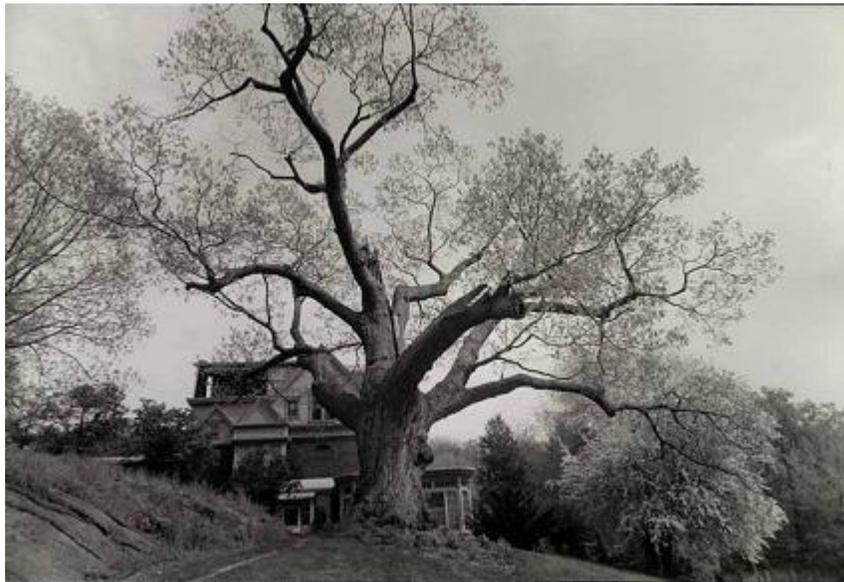


Memorial Service for Thomas Berry



The Great Red Oak at Riverdale Center of Religious Research
Photo by Gretchen McHugh

Saturday September 26, 2009
Cathedral of St. John the Divine
1047 Amsterdam Avenue, New York City

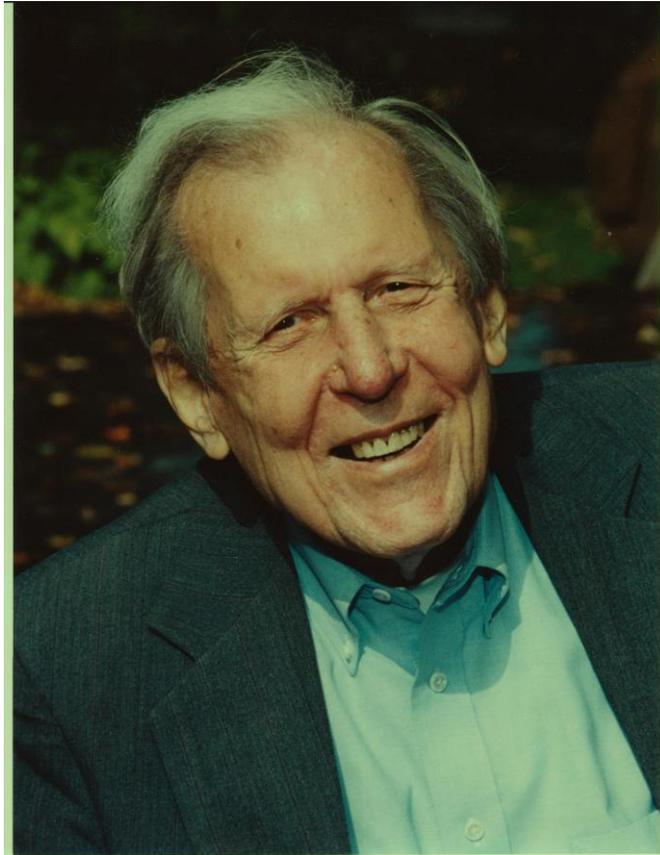


Photo by Lou Niznik

Thomas Berry

1914-2009

Program

Opening Procession

Tim Brumfeld, organ

Paul Winter, soprano saxophone

Omega Dancers and Ralph Lee and the Mettawee River Company

Welcome

The Very Reverend Dr. James A. Kowalski

Dean, Cathedral of St. John the Divine

Reflections

Mary Evelyn Tucker

The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale; The American Teilhard Association

Reading

Excerpt from *The Human Phenomenon* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Read by Reverend Franklin Vilas

The American Teilhard Association

Seeing. One could say that the whole of life lies in seeing—if not ultimately, at least essentially. To be more is to be more united—and this sums up and is the very conclusion of the work to follow. But unity grows, and we will affirm this again, only if it is supported by an increase of consciousness, of vision. That is probably why the history of the living world can be reduced to the elaboration of ever more perfect eyes at the heart of a cosmos where it is always possible to discern more. Are not the perfection of an animal and the supremacy of the thinking being measured by the penetration and power of synthesis of their glance? To try to see more and to see better is not, therefore, just a fantasy, curiosity, or a luxury. See or perish. This is the situation imposed on every element of the universe by the mysterious gift of existence. And thus, to a higher degree, this is the human condition.

Music

“Stained Glass Morning”

Music by Eugene Friesen

Performed by Bellbirds, Uirapuru (musician wren of the Amazon), Eugene Friesen, cello

A Moment of Grace

Thomas Berry

From the Thomas Berry interviews by Marty Ostrow, Fine Cut Productions

By “moments of grace,” I mean special, sacred moments of transformation. The transformative experiences are the sacred experiences. We celebrate the entry into life, maturity, and the transition of death. These are sacred moments in personal life. And so in the historical process, there are these transformation moments when the future is determined in an irreversible manner. In other words, when the planet Earth came into being, that was a wonderful transformation moment that made possible everything that’s happened on the planet Earth. When life came into being, it made possible everything that came afterwards. So these moments are determinative moments. And so our present is that way. What we do now, or don’t do now, is going to have enormous consequences for the future: the immediate future of our own children, but the future of all generations that come after us.

Reflections

John A. Grim

The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale; The American Teilhard Association

Music

Lauda

Words by Franciscan Friar, Jacopone da Todi (1236-1306)

Music by Sr. Kathleen Deignan, CND

Sung by Sr. Kathleen Deignan, CND

Iona College

The Earth and all the plants that grow,
The trees and all the fruits they show,
The very beasts, my yoke that know:
All in my homestead I unite.

The running waters, lakes, and seas,
And all the fishes swimming free,
The birds in windy air that be:
These are the stuff of my delight.

Since to God's will my spirit clings,
I am blesser of all things.
So many feathers have my wings:
To Heaven it is an easy flight.

Reading:

Excerpt from Thomas Berry's "New Story"

Read by Catherine de Bary Sleight

The American Teilhard Association

If the dynamics of the universe from the beginning shaped the course of the heavens, lighted the sun, and formed Earth-if this same dynamism brought forth the continents and seas and atmosphere, if it awakened life in the primordial cell and then brought into being the unnumbered variety of living beings and finally brought humans into being and guided them safely through the turbulent centuries, there is reason to believe that this same guiding process is precisely what has awakened in humans their present understanding of themselves and their relation to this stupendous process. Sensitized to this guidance we can have confidence in the future that awaits the human venture.

Music

Adoro te Devote

Traditional Gregorian chant, words by St. Thomas Aquinas c. 1260

Translation by Gerard Manley Hopkins

Tim Brumfeld, organ

Sung by Sr. Kathleen Deignan, CND

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas
Quae sub his figuris verelatitas

Tibi sicor meum totum subjicit
Quia te contemplans totum deficit.

Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore,
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more,
See, Lord, at Thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.

Tribute

“Kin to an Extended Family Beyond All Counting”
William Theodore de Bary
Columbia University

Music

Canyon Chaconne
Music by Paul Winter and Paul Halley
Performed by Paul Winter, soprano saxophone
Tim Brumfeld, organ

Poem

“Oh Watchman, What of the Night?” by Brian Edward Brown
Read by Brian Edward Brown, Iona College

Oh Watchman, What of the Night?

The following verse I recited on December 10, 1978 at a farewell party for me at the Riverdale Center of Religious Research, where I spent a graced year with Father Thomas Berry to whom I dedicated these words and who alone evoked and inspired them:

Unfinished thesis, finished for the night
I wander down stairs in this house that has been my home.
I have known its silence before in a year of nights
and have haunted its rooms often at this hour of favored quiet.
But tonight, like an improper Buddhist, I stand warmed
by the memories of enchanted months, shamelessly, flagrantly moved by their passing.

The red-tiled entrance, lit for the night,
reflects now the images of how many departures . . . for the Seychelles and Los Angeles,
for Toronto and Louisville, for Washington and Greensboro, Detroit and San Francisco.

What enthusiastic journeyings of happy goodbyes!
The casual corduroy prophet of earth's wisdom and heaven's goodness,
of passports forgotten, of a bag with only books, of detachment's mirth at the prospect
of the challenge and the relish of the audacious phrase.

To the left, in the great, dark-wooded room
the Chinese and Christian fathers sit in their shelves of green and purple,
exchanging the muted silence of their common mystery.
A paneled hugeness-it is empty now of its May-time volumes, the scattered lore of
a universe piled deep and wide across its table, awaiting the magic distillation that

would become June's conference.

And its ceilinged solemnity still pales at the revered Benedictine of a summer's eve, impervious to the gentle demands of an immense magnitude, the spirituality of starry energies eclipsing the shameful boundaries of so impoverished a monasticism.

A few steps beyond, and China and Japan expansively lie before me, along their wall of moonlight. While the Hindus and Buddhists are patient in an appropriate modesty, sharing shadowy space with myths and symbols, Dante and Blake. It is a room of rare texts and of Brittanic knowledge, yet somehow, only the antechamber, the passageway to the site of my most attentive scholarship, my most frequent inspiration, my warmest and most constant laughter.

Multi-glassed prism, reflecting onto rock and river,
I have known such a gladness in you
That will warm me in my going and lure me to my return.

I have sat at your table of frequent polishings and only reticent shines
through lunches and dinners of quartets and sonatas, concertos
and symphonies, hearing beyond these-only-partial strains, the
song of the spheres, the wondrous movements of time's transformations,
through the voice of earth's sage, my spirit's father, my heart's friend.

Greenhouse porch of my imagination's growth, I have sat dumbly
for a year like one of your potted plants, content merely to listen with
geologists and bishops, technicians and planners, contemplatives and artists,
engineers and scientists, dearest friends and fellow students.

Content to root in my mind's soil
the vision and the challenge, the perspective and the approach,
to be schooled in the responsibility and energized by the tireless dedication.
Though you have been a room of the most sublime idea and critical thought,
of the most sober evaluation and urgent quest,
I shall stand in the breeze of the Caribbean night
still smiling with the constant laughter of your year's grace.

The sky is pale with moon and stars, and as I turn to go,
instinctively I hear the question of night's sentinel, holding its branches protectively
for this house that has been my home. A question posed nightly as I stood for a year
and shared its rooted stillness, before sleep,

"Oh watchman, what of the night?"

A time of memories and their tears,
of ideals and enthusiasms,
of deepest admiration and warmest gratitude,
of affectionate welcomes,
and happy goodbyes.

Music

"To My Old Brown Earth"

Performed by Pete Seeger and chorus from the album *Pete*, Living Music Records

To my old brown Earth
And to my old blue sky
I'll now give these last few molecules of "I"
And you, who sing
And you, who stand nearby
I do charge you not to cry
Guard well our human chain
Watch well you keep it strong
As long as sun will shine
And this is our home
Keep pure and sweet and green
For now I'm yours
And you are also
Mine

Reflections

Sr. Miriam MacGillis, OP
Genesis Farm

Music

"Good Wish"

Music by Jan Harmon

Words from the *Carmina Gaedelica*

Performed by Gordon Bok from the album *Solstice Gems*, Living Music Records

Sung by Sr. Kathleen Deignan and Danny Martin

PLEASE SING ALONG

Power of raven be thine
Power of eagle be thine
Power of storm be thine
Power of moon be thine
Power of sea be thine
Power of land be thine
Goodness of sea be thine
Goodness of Earth be thine

Each day be joyous to thee
No day be grievous to thee
Love of each face be thine
Death on pillow be thine
Power of sea be thine
Power of land be thine
Goodness of sea be thine
Goodness of Earth be thine

Power of raven be thine
Power of eagle be thine
Power of storm be thine

Power of moon be thine
Power of sea be thine
Power of land be thine
Goodness of sea be thine
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Goodness of sea be thine
Goodness of Earth be thine

Goodness of sea be thine
Goodness of Earth be thine.

Reflections

Brian Swimme
California Institute of Integral Studies

Closing Hymn

“For the Beauty of the Earth”
Paul Winter, soprano saxophone
Eugene Friesen, cello
Tim Brumfeld, organ

Same tune as *Adoro te Devote*
PLEASE SING ALONG

For the beauty of the Earth, sing, oh sing today
Of the skies and of our birth, sing, oh sing, always.
Nature human and divine, all around us lies.
Lord of all to Thee we raise grateful hymns of praise.

Organ solo
Repeat “For the Beauty of the Earth”

Thomas Berry (1914-2009)

Thomas Berry was born in Greensboro, North Carolina where he spent his early childhood and where he returned when he was 80. It was there that he died peacefully on June 1, 2009. Named William Nathan after his father he was the third child of thirteen of which four siblings remain. He entered the Passionist Order in high school and upon ordination he took the name Thomas after Thomas Aquinas whose *Summa Theologica* he admired.

He received his Ph.D. from the Catholic University of America in European intellectual history with a thesis on Giambattista Vico. Widely read in Western history and theology, he also spent many years studying and teaching the cultures and religions of Asia. He lived in China in 1948 where he met the Asian scholar and Confucian specialist, Ted de Bary. Their collaboration led to the founding of the Asian Thought and Religion Seminar at Columbia. Thomas authored two books on Asian religions, *Buddhism* and *Religions of India*, both of which are distributed by Columbia University Press.

For more than twenty years, Thomas directed the Riverdale Center of Religious Research along the Hudson River. During this period he taught at Fordham University where he chaired the history of religions program. He directed some twenty doctoral theses, including those of John Grim and Brian Brown, as well as many Master's theses, including those of Mary Evelyn Tucker and Kathleen Deignan. From 1975-1987 he was President of the American Teilhard Association and it was from Teilhard de Chardin that he was inspired to develop his idea of a universe story. With Brian Swimme he wrote *The Universe Story* (Harper San Francisco, 1992), which arose from a decade of collaborative research.

His major contributions to the discussions on the environment are in his books *The Dream of the Earth* (Sierra Club Books, 1998), *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* (Random House/Bell Towers, 1999), and *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (Sierra Club/University of California Press, 2006). His final two books focusing on world religions and on Christianity were published in September 2009: *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-first Century* by Columbia University Press and *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* by Orbis Books.

Acknowledgements

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Stefan Yarabek of Bloom Flowers (541 Lexington Avenue) for the floral arrangements

Gretchen McHugh for the cover photo of the Great Red Oak that graced the Riverdale Center of Religious Research where Thomas lived and worked for some 25 years.

Mary Southard for the drawing of the Great Red Oak on the back cover of the program.

Marty Ostrow of Fine Cut Production for his interview of Thomas called *Thomas Berry Speaks*.

Bonnie Myotai Treace sensei for the Water Bowl Liturgy.

This is a ritual that acknowledges the presence of water as a sacred language. It is dedicated to Thomas Berry who saw all of the elements as sacred. In this spirit, a Buddhist rosary (*mala*) comprised of 108 handmade bowls filled with water was arranged on the Nakashima Peace Altar at the entrance to the Cathedral. Following a brief blessing over a larger bowl, the smaller bowls of water are poured into it suggesting the ultimate unity of water as a source of life. This is the first such presentation launching a global distribution of water bowl *malas*.

Drew Dellinger for his rap poem and for acting as emcee for the reception.

Tara C. Maguire for administrative assistance

And a very special thanks to:

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Kendeda Fund

Thomas Berry Foundation

The New Cosmology and Death

By Thomas Berry

(Editor's Note: In 1994 Thomas Berry was interviewed by Mary Judith Ress on the subject of death for the Spanish language eco-feminist magazine "Con-spirando.")

Ress: How do you view death in terms of the New Cosmology?

Berry: Death is integral to the process of life and existence. We are born of others; we survive through others; we die into others. It is part of a total process, a community process, which is what the universe is. It is the world of the living—of birth, life, and death. I think of it like a symphony. There's nothing that happens in time that does not have an eternal dimension. That is, like music, it is played through a sequence of notes or a sequence of time, but must be understood outside time. It must be understood simultaneously. The first note and the last note have to be understood as the simultaneous experience of the melody. And so the whole universe, in a certain sense, is played through in sequence but it also exists outside this sequence.

Ress: But we human beings have a tremendous fear of death. What do you think happens after death? Is there a separation? Does the body disintegrate and the soul or spirit continues?

Berry: It is a total process, and the whole being is part of that process. Our disintegration is the disintegration of a certain phase of a person's being. But the whole life process is transcendent to a time process. Therefore birth and death are both contained in the reality of a person's existence.

Ress: Very concretely, where will Thomas Berry be 50 years from now?

Berry: Why, I'll be where I have always been.

Ress: Which is?

Berry: Each of us is as old as the universe and experiences our greater self in the larger story of the universe. So we are as old as the universe and as big as the universe. That is our great self. We survive in our great self. Our particular manifestation is distinct from our universal presence to the total process. We exist externally in our participation in the universe's existence.

Ress: Is what you're saying different from our yearning for immortality?

Berry: No, it's just a question of how a person thinks about immortality. The universe itself is the comprehensive mode of existence—everything exists in relationship to the universe. Everything participates in everything that happens in the universe. Therefore we never cease to be a participant in the universe. Everything we do will have consequences that will go on forever. There is a way in which we exist individually as a dimension of the totality of things and as an influence on everything that to some extent governs what came before us and everything that will come after us.

Buddhism

Being painted by brushes of mountains, by ink of oceans,
Heaven and Earth are the bindings of a sutra revealing the truth.

Kukai (774-835), founder of Shingon Buddhism in Japan

Confucianism

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.

Therefore that which extends throughout the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature.

All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions.

Chang Tsai (1020-1077), *The Western Inscription* written on the western wall of his study

Hinduism

Bearer of all things, hoard of treasures rare, sustaining Mother, Earth the golden breasted...Impart to us those vitalizing forces that come O Earth, from deep within your body. Whatever I dig up of you, O Earth may you of that have quick replenishment.

The Atharva Veda from the 6th century BCE

Native American Tradition

Our Creator made the whole world, the whole universe. And he made everything that grows. And every animal and every bird and every kind of water - everything. .. then the last ones he made were the human beings.. And our Creator gave us this miraculous life from ever since we are born until wherever we are traveling today in our life's path. And so we say to our Creator, "Thank you for the privilege that I can walk again today. And our mind is agreed." And if it is, you will say, "Yes."

From *And Grandma Said: Iroquois Teachings as Passed Down through the Oral Tradition*, by Tom Porter
