

Obituary

Margaret Berry

Holding a St. John's University Ph.D. in nineteenth-century English literature (1956) and a University of Pennsylvania postdoctoral degree in South Asian studies (1969), Margaret Berry has, in addition to extensive college and university teaching, notably at John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio, authored three published books: *The Chinese Classic Novels: An Annotated Bibliography of Chiefly English-Language Studies* (1988), *Pegasus Over Asia: Ventures in East-West Literary Analysis* (1980), and *Mulk Raj Anand, The Man and the Novelist* (1971); numerous published articles; and two unpublished novels. She has received Ford, Fulbright, Danforth, and NDEA awards, among others, has held numerous offices and has traveled extensively in Europe, Latin America and Asia. Following 1993 retirement Dr. Berry has made her home in her native city of Greensboro, North Carolina, where she serves as liaison for Harvard University's Archives for Environmental Science and Public Policy, which houses the papers of her brother, geologist, cultural historian, and author Thomas Berry.

Thomas Berry (1914-2009), Passionist priest and internationally recognized historian of cultures, died peacefully at Well-Spring Lifecare Community, Greensboro, North Carolina, June 1, 2009. Thomas's writings and lectures on the relation of humans with the cosmos and Earth notably influenced the intellectual and spiritual history of the twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries.

Originally named after his father, William Nathan Berry, founder of Berico Fuels Company (1924), this second of eight sons in a family of thirteen children adopted the name Thomas (after philosopher-theologian Thomas Aquinas 1225-1274) following his entry in 1933 into the Passionist Religious Order. In 1943 Thomas began doctoral studies in history at the Catholic University of America, where he wrote on the historical theory of Italian philosopher-historian Giambattista Vico 1668-1744 (Catholic University Press, 1951).

Believing the wisdom of Asia indispensable for adequate learning, Thomas went to China in 1948 to study and to teach at Beijing's Fu Jen Catholic University but returned to America in 1949 when Mao Zedong took over China. Subsequent concentration on Chinese language and culture at Seton Hall University and, later, Sanskrit and South Asian culture at Columbia University, were interrupted by service as United States Army chaplain in Germany 1951-54. Afterwards Thomas undertook a teaching career, first with the Asian Institute of Seton Hall University (1956-1961); then with the Asian Institute of St. John's University (1961-1965); and finally as Associate Professor of Religion at Fordham University (1966-1979), where he instituted the doctoral program in the history of religions.

In 1970 Thomas inaugurated the Riverdale Center for Religious Research (1970-1995) in Riverdale, New York. From this base and with his presidency of the American Teilhard Society (1975-1987) Thomas's international influence as thinker, writer, and lecturer expanded rapidly. Annual Riverdale conferences explored themes such as Energy: Its Cosmic-Human Dimensions; The Future: Technological Society Man's Covenant?; New York as Sacred City; and The Ecozoic Age. From across the globe scholars and others came to the Center for rethinking their disciplines in the light of newly understood relations of humans to Earth. In 1998 the Thomas Berry Foundation was established by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, who co-founded the Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE) at Yale University.

Besides *The Riverdale Papers* (11 volumes), the most influential of Thomas Berry's books are *The Dream of the Earth* (1988, National Lannan Non-Fiction Award 1995); *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era* (1992) with mathematical-cosmologist Brian Swimme; *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* (1999); and *Evening Thoughts:*

Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community (2006). Two books of his books will be published posthumously: *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (2009) and *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* (2009).

Among Thomas's awards are eight honorary doctorates; the US Catholic Mission Association Award (1989); the 1992 James Herriot Award of the Humane Society of the US; Honorary Canonship of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine (1992); the 1993 Bishop Carroll T. Dozier Medal for Peace and Justice; the Catholic University of America Alumni Award for Research and Scholarship (1993); the 1992 Prescott College Environmental Award; annual Thomas Berry Lecture Awards established by Mt. St. Vincent College on the Hudson, and, in Washington, DC, by the Center for Respect of Life and Environment and the Humane Society of the US; and a Thomas Berry Hall and Thomas Berry Seminars at Whidbey Institute, Whidbey Island, near Seattle, Washington.

Surviving Thomas are brothers Benedict Regis and wife Jerry, of Charlotte, North Carolina; Thomas Gabriel and wife Stephanie and Stephen Badin and wife Rosemary of Greensboro, North Carolina; sister Margaret of Well-Spring Retirement Community, Greensboro, North Carolina, sister-in-law Jean Berry Forester and brother-in-law Leo J. Kelleher, Jr., of Greensboro, North Carolina.



Thomas and Margaret Berry, August 2003. Photo by Caroline Webb.