

“Where are the reservoirs of hope?”

T. Richard Snyder raises this question in a recent article entitled, “Disabilities and Disorientations.” The context in which this question is found is in the following quotation:

Today, however, the center is not holding. We are being forced to search for new resources for organizing our lives and for finding meaning. We are at a crisis point in the human project. And because it is a crisis rather than a catastrophe, we have the opportunity to discover new ways of thinking and being that offer us resources for a hopeful future. Where we turn for those resources, where we look for meaning and structure is the crucial issue. *Where are the reservoirs of hope?*<sup>1</sup>

When I was young, I lived in a town that had a reservoir located high on a hill. A small stream ran out of the reservoir from which we would often drink after a long hike up the hill. It was probably the best water I ever tasted. One day we explored and found that an artisan well bubbled out of the ground above the reservoir which provided an endless supply of fresh water.

Thirty years later I visited the town and discovered that this sparkling reservoir had become a stagnant pool. It was a sad sight. I thought perhaps that the well had dried up and that there was no longer a supply of water. I hiked up the hill once again only to find that the well had been capped and the water diverted to a bottled water company. The supply had been cut off from the reservoir and it had literally dried. The town had outgrown the reservoir and had sold the property to a private company.

How fragile are our reservoirs of hope? Can they be cut off by powers beyond our control and what resources do we have as human beings to establish new ones?

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<sup>1</sup> From *Revolution of Spirit: Ecumenical Theology in Global Context*, Nantawan Boonprasat Lewis, ed.

## The Good Wolf in Prison

I was introduced to The Good Wolf concept by Dr. John Delfs, a neurologist, who has applied a Native American story involving a dialogue between an elder and a youth to the field of neuroscience.

The Elder: Inside each of us are two wolves – a good wolf and a bad wolf. These wolves are always in battle – they are always at war within us throughout our lives.

The Youth: Which wolf wins?

The Elder: The one you feed.

Dr. Delfs is the founder of the Good Wolf Organization, which is an initiative to translate what we know from research in neuroscience and bring that knowledge into public awareness.

These two wolves are with us from the day we are born until the day we die. They have a direct influence on our brain development and have the power to heal or destroy. Dr. Delfs believes that much of the damage done in our early years can benefit from a healing influence in later life. Part of his core curriculum includes a consideration of the Prisoner's Brian.

I believe when a man enters prison these two wolves come with him. In fact, it probably was the bad wolf that set the path that led directly to prison and the bad wolf controls the prison arena. John Sanford in his book, *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality*, describes the prison world as being the exact opposite of life outside. Outside we are taught when we are young to be good, honest, caring, loving, trustworthy, kind and thoughtful, almon with many other positive characteristics. In prison he points out, the opposite is true. You quickly learn not to trust anybody. Kindness is seen as weakness and anger can be a protection device. The “con” is the person who is able to get what he wants and is often seen as someone to emulate. The good wolf has to fight to survive in this arena, this upside down world. However, the good wolf can

become a faithful guide and help a person find their potential and point to the avenues of hope that are life-giving.

The Bible is filled with accounts of struggles between these two wolves. When Job appeared before the Lord, Satan also showed up and became the prosecutor. When Jesus entered the wilderness, Satan was there to tempt him. When Moses led Israel through the Red Sea the people thought they were entering the Promised Land only to find themselves in the wilderness, the realm of the bad wolf. They told Moses that in Egypt they had food, shelter, and even graves to bury the dead. And they wanted to go back.

When a man leaves prison, he brings these two wolves with him. The bad wolf tries to take control. One man who served 33 years said, “In those early months after coming home, I had only two dependable companions. One was loneliness.... The other was fear. I was scared to death of life on the outside.” He continued, “As I whiled away hours on that park bench, I wondered if I’d made a mistake. I actually wanted to go back to prison.”

The Good Wolf in prison can be powerful. He has hope on his side and a life-giving hope helps a person find their potential and open new life-giving avenues. When Dante entered The Inferno, the sign over the door read: YOU WHO ENTER HERE LEAVE ALL HOPE BEHIND. Dante found Virgil, a faithful guide, to lead him. The Good wolf can become a faithful guide to the person in prison.