The Method Behind the Mystery:

Religious Holidays for a Global Identity

by Lauren Zinn

REA Conference Workshop — November 5th, 2016 — 11:30 am

The Main Issues

• How Can Religious Educators Best Respond to an Increasingly Global Society?
• With People Leaving Formal Religion in Droves, Can We Keep Religion Alive?

“Teilhard de Chardin [French philosopher, Jesuit priest, and paleontologist] predicted that the religions that would survive would be those that are willing to develop forms of their traditions that organically embrace the reality of an evolutionary worldview.” *

Teilhard refers to the development of culture for which he argues according to Lamarckian, as opposed to Darwinian, theory. Lamarck saw evolution as adaptive to the environment. (Think the giraffe evolving a long neck to reach high leaves.) For Darwin, evolution was random. Today, science shows how evolution is both.

If evolution is both random and purposeful, then do our religions express — let alone teach — this view? How would doing so help religion, and in turn, us? In other words,

Do our religions embrace an evolutionary worldview? What does that mean? And can we teach religious values from this emerging worldview?

This workshop provides a possible answer by revisiting a religious holiday from the perspective of an evolutionary worldview — one that transcends ethnocentrism. I’ll lead participants in celebrating this mystery holiday through three iterations to experience how culture’s evolution influences our relationship to religion.

Participants will then have a chance to apply what they learned to a holiday of their own, and we’ll debrief the results.

The Methodology

The approach to this workshop is first, experiential and interactive, and second, a case-study. We will be the subjects of our own analysis.

We’ll analyze our experience according to the stages of consciousness described by integral theorists. This will provide participants with the pieces they need to analyze and revisit another religious holiday, which they will do in groups.
Can religion evolve beyond ethnocentrism with a new approach to its holidays? Can a new experience of religious holidays support an expanded worldview? How will you know?

Primary Sources

Today, integral philosophers and writers such as Ken Wilber, Steve McIntosh, Bruce Lipton, Kurt Johnson, and Carter Phipps describe the evolution of human consciousness. According to integral philosophy, cultures go through distinct patterns of evolution. The worldview now emerging has been designated interspiritual, integral, holistic, and evolutionary. The philosophy behind this new worldview invites us to teach religion from a new perspective. This perspective provides a larger context through which all the world’s great religions can find relevance in a global age.

I’ll draw upon the following works:

* Integral Consciousness by Steve McIntosh.
* The Presence of the Infinite by Steve McIntosh.
* The Coming Interspiritual Age by Kurt Johnson.
* Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future by Bruce Lipton and Steve Bhaerman.
* *Evolutionaries: Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Science’s Greatest Idea* by Carter Phipps. (p. 362)

Liturgy specific to the mystery holiday is not included here (to keep the holiday a mystery) but will be provided to participants in the workshop. Workshop participants will be able to:

- lead the “mystery holiday” celebration with their students or communities
- design elements of an “interspiritual” celebration for another holiday
- think critically about new ideas for evolving religious education

Who Benefits?

Beneficiaries of an evolutionary worldview expressed through religion include all of us.

Religious educators - public and private - whose lessons will reach all students. Teachers/Professors/Trainers at seminaries and universities who will share these ideas with future, new and seasoned religion teachers. Religious school principals, leaders, and clergy who will more likely support teachers trying new ideas in the classroom. Parents who will learn new ways to celebrate holidays. Religion journalists who will influence what the public learns about religion. Children of all ages and adults who are given an experience of religion that is relevant to an evolving culture with a global identity. The planet and all life on it will benefit from the positive impact of youth, and adults, from all parts of the world, coming together to solve practical, global problems.