

The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness

with Michael Dowd + 56 Experts



This Sacred Earth: Faith, Science, and the Future

with Philip Clayton

Big ideas from this session:

- How climate is radically changing the mission and message of religion
- Organic Marxism as an alternative to extractive capitalism and ecological catastrophe
- How science and religion can cooperate to create ecological civilization

Michael: Phil, welcome to this conversation series, this Skype conversation series, *The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness*.

Philip: Thank you, Michael.

Michael: Phil, I've found you to be one of my closest colleagues in this evolutionary, Christianity evolutionary faith, sort of the integration of science and ecology and religion all moving us, or attempting to move us, in the direction of a healthy future for all of us.

One of the things that I've been doing at the beginning of all these conversations is that I don't want to assume that everybody watching or listening to this will be familiar with you and your work. So if you could, take four, five, six, seven minutes, however long, but help us get who you are, what you're best known for, what you're proudest of in terms of your contribution, and a little bit of how you got to where you are.

Philip: Michael, my excitement about this series that you're doing stems from the fact that I no longer hold the position from the last time we talked. What I'm seeing around me has me so concerned, that I now am arguing that we need to take a more radical position that we've taken in the past.

Michael: You got my attention. This is exactly what I've been feeling.

Philip: I think our own evolutions are similar in this one. Even though I spent my life, a quarter of a century, working on the science side and the religion side and trying to bring them together, I now think that that is not enough. A mere harmony or compatibility of science and religion is not up to the level of the crisis that we're now facing.

I would like to suggest that we sort the entire discussion, the activism and the theories, according to what I now call the eco criterion. If it doesn't match up to that criterion, it's just not enough.

Michael: Preach it, brother.

Philip: You got me warmed up already. I feel like that verse in the New Testament where Paul says, "I was a Pharisee." If you want to count by Pharisee criteria, I'm right at the top. I will say the same thing.

I was mister science and religion for 25, 30 years of my life. Already as a young evangelical Christian, I felt somehow we needed to establish a connection between science and religion. So in my evangelical college, Westmont College, I made my professors nervous by saying we have to learn how to listen to science.

Then I went on to Fuller Seminary, also an evangelical school, and said we need to learn how to listen to science. Let it set the bar. Let it bring the understanding of what knowledge is required, and actually let it challenge faith in some ways.

I chose to go to Germany and study under the German theologian Pannenberg, who was arguing something similar. After four years of full-time work with him, I was a little bit more courageous to say that religion was going to have to bend and give a little bit to enter into the dialogue of what science was demanding.

I arrived at Yale University, did a dissertation there on that topic. Just then a British financier named Sir John Templeton sold the Templeton fund for \$4 billion and put the entire amount into the science and religion dialogue. You might say that I made the investment in a good market, because just at that time that I finished my dissertation there were virtually infinite possibilities to engage in a global dialogue of science and religion.

I gave all my energy and intelligence to try to show the compatibility of science and religion. Traveling the world. We had a project called "Science and Spiritual Quest" that brought together 123 scientists with events all over the world. Fantastic, interesting work. I believe we succeeded and I believe it wasn't enough.

What we succeeded at doing was showing that science didn't have to spell the death mill for religion, and religion didn't have to set itself up as utterly opposed to the conclusions of science.

Let's just say, Michael, that all that work was just background, because in the very same years that we were, as I argue, succeeding and demonstrating the compatibility, we began to realize that what the Club of Rome said in 1970 was true. I don't know if you remember the charts in the famous book.

Michael: Oh yes.

Philip: All the lines move upward. Somewhere off, and it's around the year 2020, as in hindsight is 20/20, there's this very strange phenomenon, the peak, and not even gradually, they plummet downward.

I remember in those early years thinking, wait a minute. If population goes up like this and plummets downward, doesn't that mean mass death? Doesn't that mean something is happening of unimaginable proportions?

Now it's 2014, and we know that they were right. We understand the mechanisms, the best that science has to offer us. Model after model after model suggest that not only are we on an unsustainable trajectory, but that there's a point when, if I can put it bluntly, the whole damn thing falls apart.

Michael: Yes, exactly.

Philip: What happens is that the consequences of the change to the weather patterns begin to cost more and more money, and cut more and more deeply into the social fabric and the global economic system that we've established.

Whether that's floods and the cost of dealing with floods, or it's droughts and the cost of dealing with droughts, or it's people starving or having no water when, for example, the India water tables dry up. Then you get social unrest and revolutionary activity. That global system, which we already know is so vulnerable, collapses.

So it's really interesting. Science often has what's called emerging complexity, areas where little steps one by one move on but then the consequence is all at once. You drop a piece of sand onto the top of a sand pile, you keep dropping one by one by one, and at some point you get a landslide.

I think that that's what we are just a relatively small number of years short of facing. I just want to say, that calls for a far more radical response than we ever thought was necessary.

Michael: Yeah, amen. I could not agree more. In fact, just in the last two years, as you know my own background, Connie and I for 12 years now have been traveling North America speaking in religious and secular groups, talking about – well, I haven't used the compatibility word a lot – the reconciliation, or I guess compatibility, but the mutual dance of science and religion. But I really think that the religion side needs to be transformed in terms of helping – science needs to help religions evolve.

Just in the last two years since watching David Roberts' TEDx talk called "Climate Change is Simple", the remix that had some music added to it, it's gone from the back burner to the front burner in such a major way that now the stuff that I hear coming out of my own mouth.

Just this past Sunday I said things more radical, and more bold, and more in your face, and more purposely provocative, than anything I've ever said before. It keeps sort of ramping up, and I think it's because that this is what reality is calling for.

I choose to use the word God as a personal name for reality. So for me reality is saying some really important clear stuff, and we need to attend to that, like we are in the voice of God or the word of the Lord, to use traditional language, so that we can cooperate across ethnic, religious, political, philosophical, metaphysical differences and find enough common ground that we can do whatever it takes to ensure a healthy future for all of us, because otherwise what are we doing? What game are we playing?

Philip: I want to push you just a little bit. I never thought I would say to Michael Dowd, you need to think even more radically about it.

Michael: Go for it, brother.

Philip: Let me try to do that. It now seems to me that each of us has some set of resources that we bring. Some people really grasp how science works and scientific data. Some people have a deep grounding in their religious tradition. I'll talk later about some of the other three categories that are helpful to people. Some people have financial means. Some people have a large platform. Some people have a sincerity that they can influence the people around them.

I now want to say that it's not enough to sit firmly ensconced in your particular area of strength and to add on a little climate message, like an extra little module you add on top.

Michael: I agree.

Philip: I now think that we need to rethink global community, rethink our religion and rethink our science from the standpoint of an earth in peril.

Michael: I completely agree. What you're articulating is exactly why the sermons that I've been preaching this year is we've been going along the route of The Great March for Climate Action, because that's what's giving structure to our ministry this year is we've got a hundred speaking engagements that we've lined up between Los Angeles and D.C. We've now done about 80 of them. By the time this airs, Thanksgiving, we'll have completed them, all hundred.

The title of this series, *The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness*, has really sort of been my main theme in the evenings. I completely agree. It's not about adding on an environmental component to what I've been doing. It's now reframing absolutely everything that we do and say.

Connie too. She's now become one of the main point people in the world in this whole field called assisted migration. If humans don't assist plants, trees, especially those that the seeds require an animal or a four-legged or a two-legged being to move them north, squirrels and turtles and other animals can't move these seeds north fast enough to cope with climate change.

So not just the currently endangered species, but hundreds of species of trees will go extinct in the next hundred years, if we don't assist them in migrating north along patterns, along corridors that they've migrated countless times during the Ice Ages and this sort of thing, but we now need to assist them faster.

So I agree with you that the earth in peril – clearly it's not the earth that's in peril, but the body of life in terms of its diversity and the quality certainly is, and humanity certainly is.

Philip: Michael, can I jump in at that point?

Michael: Yes.

Philip: The reason why I think that your title for this series is spot-on is what we need to focus on, *The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness*. I think I'd like to point a finger at those of us who've been environmentalists for the last 20, 30 years.

A recent article about the time of The Great Climate March in New York City in September, which drew 400,000 marchers in the participation of 1,500 organizations for the largest march ever in the history of the planet, a critique published just before the march said that we need to be aware of the danger of what he called climate change liberals.

The climate change liberals have the idea that we don't want to rock the system. We want to make gentle urging to our businesses and our leaders. Then he warned that there was a certain impotence to the gentle reminder. It seems to me that we in the environmental movement are guilty of offering little changes.

We were afraid to name the future. Unlike what this series is doing, we've just said we don't want to demoralize who we talk to. So let's just say if you recycle your plastic bags, if you drive a little bit less, if you ride a bike once a week, it's all going to be fine, because we felt if we told them what the science was really saying they would give up.

I think what your future series here is saying is let's name it. Let's say exactly what the truth is, and let's say it now. If people are inclined to give up, at some point, as the crashing wave, the tsunami of this global climate disruption becomes visible, it won't seem too radical.

I think what your series is calling each of the 50 speakers to do is to absolutely name the future as clearly and distinctively as we can do it. Then to find those elements of hope, those moments of hope, in the reality of the situation. Is that what you're hearing?

Michael: Amen. Absolutely. In fact, some of the voices have been so prophetic. It's only in this conversation right now with you that I realized I should have invited Chris Hedges to also be part of this series, because he's clearly one of the prophetic voices on this issue, that article that you're referring to. I forwarded myself pretty widely.

Just yesterday I interviewed Tim DeChristopher, and it was just so powerful. I've got an interview later on this week with Derrick Jensen. These are people that are speaking very prophetically. Bill McKibben obviously, but so many of us – James Hansen has stepped it up in some major ways.

I really think that we are seeing the resurgence of true Modern Day prophets. Not prophets in the sense of people foretelling the future, nor prophets in the sense of channeling another worldly entity, but prophets in the sense of speaking on behalf of reality and giving voice to reality with unflinching authority.

Philip: That is a great opportunity for me to get to the title of this particular segment, which is Ecological Civilization, and to talk about this major international event that takes place next June 2015, where you're one of the keynote speakers.

It's part of what I call the three-fold radical response. The three-fold radical response leaves behind those days of the compatibility of science and religion, the climate change liberals and the gentle nudge. It says, as Brian McLaren, another participant in this series, says, "Everything must change." Everything must change.

The three-fold response includes – these are topics we’ve talked about before, but not all your listeners will be familiar with them – the role of the evolutionaries and the process thinkers. These are people who say you no longer can understand reality as a sort of static given, but it’s a continual process of unfolding and developing.

That we need to see ourselves, each generation as facing a new world, in our case a new earth, and that we need to recognize that our entire response, philosophy, religion, science, society, needs to respond to the emerging reality that we’re dealing with. Our reality, and the reality for generations to come, is a hostile planet whose ecosystems we have profoundly disturbed. It’s number one.

Others have spoken from the cosmic perspective of the movement through phases. The anthropocene being the one where humanity could place itself at the center. The eozoic – again, your mentor Thomas Berry, and Brian Swimme – using the term for one that’s focused on eco, on ecology, on all living things.

The particular element that I want to add to the discussion is what we’re calling Ecological Civilization. The term comes from Chinese leadership in 2007 when they made it a part of the official Chinese platform. In many ways the Chinese have failed to live up to that ideal, but at least it remains a part of the discussion, which I simply do not see or expect to see from Washington, D.C.

What would it mean that we set this goal of organizing our society, our politics, our corporate living and our personal lifestyles around an ecological civilization? You might say, “Phil, that’s hopelessly idealistic. That’s just not going to happen. People will go on buying the bigger car, the bigger house and taking for themselves what they can take.”

I just published a book for the Chinese environmental movement. It came out last week, called *Organic Marxism*. The idea is to take a framework of society which is post-capitalist and to understand it in a primarily ecological organic manner.

Why? Because that capitalist system that’s led us to this point will just continue driving us over the edge like [inaudible 17:55] until we abandon the idea that a planet run by the prophet motive can help humans and other living things to thrive. It’s just false, and the evidence is clear.

But why would we think that the capitalists will ever let go control? The argument is that for the first time since there were real challenges to capitalism we now face a context where the collapsing earth, the collapsing ecosystems, will make it inevitable that the prophet-driven society collapses.

Whether it happens voluntarily now, or quasi-voluntarily in 15 years, or by absolute necessity in 20 or 25 years when there's hardly anything left, is the question of how great the damage will be.

That the change is coming from a capitalist-driven, profit-driven and selfishness-driven society to a society that is ecozoic or ecological civilization, that it happens is now a matter of scientific fact. It's not avoidable.

Michael: Yes, yes. Phil, I can't tell you how excited I am to hear you saying exactly what you're saying. Just last week I finished reading the audio books. I listened to her book, and then I immediately had to buy the hardcover so that I can listen to it again and mark it up, because there were about 50 times that I thought to myself, oh my God, I've got to quote her. That's Naomi Klein's new book, *This Changes Everything*.

I was not able to get her, at least so far. I'm still trying. But I don't think I'll be able to get her as part of this series because her schedule this fall is just absolutely packed. But you're articulating some of the very same themes that she articulates in that book, *This Changes Everything*.

Philip: The phases that have led us to this point are fairly clear. We made the terrible left turn, as it were, in the beginning of the modern era when white Europeans ruled the planet by virtue of having boats and guns to be able to subdue Asia, South America and Africa and bring them under their control. The New World equally, the so-called New World, America, which equally became a place of the enslavement and extermination of the Native peoples.

Michael: And those that weren't exterminated by our bugs and pathogens before us.

Philip: Yeah, exactly. Then Adam Smith gave the theological justification to selfishness by saying that if we all seek to get as much for ourselves as we possibly can, we can be as selfish as possible, it will be the most ideal civilization. He said, as if by an invisible hand the individual selfishness multiplied by the number of citizens will produce a happy society for all.

That motto ironically coming the same year as the Declaration of Independence, 1776, set a justification for the colonization, basically the rape and pillaging of nature and of peoples around the planet.

The types of selfishness that were involved are of three sort of cascading levels: the egocentric attitude, which Locke and Adam Smith encouraged; the ethnocentric attitude, which whites used to claim their superiority over all other cultures; and finally the species-centric attitude that the good of humanity alone mattered.

What has happened as the ecological crisis has grown is that we've gained clarity that each of those forms of centrality is unsustainable. The egocentric was long a matter of religious critique. The ethnocentric grew as our awareness of the value of all human societies grew. The species-centric grew from the first critiques in the 1970s – well, maybe back to Rachel Carson in the '60s – up until today, when we recognize it wasn't only a moral failing. It was a scientific error. We are only sustainable as a species according to how much biodiversity exists on the planet.

Michael: And the health of the soil.

Philip: And the soil. Eliminate the biodiversity and you eliminate our sustainability. It's like we're out on a limb, and we reach back and take a saw and begin sawing through the very limb on which we're sitting. That's what we have apparently done with every rational means available to us over the last several hundred years.

Michael: Wow. You know, one of the things that I've been saying a lot lately is ecology is the new theology. What I mean by that is any understanding of theology that doesn't include ecology is just not up to the task. It needs to be rejected. Ecology has to be included in whatever we mean by theology or our relationship to God, our relationship to ultimate reality.

In terms of ecological theologians, John Michael Greer has got to be my favorite I think, or certainly one of them. His book, the first book of his – oh no, the second book. His book *The Ecotechnic Future* was the first book that I read.

Richard Heinberg had recommended it so highly, that it was like off the charts. A book that he wrote called *The End of Growth* that I had to get it and I read it. I thought, oh my God, this guy is a fabulous writer but he also is just nailing it. What Thomas Berry called the ecozoic era, Thomas and Brian, he calls the ecotechnic society.

The second book that I read of his is called *The Wealth of Nature*, playing of course on the wealth of nations. *The Wealth of Nature: Economics as if Survival Mattered*. It is the best short little introduction to ecological economics that I've ever read.

I can't recommend John Michael Greer – we read his post “The Archdruid Report” Every Wednesday he posts a new post. I'm now going back to 2006 and literally reading every blog post that he's written, one week since 2006, into my blue snowball microphone so that we can then listen to it afterwards. The guy, he's amazing. He was the first person I interviewed as part of this series.

Philip: What does it mean for us to find resources to address this crisis that you're talking about? This is that area that you and I have both focused on in our particular work. Are there resources within our theological traditions so that ecology becomes our theology? What if we

step back from that procedure that we both engaged in, in countless talks and writings, and ask what are we actually doing?

If a family, let's say a couple, comes to a crisis in their particular relationship, and they find that at present they're just at longer heads and they don't seem to be able to get past it, a therapist will often say go back. Do some archeology in your relationship, and see if you can find that period when you were working well together. In fact, go all the way back to the romance that first brought you together. Can you rediscover, and thereby rekindle, your first love?

I want to say that the same thing is happening for a planet in crisis, and the human species, the causer of the problem, recognizing that the tools in our tool box today are the problem, not the solution.

Michael: That's a great phrase.

Philip: We have simply thrown away the tools in the tool box that could get us out of this crisis. We sit there on the side of the road with a broken car, metaphor intended, and look in our toolbox and we don't have the tools to fix it. How do you reconnect with nature when all of the resources necessary for doing so have been abandoned, flagrantly abandoned, over the last several hundred years?

Michael: Or in some cases even demonized.

Philip: Exactly, yeah. Science said that it can only succeed if humans' relationship to nature was ended, if nature was seen as a series of machines as Descartes said. How do you change that? Like the couple in crisis, you go back to the earliest strata of humans' relationship with nature.

That's why I find native indigenous writings incredibly helpful, because you can't be an Iroquois, you can't be a Navajo. You at the same time can recognize a way of being in the world that we've utterly forgotten.

So when you say ecology [inaudible 26:57] theology, in the most general terms what I think that is really saying is for every culture, people group in civilization, can you move back down to that point where a healthy, harmonious relationship existed between humans and each other, humans and other living things, humans and the planet as a whole?

In the Chinese book we've tried to argue for a new, what we call an essentially Chinese understand of Marxism, where it's the Chinese relationship to all things, the harmony of what they call heaven of earth in the Taoist principle. If you could re-establish that harmony,

humans living in a harmonious relationship with all around them, then you could begin to have the Chinese foundations for ecological civilization.

The resources in India from the oldest Vedic texts are analogous. I'd love to talk about those. Taoism offers it in that context. Indigenous religions offer it, for example, in Australia. Sadly, Europe has the hardest time rediscovering those foundations. We killed off our druids. You were just talking about the *Archdruid* blog series. We demonized, literally called demons, the nature-oriented religions of our past.

We, in the modern period especially, redefined Christianity above all, Judaism in second place, so that it became a justification for modernism, naturalism, nationalism and reductionism. We raped and pillaged even our sacred texts to justify the selfishness of our lifetime. Michael, how could we rediscover, in our own Western religious traditions, that kind of foundational call, those basic ecological principles?

Michael: The way that – you had one word in there that didn't seem to me to fit with the others, but perhaps we're defining it in different ways, because one of the responses that I see, as not only legitimate but helpful way into this sort of falling back in love with nature, is the whole field of religious naturalism.

You used the word naturalism along with the other -isms that I would have – say more about what you mean by that, because I've been lifting up what I call sacred realism, or factual faith, basically lifting up that all cultures that survived any length of time had an I-Thou relationship to nature and to time and to mystery, and to reality basically. I see time, nature and mystery as the three faces of reality. What's real beyond our beliefs.

I see religious naturalism as one approach to coming back into an I-Thou relationship with nature. Another one, frankly, is lifting up personification. Not being ashamed of it, but lifting it up. That's what our brains do pretty instinctually is personify. That is we give human characteristics to what's more than human or other than human.

Philip: Gaia, for example.

Michael: Yeah, exactly. Gaia is a personification of the earth. In fact, if you think of Gaia as the spirit of the earth or the goddess of the earth you've got a trivial understanding of Gaia, rather than a personification, or a godification if you will, of what we also call today earth.

Connie and I have personified North America as Nora. We don't call this continent North America. We call this continent Nora. We actually have a more intimate personal relationship. The idea of toxifying, putting our waste into the bloodstream of Nora, it's crazy. It's suicidal. Yet just by personifying it makes it easier to get to that place. Rather than viewing North America, this continent, as an it, we view it as a thou.

Philip: Fantastic. My colleague here in Claremont, David Ray Griffin, distinguishes between two forms of naturalism. He uses subscripts to make sure that we get the difference. He says that we have created a naturalism which is sam. His three terms for that are sensationalist, atheist and materialist.

We have created a form of naturalism, which is as Max Weber said, disenchanting. We've taken the enchantment, [inaudible 31:22], the personal dimension, the value dimension, out of it, and we've created this flat naturalism. Sam, let's do it backwards, materialist, so it's just matter in motion. There's no spirit. There are no agents. We've even allowed genetic biology to write off the very agents which biology was supposed to explain.

Atheists, we've created a meaningless wandering universe with no theology, no higher set of myths and stories about them. Sensationalists means that we've taken just the inputs that come into our eyes, what the five senses can sense, as the only reality that can exist.

He offers in contrast to that a naturalism which is panentheistic. Panexperientialistic, so panexperientialist and panpsychic. Let's not go into the details of his particular [inaudible 32:22] philosophy, but the idea is that it's in nature which throbs with meaning and value, where we encounter not dead matter, but agents in systems living together in societies of which we are one part.

That kind of naturalism is inspiring. It's religious. It's mythopoetic. It calls us to be better than our modern self. It calls us back to an ancient future self, a self of integration, of social connection and a species that exists for the common good. I think that's where you and I would have common ground.

Michael: Yes. Yeah, amen. The ancient future self, I just wrote that one down. That's great. Yeah, exactly. I think the traditional -isms, kind of like the tools in the tool box that don't work because we've thrown all the ones that would be helpful, we no longer have them, many of the traditional -isms, deism, theism, atheism, pantheism. To some degree pantheism, although I think pantheism tends to be more of a philosophical approach.

I certainly find myself easily aligned with pantheism. With pantheism, depending upon how you define it, with creatism or creatheism, Connie and I coined our own bridge-building term, but basically the creativity is divine. That process is divine. That the unfolding emergence, emergent complexity, is divine.

That at this point in time there's nothing more important than learning to live within the limits of reality, within the limits of nature, and come back into, as Thomas Berry called, a mutually enhancing human earth relationship.

One of the things that he often said was that democracies in their current expression are actually conspiracies against the natural world, because they give all rights and privileges to humans and human corporations at the expense of nature. What we need are biocracies. We need to make sure that the voice and the well-being and the agency, the essence of the natural world, including watersheds and rivers, is also included in the democratic process.

Philip: That seems exactly correctly spoken. It strikes me that the voices we need to listen to are the younger voices, because they have come of age in an age of the imperiled earth. That means that their thinking doesn't need to adapt an existing framework of a non-ecological religion or a non-ecological science and build a bridge. They begin with ecological crisis and think outward from that as the heart. It's that that leads me to endorse your worry about -isms.

As a Baby Boomer era person, I thought if we could fight for the right -ism I would help the environmental movement succeed. So early on in my career, and some 20 years ago, I began to work on this notion of panentheism.

Not the [inaudible 35:26], who's the God that's up in the heavens somewhere with no connection, who as Pascal said at one point snapped his fingers, created the universe and then left it to run along askance. But rather, the God who permeates the natural world, that's God downward, and the one in whom we live and move and have our being. That's us looking upwards.

Then I started listening to younger voices. They said, "Phil, that's an -ism. That's one more doctrine." Just as we don't care about the heresies of the past, which you Baby Boomers still use to define your existence. Do you have the right view on the second coming of Christ? Do you have the right view on scripture? Do you have the right view...? They said in our world things are just too urgent for us to have time to build up a castle of -isms and [inaudible 36:25] to action.

So found myself dropping the word panentheism from my work and merely speaking of the eminent divine. Without the notion of the divine and the many forms it takes around the world, we are really rudderless. But let that divine be, as it has been in the great traditions around the world, especially the great mystical teachers, let the divine be understood as eminent.

The Quakers, and I'm a Quaker, the Quakers use the expression "There is that of God in each one". That's a beautiful expression of the eminent divine. If I recognize that of God in you, or that of God in the person who cuts me off on the freeway, or that of God in any one of those humans I interact with, I've begun to live in a more humane way with humans.

Why can't we let that cross the species barrier? Why does the eminent divine out of God have to have a face? Why does four legs exclude somebody from being a part of the

eminent divine? We have the theological resources to go there, and it's time. Please, let's open those fences that have corralled the horses or the pigs in one, and corralled us in another corral, let's tear down those fences and recognize what we share in common.

Michael: Yeah. Amen, brother. Just this Sunday, just earlier about an hour before we began this conversation, I sent the minister of the church in Pittsburgh that I'm going to be preaching this Sunday the title and three main points that I'm going to be making in my sermon.

The title is "A Scientific, Factual View of God and Why it Matters". The three points are: there are many ways to think about God, but reality is Lord; abusing nature betrays God, honoring nature is our only way home; and the third point is our instincts are condemning us to hell, and saving the future is now the only salvation that matters.

Philip: What I love about your approach, and I've heard it in a number of more recent YouTube talks, and maybe this is the point that I'd like to conclude our conversation with, what I think is powerful about that is it's that same spirit that we found in the election of 2008.

Many of the people who left home and went to work in precincts far away from where they live used this term, pragmatic idealists. Idealist is we have the belief that the world can be better and must be better. Society can be better and must be better. Pragmatic is it's about action.

Michael: Yes, exactly.

Philip: We don't have time to just sit back and do a calm analysis. We're going to do our analysis on the fly. We're going to look at the resources that are available to us. Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher, called it "bricolage". It means picking up the pieces at hand and building them into something usable or beautiful.

Pragmatic idealists say we'll march first and worry about the internal philosophical foundation later. We'll show up with 4,000 other people and we'll make a difference. They say we'll do our philosophy on the fly, bricolage, taking the pieces that address the urgent situation around us. It also suggests a way of doing politics, but it's much more the realpolitik, realpolitik, of response to a global crisis.

Let me just say this in closing.

Michael: Unless you have to go, there's actually two more questions that I want to ask you.

Philip: All right. I'll just say this very briefly then. Americans, we're the pragmatists par excellence over time. When we were involved, usually Michael, in wars, we got better than ourselves in wars. We would give up meat two days a week, Tuesdays and Fridays or whatever it

was. Then we would find a way to do the impossible. Why can't we take that thing that used to be called Yankee ingenuity and bring it to bear on a rapidly changing planet?

Michael: I think we will. I think we have to and I think that in the next two, three, four, five years we are going to see that emergence of something so obviously needed and yet so obviously radical given the fact that unfettered, unregulated capitalism – basically these very, very wealthy multinationals own most of the governments of the world.

So how to counter that and to do so most effectively, to do so non-violently so we don't play into their strengths, is I think that's going to be one of the major emergences – emergencies, catalyzing emergence – in these coming years.

Philip: Right.

Michael: Phil, there's two last questions I want to ask you. One is related to this whole concept of emergence. Because you have been at the center of this and been articulating and working with others like Terry Deacon and Ursula Goodenough and many others, say a little bit about what you see emerging, at whatever level, like in say the next ten years. What do you see as emerging, or what do you at least hope is emerging, and are doing something to further that or help that?

Philip: Very nice. I worked on the nerdy side of emergence for 20 years. That meant detailed conversation with scientists to show how this framework of new realities, new types of entities, emerging within the heart of fundamental physics, of chemistry, of the origins of life and the entire life process.

I believe that in the series of books, they're easy to track down for those who share my nerdy interest, we can see that the scientific picture of reality is not the given of some fundamental particles connecting in different ways. So that when you have any phenomenon in the world you can just reduce it down to those basic particles. Call them genes, call them neurons or call them quantum realities. That's a different picture of reality.

So we won that one, as I think we won the battle on panentheism. We've won the other particular battles, science, religion and compatibility. But Michael, it's not enough. It's not enough to do the nerdy discussions by themselves. When you're moving really quickly, like on a freeway, the things on the side blur and you can only concentrate on the objects closest to you, and you need to because you're in a dangerous situation.

So likewise, we're now moving at a very rapid pace toward the edge of a cliff with unbelievably negative consequences ahead of us. So now we need to take only the most essential features of emergence. What is that? It's a message we're hearing from many of the visionary leaders around the world, and it's this. That the cosmos, it's a continual process of

evolution. That the givens of one epic, or time or stage, are the building blocks for the emergence of something new.

I often give a talk called the 27-minute history of the universe, where I show each set of building blocks giving rise to the next. Fundamental elements giving rise to suns, giving rise to planets. The properties of physics giving rise to chemistry. Chemistry to life, life to ever higher levels.

The same thing is true of culture. The same thing is true of religion. Each one builds on the givenness of our biological situation to move us to a society, a culture, a civilization, a world view, a philosophy and a religion, a set of religious practices. The moment you recognize that you recognize it's a single system, systems interacting with systems interacting with systems. That's the ecological insight. Emergence it turns out was the story of ecology written large.

Michael: Wow, I like that.

Philip: Everything of what we are as human beings is part of an emergent system that goes back to what? To the basic building blocks of life, which is ecology. It turned out that science has verified your off-repeated statement. Ecology is the best theology. Theology correctly understood is ecology. From that perspective we recognize what the contribution of emergence is.

Michael: Beautifully said. Wow. It reminds me of a conversation that I just recently had with Joel Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams on this topic, and her new book on sort of an emergent way of thinking about God. It's quite fascinating.

Phil, there's one last question that I've been asking all my guests. It's sort of off the wall, but it's generated some really fascinating responses. I purposely don't let folk know about it ahead of time so that you can just sort of, oh, let me think about it.

If you had the opportunity to have a dinner party with any three people in history, so it's those three people and you, all four of you together in one setting, or a one-on-one, like over a beer or a glass of wine or a hike or whatever, with any three people in history, who would those people be and why would you pick them?

Philip: Interesting. Two are going to have to come from the continent of India. I'm actually going to interpret your question from the standpoint of our favorite long-term television show *Dr. Who*. We are actually going to bring them in the TARDIS to 2014 and we're going to bring them to a world climate summit. Maybe we'll do it next year for the World Climate Summit.

I'm having a dinner with them just prior to them walking onto the stage. I'm filling them in on the situation on the planet, and then they – I've got 20 minutes reserved in front of the world leaders. Somehow I was able to – well, I'm Dr. Who so I can do that, right?

I'm going to introduce three mystery guests. The TARDIS landed in the middle of the world leaders, and the three guests will step out with me and walk to the podium and they will speak.

First I had to bring back the Buddha, after enlightenment and before his body stopped beating, because I needed them to understand the doctrine of what later became called Pratityasamutpada, or often translated as “codependent arising”. It means that all things are linked. There's a relationship of causal connection between all things, as Thich Nhat Hanh always says.

I think nobody better than the Buddha can help people realize that the basic religious insight is that all of us are in all of us. All of us are interconnected, and the divine is the word for that interconnection of all things. I think he'll be an effective speaker.

Michael: I think so.

Philip: Then next I need to have an iconic scientist who represents the best of science, a Nobel Prize winner. Of course Albert Einstein is the person I'll choose because his science and his mysticism were one. His Jewish mysticism and his science were inseparable. He can speak in the name of science and his excellence to say that science is only correctly understood when it builds on the foundation that the Buddha gave us to religion, the interconnection of all things.

Of course it studies the things that can be replicated and explained and proven with numbers. Fine. But it's not different. The Buddha's religion is ecological religion. Einstein's science is, if I may use the word broadly, ecological science.

For my final guest I again need what I think is the greatest Indian activist of all time, Mahatma Gandhi. I'd love to have him with his creative effort to galvanize a subcontinent, to bring people together, to bring a sense of hope and the belief that change is possible. I want him to say, “You guys can do this.”

By pushing back against the capitalists, pushing back against the system and building on what the Buddha, the great religious teachers and the great scientist teachers have said, that we can become the ecological species.

Michael: Amen, brother. Philip, thank you so much for being a part of this series. Just blessings on your work. I so look forward to seeing you at the conference next year, if not

sooner. I'm thrilled to hear this latest radicalization of you and your work and your message, and I feel so deeply aligned with it.

I have a gut hunch that there will be some cross-fertilizing and some co-creating in the years to come, should we be graced to continue living that long. So thank you.

Philip: Michael, thanks for doing a tremendous series. I feel honored to be a part of it.

Michael: Cool, good. Thanks. Bye-bye.