

The Forgotten Gospel

Rev. Linda S. Smith

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About a month ago I was in the San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California for a vacation, far away from the responsibilities of work and home. I had packed several books and planned to read, study, and write a sermon. My partner and I stayed in a rustic cabin in the National Forest far off the main road in the midst of huge redwoods and pines. We didn't see another human the whole time we were there. We carried our drinking water from a cold mountain spring and collected dead branches from the forest floor to build the fires to cook our food. In the mornings bright blue mountain jays came to share our breakfast. Every evening a coyote walked past the cabin, occasionally stopping to stare at us for a few minutes.

I found it difficult to concentrate on my books and became increasingly absorbed in the world around me, especially the trees -- some were well over 200 feet tall and about 8 feet in diameter. I knew that this was about as close to God as I could get and I understood what Meister Eckhart meant when he said: "Every creature is a word of God and is a book about God." And I would add, every tree, every rock, every stream, all of nature is a book about God.

According to Catholic Priest Thomas Berry, "In the original Christian tradition there are two books of revelation, the Book of Nature and the Bible." With the invention of the printing press in the 16th Century and theological debates, we have lost sight the Book of Nature. It is time for us to put the Bible aside and turn our attention to the Forgotten Gospel which is written in the movement of leaves in the wind, the call of a hawk over the mountain, the sun warming a new born faun, the rush of the river. The divine nature is revealed in all the elements of Creation.

Originally it was commonplace to experience and acknowledge the spiritual presence throughout the natural world -- in the dawn and the sunset, the light and the dark, the vegetation, the great trees, the waters, the winds, and the mountains. Everything around us can be experienced as filled with a divine presence.

When humans diminish nature, we diminish the divine presence—the extinction of a species of plant or animal may be comparable to taking a page of a revelatory text and tearing it out and burning it up in an irreplaceable manner. When we destroy a form of nature we are tearing up the revelatory process and destroying it. Loss of natural resources is not just an economic disaster, but also a terrible spiritual disaster.

We can pass laws protecting plants and animals and rain forests and children and the atmosphere but ultimately we must enter into creation and remember how to experience the divine presence as a reality in this world before we can reap the fruitfulness of creation and heal ourselves and our relationships.

How do we learn to experience the divine presence in Creation? How do we read the Book of Nature? How do we read a book of revelation? Alice Bailey, talking about the Books of the Gospel, says, "in our myopic study of the letter, we have lost the significance of the Word itself." She suggests that in reading the Gospel we need to "shift levels" from the letter of the word to the inner meaning. In reading the story of the Gospel in this way the reading is revelation, not a story about revelation. By shifting to the inner meaning we open ourselves to the possibility of the revelation of Divinity.

In order to experience the revelation of God in Creation, to read the Book of Nature as a revelatory text, we need to follow Bailey's advice and shift levels -- notice symbols and synchronicity and use our intuitive sight to find the meaning behind the word or the God within Nature.

The photographs of the Earth taken by astronauts have helped us shift our perspective about our planet and see that The Earth herself is a divine being. When we shift to this level and use our intuitive sight we can read the weather patterns, the earth changes, the current quickening, as indications of the initiation of the divine being which is our Earth.

Native American Shaman, Paula Gunn Allen, says, when we look and listen to our beloved planet in all her wildness -- her volcanic passions, her hurricane storms of temper, her tremblings and shakings, her thrashings and lashings...We find that our planet is in crisis. Of course, we all know that. But in our attempt to understand the causes of things, we may limit our thinking to placing blame for Earth's crisis on men, or white people, or overpopulation, or capitalism, or industrialism, or loss of spiritual vision, or social turmoil, or war, or psychic disease. For the most part, we do not recognize that the reason for her state is that she is entering upon a great initiation - she is becoming someone else - and it is our great honor to attend her passage rites. She is giving birth to her new consciousness of herself and her relationship to other vast intelligence's, other holy beings in her universe.

We are each a part of the living planet - as she is, so are we. We each experience this great transition from our own perspective and our own place on the planet -- all of us, all of womankind, all of mankind and all our relatives -- the four-leggeds, those with wings, the crawlers, the plants and seasons, the winds, thunders, and rains, the rivers, lakes, and streams, the pebbles, rocks and mountains, the spirits -- all the beings. Even the tiniest, those we can not see; and the great ones, the planets and stars. Together you and I and they are moving with increasing rapidity and under ever increasing pressure toward transformation.

At such a time as this what can we do? We can look and listen to our own place on the planet, our own chapter in The Book of Nature, and become aware of our role in this great initiation. For example, here in the Ozarks, let us consider three facts about this spot on the planet and "shift levels" to see with intuitive sight.

First, to find the Ozarks on a world globe, hold the tip of your finger over Tibet and rotate 180 degrees. The Ozarks are directly in line with Tibet which is said to be the great seat

of esoteric learning since the beginning of time. It is also the highest region on Earth and is called "The Roof of the World."

A second fact to consider about this spot on the planet is its age. The Ozarks are Ancient. Imagine far back in geological time, before any humans set foot in this place, the land was covered by sea, the continents were still forming, seeking the shapes we know today. An area would be uplifted and the sea would recede – then over 10's or even 100's of millions of years the area would be covered with water again. Three hundred million years ago the sea receded from the Ozarks for the last time.

The whole region arose as an enormous dome (50,000 square miles), taller than the Rocky Mountains are now and this dome was worn down, very, very gradually, over millions of years by erosion shaping the hills and valleys that we call the Ozarks Mountains.

Some geologists believe the Ozarks to be to be the oldest continuously exposed landmass on the planet. In any case, the earth here has seen many millennium come and go and it's not surprising to find a Wisdom School here named after Sophia who was, according to Proverbs

...created at the beginning...at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth –

(Proverbs 8: 22-25)

A third fact is that there is more diversity of plant and animal life in the Ozarks than anywhere else on the continent. The Ozarks are a natural sanctuary. One of the reasons for this is that when the glaciers moved down over the earth from the North pushing everything in their path ahead of them, they stopped where the Ozarks begins depositing a rich diversity of plant and animal life here.

The Ozarks region is bordered by four different climates creating a sanctuary for a selection of plants and animals from all sides. For example, river birches, essentially northern trees, hide in cool hollows. Beech trees, normally found in the eastern United States, find a home here in moist valleys near creek beds. Scorpions, more often associated with southwestern deserts, make themselves at home among the rocks of sunny hillside glades. Fish that do not usually share the same waters, swim the Ozarks creeks often sharing a gravel bar to spawn, taking their turns patiently, spawning a little earlier or a little later, or a little deeper underwater, or a little closer to the creek bank. Everyone seems to find a niche -- from armadillos to bears, from cactus to evergreens.

According to the Wisdom teachings the diversity and mixing of the races on this continent is a sign that the new humanity of the coming Aquarian age is developing here. Rabbi Nuham Ward says (in "Judaism in the Planetary Era"), "A new revelation is coming...this new revelation will not come from a chosen people that excludes other - unchosen - people. All people are chosen." And we might add all plants, animals, and

much of the diversity of Creation is chosen here in the Ozarks.

The Book of Nature written here in the Ozarks mountains, contains an affirmation of what is happening here on Sparrow Hawk Mountain and it calls us to respect and protect diversity in all its forms – not only the diversity of plant and animal life of this bioregion but human diversity as well. We are called to respect all the differences between us from the most obvious to the small subtle difference that sometimes make community difficult but which reflect the complexity and beauty of the divine nature. A community without diversity would not only be boring but would diminish the presence of God in our midst.

The Ozarks Mountains are just one small chapter in The Book of Nature and we have only read a very few words of this chapter today– but I would like to suggest that each of us turn to the Forgotten Gospel in our own niche of God's Creation and in this way participate in the initiation of our beautiful planet and the diversity of God's evolving manifestation.

Let us close with Solomon's prayer from the Book of Wisdom:

You told us to build a temple on your sacred mountain... With you is Sophia, who is familiar with your works and was present when you created the universe, who is aware of what is acceptable to you and in keeping with your commandments. Send her forth from your holy heaven, and from your glorious throne bid her come down, so that she may labor at our side and we may learn what is pleasing to you. For she knows and understands all things and she will guide us wisely in whatever we do, and guard us with her glory. (Wisdom 9:8-11)