

CANA eLETTER OCTOBER 2022

UNITY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD



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The theme of this eLetter is what the bible calls the Kingdom of God or of Heaven which Jesus said was his key message. Nowadays we might translate this as the realm or reign of God, or as translated from the Aramaic, the reign of unity. What does this mean for us, and for the church? How might we embrace this in our lives?

When
the box that I've built
to define the things of God
breaks
it feels like I've lost God.
But I haven't lost God.
Just the box.

Unity and the Kingdom of God



Jane Upchurch

Jesus spoke a lot about the Kingdom or Realm of God, a term which from the Aramaic could be translated as the Reign of Unity; it is recognised as his main message. It is clear from his teachings that this state of being is already present now, and within us (Luke 17.21), and it is also a future realisation (Your kingdom come Luke 11.2). This realm is where love, peace and justice for all reign. It has often been interpreted by the church as a requisite for good behaviour. But it is the other way around - entering into this God-filled realm changes and enables us. And more than that, it is a place of unity, oneness and wholeness – with God, with each other, with creation. Jesus' prayer for us in John 17.20-23 is: 'that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world will believe you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one; I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.'

This experience of unity is something that the mystics of all ages have described. But we have inherited a worldview of separation that sees us as separate from God, from each other, from the planet and from all other life which has led to so many of the problems that we face today. The teachings of Jesus and the essence of Christianity have been interpreted through this lens. But we live in a time when evidence from numerous fields of research reveals the unified nature of reality. It is dynamic, changing, evolving and purposeful and it shows our interconnectedness, interdependence and belonging with the whole community of our planetary home. It is unity expressed in diversity, and the essence of its power and presence is love.

This may be a new scientific understanding but it describes the universe as it has always been, and we can see glimpses of this in much indigenous wisdom. So as we saw with the realm of God, it is always there, around and within, but needs to be recognised so we can live by and in it. Jesus called this process for us metanoia which means to change or enlarge your mind. Modern parlance might call it 'raising

your consciousness'. In the bible this is usually translated as 'repent' which has come to have different connotations. So to rephrase Mark 1.15 when Jesus inaugurated his ministry 'The reign of God is near. Open your mind and believe the good news'.

Science and spirituality have been assigned separate paths for the last few hundred years so it is exciting to come back to a point where they are integrated and say the same thing. As we see in the Aramaic language of Jesus, this is the reign of unity. The United Nations now recognise the importance of this and have adopted the unitive narrative as a basis for approaching their SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals <https://sdgthoughtleaderscircle.org/unitive-new-narrative/>). Recognising and living by this unitive narrative really would enable individuals and communities to operate in equality, love and justice with each other, with the planet and with the Source of all that is.

The Kingdom of God/Heaven



Adapted from “Blue Sky God: The Evolution of Science and Christianity”

by Don MacGregor

The dominant theme in Jesus' teaching as we have it in the gospels is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. There is no indication in the gospels that he intended to start a new religion, but rather to bring a message that would help people on their spiritual path within the Jewish tradition into the awareness of the God of love. Jesus said the kingdom was near, among them and within them (Mark 1:15, Matthew 3:2, Luke 17:21). Jesus used many parables to describe the kingdom to his followers, to convey the radical notion of the way God wanted the world to be. These parables were to be chewed over, to extract the nourishment like a cow chewing the cud. (See Matthew chapter 13 for many of them.)

His teaching invites two elementary questions. Is the kingdom for now, have we somehow got it already, or is it a state of heaven to come? Secondly, is it something within us, or is it something between and amongst us? Luke's gospel implies it is both among and within us (Luke 17:21). The understanding of God as the compassionate consciousness undergirding everything can help us with these questions. God is both

within and among us, sustaining us. The idea that God is "among us" is the concept of a corporately shared experience of God, a unity that we can enter into. Being "in the kingdom" is akin to the state of unitive consciousness, an experience in which we have the potential to share. The kingdom then lies both within and among us, it is "both-and" rather than "either-or". It is also both now and not-yet, as we have the potential to live the kingdom way, but not yet the level of enlightenment needed. We have been given, in Jesus, the example of the kingdom way of living now, and we are given a hope for its fullness in the future.

Jesus demonstrated this kingdom in action, to make people think about what it really means to live God's way. Sadly, in the Church, we have lost some of the impact of that message. It is, more than anything, a way of being which leads to a way of doing. The way of being has to be firmly established, the way of compassion. In this understanding, being "in the kingdom" means being *aware* of being held in the consciousness of God, connected to the ground of being.

This kingdom is not just within, it is worked out in the world as well. It has both individual and social dimensions. Jesus lived in a culture dominated by "kingship" or "emperor-ship". All the trappings of power and glory went with the role. Royal power was exclusive, oppressive and class-distinctive. Jesus turned his back on this world of power and privilege, and often sought to undermine its meaning. He offered a counter-cultural view: a new world order marked by relationships of justice, love, peace and liberation. This is what the kingdom of God is about, and it stems from seeing everything as an interconnected whole, imbued with divine presence.

Jesus openly challenged the religious authorities over their nit-picking laws, ignored prevailing taboos, disregarded solemn religious regulations, and included everyone in his offer of life. This new way, the kingdom of God, was for all. The same attitude seems to have prevailed in the early Christian communities, with mutual service and support, sharing of property, diversity of gifts, inclusion of the marginalized and oppressed (Acts 4:32-34), with room for many different shades of opinion and ways of being Christian.

As Christianity grew and expanded, priorities became blurred. The rise of the Church as an institution, after its acceptance by the Roman Empire as the state religion, meant rules and regulations, power struggles, male dominance, creeds and councils to decide who was in and who was out. Oppression and suppression was for those who were not "in", bringing accusations of heresy, trials, burnings, corruption, division, denominations and everything that is wrong with the Church. This was a long way from the Galilean prophet, mystic and wisdom teacher who washed the road-worn feet of others, who shared bread with tax-collectors and sinners, who cherished the company and giftedness of women and who denounced the religious leaders of the day as white washed tombs, clean on the outside, rotten on the inside.

Many Christians today yearn afresh for Jesus' radical view of the kingdom of God. Christendom established a sacred tradition, but one which has become out of step

with our culture and, as many believe, has become parted from the original teachings of Jesus and is in decline and disintegration in the West. This confronts the Christian community with some vital and fundamental questions of meaning. The teachings of Jesus, the heart message of the bible, the core values of love, mercy, and justice are all highly relevant, but they get lost in the middle of all the “churchiness” of church.

Perhaps existing congregations would be revitalized if the simple message of Jesus was taught more comprehensively. The kingdom of God was Jesus’ shorthand for the whole message. There are many different ways of expressing it. You are beginning to enter the kingdom when:

- you transform your mind;
- you come close to God;
- you love your neighbour;
- you feel compassion for the world;
- you can forgive those who hurt you.

Then you are entering God's kingdom, which means:

- you are being changed, transformed, refined, purified;
- you are moving up onto God's resonant frequency;
- you are beginning to fulfil the God-given potential that you have as a human being;
- you are recognising the Christ within you.

We can get lost in doctrinal arguments, as many do, over baptism, or ordination of women, divorce or homosexuality, but the main message of Jesus was not to talk about the Way, but to live it out - to live out a life motivated by compassionate consciousness. His message was not about being moral upstanding people living a good life, but to be compassionate people, full of life and light, giving energy and life to others. Morality should emerge from compassion or it can become judgementalism.

Christianity has grown to become a bit of a beast, the rolling stone that has accumulated so much moss that it has become unrecognisable at times. At one level, it is so very simple, to love fully and deeply. The Church has, in working out its theology over two millennia, made it very complicated. Jesus’ message was about a way of life that leads us into a kingdom way of living, which helps us to progress spiritually. When Jesus talked of the kingdom of God, he was talking, in the Jewish terms of the day, of a higher or deeper plane of consciousness from which we need to operate if we are to bring about a world of love, peace and harmony. This unitive consciousness is an awareness of the interconnectedness of all, sustained in the ground of being, the consciousness of God. The transition to this is the global shift which the world is currently going through, where old ways are dying, and a new way is being is becoming anchored in the consciousness of humanity. It is the way of compassion, cooperation and coexistence with all living creatures. It is a way of living in harmony with the planet. It is an evolutionary way of moving to a new level of consciousness for the human race. It is the kingdom or wisdom way, the way of Christ.

The worst thing

The worst thing we ever did
was put God in the sky
out of reach,

pulling the divinity
from the leaf,
sifting out the holy from our bones,
insisting God isn't bursting dazzlement through everything
we've made
a hard commitment to see as ordinary,
stripping the sacred from everywhere
to put in a cloud man elsewhere,
prying closeness from your heart.

The worst thing we ever did
was take the dance and the song
out of prayer
made it sit up straight
and cross its legs
removed it of rejoicing
wiped clean its hip sway,
its questions,
its ecstatic yowl,
its tears.

The worst thing we ever did is pretend God isn't the easiest thing
in this universe
available to every soul
in every breath.

by Chelan Harkin

[From her poetry book 'Susceptible to Light'](#)

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Luke 12.32-4

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Matthew 13.44

“The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You.”

What might this mean for us today?



Janice Dolley

At this time of momentous change for all on Planet Earth there is possibly a deeper meaning in these words than how we have understood them for so long. If evolutionary science is now telling us that all matter is energy that vibrates at different frequencies in a vast whole, then our awareness can lift from its focus on mundane concerns alone and also relate to other dimensions of being. It seems that, at the lower range of frequencies, we have the solid matter of our everyday lives, often called a third dimensional world. This material plane is permeated by a subtle world of spirit. Some might call this a fourth dimension. At a higher frequency range still is the realm of Oneness or Spirit in which all resonates in harmony and is no longer fragmented. This could be called a fifth dimension and is possibly similar to the dimension that we experience when we die and pass to ‘heaven up there.’ Just as our awareness expands in the here and now as our own frequencies rise higher through meditation, prayer and in many other ways, so it seems that awareness also expands after death, as my friend Ursula said shortly after she died:

“Can you imagine limitless breath, space, light, purity, freedom, knowing who one truly IS? We’ve talked about how it might be, but this is much, much more than we imagined” (1)

So when Jesus said “the Kingdom of heaven is within you” he perhaps meant that we can access this realm whilst living at this denser material set of frequencies. This naturally involves a shift in both our thinking and our being. If such a shift is emerging on a worldwide scale at this time, then this might explain some of the changes that we are currently experiencing. As the financial, political, and religious patterns that have served the old paradigm of separation are crumbling, so at the same time new and more deeply interconnected patterns of relationship are forming.

Maybe the spiritual energy in the ‘after life heaven’ that Ursula described is similar to the new energy that is emerging for us at our denser material level. This is possibly akin to what we have been calling Christ Consciousness, the unifying force of unconditional love, oneness and joy that permeates all existence. In the afterlife version of heaven, it seems that all undertakings flow in alignment with the originating vision held by the Creative Source of all life, God, and that all therein dwell in awareness of this divine presence. It is then that:

“The presence of the divine can awaken the world to its magical and miraculous power. If we welcome the divine back into life, if we acknowledge her divine nature, then we can participate in life’s re-creation, in the miracle that is waiting to happen” (2)

If enough of us can raise the frequency of our beings to a higher level by dissolving fear and transcending old ideas to include all difference, if we can embrace the inherent creative power of the Kingdom of heaven that Jesus taught lies within each of us, and if we can live in the eternal now and connect each day with our higher soul-self, then we might begin to discover that we are the bridges between heaven and earth and that it is for us to lay the pathways to the future. By making loving and compassionate connections with all forms of life we can begin to answer our own prayer of “thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” Fulfilling this prayer seems to lie in our individual and collective hands.

References

1. Dolley, Janice, “Awakening to a New Reality: Conscious Conversations across the Horizon of Death.” Sleepy Lion Publishing, 2020
2. Vaughn-Lee, Llewellyn, “The Return of the Feminine and the World Soul”, The Golden Sufi Centre, 2011

Books



Meeting Christianity Again for the First Time by Tony Rutherford

This is just the sort of book I need to give to puzzled friends who ask me why I continue to go to church and call myself a Christian, or to people I meet who are interested in Christianity but have been put off by all sorts of preconceptions, often

planted by a media unfriendly to any sort of spirituality which challenges our present materialistic world.

Tony Rutherford is a retired Anglican priest who describes himself as a learner, willing to ask questions, especially those that lead to more questions. In this nicely produced small book he looks at the questions we might ask about the Bible, about Jesus, about who or what God might be and about the Church. He describes the latter as a gathering of people who are committed to following the life and teachings of Jesus and who have been inspired by his message, transformed by his messages and encouraged by his style of leadership. It is an easy and stimulating read and I find myself going back to it many times.

Judy Hanmer

New Horizons – A communion for Peace and Unity

Jonathan has updated his alternative liturgy. It presents an opportunity for spiritual practice, reflection and prayer which is contemporary, inclusive and meaningful. It is easily accessible for all to share. For more information or to receive a copy (£5 plus £1 P&P) contact Jonathan Robinson at murrell.robinson@protonmail.com

Why change the liturgy?

Jon Robinson

Do we still need set forms for our worship or our particular spiritual practice? Set forms run the risk of becoming divisive because they cannot bend. On the other hand, an agreed form, provided it is sufficiently flexible, can provide a focus around which we can gather together, share together and celebrate. This can be good, and the word 'liturgy' can be helpful.

Some of you will be familiar with my compositions which centre around the theme of communion, an often misunderstood word. Many of our CANA members are keenly aware of the difficulties they have with what the Church currently prescribes. They feel they are in a very different spiritual space. The statistics of continuing decline for church attendance for communion needs no further comment. We need to recover a sense of mystery, because mystery can point us to the deeper truths that lie beyond words and the limitations of our physical senses.

There is another problem. How can we believe in a God 'out there' when we are realising more and more that all is interconnected and interdependent? Communion is about the dynamic of relationships. It is about fluidity, not about narrow and unchanging beliefs. So many of the problems of the world which challenge us today require a spiritual solution, but the spiritual solution will only come when we recognise our common and shared humanity and the deep sense that all is essentially 'One'. Love, in its best and truest sense, is the calling to live in this oneness.

My new composition “New Horizons – a communion for peace and unity” aims to move towards a less dualistic presentation of spirituality which recognises and celebrates this essential oneness. Although it follows a fairly familiar structure it is also radical in its philosophy and in its presentation of spiritual story and truth. It aims to be a progressive and joyful liturgy which is adaptable to particular situations and needs.

Why is communion important? Communion brings us together. It is about our connections that make us who we are. It is about how we connect with each other, with the visible world around us and the mystery of what lies beyond. It is about interconnectedness and interdependence with all that is. . At its best it is about kindness, compassion, empathy and love. Communion is life.

Sometimes it needs a story to express and emphasise its importance and significance and for those who see themselves as Christian, it is the Jesus story. So let us celebrate communion, imaginatively and with meaning.

EVENTS

Cana Conscious Conversations (CCC)



***Morphic resonance, rituals & festivals
including the revival of pilgrimage.***

**Saturday 4th February 2023, 10.30-12.30 by zoom
Led by Rupert Sheldrake**

Please email Bill at admin@cana.org.uk if you would like to participate.

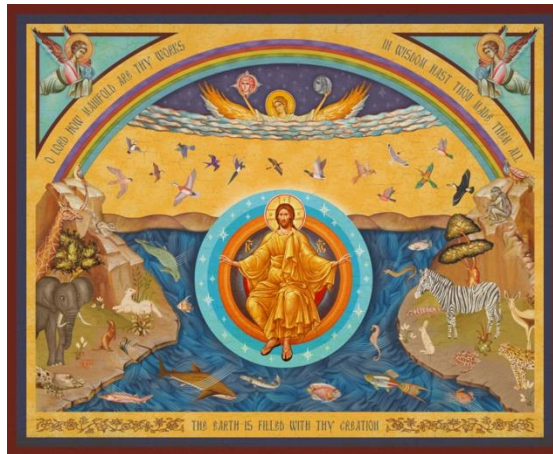
CANA Online Sacred Space (COSS) 10.30 Wednesday 2nd November



This is an on-line ritual, an opportunity to engage with Spirit and with our own divine centre communally, and this time we will particularly be celebrating Samhain. This is not a eucharist, there is no wine, no blessing from a priest, no Christian liturgy. But it does seek to embody some of the essence of the eucharist experience in creating a sacred space of communion but within a wider framework.

Please email Bill at admin@cana.org.uk if you would like to participate.

An Introduction to the Wisdom Tradition Within Christianity



Revd Don MacGregor continues a series of three talks over the year on the Wisdom Tradition. They will all be on Zoom and will give space for questions and discussion after each talk. All those on our events mailing list will be notified and given the zoom link to join the call if they would like. Please book the date in your diary.

Talk 3: The Wisdom Jesus Path – Don explores four breakthroughs in recent understandings of Christianity, the role of Jesus as Wisdom teacher, the Cosmic Christ and the movement towards a more universal version of Christianity.

Thursday November 17 2022, 8pm-9pm

Awakening to a New Awareness **The evolutionary edge of Christianity**

Advance notice – please save the date

A hybrid conference with the White Eagle Lodge at their temple in Liss,
Hampshire and on zoom, Saturday March 25th 2023

Our world seems poised between breakdown and breakthrough, a time when the beliefs, practises and ways of being that were appropriate for a past era, serving the old paradigm of separation, can be left behind. We now know from new science that all is deeply interconnected, and we are seeking through this conference to embrace the essential commonality within religious and spiritual groupings with roots in Christianity. We recognise the universal spirituality within the way of Jesus, and would, together, begin to lay a foundation for an era of love, compassion and belonging where beauty, goodwill and wisdom prevail for the benefit of all life on our planetary home.

CONTACT US

Each full moon we encourage us all to focus on the light, love and anointing power of the Christ energy, the divine essence in all life, to assist humanity during these present times, and move us into an era of universal spirituality.

If you would like to receive an email for this, or at the new moon with a focus on praying for the planet, then please email us at info@cana.org.uk.

DONATIONS

CANA operates on a gift economy so if you would like to contribute and do not already, then email or write to us and we will send details, or go to the page on our website [Donate](#)

If you would like to reply to any of this or have questions or suggestions for future editions, please email info@cana.org.uk, ring Jane or Bill on 01895 639476 or write to them at 20 Manor Road, Ruislip, Middx HA4 7LB.

*May love and light fill your life and our world
bringing healing and wholeness*

CANA is a network of people responding to the new impulse of Spirit at this time. Many of us recognise its resonance with the teachings of Jesus as a way of transformation. Our hope is to rediscover and re- imagine a path leading towards a more universal spirituality that can operate with respect for all living creatures and all faiths, a path of love and service for the betterment of all. This is not just about the transformation of the individual, but the global shift of humanity to a higher way of being and of love that Jesus termed 'the realm of God'.

www.cana.org.uk