renewable energy sources will require the attention of everyone -- and in this fashion, broader participation will be demanded. At the same time, the legislatures and other governmental agencies must set in place fair tax systems so that financial resources will be redistributed to those in essential need, therein reducing levels of insecurity in our world.

This reflection has evolved over a one-year writing period. It started in fall, 2011 with a secular message to activist Wall Street Occupiers and Arab Spring demonstrators, but changed into broader-based discussion for well-intentioned Reclaimers of the Commons, who fit the definition of activists. While the preference was for Christian believers, we soon realized that a broader ground of belief is needed. This appeal is to all who hold a "Higher Power;" thus providing a wider audience to confront what is our national and global addiction to our consumer economy, whether by engagement or by silent indifference. Our message can become one of Good News, that we are enabled by turning to God to have an infinite Power source who will enable us to reach ultimately a renewed Earth (maybe unrealized in our time here).

This conclusion is really a launching platform, not a closure to discussion. We started in the naive hope of discovering a method, way, gimmick, or some organizing expertise that would be key to influencing a host of good activists, and that this multitude would cooperate in reaching a successful result. Certainly, HERE is the current situation; NOW is the urgency to act at this present moment; and WE are the instruments of change that is to occur. However, much more needs to be said and thus this is to become an extension of our *Reclaiming the Commons*. In working at the present place and time, we discover a negative insight, namely, we do not have the answer, for we are not in charge. Far better is to find out who is in charge, and cooperate in the process of healing a wounded Earth.

Introducing goals beyond the horizon of our mortal lives is a testimony to our trust in God and in future activities. We are confident that this trust is contagious and that others will continue the struggle. Our lives are more than marking time until the final trumpet sounds. We work together

encouraging each other to help establish a better **world** in a proper **time**, and with **all** participating in bringing this about. Yes, and this is more than idle dreams by aging 20th century activists; this is championing the Force of finality -- a mass or multitude moving in time at an increasing speed. We help create the future as long as we live by an active communion with the God in whom we trust. We are like moths drawn to the Light.

Our ultimate goal must be a better world, which can only be achieved by sustainable living, an improving quality of life for all -- humans and others striving for life on this planet. Being pro-life is not only all embracing; it is the motivation that moves us forward. The moment we exclude some portion of the cosmos and narrow the world down to any selfish privileged group, we distort that goal. Elitism and injustice goes hand in hand with the exclusiveness that is foreign to any authentic activist's agenda. How can we change a world if the hungry, the homeless, the ones with no chance for health facilities or good education, and the many without jobs, continue to cry out for justice? The cry is for a reasonable chance to succeed, and we listen and act as catalysts to bring about a just world -- if we work together.

Development must be sustainable and contain a number of principles such as respect for human life and participation through democratic process. Promoting these principles takes effort by astute activists; defending them against a *laissez faire* approach to good governance requires politically-involved activists; inspiring others to join in the struggle requires creative activists whether acting in public as prophets or as agents of change. All need to seek to join forces to work for an ultimate success. Our hope is to use all possible written, oral, and organizing talents for the work ahead.

The Wall Street Occupiers and the Arab Spring demonstrators have inspired us as have the many who object to any form of injustice. The energy generated by a seething anger experienced throughout the world must be channeled properly but involves risks, for the hungry or unemployed are limited in patience. Interestingly, at various times in history the same ideas or sentiments surface spontaneously in different places, such as the revolution of 1848 or certain scientific discoveries or artistic accomplishments. Today is such a time. Prophets and catalysts for change must swell up from the activist ranks, and confront any attempt at autocratic leadership. Hopefully, those who surge forth are imbued with a democratic spirit and with sustainable development techniques -- and invite our contributions.

Initial actions, whether public demonstrations or hidden works by Robin Hoods, point to ultimate goals that must be implemented. We must see a need, see it now, and see that we must unite because we cannot work alone. And the "Not alone" means that we need divine help, the Source of all dynamics. This may not mean all must subscribe to the same manner of acting or all be on a single level of spiritual awareness. At least the ones

testifying to a spiritual power must be free to express this view in their own way and demand an openness and tolerance of that openness.

Being effective prophets, agents of change, and team workers requires different gifts. Some activists are strong believers and take **faith** in our traditional resources; some practice an enthusiast **hope** in the things beyond their lifetime horizon; some present a merciful **love** through compassionate service to others. We need continual improvement, for our unaddressed blemishes hurt those who demonstrate publicly, engage candidates, or criticize the current dysfunctional economic system. All witnesses and supporters are on a journey of perfection together, including those who suffer injustice, or who patiently offer their own sufferings for the betterment of our world (homebound, under-appreciated caregivers, etc.), or those who seek to downsize affluent lifestyles, or those who question the current global consumer culture.

Activists need to become alert for candidates to become 21st century prophets, agents of change, and team members in social action who are willing to build and guard the barricades. Workers, small farmers, homemakers, husbands, and youth are all needed along with experts of many fields. The selfishness of a greedy capitalism that leads people to an enlightened self-interest is an easy road to disaster, and that is becoming clearer each day.

This reflection is word evolving into meaningful deed. Much depends on how well words are presented, delivered, distributed and reflected upon. Pardon our imperfections. Resulting actions may vary: mild or harsh, liberating or binding, confrontational or timid, short-lived or long-lasting. Possibilities are numerous, but we need to seize the initiative. Announce the problem; find agents of change, join in teamwork within a democratic process, and confront the disparity of wealth and unfair tax systems. The situation is critical; the imperative is urgent; the focus demands clear-headed citizens who are addressing the social addictions that distract our mission. We have much work to do but, with God's help, we can save our wounded Earth. In God we trust.

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climate science) are hired by corporate front organizations to cast doubt on areas demanding health and environmental controls from tobacco smoking to pesticides and including climate change. By demanding equal time with scientific experts, these hired "merchants of doubt" delay regulations for decades, adding profits to coffers.

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8. *World Energy Report* (November, 2011).

9. Quotation from Pope Benedict XVI in general audience on Sept. 7, 2007, as reported on that day by the Catholic News Service.

10. Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The Price of Civilization*, p.8.

11. A. Fritsch, *Down-to-Earth Spirituality* (Sheed & Ward, 1992).

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13. Al Fritsch and Paul Gallimore, *Healing Appalachia: Sustainable Living through Appropriate Technology* (University press of Kentucky, 2006).

14. Jean Edward Smith, *FDR*, Random House, 2008.

15. Immediately after 9-11, I was criticized for an article I wrote in *Appalachian Alternatives*, Autumn, 2001, saying that terrorists were driven to react through the use of modern technology (airplanes, Internet); we have to understand that this is their form of resistance to a society that threatens their culture. I may not have been sensitive to emotional readers moved by terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, but my thesis is still valid: threats are singular but blame is global in character.

16. See <[earthhealing.info/Daily Reflections](http://earthhealing.info/Daily%20Reflections)> "Encouraging Reclaimers of

the Commons," (January 31, 2012).

17. Sachs, *The Price of Civilization*, p.135.

18. St. Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*.

19. Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), p. 315.

20. "Occupy Wall Street and Prepare for a Constitutional Convention," See *Additional Publications* on this website.

21. Robert T. Sears, SJ and Albert J. Fritsch, SJ, *Earth Healing: A Resurrection-Centered Approach* (Brassica Books, 2011); also see Robert T. Sears, SJ "Interrupted Love," *Journal of Christian Healing*, 26, #2. Fall/Winter, 2010.

22. At a 1967 energy ethics conference I attended in New York, someone asked the interesting question: If we had all the solar energy we need would some sort of constraints still be needed in our use of it? Do we always have to couple solar energy use with energy conservation? Yes, all energy use demands self-control.

23. Using social issues in the cultural wars currently waging is used often for political purposes. Some of us try to bridge the divide between pro-life and pro-choice groups. The late activist, Jim Berry, said, "You can't be pro-life without a viable Earth."

24. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books and Henry Holt & Company, 2007).

25. Churches need to reexamine their relationship to the current dysfunctional economic system and attempt to divorce themselves from the established order -- a book in itself.

26. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Soliloquy, Act 5, Scene 5.

27. Magnificat (Luke, Chapter 1).

28. St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* speaks of the battle between two kingdoms and this is worth reflecting upon.

