

Christian Perspectives: Tackling uncertainty

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James H. Olthuis claims that "the ultimate questions of life lie deep within the heart of everyone," a sentiment often expressed by those who devote time to the consideration of spiritual matters.

Thomas Merton claims "our vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny." Merton, having spent the greater part of his life contemplating divine matters, while observing the passing parade of culture with a critical but not unkind eye, is a trustworthy voice in the white noise that is the post-modern landscape.

Perhaps, the questions that lie deep in our hearts are the ones we need to continually ask in order to create our life with creation itself. And perhaps as we are continually emerging, however flawed or mistaken in the process, we are creating not only our own identity, but the identity of society by extrapolation, and so too our destiny expressed in the world views we hold, both through our unique myopic lens, and the longer view of history.

The blossoming of the individual soul then, is wound up in the unfolding of the universe, a grand tapestry being woven by the unseen hand, the bits of thread our essence, the warp and weave the various epochs, a kaleidoscope of cultures tumbling off the loom while the whole and the parts work together, changing and influencing one another in the process.

The universe and everything in it, including time itself, is one giant shape shifter.

This mystic wholeness is life moving between the seen and the unseen, which our limited minds call life and death, but which, in fact, is all life only in different form. It is neither predictable nor tidy for the creative process, be it the birth of a child, or the birth of an era, is fraught with the push and pull of a myriad of forces, most of which we do not understand.

From time to time, there are broader movements, great shifts either in the physical or metaphysical landscape that seem to tip everything on its side. If humans are present, these large upheavals send a tremor through the collective consciousness, releasing those predatory creatures, fear and anxiety, to infect the populace at large.

As tension mounts, we are forced by our instinct for survival, as much as by our more noble ideals, to forge a new alignment between our day to day reality and the lens through which we peer to make sense of it all.

Those of us living in the Western world at the beginning of the twenty first century are living in such a time. The very ground under our feet shakes too often with tremors, both from the earth's core, and from our own uncertainty.

Having handed the reins of forward movement over to that prancing pair of show-offs "science and technology" we appear to be careening out of control. In our families, in our work, and in our play we are fragmented and disoriented, running greedily to and fro like lost children in an amusement park gone amuck.

The twin giants of pride and sloth have snatched us by the collar. The landscape appears to be littered with dead bodies of all kinds "tossed aside philosophies which no longer hold up under scrutiny, religious ideologies encased in hatred, stillborn hopes and dreams stifled by the air we have poisoned with our excess, deformed extravagances created by our avarice and encouraged by the advertising hounds, those skulking carnivores sniffing out any new trend in our unfolding spirituality in an attempt to co-opt it for commerce."

It is not a pretty picture.

And yet, for those intentionally taking part in the revolution of the spirit that is underway, it is a remarkably hopeful time. For those having grown up in the Christian ethos, it may mean that at last we can cut to the heart of our faith, willing our minds to wonder, rather than know, and desirous of seeking out truth, solidarity, and goodness with whomever, and wherever, it may be found.

That's what Jesus did. And that is why, all these years later, he is still a marvel to behold.

At the Shelburne/Primrose Pastoral charge this Christmas season, we took as our theme a set of lyrics written in 1955 by a woman negotiating her way through deep loss. They encourage us to begin where all matters of import begin - within our own hearts.

May all manner of blessings be yours this New Year.

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God our Creator, family are we,

Let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now,

With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow,

To take each moment, and live each moment, with peace eternally,

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

- Jill Jackson Miller/Sy Miller