Midwives to the Midwives of Change

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Introduction

The term 'midwife' is rich in meaning, and its use in the Conference theme is an example of ways in which it has been applied in contexts beyond that associated with women giving birth. For 20 years I have been associated with Hopewell Hospice on the Gold Coast, and those involved in providing palliative care are often referred to as "midwives to the dying," paralleling the transitions of birth and death, and the support that can assist in both cases.

Another aspect of Hopewell's services is known as "Paradise Kids." Its groups support children dealing with grief and loss, such as a death in the family or family break-up. Throughout the seven sessions of the program, each child has a trained volunteer "buddy" sitting beside them to provide a listening ear and supportive presence. The buddies serve a "midwife" role, assisting the children to reflect on the painful process of grief, and helping the experience of loss to become an opportunity to learn about life and how to deal creatively with its challenges.

The Conference Theme encouraged participants to serve as "Midwives of Change" by bringing progressive perspectives to their religious communities. This Workshop proposed a further birth process for progressives themselves by drawing on the Integral Philosophy developed in the numerous books of Ken Wilber, and particularly *Integral Spirituality*, *A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World* (2006), and Paul R. Smith's *Integral Christianity: The Spirit's Call to Evolve (*2011). Through their powerful insights, they can serve as "Midwives to the Midwives of Change" by providing integral perspectives as another stage of personal growth. In that this wasn't an academic presentation, extensive use was made of material from these books without attempting to give detailed references.
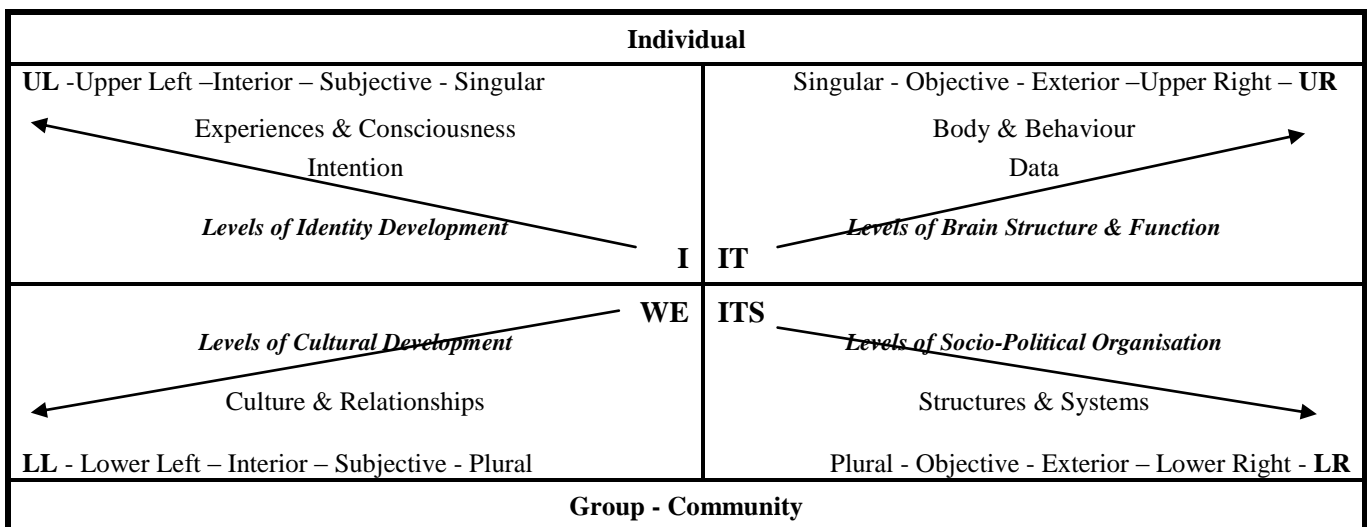
Conference participants were challenged to serve as elders ('midwives') to individuals in their spiritual and religious communities to assist the evolutionary process in which we are all involved. As well as drawing insights from the progressive perspective, this Workshop was a call to be open to developing an integral mindset.

Making Sense of Life's Experiences

If you are in a new place and trying to get oriented to a strange landscape, it is helpful to remember that a compass has four major directions: North, South, East and West. If you look in just one direction, and turn your back on the others, you will have a limited awareness of your new environment. Through Integral Philosophy, Ken Wilber provides a way of holding together a full range of perspectives. As a "Cartographer of Consciousness," he provides a way of mapping the many perspectives that are often regarded as conflicting opposites. He refers to it as "AQAL," in that it incorporates the perspectives of all four quadrants, all levels of development, all lines of development, all states of consciousness and all personality types. To use the analogy of the satellites used in a global positioning system (GPS), he provides orienting markers that help locate particular points of view in a larger context.

At the heart of the integral approach is the recognition that all situations can be observed from the four perspectives, Singular and Plural, Objective and Subjective. These are also identified by means of the pronouns, I, It, We and Its, as summarised in this diagram.

Individual	
UL -Upper Left –Interior – Subjective - Singular Experiences & Consciousness Intention *Levels of Identity Development* **I**	Singular - Objective - Exterior –Upper Right – **UR** Body & Behaviour Data *Levels of Brain Structure & Function* **IT**
WE *Levels of Cultural Development* Culture & Relationships **LL** - Lower Left – Interior – Subjective - Plural	**ITS** *Levels of Socio-Political Organisation* Structures & Systems Plural - Objective - Exterior – Lower Right - **LR**
Group - Community	

The AQAL Model can be illustrated in terms of **palliative care**. At the heart of palliative care is a person dealing with the approach of death. That person can be analysed in terms of a specific diagnosis and **objective data**. That tends to be the primary focus of the medical system (**Upper Right Quadrant - IT**). At the same time, the person is someone with feelings about the experience they are going through, and ways of understanding their situation. This **subjective dimension** is also a key component of comprehensive palliative care (**Upper Left Quadrant - I**). Elisabeth Kübler-Ross famously referred to feelings and states often found among those facing the approach of death as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

In addition, the person is part of a **social network**, which includes family members and friends that are sharing the experience and feeling its impact. There is also the larger **cultural context** with its many attitudes and beliefs about illness and death **(Lower Left Quadrant - WE)**. The cultural context includes a **health system** and whether the system receives adequate funds for satisfactory palliative care services and for research to improve treatment and care (**Lower Right Quadrant - ITS**).

Developmental Levels

In mountain climbing, as one goes higher and gains altitude, it is possible to have a wider view and a broader understanding of the terrain. Incorporated in the AQAL model are developmental concepts that identify a capacity for growth and evolution in each quadrant.

Individual biological functioning, as well as brain development from childhood to adulthood, is set in a long-term evolutionary context (**UR - IT**).In addition, there are stages of individual development and changes in social-emotional-cognitive functioning (**UL - I**), including developing self-awareness, across the life span.

In any society, there is an evolution of cultural perspectives (**LL - WE**) as these interact with developments in the other quadrants, e.g. the changes in gender identity and relationships (LL) linked to socio-economic structures in industrialised societies (LR) as they move from pre-modern, to modern, to post-modern and beyond. This evolution of social systems (**LR - ITS**) includes changes in means of production, forms of government, medical services, the economy, access to hygiene and nutrition, and the interplay of global and local factors. In terms of food production, there has been a process of development from hunter-gatherer societies, to horticultural, to agrarian, to industrial, to post-industrial/ informational societies, each with distinctive social systems and cultural perspectives.

The integral model emphasises that it is possible for each level to 'transcend and include' what went before, i.e. each development can go beyond its predecessor, and yet include it in its makeup. To this end, the metaphor of a conveyor belt is used in *Integral Spirituality* to illustrate the process of individual development, with recognition that no matter what developmental stage a society has reached, each child starts out back at zero and must grow from there. How far that development goes will depend on the options available within their socio-cultural context, as well as personal choices. In *Integral Christianity*, Paul Smith applies this analysis to stages of development within the Christian tradition for both individuals and church communities. This is reflected in his discussion of options for those who feel they have outgrown their religion.

Some become agnostics and atheists. Others keep going to temple, mosque or church, checking their minds at the door to seek nostalgia and comfort there. An increasing number search out other religions or try a cafeteria-style "I'm spiritual, not religious" approach. Many leave their religion but hang on to God.

However, there is another option. Move to a higher stage of your own religion! This is what integral and beyond Christianity and church are <u>all</u> about for Christians - recognising that wherever you are on the spiral of life, there is a call of the Spirit to follow Jesus at ever-higher levels. This is also the escalator potential of all spiritual traditions. People may be at different stages in various aspects of life, with society containing a mixture of stages and a particular stage predominant. Many are at the modern stage in their work and the traditional stage in religion.

Wilber's analysis of developmental levels draws on many sources, including the groundbreaking work of cultural historian and evolutionary philosopher Jean Gebser (1905-1973). In *The Ever-Present Origin*, Gebser referred to stages of human development as archaic, magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic and integral. Steve McIntosh, *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution*, 2007, refers to development of consciousness as a spiral process, with each new level building on what preceded it. He identifies the stages of consciousness as archaic, tribal, warrior, traditionalist, modernist, postmodern, integral and post-integral. Being a preacher with a liking for catchy titles, Paul Smith has rebranded these stages of consciousness as fantasy, fighting, fitting in, flourishing, fulfilling and frontier. He then identifies churches as tribal, warrior, traditional, modern, postmodern and integral. This applies to their structures and systems, (LR Quadrant) and to their cultures and relationships, (LL Quadrant).

A Model for Understanding Religion

The educative dimensions of being a Midwife of Change can draw on insights from religious education. such as the work done through the Queensland Religious Education Curriculum Project (RECP), of which I served as leader from 1975 to 1985. The challenge for the project team was to demonstrate how religion can be dealt with appropriately in educational contexts, as distinct from religious contexts. The RECP Model was based on recognition of the links between religious beliefs and the questions raised by the experiences that are part of our common humanity.

In this model, Human Experience is identified as raising *Ultimate Questions* about life's meaning and purpose, and the Traditional Belief Systems provide *Doctrines and Teachings* as responses to those questions. This creative linkage provides a way of avoiding the moralising and sermonising that are all too common in religious education, where an issue would be named and the set answer would be given before participants had been engaged in understanding the experiences and sharpening the questions that helped shape the belief.

To complete the model, recognition was given to the beliefs and experiences of the students themselves. This emphasis on the role of the students was a reaction against the tendency to see religious education as bringing 'religion' to the students and regarding them as passive recipients. Similarly, growth in religious understanding as an individual experience is often stimulated by having to face some challenging life circumstances.

To integrate these perspectives, the three-circle RECP model, covers **Human Experience**, **Traditional Belief Systems** and **Individual Patterns of Belief**. Each circle was then divided into an **outer section** to refer to *observable phenomena* and *life contexts* in which they might be found, and an **inner core** that related *to beliefs, questions, attitudes and values* associated with the external experiences and actions.
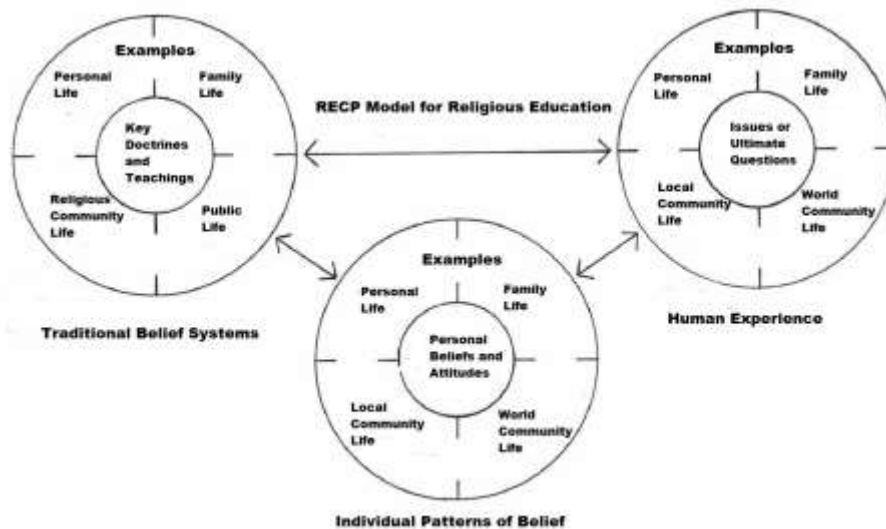
Mavor IG, et al, *Religious Education Curriculum Project*, 1975-1986

In retrospect, the three-circle model anticipated the elements of Wilber's quadrants, with the outer circles fitting with the objective right hand quadrants - "What do they do?" - and the inner circles with the subjective left hand quadrants - "What does it mean?" Further, the Human Experience and Traditional Belief System circles link to the Lower or Communal quadrants and the Individual Patterns of Belief circle links to the Upper or Individual quadrants.

In the Lower Left Quadrant, the sequence from pre-modern (mythic belief) to modern (rational, scientific belief) to postmodern (pluralistic/relativistic belief) has been influential in approaches and debates within religious education and religion generally throughout the past century. At each of these stages, people tend to regard their point of view as correct and use it as a basis for criticising the views of others. For example, mythic believers tend to absolutise their path to 'salvation' and defend literal interpretations of the myths as being the essence of religion. In contrast, scientific rationalists want to debunk the myths and tend to equate religion with the myths, so reject both. Postmodernists, however, want to relativise all truths as 'interpretations,' including religious beliefs and the conclusions of science.

Beyond these conflicts, some achieve a level of consciousness, in which they are able to acknowledge the sequence of growth and development that takes place in people's lives and to affirm the importance of each stage as part of an expanding spiral. In them, pre-modern, modern and postmodern perspectives can co-exist and they can affirm them in others. Each stage can be seen as building on what came before it, without idealising any one level.

The key factor in this model of development is the process of differentiation, transcendence and inclusion that takes place when a particular view of the world is outgrown and used as a basis for a more inclusive point of view. This is seen, for example when development takes place from egocentric to family-centric, to tribe-centric, to ethnocentric, to nation-centric, to world-centric, to cosmos-centric. Intended to embarrass Jesus, the question "Who is my neighbour?" could be given different answers from each of these levels. His response with the story of the Good Samaritan continues to serve as a challenge to ethnocentric outlooks.

Wilber seeks to encourage an integral practice that encourages the healthy expression of each stage of development and promotes a movement towards higher levels of consciousness. Such practices can be incorporated into every-

day life, including activities such as meditation, exercise, devotions, intellectual and emotional growth, community service, social action and care for the earth.

Ways of Talking about Religion

When supporting others in their growth through stages of development, the patterns of language used can be significant. This is a helpful insight of postmodernism. There is a major difference, when dealing with beliefs, between speaking as if they are facts and speaking in a way that acknowledges the belief dimension. For example, when speaking within a community of faith, it is reasonable to say, "God is love" or "Allah is merciful" but once an audience is acknowledged as being diverse, it can be presumptuous and disrespectful to make such statements as if they are matters of fact that are not open to question. From a postmodern perspective, these are interpretations of experience and it is reasonable to ask, "Says who?" or "What communities of belief hold that view?"

Our approach was to train teachers of religious education to make a distinction between facts (external perspective) and beliefs (internal perspective), and to reflect that distinction in their patterns of speech. In recognising that beliefs are human constructs, the aim was to link beliefs to people, either as individuals or as collectives. A belief could be 'owned' as being held by the teacher, with encouragement for students to respond also with their 'owned' beliefs, e.g. "I believe …", "It seems to me that …", "What do you think/ believe?" Alternatively, a belief could be 'grounded' by linking it to an individual or a to community of belief, e.g. "The Pope has said …", "Most Christians believe that …", "In the Torah it says …", "Tibetan Buddhism teaches …"

The RECP approach was another recognition of the importance of the individual student by challenging teachers to respect the diversity of views present in their audience, whether in a state school or a church school. It also allowed teachers the freedom to work respectfully with beliefs that they did not hold personally. This approach is particularly helpful to those who want to draw on the insights of modernism and postmodernism, while also respecting the full range of developmental stages. Those serving as "Midwives of Change" face similar challenges.

Quadrants/ Levels and Religion

In the LL Quadrant [WE] religion comes, broadly, in four modes - magical, mythical, mental and mystical.

The *magical* religion of the tribal and warrior stages is filled with fantasy. The *mythical religion* of the traditional level depicts its heroes, such as Moses, Jesus, Krishna and Buddha, with mythical language and legends that enhance the founders, and reveal the devotion and awe of the followers. The great majority of the world's population, 65-80 percent, are at the pre-modern stages of traditional, warrior or tribal

The *mental* religion of the modern stage focuses on the rational mind, using modern methods of critical thinking to distinguish between the mythical elements and the deeper truth. In its mental approach, the modern level may leave the religious path altogether and opt for a more philosophical path.

Just emerging now is the *mystical* religion of the integral and beyond stages, which have transcended magic and myth to reach the meaning of the rational/ mental stage, before transcending the resistance to anything not rational (pre-rational or post-rational). The move to the mystical allows connection with spiritual realities and, ultimately, an experience of the divine reality that we are all a part of God and one another.

These perspectives can be illustrated by reference to the place of the Bible at each level. The tribal mindset sees the Bible as powerful magic. The warrior mindset sees the Bible as the story of the battle between good and evil. The traditional mindset sees the Bible as the totally true Word of God containing all we need to know about our relationship to God. The modern mindset sees the Bible as a blend of fact, myth, legend and wisdom. The postmodern mindset sees the Bible as one of many Scriptures from around the world that teach spiritual wisdom.

The integral level church has found itself with respect to the Bible, with most members accepting the place of modern rational inquiry in the writing and preservation of biblical documents. At integral, the Bible is studied, referred to and valued as an indispensable resource, and the battle about whether the church will, as in some modern fashions, discard the Bible as unusable is also over. The Bible is now seen as a fascinating account of the evolutionary progress of the spiritual path, and understanding it in terms of stages of spiritual development provides a way to appreciate and value the Bible in all of its aspects.

Understandings of the Divine

On the basis of rational analysis, some progressives have difficulty with the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. They are aware of the development of that belief in a particular historical and philosophical context, which was very different from modern consciousness. While some respond by rejecting the doctrine, and others find alternative forms of expression closer to their own experience, the Integral principle of transcend and include offers a way forward.

In the Quadrants, Wilber draws on the use of pronouns in everyday conversation to characterise the various perspectives – **I, It, We, Its**. He also makes use of those pronouns to analyse three perspectives on one's relationship with God or with that which is of Ultimate Concern in one's life. This can take place in first (I), second (Thou/You) or third (It) person terms and, while all are possible, most people only emphasise one or two of them.

The **first** person perspective emphasises the presence of God's spirit within, using spiritual practices and disciplines to nurture that presence [**I-I**]. The **second** person perspective sees God as the 'Other' to whom one offers allegiance and obedience [**I-Thou**]. The **third** person perspective sees God in the world of nature and the processes of evolution, with which one seeks to come into harmony [**I-It**].

Each of these perspectives tends to predominate in various forms of religious belief and observance, and some have been persecuted for affirming an approach that didn't fit with the majority view. From an integral perspective, spiritual growth can be enriched by practices in all three perspectives, directing prayer to each of the "faces" of God, as described by Paul Smith.

*"I" – **The Inner Face of God:** God in 1st-person is the image of God within myself, the Christ Self, the True Self, the Unique Self, Buddha-nature, the eternal "I am," Pure Awareness, Pure Consciousness, Original "I Am-ness."*

*"Thou" –**The Intimate Face of God:** God in 2nd-person is the wondrously caring classical Trinity to whom we can speak: Abba Father/Mother, our elder brother Jesus who is our Supreme Guide and Lord, and Spirit that flows in endless, joyful, creative impulse. There are also other namings for the Holy One who comes close to us as our Beloved.*

*"It" – **The Infinite Face of God:** God in 3rd-person is the face of God as the creative evolutionary process, the Web of Life, Ground of Being, the Great Mystery and, in specifically Christian terminology, Cosmic Christ of Colossians 2:15-20 who is the pattern that creates and holds all things together.*

Valuing all Stages of Development

Each station along the way in our development has healthy aspects as well as unhealthy. The unhealthy parts are best transcended, while the healthy parts make a lasting contribution to further development of the individual or culture. A criticism of some progressives has been that, in their celebration of the sense of liberation that they have found in this perspective, they have denigrated their own earlier stages of development.

To use the escalator metaphor again, to reach the top floor you have to pass through all the other floors, which is also true in the spiritual life, where each floor is necessary for moving up. The foundation of the integral mindset is the understanding of floors (**stages**), along with the awareness we carry with us at each floor (**state development**). Natural hierarchies are understood as normal stages of growth, with the goal of the integral stage being the **health of every floor**, not just its own. To negate earlier levels would inhibit the growth process of those still passing through those stages.

Integral-level individuals and organisations work for both the health of each stage and the building of the next one, with anticipation of further evolutionary growth, and affirming each level as of value in itself. From birth, each child progresses though its own stages, at least up to the edge of whatever culture it is living in, each culture demands understanding and honouring, and each unfolding level reveals important facets of healthy living.

The tribal level gives us family/kinship ties and loyalty. The warrior lens provides world-changing action, and the traditional altitude offers us loyalty and stability. Modernism expands our world with scientific exploration and discovery, and postmodernism gives us respect for all. Integral altitude champions each stage as appropriate for both individuals and cultures, and encourages the next natural stage as a way to progress.

The purpose of Integral church is to create a community which accelerates our growth in **stages** of understanding God, and **states** of experiencing God. In *Integral Spirituality,* Wilber outlines what he calls "*a startling new task for religion in the modern and postmodern world*" - the possibility that all the world's religions can provide an evolving spiritual path for each of the stations in life. This would include *"higher levels and stages of their spirituality,* that have kept pace with Spirit's unfolding into the modern, postmodern and integral stages... All of the stages of growth will always be with us since every individual passes through these stages, from the lowest stage up as far as their situation allows.

There will always be fundamentalism, because we all go through that stage between the ages of seven and adolescence, and some people stay there. Tribal, warrior, traditional, modern and postmodern cultures also all exist today and will for the foreseeable future. All of these stages of spiritual development are sacred and legitimate worldviews. Churches for those at these levels exist all over the world. At present, Integral spirituality and beyond exists primarily in emerging networks.

Responsibility of the Religious Traditions

Most of the world's people are already connected to a religious tradition, and most won't change that connection in their lifetime, even if not active in it. But if that religious tradition offers a version that has kept up with the Spirit's movement, then that move of the Spirit would be more readily available to those people than an entirely new religion would be.

Every world religion that offers more than a traditional level can provide spiritual nourishment for individuals and groups at ever-higher stages. If ready to give up their angry warrior practices, an individual or group at the warrior stage can move to the traditional stage with its more loving approach. Allstages must be lived in and worked

through. If the next higher interpretation of Christianity is available, then the escalator function allows them to move on to the next level when they are ready.

Jesus not only modelled the escalator function, but he predicted its future function in his daringly integral statement, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them, now. When the Spirit of truth comes, that Spirit will guide you into all the truth." The various emerging versions of Christianity and church are the current fulfilment of Jesus' prophetic statement that he had much more to teach his followers. With deep wisdom, he told his followers that, even from him, they could not learn all there was to know and experience at their present level of consciousnesses. He assured them that in the future, the Spirit would continue to move us to new stages - if we would listen to the Spirit's call to evolve.

In summary, Wilber identifies an important role for religion, both preserving the past and providing for an ongoing process of growth. Everybody is born at square one. There will always be people at [each level], and that is fine… An enlightened society would … make room for that by recognizing that stages in development are also stations in life, deserving honour and respect.

The earlier stations - archaic to magic to mythic - involve stages that, nonetheless, are ones that humanity's leading edge passed through in its infancy, childhood and adolescence. But because religion alone is the repository of the myths created during those times, religion alone is the institution in today's world that gives legitimacy to those earlier stages and stations for men and women. Religion alone gives legitimacy to the myths. And religion alone owns that 70% of the world's population at those stages. But precisely because of its ownership of the pre-rational heritage of humanity (and the pre-rational corpus of the great myths), religion alone can help its followers move from the pre-rational, mythic-membership, ethnocentric, absolutistic version of its message to the rational-perspectival, worldcentric, postconventional versions of its own message. This … is the great leap that religions alone can help humanity make, which is best analysed using quadrants:

In the UL, psychologically, an individual needs to move from ethnocentric beliefs to worldcentric beliefs. This is a difficult transformation from a role-based identity to a person-based identity. This allows the individual to adopt a postconventional, worldcentric moral stance and not just an ethnocentric, us-versus-them mentality… Crucially in the LL, the individual needs to feel that his or her religion supports a truly universal or catholic Jesus, and not merely an ethnocentric creed. In some cases, this is a hotly contested issue…

How this will be institutionalized (in the LR) will help determine the behaviour (UR) that is allowed by a person of faith in the modern and postmodern world. What is particularly required is an institution that embodies the stations of life in its own concrete social (and cultural) system. Can individuals ride from pre-rational to rational to trans-rational floors, or will religion remain the repository of humanity's childhood?

If religion chooses the latter, then all around it, the other disciplines (law, medicine, science, education) will continue to move into the things that adults do, and religion will remain the things that children (and adult children) do - like blow up things. But if religion lives up to its promise as being that endeavour in humanity that allows Spirit to speak through it, and Spirit is indeed evolving in its own manifestation, then religion becomes a conveyor belt for humanity, carrying it from the childhood productions of Spirit to the adolescent productions of Spirit to the adult productions of Spirit ... and beyond that into the great tomorrow of Spirit's continuing display. This, surely, is the great role for religion in the modern and postmodern world.

Conclusion

Central to the birth process is a physical activity. Knowledge and understanding can help the process but cannot replace the work that must be done to complete the birth. Even with the perfect integral map that was all-inclusive and holistic, that map itself would not transform people. To return to the metaphor of cartography, we don't just need a map; we need ways to change the mapmaker. The insights of the integral model need to be linked to the discipline of spiritual practices that nurture the experiential dimension of religion. It is this responsibility to which Midwives of Change are called, and to achieve that goal it is essential that they attend to their own process of growth and development. The insights of the Integral perspective can assist them in this.