

INTERVIEW Fa

Man. Alice: First 6 pp maxim

IN A WAY YOU'VE SUCCEEDED, I SUPPOSE.

Yes, I suppose that's true.

I THINK WHEN SOMEONE HEARS THE WORD HERMIT, THEY DON'T THINK OF THIS KIND OF LIFE AND I WONDER IF I CAN ASK YOU JUST A BIT ABOUT THAT AND THE HERMIT COLONY THAT YOU FIRST WENT TO HERE.

Right. You know I came, I'm a convert to the Catholic church and I spent a year in a Benedictine abby in Oklahoma at Shawnee, and then I was received into the church and then - I had lived as a hermit, as an Anglican prior to that some years before in Connecticut near Kent School. And so then I entered the Trappist monastery in Dubuque, Iowa, which is Cistercian, it's Benedictine, and discovered that in the rule of St. Benedict which we followed there is a provision that after you've lived in community for a time, then you can go off into the desert and live a more solitary life. And it was the time of Vatican II, which was from about '62 to '66, and we were all looking, trying to discover our roots. Where does the order come from, where do the monks come from. So we went back and we discovered that the first monks were really hermits. After the Peace of Constantine around 314, there was a great influx of people going out into the desert around Egypt, Egyptian habitat there in Skeet River, Skeet Valley. And so-

LIVING ALONE?

Oh yeah, living alone, like Anthony for example. They were living alone. They would come together for a time, some Sunday maybe, put the celebration of the eucharist. But solitary hermits, yes it was flooded with hermits, solitary beings. As some, mostly men. There were a few women closer to the city. So when the monks discovered that, that the hermits were really the first - they were the real monks in a sense - so we all wanted to be hermits. And abbots aren't really willing to let somebody go out and be a hermit by themselves. So when Jock Vinandi, who had been an abbot in Belgium, sort of organized the life and people began to gather around him, abbots were not so reluctant to let their men go and see what the life was all about. So we heard about the hermits out here on Vancouver Island on the Sola River, so I got permission to come out and to visit them. And I liked what I saw and I thought this was, you know, I really felt this was my vocation. And so I talked to Remi, our bishop, and I told him I wanted to go on for the priesthood. I had done my studies, I'd been there for 8 years, and he said well you know if you're accepted by the hermits, I will ordain you to the priesthood. And so that kind of settled it for me and so then I became a member of the colony and at the same time I was incarnated in the diocese of Victoria when I left the Cistercians.

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THE COLONY THAT YOU LIKED SO MUCH, THAT YOU SAW?

Well I think I liked the solitude and I loved the British Columbia, was living on a small river, headquarters creek or Wolf Creek and I loved - I love this island and - see, in the Cistercian life it was a big big community, and I remember that when I



entered there, I entered the same day with another postulate, that's what you're called when you enter, and Brother Michael. And so Brother Michael, he preceded me, we entered the same day but he was just a little before me. So for 8 years I walked behind him, you know in procession. We did everything in kind of an orderly manner, went to meals and so forth. And everything was in a sense was done in a sense by the numbers, but we were always together. It's like if you go to India, you see people everywhere, there are always people, and it was very much like that. There was very little solitude and really very little time for contemplation. We sang, said the office, the psalms of David, and that took up many hours of the day. But very little time for quiet, contemplative prayer, even though it was a contemplative community, contmpleative order. A lot of work, a lot of study, but very little time for quiet prayer. So here I am, that was very attractive, had hours to pray, which I had never had before.

DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE THAT THAT MADE IN YOUR LIFE, I MEAN IS IT DEFINABLE FOR YOU? DO YOU SAY THIS IS WHAT SILENCE HAS GIVEN ME?

Yeah, I think it probably would be translated into a deeper peace, a joy, a happiness - happiness I would say, deeper happiness, deeper peace. Perhaps a sense of greater relationship with the natural world, which I think flows from the contemplative religion.

DO YOU EVER FEEL OR WORRY ABOUT IT BEING SELFISH?

I don't think so. You know, the hermitage it opens up to the whole universe or to the cosmos. You know we have in the cosmos something like a trillion galaxies, and each galaxy has 100 billion stars, and these are my brothers and sisters and the earth and people, the actual world and the human community and I'm open to that. And so I think that I don't believe it's selfish. For example people come here to practice meditation. I give retreats, I occasionally take church service. I seem to have contact with the rest of the human society around me, and my neighbours and

I'M TOLD THAT YOU LOOKED LIKE YOU HAD GREAT JOY ON YOUR FACE AT THE SERVICE.

That's what Dave was telling me. Well yes I, you know, I'm very fond of people, yeah. And I think that you really have to love people if you're going to live a solitary existence. I think you have to have that relationship with the community. I don't think you could - if you were a misanthrope or some kind of perhaps a psychological or had psychotic difficulties you would find it very difficult living a solitary life. And I think you have to be a very sociable person and be conscious of what's taking place in the world, even though you're not in contact with the world. Like there's a Carthusian saying that says never less alone than when alone, which I think is very true. Never less alone than when alone.

IS THAT HOW, I'M INTRIGUED BY HOW THE SILENCE AND THE SOLITUDE MAKES YOU FEEL CLOSER TO THE NATURAL WORLD THAT SURROUNDS



THIS COTTAGE THAT WE'RE IN NOW. DO YOU KNOW THAT PROCESS?

Well I would phrase it something like this. We're really going to get in, I think maybe a little bit into what the meaning of prayer or meditation or contemplation. We're so used to think there's only one way of thinking and that's sort of a rational way of thinking, but there are other ways, deeper ways so maybe we won't call it thinking but there are, let's say there are deeper ways of thinking. And I think that a person, we're so left-brain in the West and we've lost this. We were talking a little bit before about Wordsworth Intimations of Mortality and we have this sense of unity with nature, with the earth. And so we've lost pretty much our right-brain dimension, which is the dimension of artistry and spontaneities and creativities and legend. And perhaps we lose that, most people I think lose that when they're quite young, as you grow out of childhood into adolescence. So to regain it, and I think it can be regained, what we do, in meditation, we enter into silence and stillness, and actually we sort of stop the mind, we just stop the discursive rational mind and enter into a deeper level of consciousness, a contemplative dimension. And I think when that happens, that in a sense really frees us from our ego. You know meditation I would describe as an onslaught against the ego, the ego being a dimension of the psychic which is the I maker, it wants something for the self, some kind of..aggrandisement for the self. And somehow it helps us free us, it frees us from that to a certain extent. We never of course die I guess to the ego, but it's always there hammering away at us, but it does free us and then it opens us up to what's, what is around us and helps us to enter into I would say communion with the natural world. The idea of communion is not communication or conversation, it's a deeper level of contact with the natural world. Like the natural world is, it's not a collection of objects but it's a communion of subjects to be communed with. I'm talking about the trees, the flowers, the rivers, the fish, to be communed with. And as long as we're functioning just out of our ego, we're not really in communion with the natural world. We don't hear the voices, you know, we don't hear, we don't speak to the trees and we don't hear their voices. They're speaking, the trees speak, the flowers speak, the birds speak, only we don't hear it if we're caught up in ourselves. That's why it's important I think to enter into silence and stillness and solitude to become open so we can commune, so we can hear the - you know, we're, I'd say we're an autistic generation. You know what I mean by autism, that a child, an autistic child, it can't get out, we can't get into it and in a sense we're that way with the natural world. We're autistic, we can't get out because we don't hear the - we're hard of hearing. And to hear I think we have to have some silence and stillness and that opens us up to the whole universe. And - and especially people you see, not just the natural world, but the human community as well.

WHAT DO WE HEAR FROM THE NATURAL WORLD? WHEN YOU DO GIVE YOURSELF THAT SILENCE AND THAT SOLITUDE?

Well I don't think it's something you can put into words. It's what we, you know we have, we have a genetic coding. We also have a cultural coding. We're primarily today I think governed by what we consider our cultural coding, which comes from our education, our society. It tells us where to go. It comes from the media to a great extent, TV media, radio, our cultural coding. But we have another coding and it's our genetic coding and it's in us, it's in our DNA, and it comes from the first big



bang, this first unfurling of the universe and it's the great dynamics of spontaneity sort of there. It's the unfolding and that's in our genetic coding. And we can listen to that in a sense and that gives us guidance, and I can't tell you, I can't really put that into words. But the trees, the plants, they all have this genetic coding and they know where they're going, you know, they're being directed in a sense by the universe which is a, in a sense it's a being that's unfolding. It has the dynamics and the trees know the story, the birds know the story, and we know the story too if we could get to it. It's in our coding, genetic coding, if we could listen to it. If we could - it's a matter I think - not of in a sense I use the word voices, but it isn't voices, it's a type of communion, communication which I would call communion.

IT'S A KNOWLEDGE, OF SYMBOLS OR OF--

Yeah, it's like T.S. Eliot speaks about Little Gidding, and when you--

END

2856

MAN ALIVE

`HERMITS'

TAPE #118

WHAT I'M AFRAID OF IS PEOPLE DISMISS THAT POINT OF VIEW AS THE TREES AND THE FLOWERS AND THE STREAMS AND THE CLOUDS AND THE GRASS HAVING A MESSAGE FOR US. AS BEING REALLY AIRY-FAIRY STUFF AND YOU KNOW, JUST GET IN THE REAL WORLD. AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT, HOW DO YOU CONVINCED PEOPLE THAT THAT'S TRUE, IF THEY DON'T HEAR THAT MESSAGE ALREADY?

Well I don't think you can convince anyone. I think the important thing I think is to get a grasp or an idea of what the new story is, what the story is, and that from the very beginning, and this goes back to Teilhard, he was the one I think introduced it, the idea that from the very beginning in the unfolding of the universe we go back 15 billion years ago, when the great furling forth came forth out of ultimate reality, ultimate mystery comes the beginning of the universe. And Teilhard would say that even from the very beginning, there was not just a physical dimension, physical-mechanical dimension, but there's also a spiritual-psychical dimension which was unfolding right along with the physical dimension of the universe. And another thing he would say, the second point was that we've given perhaps too much emphasis to the redemption process over the creation spirituality. And the third thing was that he emphasized that man from the very beginning was integral with this unfolding of the universe. And I think the thing to do, we have to do, somehow we have to see that we are integral with this unfolding of the universe, that the human being is that person in whom, each one of us is a person in whom the universe reflects, activates and celebrates itself in conscious self-awareness. After 15 billion years the universe is now aware, it can reflect and it does that through



human beings. And I think if people could see that, they could see that they are a dimension of the universe. Not that they lose their own personal dimension, but they have a greater dimension, they are in, implicated in the unfolding of the universe itself. And if they could see that, then I think they'd begin to appreciate that every living being - and even nonliving being - have a subjectivity or a personality that affects them. And everything is related you know, as Friejof Capra says, it's a complicated web of independent relationships. Everything - and we need everything else, we need the trees, we need the flowers, we need each other. It's very important, it's a community that's dependent on every other being. The volume of an atom for example is the whole universe because an atom affects every other atom in the universe. That's what quantum physics is telling us today, and every other atom is affected by atom in the universe, so its volume is the whole universe. So we're related to everything in the universe.

THE THING THAT I STRUGGLE WITH IS, I MEAN I BELIEVE THAT THE FISH AND THE TREE AND THE FLOWER AND THE ANT ARE TANGIBLE REPRESENTATIONS OF A DIVINE PRESENCE. BUT WHEN WE ABUSE THE EARTH THE WAY WE DO, SURELY WE'RE ALSO ABUSING THE CONCEPT OF A DIVINE PRESENCE.

We are, that's right, we certainly are. In fact you know, I think getting back to this idea that through us the earth is celebrating and reflecting in conscious self-awareness, if we really realized that, then we would also realize that our own spirituality, our physical wellbeing, our economics, if we damage the earth it's affecting us in a very drastic way. That's not exactly what you were saying.

YEAH, I JUST THINK I MEAN FOR ME IT'S JUST A HUGE IF TO GET PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT.

Well that's, yeah that's right. It's why I think that the earth is mandating today that we undergo what I would call a transformation of consciousness, a transformation of human hearts and minds so we have a new vision of our place in the natural world, in the whole universe, if we could see that. And I don't think we, we're not going to convince people of that. It's not something we're going to do through a rational process. That's why I think that meditation, the contemplative aspect is so important because I think it can be seen through that, that leads us into a deeper relationship with the earth and with the universe.

DO YOU THINK WE ARE AT A TURNING POINT?

Oh I think so, that's right. The idea of the - every, you know all the people that I read like people like Thomas Berry and you know, I think Thomas Berry is just a tremendous person and I think he's the best we have in the ecological movement today, the environmental movement. Thomas Berry, Friejof Capra, he's written a book called The Turning Point, Mead Griffith, New Vision Reality, Hugo Lasalle, Living in the New Consciousness. And it's not just the earth itself, it's kind of a spiritual movement I think that's taking place. You know we've had various levels of consciousness in the past. We've come up from what I would call archaic consciousness, your boy, man up to magical, mythical, rational, and Hugo Lasalle



says we're at the point now we're entering into what he calls fourth dimensional consciousness, and that's kind of a time freedom, time, freedom from time over conceptual time which gives us this tremendous freedom and liberation. So much of our sickness today is caused by this pressure of time. I don't have enough time, I'm too busy, heart attacks, high blood pressure, perhaps cancer, all the pressures that we feel. If we could become free from them. So that's one sort of turning point I think that we're at. We're entering, we're reinventing the human and the earth has been doing that right along. We go back what, time of 3 and a half million years ago, the first hominids, Lucy for example and the Afar triangle and up through homo habilis and homo erectus and homo neanderthalis. But we've been reinventing the human and now we're at a point where we're going to reinvent the human again in a higher level of consciousness which I call or which Hugo Lasalle calls fourth dimensional consciousness, which is this time freedom.

DO WE HAVE A CHOICE IN THAT REINVENTION OR WILL IT JUST HAPPEN DESPITE THE SCREAMING AND KICKING?

Okay, it's happening I think nevertheless. Like Lasalle would say it's already in orbit. For example people who are living in archaic consciousness, 4 million or 3 and a half million years ago, they didn't invent magical - they didn't say well let's get together and bring this into being, but it happened. I think it's the universe, the dynamics of the universe, the spontaneities of the universe, the unfolding, that's bringing it about. And we can help. That's our great thing today is that I think the earth is pouring into us all this creative spontane--spontaneity. It's pouring it into us so that we can help move this along. So when people decide to meditate, well part of it, it's their doing, but I think part of it it's you know, they're, they don't know where it's coming from and we don't know where it's coming from, but I think it's coming from the universe.

BUT WE NEED AS WELL AS THAT CREATIVITY AND SPONTANEITY, WE NEED A GOOD POURING OF URGENCY, A SENSE OF URGENCY. I DON'T KNOW IF WE'VE GOT THAT OR NOT YET.

Well you know, I think we're in what I would call a crash situation. It's like an alcoholic and he's in a crash situation and he says no, I'm okay, I'm alright, I'm getting on, I'm working and I'm okay. And it does, it isn't really until he really crashes that he realizes he needs something else. So we live I think sort of between hope and some kind of an attraction, attractive force, and that's what we need today is this attraction. And I think that's the attraction that entering into what I call the age of the earth or the ecozoid period that Thomas Berry has named. That's the great attractor today. If we realize that we can be full of despair, a tragedy - we can celebrate the past, we can be full of despair over what's happening, but we can invent the future, and that's what we're doing. If we see that there is a way to get into the future and people are beginning to see that, not just through resource management but a much - that's what we mean by deep ecology, getting into this deeper level of what the universe is mandating today.

IT'S ALMOST ACKNOWLEDGING THAT YOU'RE PART OF WHAT HAS TO BE REPAIRED.



That's right. Exactly. We are, you know we didn't ask to be born at this particular time. We were given the great privilege to be born at this time, and the universe has poured into us this creativity, moved the process along and we can accept that or we can deny it. And if we accept it, it's a great privilege. But I think it's going to mean a lot of sacrifice and we don't really understand how deep the sacrifice has to be to move into the future and to this new dimension we're talking about.

HOW DEEP DO YOU--?

The idea of sacrifice, that's - well, you know the idea of sacrifice in the beginning, what does it really mean? To sacrifice, you know, the disciples of Confucius once went to him and asked him, they said What is sort of what is at the heart of your whole teaching? And he thought for a moment and he said Well the heart of it is reciprocity - reciprocity. Something is given and a return is made. And that's what we mean by sacrifice, and I think that that's what industry has been unwilling to do, it's been unwilling to make the return. They've tried to get around making the return. They've tried to dodge that. And so we've been given the universe, you know been given our being, great gift of being. That's a tremendous gift. And universe has poured into us the spontaneities, the creativity to move things into the next level of consciousness. And to do that, we have to make the return and you say well, what can we give? Well we can't, we don't have anything, we just give back what we've been given. But we're...transitional periods are always periods of sacrifice and Thomas Berry points out that in the beginning, the stars, the first stars, they exploded and they gave birth to the second generation of stars - that was a sacrifice. So that the next generation of - and so eventually we could come along. So they made the sacrifice. And I think that's what we have to do today. We have to make the sacrifice. And you can't bargain for the future. We want to bargain, you know, we'll do this if we can get that, but you can't bargain for the future. And we have many selves, many selves. For example we have our own personal self, we may have a family self, have our community self, we have the earth self, we have the universe self. And when the greater self which is the universe or the earth is in danger, it's always the smaller self that makes the sacrifice for it. And it may mean death, and not only for ourselves, but we may have to ask that of other people, and that's pretty difficult to do. And what I mean by death is that I'm thinking primarily of death to the ego and you know, we don't want to die - one thing that man doesn't want to do is to die. That's man's greatest fear. And Ken Wilbur in his Atman Project, Up From Eden, points that out, that we all know sort of intuitively that we are for, built for eternity. We have this everlasting - we realize that, and we also realize the way to that is through death to the ego, but we don't want to give that up. So we substitute something for it, something that looks like eternity. It could be wisdom, it could be power, it could be some sort of security, knowledge, something that seems like the pyramids, that seems eternal, doesn't it. And they built them perhaps with that in mind, something absolutely permanent. But the way to it, way to this everlasting life or eternity is through death of ego, and that's the sacrifice I think we have to make, the transformation of consciousness that has to take place.

MR. LAWRENCE VANDERPOST HAS WRITTEN A LOT ABOUT THE BUSHMEN IN AFRICA AND HOW HE CAN GO ANYWHERE AND FEEL AS IF HE'S KNOWN



IN THE UNIVERSE I THINK IS THE PHRASE LAWRENCE USES, AND THAT A GREAT PLAGUE FOR WESTERN MAN IS THAT WE DON'T FEEL KNOWN ANY MORE IN THE UNIVERSE AND THAT WE'VE SEPARATED OURSELVES FROM THAT.

That's right, we have. In fact we probably have separated ourselves, it goes back to the neolithic period, about 9 and a half thousand years ago, when we came to think of ourselves as spiritual being, the only spiritual being in the universe, and we worked out sort of our destiny with a background, the rest of the universe as purely nonspiritual, material, mechanical--

SYSTEM.

System, that's right. And to the, we've lost that, gradually we've lost our relationship with the earth and the universe.

SO DOES FLY FISHING GIVE, DID FLY FISHING GIVE YOU BACK THAT KIND OF CONNECTION?

Well no. I think there is a relationship. You know there are many things like fly fishing. It could be mountain climbing, skiing for example, just taking a walk through the woods, bird watching - bird watching is a wonderful thing I think or gardening or fly fishing. I think what fly fishing does, it puts you in contact with the other creatures of the earth. It's what we're talking about being in communion with the universe... Everything out there is community of subjects, it's not a collection of objects. So when you're on the river, I think you're open to that, you're sensitive to the flow of the river and maybe a merganser foraging for food or a kingfisher, these other creatures, the trees, the sound of the river, just the ambience of the air. The whole environment is very conducive I think to putting us in contact with the natural world and encouraging our, lifting our spirits.

THAT'S ONE THING TO TALK ABOUT HERE IN CAMPBELL RIVER, BUT IF YOU LIVE IN NEW YORK'S INNER CITY OR IN BOMBAY--

END

2857

MAN ALIVE

'HERMITS'

TAPE #119

I GUESS WHERE I WANTED TO PICK UP WAS JUST TALKING ABOUT THE LIFE THAT YOU WERE LEADING HERE AND WHAT SOMEONE IN BOMBAY OR IN THE INNER CITY IN NEW YORK OR SOUTH-CENTRAL LOS ANGELES, WHO DOESN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO BE QUIET, TO LISTEN AND HEAR WHAT THE NATURAL WORLD HAS TO SAY. DOES THAT HAVE TO BE TACKLED OR IS



THAT JUST TOO PRACTICAL AN APPROACH TO IT?

Tackled in what sense?

WELL DO THEY HAVE TO BE ABLE TO AT SOME POINT HEAR THAT MESSAGE OR CAN THEY HEAR IT IN OTHER WAYS?

Oh I think they can, I think they can. I mean like I mentioned the idea of just gardening. That's a wonderful way to get in contact with the earth and get in contact with the universe. And I think everyone can really set their minds and hearts to it, they can find a place of quiet and of solitude and stillness to meditate or to contemplate. There is opportunity there wherever a person is I think to find this, these deeper levels.

WAS CONTEMPLATION A MORE IMPORTANT EXERCISE IN THE WEST IN THE PAST? I MEAN HAVE WE LOST IT, HAS IT EVER BEEN A CENTRAL PART OF OUR EXISTENCE?

Oh it has been. Like we have a contemporary tradition in the Western church, and I'm speaking primarily now of the Catholic church, that goes all the way back to John of the Cross in the 16th century, Claude of... in 14th century, going back to Benedict in the 6th century and... and even in the east they had this wonderful contemplative tradition, Hesikas tradition of the Jesus prayer, the way of the pilgrim, reciting this prayer, Jesus Christ our living God, have mercy upon me as a sinner thousands and thousands of times, that kind of prayer. And we had it, you know this - we, it was sort of accepted in the West that the normal path of prayer would lead from a more discursive to a more contemplative inner type, what I - I call it nonobjective prayer. Like objective prayer you take something and you focus on it, usually a mental rational type of prayer, like Ignatian meditation. That's what I mean by objective, and meditation, contemplation is what I call nonobjective prayer which springs out of sort of the core of our being. And that was sort of the accepted path of prayer until about the oh 14-15-16 century, and then we lost it pretty much, not completely but pretty much in the West. And it was due to many things. For example, the Black Death in Europe in around 14-1347-39 when almost a third of half of Europe was wiped out by this death and people didn't know where it came from and they didn't know what disease was. And so they thought, well God is mad, he's angry, he's angry with the earth and they're being punished and the earth was really something bad. And so they began then to turn away from the earth. Before that time, the earth was considered revelatory, that St. Francis for example, the earth spoke to St. Francis, the birds, the plants. And it was about this time that we began to lose our, I think our contemplative tradition, and we became much more discursive oriented. It's primarily I think due to people like St. Ignatius, and he became, the Jesuit community came into being about that time and they became the soldiers of the pope, and they would carry the Gospel throughout the world to evangelize a more different type of preaching. And so became much more rational and mysticism became very suspect in later periods, say from about the 16th through the 19th century, and anything to do with visions and so forth. Of course I'm suspect of visions anyway but we seem to have lost that tradition of meditation and contemplation, and now we're regaining it and - in the West. And the East is



helping us you know because the East has had a pretty solid tradition of contemplation in Hinduism and Buddhism, Buddhism, Taoism, even in Islam they have the Sufi mystics who've had this tradition of contemplative prayer. And so I think the East has helped the West to rediscover their own contemplative tradition.

BUT THIS DEEP, AND I MAY BE GETTING IN OVER MY HEAD HERE, BUT DOES DEEP CONTEMPLATION MEAN THAT YOU HAVE TO RELEASE POWER OR ANY SENSE OF POWER THAT YOU HAVE?

Oh I think so. It goes back to the ego. I mean St. Paul would say when I am weak then I'm really strong, and I think when you give up your ego then it seems like there's this terrible weakness and you can't perhaps organize things as you used to, you can't have these specific goals that you're going to attain. It's more of a passive sense. But you get a different power and as a Christian, the Christian belief would be that what we really discover is this inner dimension of the life of Christ. We enter into his human resurrected glorified infinitely transcendent consciousness and through that we're carried to the Father. And we actually, Christian concept belief would be that we become Christ in some way. We actually become Christ, that we believe that Christ is the taking flesh of ultimate reality or the logos coming and taking flesh and living among us. And the Christian concept is that then we discover this life of Christ you know and we become Christ. That's who we really - that's our ultimate real true self, is Christ. And so when we turn away from our ego we discover this Christ life.

IT'S A--

And it isn't ours, it isn't ours, you see, but it's everybody's though.

AND THAT TURN REQUIRES COURAGE.

Oh yeah it does, it requires discipline and letting go and I think letting go of our control of self, letting go of control of other people. The ideal world I suppose would be to live in a world where there's no one to control and no controller.

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE THAT KIND OF A SITUATION.

Yes. Yes, yes, yeah.

TELL ME HOW YOU STARTED BOOK BINDING.

How I started, okay. That's a good question. I started really when - well I was a boy scout and when you're a boy scout, when you're working on Eagle scouting, you acquire a number of merit badges and you have to sort of learn a subject, then you go before an examiner. And he'll either pass you or flunk you. And so there are many of these, I don't know, maybe 100 or so badges you can get. And one of them was bookbinding, and I was somehow interested in that, and so I had a boy scout manual and I took it apart piece by piece, and I was just fascinated you know how a book worked. I really didn't understand it before, how signatures are formed, how the pages are folded up to form a signature or a section of a book. So then I put it



back together, I reseeded it and the binding wasn't a very good binding, but it was substantial and I took it to the examiner and - and he was quite amused, but you know, very enthusiastic about this project. And so I just had this fasc--I loved books too by the way and so that was my first experience. And then later, when I was nibbling at the door of the Catholic church, I got permission from my Episcopalian bishop, Bishop Born in Colorado, to spend a year studying the Catholic faith. And so I ended up in a Benedictine monastery in Oklahoma at Shawnee. And you know the Benedictines have been sort of the centre of cultures in Europe going back to the 6th century. They were centres of learning, and calligraphy and bookbinding and so forth. So they have a bindery there and they said well you might as well make yourself useful. So in the beginning they put me in the library and I was sort of mending books with mystic tape and then I noticed the bindery and I sort of volunteered for that. So that's where I learned just sort of simple straightforward case binding at this Benedictine monastery. And then later when I entered the Trappist in New Mallory, Dubuque, they knew that I had done some binding. And after I got through my novitiate, which is two years, then they assigned me to the bindery. In fact I was in charge of the monastic bindery for about 7 years when I was there and did all kinds of binding, full leather bindings. And we had these huge choir books, they were this high and when they opened them up, they were about this wide, and we would slide them along these choir stalls, and that's how we chanted the office from these big books. So we thought then the abbot said, well we'll send to Belgium and get the parts for the book, the brass parts and you can do everything. Well I don't know if that was such a good idea, but we got them together, but I think it was probably not very financially feasible. So I was doing that kind of binding. And so then when I came out here to join the hermits, I discovered that not only did I have to build my hermitage, but I had to make my own living. And since I had this background in bookbinding, that was the sort of thing I thought well, I'll do that. And it seemed to fit in well with the contemplative spirit and ideal, making your living with binding materials that were part of our civilization. \*\* I like to think of the life of having a sense of preserving what man has written, what flows from man's spirit, like the works of art or his crafts or his, the writings being bound into books and so forth. And also preserving man's spirit, my spirit, your spirit, everyone's contributing to that. And that's also then preserving the earth itself, you know, because if we don't have the earth, we have nothing. You know we think that - this may be getting off on a slight tangent, but we think that Western people since the Reformation, since we lost that contact, the earth being revelatory, we thought that well, we don't, perhaps we don't really need the earth. You know we can, we're going to have a period we'll call a millennium, a thousand years of great prosperity and peace. Or we can go off to another planet. But actually as far as we know, this is it. We have the earth and we have to preserve it, we have to do our part to do that.

SO BOOKBINDING REALLY WAS AN ECOLOGICAL ACTIVITY FOR YOU.

That's right. And it still is, and it's a peaceful - I think perhaps nothing is more enjoyable than or more contemplative than just sewing a book and exercise it's a very peaceful, contemplative exercise, and so it's an ecological exercise as well.

CAN WE JUST GO BACK TO WHEN YOU'RE FLY FISHING AND YOU'RE ON THE



RIVER AND TALK ABOUT THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE RIVER THAT YOU HAVE TO BE AWARE OF I GATHER TO BE A PROFICIENT FLY FISHERMAN.

That's right. Like there are insects. We call them invertebrate life in the river and that's something for example that's happened to the Oyster River. We've lost a lot of that invertebrate life in the river. And that's mainly due probably to the logging that's taken place in the upper watershed, movement of the gravel and especially silting that's come through washing the banks. And you know you can see gravel and it looks perfectly alright, but what happens is silt actually gets down into the gravel maybe six inches and you don't see that. But there are insects that's been part of the life in the gravel of the river, like the mayfly, phemeroptera, that order of phemeroptera, they go down and they'll spend part of their life in the deep gravel. And then they will come out and suddenly they will emerge and live - we call them, the word ephemeral comes from it, they live just a day and then they die. But the whole life cycle is based on having a healthy gravel base in the river itself. So fishermen then, they study insects because trout are attracted to insects, you know not so much steelhead because when the steelhead come in they're not feeding, but cutthroat would be. So you're always interested in the invertebrate life, the insect life of the river because when you fly fish, you want to match your fly with the current hatch in the river because that's what the fish are feeding on. So it's important to be aware of the insect life in the river.

AND THE FISH KNOW WHEN SOMETHING SHOULDN'T BE THERE.

That's right, they do.

THEY SUSPECT.

Yeah, and they'd probably ignore your fly if it wasn't very close to what they were feeding on, like a black, a midge or a coleoptera, something that they're used to feeding on.

SO HOW FRAGILE IS THAT GRAVEL, I MEAN THAT BALANCE THAT HAS TO EXIST?

Well it's very fragile, and the balance is extremely important. And I think that's really what, what has happened to a great extent to the Oyster River. Due to the logging that's taken place and in the last 30-40 years, especially the last 30 years, what you do when you log off a watershed, we call this clear-cut logging, if it's completely taken off. There's nothing there for, to absorb the moisture of when it rains or when it snows, and so you get a really rapid runoff because there's no root system to absorb the moisture. And if you do have a good healthy root system there, and it just isn't a root system at all, but in the root system there are little fungi and bacteria that secrete material and the roots secrete material, and the material that the bacteria and the fungi secrete help to hold the soil together. So when the root system is gone, that, the other life disappears as well, so there's nothing to bond the earth. So you get heavy rains and rain on snow, and all that earth, sediment moves into the river. And so then you get high winter flows and moves the gravel, changes the course of the river, and the sediment gets in, smothers the insect life,



and when the insect life is gone, why there's nothing for the small fry to feed on. Like coho does spend one year after they come out of the gravel, they'll come out and spend a year feeding. And also the fish themselves, they spawn in the gravel, they dig down, they come in to spawn in the fall. They dig what they call revs. The female will do that and deposit the eggs and then cover it with gravel. And so if you get a lot of silting, then that will suffocate the eggs and the eggs won't hatch. And so it's important to have clean gravel, nice flowing water with oxygen in it to feed the eggs.

JUST LISTENING TO YOU DESCRIBE THAT PROCESS, IT'S MAGICAL TO ME.

It is.

HOW IT ALL WORKS.

That's right. It's in fact the whole natural world is a magical mystical world and it's just so complicated and involved. Again, Thomas Berry points out in the Unfolding of the Universe there are sort of three basic principles or laws, and one is diversification, that since the great unfurling things have become more and more complicated, more and more diverse until we arrive at human consciousness, self reflection. The other thing is that apart from diversity, everything in the universe has what he calls a subjectivity or even what might call a personality. And every diversified subjectivity is related to everything else, it's all bonded together, and it's just a marvellous thing. Instead of subjectivity, maybe interiority would be a better word. Every atom has this oomph about it, it has this interiority. Not saying consciousness, but there's something there that holds it together, interiority. So every diversified interiority is in union with every other diversified interiority in the universe. Everything is related and it's just a magical mythical relationship, a complicated web of interdependent relationships.

AND YOUR APPRECIATION ONLY INCREASES WITH THE MORE YOU UNDERSTAND I THINK OF THAT.

That's right. So it isn't just the contemplative aspect but you know, the story of the earth, we have to really understand the story of the earth, where it's come from. And that's what we mean by cosmology. You know, the native people, they have their own cosmology. Where did the universe come from. Perhaps they might think, this is very simplistic, that they're living on the back of a giant turtle, that's what the earth is. But the wonderful thing about the native spirituality is that they feel that the great spirit is present throughout the earth, throughout the universe, and so they're very respectable - respectful of every creature because the spirit... it's filled with spirit and in a sense the West has lost that respect that the native people have.

AND THE CONCEPT OF NOT OWNING LAND BUT BORROWING IT FROM FUTURE GENERATIONS I THINK IS AN INTERESTING ONE, THAT YOU REALLY, YOU DON'T OWN THIS LAND HERE.

That's right.



YOU'RE JUST BORROWING IT.

Just borrowing it, that's right, here for a time and then passing it on. And if we could only pass it on so that it isn't depleted, it isn't degraded, but somehow we can enhance it and perhaps bring it back. We can never make the return to what it originally was, like the Oyster River will never be the same as it originally was. And just like our paper documents in our libraries, they are deteriorating, even like we talk, they were deteriorating yesterday, today and they will go on. And only way we could stop that altogether would be to freeze it, put it into total darkness, but we could never use it. So the best we could do is just slow down the process. We could never take it back to its original state.

I'M TEMPTED TO ASK YOU HOW YOU FIGHT DEPRESSION.

END

2858

MAN ALIVE

'HERMITS'

TAPE #120

JUST I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU WHEN YOU'RE AWARE THAT IT'S NEVER GOING TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO WHAT IT WAS AND THAT IT'S CONSTANTLY DETERIORATING, HOW DO YOU FEND OFF DEPRESSION?

Well I think that yes, getting back to that, ten years ago it seemed really discouraging, but I think now that I have, I'm much more hopeful for the future. And like I was saying, we live between, I think between terror and hope. and in the past I think what environmentalists have done, you try to move people. They've given them all the facts, you know, all this has taken place and we're losing our ozone layer and greenhouse effect and what we're doing to the Gulf of Georgia, we're polluting the water. Our... atmosphere, biosphere, geosphere, duosphere. And we're closing down our life support system and that can be very depressing and we can lose hope you know and people become terrorized. It's going back to what we were talking about before, like reaching, we're in a crisis situation and it seems to be hopeless. But I think if we can see that there's a way out, terror and hope, we have this hope there is a way out of this. And that's where the sacrifice comes in and people have to begin to see that the sacrifice is demanded. And I really like what Thomas Berry says, and by the way you know we had the diocese of Victoria here, it was convened by our Bishop Remi de Roo, a synod just was completed in the last five years. And one of the resolutions was that pretty much based on I had gone to this conference in Seattle, Earth and Spirit and our keynote speaker was Thomas Berry. And just very eloquent speaker but deep thinker and like I think he's our foremost - he's our great leader in the ecology movement today. And in the synod, we got - actually one of the resolutions was that we would go into the future as a single sacred community, the natural world and the human community would



go into the future as a single sacred community, and that's almost verbatim the words of Thomas Berry. And he says this isn't in the decision 54, but he says unless we do that, he's using this exodus symbol, it's used in many places like coming from the Old World to the New World is an exodus or Dante going into purgatory. And the exodus, using the old, the Israelites coming out of Egypt into the Promised Land, going through the desert. But unless we do that, go into the future as a single sacred community, that we will perish in the desert. We'll never perish absolutely but we'll lose the grandeur of the earth, the universe. But if we can do it as a community natural world and human community as a single sacred community, I think we'll make it. And I think we can get there and I think that's our great hope today, is to enter into the age of the earth or what Thomas Berry calls the ecozoid period. We've come down from the paleozoic, 6 million, 600 million years ago to the mesozoic, 220, to the cenozoic, 65 million years ago, and now we're at the terminal phase of what we call the cenozoic, this last 65 million years. And now we're emerging into what he calls the ecozoic, and if we can get into the ecozoic, then we're in business. And I'm just maybe, you might be interested in some of the ways that we can get into that new period. Some of his suggestions are, and we've talked about this already, is to first of all have the idea that the natural world is a communion of subjects, it's not a collection of objects we have to commune with. Another point he brings out many times is that, that we are earth derivative, the humans are earth derivative, that in health-wise, you cannot have healthy humans on a sick earth. The primary function of medicine is to cure the earth. If we can have a healthy earth, then we can have healthy human beings. We are earth derivative. And it's a one time event. We don't get a second chance. You know, it's unfolding and there have been a series of irreversible transformations that have brought us to where we are, and these aren't going to happen again. We don't get a second chance. We can talk about going off to another star or another planet or millennium, but this is it. And the, in the future, the earth, the natural world, human beings are going to have to behave quite differently than they have in the past. For example in the last 65 million years, we call it the cenozoic period, it was just all unfolded. We have this tremendous array of plants and flowers and birds, and you know we had nothing to do with it. It was just all given to us and we were just sort of asked to stand by in an honouring gracious manner. But in the future, humans are going to have everything to do with it. Like Thomas Berry says we can't make a blade of grass, but in the future, unless we protect it, foster and accept it we're liable not to have a blade of grass. So we have a tremendous responsibility. All these creative energies of the earth is poured into us, we're going to be called upon to utilize and put those into practice. So I think it's a very hopeful period and I anticipate the future with you know great joy.

#### AND THE FUTURE INCLUDES THE EXECUTIVES OF LOGGING COMPANIES.

It does, that's right. Well it's amazing you know we are sitting down, like we are at the meeting this week, Oyster River Watershed Management Committee. And here we have the logging companies that have logged this valley and are still continuing to practice forestry there. We're sitting down and actually talking together, humans you know people talking with humans. And they're part of it. You know the Oyster River watershed valley is not just the people, not just the native people who lived there before, but it's everyone who shares in the valley, in the community, and that



includes the foresters, that includes people who recreate, it includes the fish, the trees, everything. We all need each other and we're beginning to realize that. So we're perhaps getting beyond the confrontational aspect of environmental movement. Now that was important I think. Somebody had to stand up to these - I'm not talking so much about forestry, but one of the great tragedies in our area is the Nicheko River up near Port Rupert, Prince George, Port Rupert area, where they've redirected the whole course of the river and almost dried it up so one of the important tributaries of the Fraser, Salmon tributaries, is all but lost now. Just to create power for Alcan Aluminum. That's you know, that kind of approach to our natural resources perhaps won't happen in the future, but we're beginning I think to talk to each other now.

BUT THAT'S PERHAPS WHAT WE CAN'T AFFORD. NOW YOU SAY PERHAPS IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE. I MEAN HOW DO YOU CONTAIN YOUR ANGER ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF SOME COMPANIES - NOT ALL FORESTERS OF COURSE, BUT I MEAN JUST, IS IT A PROBLEM?

Well it's a problem I think when you see it on a planetary scale. I think when I really got angry is what was happening in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, when they set all these oil wells on fire and all that going into the Persian Gulf, contaminating, that really made me really anger, angry.

BUT WHEN YOU'RE SITTING WITH LOGGING EXECUTIVES AT A MEETING HERE, DO YOU FEEL ANGER TOWARDS THEM?

No I don't, no, because I know them. And you know I think that we - the people I know who are loggers, they have a great love for the natural world, just the same love you and I would have. And it's a job for them but they are I think deeply concerned now. I have a friend up on the Macaulay Rd., Chris Miles, who's the head of the environmental group for Mack and Blow, the logging company that's logging there. And I know he's deeply concerned with the earth and with the natural world, and -

THAT'S WHY I WAS CAREFUL TO SAY EXECUTIVES BEFORE BECAUSE THE LOGGERS ARE JUST LIKE YOU AND ME WITH A JOB, BUT THE EXECUTIVES ARE THE ONES WHO ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING MONEY FOR THAT COMPANY. AND I CAN'T SEE HOW THEIR DESIRE TO MAKE MONEY IS LESS THAN THEIR--

Okay, I think today that they really have to listen because there has been so much opposition to what they have been doing in the past, so much pressure put onto them that they have to listen. Now they have to sit down and talk. And even like you challenge a company that's been doing some of the logging in the watershed, it was a New Zealand outfit, now it's Canadian owned which I think is a step forward.

LET ME JUST GO, I'VE JUST GOT A COUPLE OF THINGS I CAN JUMP AROUND HERE, IF I CAN. THE COLONY AT SOLA RIVER, WHY DID THAT END, THAT HERMIT COLONY THAT YOU WENT TO?



Well in a sense - I don't like to think of it ending because it really continues. But why did the hermits disperse and go to other areas. When the hermits first came there, there was no provision for them to leave their monasteries and to go out and live a hermit life. At the time abbots just wouldn't allow that. So the leader made it possible for them to come to the Solon Hermitage down south of here about 8 miles and to live a hermit life. But what we discovered was I think and my perspective was we became more and more of a community, the very thing we were trying to get away from. I was the procurator, the business manager and we were always talking about property and cars and taxes and things like that, or repairs. And it meant lots of meetings and we wanted to live more of a solitary life. So we talked to Remi about it and he said well, if you can find a place, someplace on the island in my diocese to live a solitary life, that's fine. So that was the beginning of dispersement.

WHAT'S THE COMMITMENT THAT YOU MAKE TO BE A HERMIT PRIEST?

The commitment?

YEAH, TO THE HERMIT PART OF THAT. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR YOU? WHAT'S THE JOB DESCRIPTION I GUESS IS WHAT I'M ASKING.

Yeah, what's the job description. Yeah that's a good point. Well, I think primarily it means lots of, lots of solitude, lots of quiet. Instead of living in a big community of monks I'm living here in a solitary environment, living alone. I have - I have contact with the world but very little in a sense. Not a great deal of contact with the world.

SO THERE ISN'T ANY RESTRICTION ON MEETING PEOPLE, TALKING WITH PEOPLE, SOCIALIZING?

No I think it would probably be between - I have a director. I suppose the bishop is my immediate, I don't suppose he is my immediate superior, and you know if he saw something out of line I certainly, he certainly would call me in. I have a contact with the founder, Jacques Vinandi in Belgium. And I have a director that I contact from time to time, so my life is known to other people. I'm not just an independent sort of irresponsible person that can do exactly as I would like to do. I'm - I have freedom but it's a responsible freedom.

SO THE BOY SCOUT EXPERIENCE IN MISSOURI.

Okay, when I was a boy scout, I used to go to the Ocoala boy scout camp in the summertime, working on merit badges and just camping. And they had a tribe of Micosay, an honorary tribe, and fascinating group that we all were enchanted by. And so I was called one night to become a Micosay and you're sitting around the council ring and Chief Bartle says, calls out your name, you come forth and he says you've been called, why you've been called you do not know and will you ever know, but thus far you have been considered worthy. And at the end of, for 4 and 20 hours you remain absolutely silent and at that time report to Blue-eyed Otter, the medicine man of the tribe. So I did that and then I was asked then to go out into the forest and spend the night, and with some blankets and during that course of the



time to make medicine and put into the little pouch, select a name, which was Night Bird for me, based on hearing a whipporwill call. And then we had to make vows, three vows, and one to love our country, love our mother and to love God. And I always thought of loving country, I never thought of it as specifically North America but I thought of the earth, about the earth. So that was a tremendous experience for me to spend that night and it took me very, I thought very close to the presence - it was just a tremendous, great experience for me.

HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN?

I was 13.

WOW. THAT'S A PRETTY PROFOUND.

It was really is, yes, and just reading about it later, like the native people, the interior Salish up on the river, the Stein River, they go into the forest and have initiation service very similar to that. And I suppose, I didn't realize it at the time, that Chief Bartle, because it was in the area of the Osage Indians on the Ocoila River there, Osage river, that they were drawing from this tradition, perhaps the Osage Indians had that same condition that the interior Salish have in the Stein River watershed.

BUT THERE'S THINGS, ALL KINDS OF THINGS FROM THAT EXPERIENCE THAT HAVE RESONATED IN YOUR LIFE THIS MANY YEARS LATER.

That's right, especially love for nature and plants.

DID YOUR PARENTS, I MEAN DID YOU HAVE TO TALK THEM INTO THIS OR?

Oh no, they didn't know about it. They had no idea of the initiation, no. And I suppose it was very, kept very secret too you know. I don't think we talked much about that part of it to anyone.

OKAY THE OTHER WAS ABOUT BECOMING THE FIRST HERMIT PRIEST.

When I came to the island, I had done my studies for the Catholic priesthood at New Mallory Abbey. And two years of philosophy, five years of theology, and before that I had been an Anglican priest and gone through another series of studies for that. But anyway, when I came here, Remi was aware I had done my studies for the priesthood. And when I went down to see him in Victoria, our superior asked me to go down and I talked to him. And he was very helpful. He took me round to a binder in Victoria, Fitzbrun, and helpful in sort of helping me get started in bookbinding in the sense he gave me some direction. But I talked to him about the priesthood and I said I'd like to go on for the priesthood, and I felt this call to the priesthood. And so he said at the time, well you know if you're eventually elected to the hermits and you become a hermit, and he said I will ordain you to the priesthood. And so after that becoming an official hermit, official hermit, then I was ordained - when I did that, then I was incardinated in the diocese of Victoria. When you're ordained, you're ordained - say if I were a monk I'd be ordained for the



community, for the monks themselves for their community. And so when you're ordained in a diocese you're ordained with the diocese. So I'm actually a priest of the diocese of Victoria, with a mandate - and when Remi preached the sermon at my ordination at Canadian Marchers in Courtenay, he said my mandate was to be a hermit, to live the hermit life. And just looking back over as far as we know historic records, this is the first record of a hermit being ordained to the priesthood in something like 200 years of the history of the church, as far as we can ascertain.

DO YOU KNOW WHY IS IT SO LONG? IS IT BECAUSE NO ONE WANTED THAT KIND OF LIFE OR?

Well it's just a very unusual circumstance I suppose. I suppose in Europe where the person would become a hermit might be already a priest. You don't necessarily have to be a priest of course to be a hermit. In fact perhaps the real hermits are those we know nothing about, you know the real genuine deep down hermits are people who - there are a lot of people I think on the islands around here, off of Vancouver Island, who live solitary lives. They may be artists or craftsmen. They live a very heremitic life of solitude and probably of deep prayer you know that's going on. No I think it's probably because I had done my studies and I requested it and Remi was open to it.

WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO IF NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT YOU?

Well I think it does a lot of good you know. I think we're talking about it before - we're talking about these sort of three laws coming down from the beginning of diversity and interiority and communion, that everything in the universe is connected to everything else. Everything you think or do, the stars are aware of it. Everything is connected. And I think the heart of contemplation is really love, Christian love or love, human love. And if we enter into that, that affects everything else in the universe, humans, nonhumans, it affects everything.

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