

Eucalyptus rubida

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How Should We Live?

I believe this question is central to a notion of spirituality and it might well be preceded by a few others like:

Where have I come from?

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

The answers to these latter questions will probably determine the answer to the first one. Depending on your worldview you will probably come out with different answers.

As Christians we have been accustomed to looking to the Bible or the teachings of our churches as a form of guidance, though ultimately we are answerable to ourselves and our own insights. This latter view might be seen as unorthodox, but it is what millions are having recourse to in these times where old certainties no longer satisfy the spiritual hunger of people. Here is another question:

What ultimately matters?

This was the subject of **Newsletter No.37**. Not an easy question to answer in words, but a little easier to clarify by looking at some of our own life events and choices, and the actions of other heroes and heroines of history.

In the **last newsletter** we looked at examples from mythology and also real life, including the life of Jesus, which should tell us pretty well everything about what ultimately matters.

One of the prophets of our time has been the Passionist priest Thomas Berry (d.2009) and his passion for putting before us in an coherent way the story of our origins in his printed works *The Universe Story* (co-written with Brian Swimme), *The Great Work*, and other collections of his essays *The Sacred Universe* and *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth*.

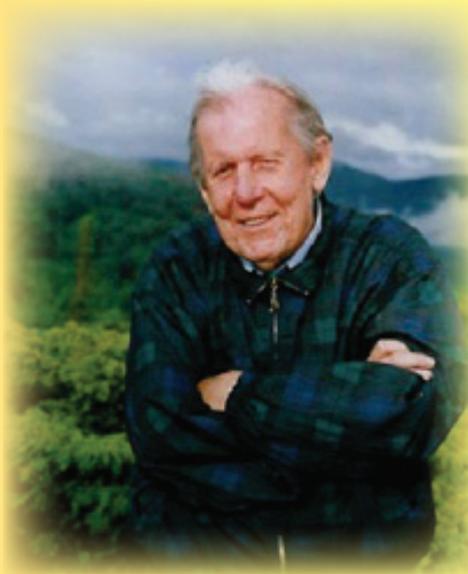
As often happens, when an artist or poet crafts their words with care, truth seems to jump out of the page. After reading Thomas Berry over many years and listening to his recorded lectures, over and over, I would like to list some of my favourite pieces:

The human is less a being on the earth or in the universe than a dimension of the earth and indeed of the universe as a whole. Berry Creative Energy. p46

Comment: Can this be an invitation to see ourselves in a new relationship of intimacy with earth as origin, mother, ...

... the eye that searches the Milky Way galaxy is itself an eye shaped by the Milky Way. The mind that searches for contact with the milky Way is the very mind of the milky Way galaxy in search of its inner depths. Berry & Swimme, The Universe Story. p.45

Comment: A remarkable similarity with Meister Eckhart: "The eye that sees God, is the same eye with which God sees me."



... each particle is in some way intimately present to every other particle in the universe. Berry & Swimme, The Universe Story. p.29

Comment: If this is true, then I am held in a remarkable web of life that extends back through time.

Cosmology aims at articulating the story of the universe so that humans can enter fruitfully into the web of relationships within the universe. Berry & Swimme, The Universe Story. p.23

Comment: Holy Scripture has up to this time been the source of our cosmology or creation story. Now modern science has given us new detail regards our creation story, and hence our cosmology.

In fact, in a certain sense, humans are the

way in which the universe creates itself, because the human can be defined as that being in whom the universe reflects on and celebrates itself in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.

Comment: Are we then the universe awakening to consciousness? Of what new things then, are we conscious of these days, and how do we address them?

From here on, the primary judgment of all human institutions, professions, programs and activities will be determined by the extent to which they inhibit, ignore, or foster a mutually-enhancing human – Earth relationship.

Comment: Looks like we might have some answers shaping up here!

I received an email the other day in which Jane Goodall gave ten ways of caring for the animals we love. I found them very thought provoking. You might care to have a look at them. (Jane Goodall)* Care for the animals we love is not a bad subject for applying Thomas Berry's criterion of a 'mutually-enhancing human Earth relationship,' but Jane's recommendations might disturb us.

I think Jane had a mystical connection to all life, and in particular her passion for chimpanzees. The suggestion is that we need to cultivate a mystical connection to Earth and all the life that has emanated from it over the past 3.5 billions years of evolution. Life, Earth, the Solar System and the Milky Way galaxy are our ancestral line, and each of us can attach ourselves to some or all of it in our own ways.

Most of us have the privilege of coming into this new era with a background of the gospel of Jesus, and a mystical tradition that was distinguished for its view of the deep indwelling of Spirit in everything. I think that today's and tomorrow's Christian needs to be a mystic with a cosmic dimension. How else can we bring healing to a wounded planet and its people? Maybe also healing to ourselves. The wisdom is basically there - we need to embrace it. To do nothing is not an option.

Trevor Parton

*<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/can-animals-save-us/10-best-things-we-can-do-for-animals>