

## Introduction

*Outlaw Theology:* No one has ever written “An Outlaw’s Theology.” So why am I? Clearly you know what an outlaw is—a criminal, and I am classified as a violent felon. You probably know that theology is something religious folk study: priests and ministers, rabbis and imams, nuns, some lay people—and I am a lay theologian. More than likely you are not an outlaw and have no personal experience of the criminal underground or imprisonment. Likewise, “theology” often sounds brainy and churchy, and is an intellectual discipline that you’ve probably not deeply studied. Your first impression then is more than likely that theology has little to do with the everyday world in which you live, and have absolutely no idea what it has to do with being an outlaw. My task is to not only provide you with insight into how and why I became an outlaw theologian but how absolutely critical it is that you become one also—for your own sanity and the survival of the planet itself. *No small potatoes, eh?*

*Sanity and Survival:* In a way my life is summed up by, “All we are saying is give peace a chance!” All my life I’ve been trying to stop people from murdering one another. I’ve been failing miserably. Yet, when as an elder I went back on campus (2006-2008) to promote a play about my Vietnam era anti-war trial, “Peace Crimes: the *Minnesota* 8 vs. the war,” I was stunned and amazed to find that in so many ways these young activists were my visionary grandchildren.

I found that among today’s youth the mingling of the passion and insights of Martin Luther King with John Lennon’s vision was stirring up a storm of change. Young activists were engaged in a slate of human service and social justice causes which sought to create compassionate communities both locally and globally. The main topic on the young activists’ agenda was the question about the survival of the planet. In my day it was just one war—Vietnam. Today, the concern was whether the human species will insanely kill itself by unleashing an ecological apocalypse and/or destroy the whole planet through creating a nuclear winter.

*Whole planet:* As a Sixties peace activist I was concerned about America. I knew hardly anything about Vietnam or the Far East when the war started. Today’s youth are planetary

citizens. In my day there was “America” and American goods, foods, clothing, educational system, and the like. Today there is simply “planet Earth.” Rarely is something purely American. What is being sought is a sane plan for everyone living together. Not surprisingly, the struggle that is the special focus among the young is “Whither globalization?”

*Globalization:* Whenever it actually began for certain, today, the main worldwide dynamic is globalization. This is a loose term that includes obvious changes such as the world-wide-web that links anyone willing to be a node on its Net. But the deeper changes concern the stories we are telling ourselves about what it means to be human and what it takes to have a healthy and meaningful human life. In a way, as the previous major wars were called *World Wars*, Vietnam was the first *Global War* in that it was telecommunicated into every home or hut with an antenna everywhere around the planet. But consider this: I failed, with others in the anti-war Movement, to stop this war because it was more than a globally telecommunicated military event. Rather it was the first war of globalization.

We did not grasp that we were opposing the first wave of a globalization movement which sought dominion over all Earth’s people. Notably this dominion was not just militaristic, it was cultural. Yet—and this was the first sign that this was a globalizing dominion—it was not simply a quest to make the world culturally Western or American or Judeo-Christian. In fact the contrary was true, that is, the war opened the West to the East and a wave of cultural tolerance swamped every American sector: economic, educational, religious, etc. People spoke about being “citizens of the world,” that is, American+something more than that. As the internet arose and the globe became laced by its technological Web, a new definition of reality as “virtual” described a new “space” which was at once hardwired to the old space, now called off-line, and which put you on-line as an agent in the virtual realm of hyperspace. You now had simultaneous identities: off-line and online; real and virtual. *Wow!* Whatever it was, when you entered globalization’s virtual reality you realized that it was transforming every and all aspects of human culture...but into what?

Is globalization a predatory or a creative movement? Does it seek dominion through conquest or can it become an enabling, humanizing movement? The answers to these and related

globalization questions depend upon the story we tell ourselves about the purpose, meaning and value of human life, that is, our story of human origin. In this light, I hold that globalization is presenting a new mythic story of origin, one that is replacing the dominant Western biblical story of Genesis. More critically, I hold that it is *you* who can and should imagine this new story of origin. This is where my Outlaw Theology comes into play.

*An Outlaw's Theology's* three Pathways take you on a journey that wends through monastic hallways, trial courtrooms, jail and prison cells, and onto campuses to engage with today's young activists. You will follow me as I climbed to the mountaintop, shouted "Peace! Peace!"—and heard society's judgment: "Criminal!" We then fall and descend into the hellish sectors of prison's darkness where I existed as a subhuman. Finally, we listen to young campus activists as they profess a profoundly hopeful and powerful vision of the preciousness of all human life that guides their efforts at directing the globalization movement.

I use personal narrative and accounts of intimate prison experiences so that you can enter into realms of human thought and feeling that are dark, at times heretical, even possibly evil to you. You then descend into the terrifying prison sector "where everything human is soon absent." Next, you learn how to ascend from the dark sector into the sunlight sector and develop an innovative "Earthfolk" vision that enables you to dwell peacefully and comfortably at home on the Living Earth. The journey concludes with an upbeat invitation to engage a series of ritual practices that will enable you to transform you own subhumanness and envision yourself and others as one of Earthfolk's precious beloveds.

*Pathway#1: Outlaw* relates how an altar boy and young monk became a federal criminal. My transformation had three sources. 1) In my faithful obedience to the radical moral challenges issued by my Church. 2) My faith as formed by my family, especially my father. 3) The revolutionary theological vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., which led to my embrace of nonviolence and pacifism. Then, I present my "peacemaking theology" which drew ridicule from the prosecutor and stark condemnation from Church and State magistrates but was all I had to give as patrimony to my sons. Notably, this is a Pathway whose depth you can plumb through sympathy and empathy. Nothing recounted along the way should shock you.

*Pathway#2: Subhuman* recounts my entry into federal prison—the *Inside*—and my post-prison journey as a lost soul on a ten year Dark Night of the Soul wandering. My experiences on this Pathway might be near impossible for you to fully appreciate because such requires more than sympathy or empathy. To properly walk this Pathway requires an effort on your part to become me.

Prison was not what I expected nor what I anticipate you believe it is. I found it to be an enduring institution that served to keep me and *you* from knowing about the physicality and operations of the Shadow realm. Whereas “Shadow realm” is probably a semi-poetic or popular psychological concept for you, it is actually that part of everyday life which is right in front of you but you do not see. It is as invisible as are the thousands of ex-convicts—like me!—who walk through your neighborhood and sit down next to you at the movie theater.

I describe my becoming a subhuman, an institutional number—8867-147, and being The Man’s Bitch. You hear that the judge ruled that I was an “irrelevant and immaterial” human. With that verdict he effectively showed the world that I was no more than a babbling, incoherent fool. Ironically, being so humiliated and devalued, arguably, forced me to listen more sympathetically and attentively to inmate stories and to empathetically share their raw, sometimes savage, emotions. These inmate stories are the factual and inspirational bedrock for my Outlaw Theology.

Here is where I might lose you: There are three sets of “Rung stories” written as first-person accounts which might be a bit too raw and savage for you. I make no apologies. Prison’s revelation was that unless I experienced my own subhumanness that I would never become a real human person. To enable you to become me, I tell these stories—which I carved out of my flesh and spirit.

As if the Rung stories won’t be hard enough for you to navigate, you then hear that in prison I encountered a Shadow Mother who “kept me alive, although not loving me.” This numinous She I found in the extreme sector of prison’s Shadow realm—*where everything human is soon*

*absent*. It is She, however, who I also found present in the Garden of Eden as I listened to the biblical tradition with inmate, subhuman, and Shadow senses. It is my veneration of Her that turned me into an Outlaw Theologian.

*Pathway#3: Earthfolk* While back on campus (2005-2008) to promote the “Peace Crimes” play, in discussions with young activists I heard emerge a set of visionary words and images that were inclusive, universalistic, ecological, and above all, about justice and the acceptance of all people as children in one human family. Yet, I discerned a growing split between two ways to embody this emerging vision. One was that of the Earthpeople. The other that of the Earthfolk. The critical difference was in the activist’s sense of Mother Earth. Was she alive, a goddess, and worthy of veneration? Was She a *Living Earth*? Or was the phrase simply symbolic and conveyed nothing other than the biological and geological facts that all humans lived on the same planet? I realized that my prison experiences, my Dark Night, and my Outlaw Theology—with its call to experience one’s subhumanness—could provide those emerging as Earthfolk with a pathway and set of practices to learn how to discover their Mother and venerate Her.

While I claim that you should embrace the Earthfolk vision to protect your own sanity and ensure the survival of the planet itself, I make no bones about it that Pathway #3 is a more difficult, even treacherous, segment of your journey than the other two. You will need to be sympathetic and empathetic as you prepare yourself to discover your Shadow subhuman self. I offer a discipline and a set of practices for you to follow to begin opening yourself to embracing your own subhumanness and walk in the Shadow realm. I further offer ways to use the Rung stories to meditatively descend into and ascend out of the Shadow realm where you touch your subhumanness and transform yourself into a real human person. Only at the moment you discover your Shadow Mother and come to venerate Her will you begin to embody the Earthfolk vision. Know however that the unfolding of the Earthfolk vision is not solely and simply an act of consciously seeing and sensing the world in a certain way, rather, conversely, it is also you being seen and sensed by the world in a certain way. The challenge facing you is to live in such a way that others see and sense you as an Earthfolk.