

Eucalyptus rubida

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Eucalyptus rubida is the dominant tree species at Glenburn. Its bark shines red at certain times of the year.

What is meant by Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation?

The **Comboni Fathers** of South Sudan ask this very question on their website, but it is an enquiry that is widespread across the churches worldwide. It sometimes provokes a dispute between factions in these organizations. That recognised and put aside, there is a need to examine the word integrity with some attention.

On the face of it, the wholeness initially implied by the word, suggests that everything should be valued for its place in the scheme of things. There is just a hint here that things should be valued primarily for their benefit for us humans. Deep Ecologists take it a step further and say that every part of our world e.g. a tree, has value in its own right, and has basic rights along with everything else e.g. right to life, habitat, biodiversity, etc.

There is in fact another implication in the word 'integrity' suggested to us by the mystics and by an interpretation of quantum theory. The mystics are so named because they have the ability to see more deeply into the 'mystery' of existence than most of us. Look at some of the poetic language Hildegard of Bingen uses:

....the word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, all creativity. The word manifests itself in every creature.

....the entire world has been embraced by the Creator's kiss.

....God has arranged all things in the world in consideration of everything else.

And from Meister Eckhart:

.... See God in all things, for God is in all things. Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God!

....He created all things in such a way that they are not outside himself, as ignorant people falsely imagine. Everything that God create or does or creates in himself, sees or knows in himself, loves in himself. Outside himself he does nothing, knows or loves nothing; and this is particular to God himself. (Sermon 2)

The contribution of quantum physics does not have the beauty of the Christian tradition, but complements it. David Bohm:

....unbroken wholeness of the totality

of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders.

David Bohm was speaking here of his theory of the universe being a type of hologram with an implicate and an explicate order.



Einstein was not always a fan of quantum theory but has his own eloquence:

...A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Each of us constructs a universe for ourselves that is unique to us - nobody else can even imagine what it is like.

Language is routinely inadequate to express ourselves, as words are at best metaphors for the deeper reality for which words are mere signposts.

How then can we talk about that deep wholeness inside which we all exist? Religious people talk about God. Physicists talk about quantum entanglement, complementarity, and the implicate order.

These worldviews can talk with each other, in fact they must talk with each other, if Christians are to know their God better, and if physicists are to accept that mystical knowledge is always a possibility.

Humility is important to each as is the common imperative for compassion, justice and peace for all life that Einstein talks about.

The Indian Vedic wisdom tradition is prepared to dissolve the final duality between God and the created order. It instructs us that if we wish to seek God we should begin with ourselves, because ultimately there can be no existential separation between the two. Difference perhaps yes, but separation no! The Rig Veda:

The Reality (Truth) is ONE: the wise call it by various names.

Jesus:

"I and the Father are one."

And from the King James Version:

"Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are Gods."

The satisfactory expression of this word 'integrity' will continue to elude us.

Sufficient for us to realise that mystical experience will always be more meaningful for us. Those epiphanies we open ourselves to will bring us to a better understanding of what integrity means. It may be only glimpses of eternity that we get, but this may be enough for now. Meditation of various types can assist in preparing the ground for the inner experience of the mystery that we call God.

Every step we take takes us further into mystery. It may take great courage to leave behind cherished notions of our place in the scheme of things in favour of the ultimate mystery that now comes to us deep within us and clothed in the universe.

Text and photo Trevor Parton