

CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 20

Our Personal Exodus

One of the things I love about living in the Comox Valley is looking up and seeing Eagles soaring above me. Usually there are a couple of them playing in the winds. During the herring migration there are sometimes many more.

They remind me of an exodus story. (The term exodus comes from the Greek and means a “coming out from”). Many years ago I was a young monk involved in biblical studies in the Passionist order. One day we got a visit from a Barnabas Ahern, a famous biblical scholar. He came to our class and told us a story.

One day Barnabas was out for a walk in the Sinai desert. He looked up and saw a strange sight. An eagle high above him seemed to be playing a game. As it was flying in the winds it would tilt to the side and drop something from its back. Then as the object fell, the eagle would swoop down and catch it again on its back. Then the eagle would climb to a higher altitude and do the same thing again.

This happened three or four times but the last time he noticed something different. The falling object was fluttering. He realized the eagle was not playing a game. It was teaching its young chick how to fly.

Watching this scene Barnabas told us that he finally realized the true significance of words he had read many times in the Book of Exodus. Yahweh-God called Moses up to the mountain and said to him, “*Tell this to the House of Jacob. Tell the Israelites you have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you away on eagle’s wings and brought you to me.*”(Exodus: 19:3)

We humans are now experiencing our own personal exodus event. Scientists are telling us that we have entered the new Anthropocene Era with its climate change and we are wreaking havoc on Earth. We have taken over the evolution process and are creating irreversible transformations. We are destroying many species and the eco-systems we all depend upon.

In a sense we humans are in an untenable situation. We must come out of this dangerous world we have created and enter into a new world that will maintain the lives of other species, the life of Earth’s resources and, indeed, our own lives. And the scientists have also told us that we must begin our exodus immediately.

But what is the path through this climate changing “desert” that we have been creating?

I think we start with awareness that continuing down our current path is no longer tolerable. What we are doing to Earth we are doing to ourselves. We need a personal exodus strategy based upon a psychic/spiritual awareness that helps us realize that we earthlings are part of the Earth we are destroying. This relationship may come to us in

many ways, often through action in the community. As the psychiatrist Eric Fromm once noted: *“People never think their way into new ways of acting. They act their way into new ways of thinking.”* And Lao Tzu put it even more succinctly: *“If you know, but do not do, you do not know.”*

Next we must seek out others who are aware that our present situation is untenable and are seeking their own “coming out from”. As they say, “It takes a community...”

Then we must develop a shared vision—some sense of where we are going and how we are going to get there. Because of the constant daily media references to climate change a number of these visions are beginning to emerge. My preference, as I’ve mentioned often in these chronicles, is Berry and Swimme’s Ecozoic Era—*a mutually enhancing relationship between our species and Earth.*

Finally, we must seek guidance from science. Ironically science has helped develop the systems that are causing the problems. Now they can help us create systems that can live within a living Earth. And we don’t have to be scientists to understand them. There are many knowledgeable science interpreters constantly explaining the science in media. Our role is to interpret the interpreters—share with others what the interpreters have given us, and test it in our work in the community.

Will this kind of personal exodus work? I don’t know. It will be a trial and error process and only time will tell. But, according to the scientists, time is the one thing we don’t have.

And, oh yes. One more thing. When I see the eagles in the sky and think of Barnabas Ahern’s story, I don’t think about Yahweh-God speaking to Moses in the book of Exodus, Today in our climate changing world I think of the fledgling chick falling though the sky. I think our highest priority must be to support and help young people learn how to fly on their own exodus journey.

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