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**Big spill, big thoughts**

*The catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is a widening environmental, economic and political crisis. Is it also a moral crisis? How does religion influence our use and abuse of the natural world? Does religion help or harm the environment?*

Expressing big thoughts risks being thought crazy by those who customarily think small. But big events call for*thoughts of matching size*. And the Gulf of Mexico oil gusher (not "spill") is a big event, "the greatest environmental disaster in our nation's history" (said President Obama today).

Here are a few thoughts which seem to me to be proportionate in size to the Great Oil Gusher.

1.....While we should think-talk-act green, our footprint on the earth is black. Our species is the big bad news to the biosphere, the bad news of depletion and pollution. There are almost four times (3.8 times, from 1.8 billion to 6.8) more of us than there were the year I was born (1918), the year 3 percent of the world's population died of the pandemic called the Spanish flu. Now, our species is itself the pandemic, *the biosphere's disease*.

2....."We would live better if we spent more time in cemeteries." That's the main thing I remember from the Memorial Day sermon I heard in church Sunday. *What we can't control* helps us to think, and perhaps live, bigger. As I write, it's not yet clear that we can completely control the Great Oil Gusher.

3...."Be Very Afraid." Too much fear blows your mind, but too little is also irrational. The Bible, Shakespeare, film, television warn us to *be intelligently afraid*. / Be afraid of science (as well as grateful for it). In the 1986 film "The Fly," a scientist's experiment goes wrong and he begins to turn into an insect. He says "Don't be afraid." But a reporter responds "Be very afraid." / In his 2010 book, sociologist Robert Wuthnow picks up the phrase: "Be Very Afraid: The Cultural Response to Terror, Pandemics, Environmental Destruction, Annihilation, and Other Threats." Can we control the Great Oil Gusher, an instance of technology gone wrong? Can we control terrorism, science and technology steadily increasing the destructive potential of one individual?

4...."The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10) The Bible suggests this *fear-transcendence*as productive also of strength and joy. The founder of Pennsylvania gave this big thought a political twist: "Fear God or tyrants."

5.....The Ten Commandments begin "You shall *love the LORD*." This big thought is a prophylactic against idolatrous lesser loves. Greed, an idolatrous love of gain, was the immoral component in the cause of the Great Oil Gusher. BP chose to maximize production, over optimizing safety.

6.....Earth-care is an obligation to the Creator-Owner (Genesis 2:15). "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it....for he founded it...." (Psalm 24:1-2) That nature just happened is a little thought in comparison with the big thought of *creation*. Here is how Darwin used this big thought in the last sentence of his "The Origin of Species": "There is a grandeur in this view of life...originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one;...from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."

7.....The *irony* should not escape us. The more "developed" and complex the world has become, the more fragile the works of our hands and minds. It is as though earth were fighting back against "the world" for our worshiping and serving "the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise. Amen." (Romans 1:25)

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  JUNE 2, 2010; 12:13 AM ET**

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Just as man's history shows his idolatry for elementary concepts of truth resulting in disaster, so too has man's history shown that his idolatry of one or the other individual as savior, one book only, one prophet only, one line of prophets only, and only road to god been a disaster.

It is important for men to not fear Truth but to realize It / to embrace it. It is important for men to not fear apocalypse but to become one with the cause of the creation and the end. it is important for men to not believe that the other is deserving condemnation to hell but to demand the unity between self and other.

To worship Truth is to abandon the anthropomorphic construct of a god so narrow minded as to give only one savior (and to realize that such a god is to be abandoned).

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