

April 28, 2019

Sacred Earth, Sacred Word "Original Blessing"

Genesis 1 (selected verses about what was created on each day
of creation)

1 Peter 4:10

The Rev. Lynn P. Lampman

Today, we begin a series on Creation Spirituality, which is an ancient tradition some are trying to recover. Some feel it is essential for our time: a time in which ecological suffering is common to all parts of the globe and all species on it.

Creation spirituality begins with creation and the cosmos. Only later does it get to the human story, set in the larger drama of creation itself. There can be no anthropology without cosmology.

Creation spirituality is not a newly invented path. Yet, as post moderns it is a newly discovered path due to the breakup of cosmology at the end of the Middle Ages which has left us lost in a mechanized and non-mystical world.

Creation spirituality is an ancient tradition, which is the basic spiritual heritage of all native peoples; such as Native Americans, Celtic peoples of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Rhineland of Germany, peoples of Africa and Asia, the Polynesian Islands and New Zealand, and the aboriginals of Australia.

All these peoples had cosmology as the basis of their worship, prayer, economics, politics and morality. All of them honored the artist in all persons. All expected the divine to burst out of anyplace at anytime. To see the world this way is to be creation centered.

Yet, creation spirituality is not only endemic to native spiritualities everywhere; it is also the most ancient tradition in the Bible. The Yahwist source in the Hebrew Bible (known by the letter J) is the oldest tradition in the Bible and its theology is creation-centered theology. So too is most of the prophetic books and all of the wisdom literature in the Old Testament. Jesus knew these scripture well, and thus through him they were carried into the New Testament through such passages as John chapter 1 and the Book of Revelation, the parable of Jesus and using images of creation to talk about the kingdom/reign of God.

Creation spirituality is not just a tradition; it is also a movement. In other words, like Hildegard of Bingen said, we want to set fire to the dry wood (the dryness of care-less-ness) that exists in lives, communities and institutions. Creation spirituality provides a common language and common ground for ecologists, ecumenists, artists, native peoples, justice activists, feminists and male liberationists, LGBT people, animal advocates, and scientists.

The backbone of creation spirituality is its naming of the spiritual journey in four paths (which tells us what matters).

In Path One: awe and delight matters.

In Path Two: darkness, suffering, and letting go matters.

In Path Three: creativity and imagination matter.

In Path Four: justice and celebration (which adds up to compassion) matters.

These four paths can be understood as four commandments:

1. Thou Shalt Fall in Love at Least Three Times a Day (via Positiva): Every day fall in love – with a star, a species of wildflower, another human being: someone from another

- country, another sexual orientation, another race, music, poetry, dance. The creation spirituality journey begins with awe, wonder, and falling in love. First commandment: is that of praise that flows from beholding the awe of our being here.
2. Thou Shalt Dare the Dark (via Negativa): Every spiritual journey is about moving from the surface to the depth and that involves entering the dark. The Divine is to be met in the depths of darkness as well as in the light. We as spiritual journeyers need to let go of cover-up and denial, and enter into the darkness that pain is all about. In other words, going deeper than despair, apathy, bitterness and cynicism that creates resentment in souls and society.
 3. Do Not Be Reluctant to Give Birth (via Creativa): We create only out of what we have beheld of light and darkness. On this path we put our imagination and creativity at the service of compassion. The basic spiritual discipline in creation tradition is decidedly not asceticism, but the development of the aesthetic. Beauty and our role in co-creating it, lie at the heart of the spiritual journey. The process of listening to our images and birthing them allows us to embrace our “enemies” – that is, the shadow side of ourselves – as well as to embrace our biggest visions and dreams. Art as meditation becomes the basic prayer form in the practice of creation spirituality. Let’s face it, people do not consume culture; they create it.
 4. Be Compassionate As Your Creator in Heaven Is Compassionate (via Transformativa): The creation spirituality journey culminates in compassion – the combination of justice making and celebration. Justice and joy is what compassion is all about. Compassion is about the actions that flow from us as a result of our

interdependence. On this path, we are all called to be prophets, and prophets interfere. In other words, all of us as prophets are called to interfere with injustice, unnecessary pain that rains on the earth when humans neglect justice and compassion.

All creation is ruled by justice or homeostasis, the quest for equilibrium that is intrinsic to all atoms, galaxies, the earth, and the whole history of the universe. The human call to compassion and justice making is not a burden and has nothing to do with feelings of righteousness. It is a matter of the human species joining the dance of all creation in the quest for balance.

The Four Paths of Creation Spirituality are a sacred loop.

- Path One (via Positiva) and Path Three (via Creativa) are about wonder, delight, and beauty. Path One is the delight and wonder engendered by the experience of creation. Path Three can evoke delight and wonder at what humans birth. In other words a thunderstorm is awesome, and so is Beethoven's naming of it in his Sixth Symphony in F Major, Opus 68.
- Path Two (via Negativa) and Path Four (via Transformativa) are about us being able to enter compassion (Path Four) because we have entered the darkness of suffering and pain (Path Two). The struggle for justice is born of the experience of injustice. Path Four is a response to the suffering of the world and of the self that we undergo in Path Two. But by the time we arrive at Path Four we are more fully equipped – thanks to the awakened imagination and creativity of Path Three. Thus, we end up responding to suffering not just with anger but with creative, effective works that truly heal.

We are capable of relating to all things as beauty. And, we are also capable of destroying all things. Thus, we need ways that help us guide our creative energy in directions that allow our passion to mature into compassion.

Creation spirituality offers an avenue of grace by sounding an end to internalized oppression, shame and self-hatred. We are not here to bemoan our existence, to blame ourselves or others, or to allow in our sinfulness. Rather, we are here to return blessing for blessing and to give our gift back to the larger community. Blessed to be a blessing.

(Concepts and ideas in this sermon have been gleaned from the book, Creation Spirituality: Liberating Gifts for the Peoples of the Earth by Matthew Fox)