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Circular # 110

April 29, 1989

MATTHEW FOX AND THE HUMAN ENTERPRISE

Matthew Fox, the Dominican priest who runs the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality out in Oakland California was recently silenced by Rome. Fox sort of accepted the silencing and he sort of defied it also, which I thought was really hopeful. It attracts a lot of attention and it has the possibility of moving the few people in the church hierarchy who think, to think about why anybody in his (all Rome authority is male) right mind would want to shut up a genuine prophet, trying to bring religion into some sort of correspondence with the reality of a grievously injured earth.

Fox has written a new book called *THE COMING OF THE COSMIC CHRIST*, which I think may turn out to be the most important prophesy to modern Christianity ever written. In Part I, called *A Dream - Your Mother is Dying - A Crucifixion Story for Our Time*, it integrates the many, many stories of planetary ruin in order to create an overall sense of spreading death. The sections in Part I are titled; *Mother Earth is Dying; The Mystical Brain is Dying; Creativity is Dying; Wisdom is Dying; The Youth are Dying; Native Peoples, Their Religions and Cultures Are Dying; Mother Church Is Dying; Mother Love (Compassion) is Dying; Our Mother is Dying But Not Dead*. Those titles are made vivid in the texts that accompany them. As I read it my memory retrieved a phrase, "the failure of the human enterprise", that I had run into somewhere in my past reading.

Failure is in performance activated by perceptions. When the human came to perceive the earth as something to be exploited rather than as the embodiment of divine presence, failure was assured. It is now manifested in oil spills, ground water contamination, toxic waste, radioactive waste, acid rain, greenhouse effect, loss of ozone layer, top soil loss, wilderness loss, species loss. Further, it is manifested in war, hunger, oppression, addiction, and extreme maldistribution. Most of this list can be included under the heading matricide, the killing of the mother, Mother Earth. General death is the only possible outcome for the path we are on. Matt Fox, like the prophets of old, is standing in the market place and shouting it out. The Mother must live and live in her natural splendor. And only then can humans realize their humanness.

Well, do not stop with Part I. Part II finds the resurrection from death in the renewal of mysticism. Part III details the quest for the Historical Jesus to the quest for the Cosmic Christ as the paradigm shift for Western Religion.

Par IV is titled *Who Is The Cosmic Christ?* It opens with a quotation from Gregory Bateson, "Is the human race rotting its mind with slowly deteriorating religion?" And says in answer, "Without mind and mindfulness, religion is reduced to mere acts of will. Even well-intentioned acts of charity do not make up for the loss of mind - knowing our place in the universe. The Cosmic Christ is Creator of Mindfulness: the opening of the mind and the heart to the universe, to what is and where we are: citizens of a vast twenty billion year history that is still unfinished and which we are called to complete; citizens of a universe of one hundred billion galaxies, of which ours is a mysteriously small one. A mindful religion, then, awakens the mind rather than dulls it; praises the mind rather than diminishes it; resurrects the mind rather than rots it." There is a lot more in Part IV, but it can be summarized, perhaps, in the statement that the Cosmic Christ says to us exactly what the cosmos, the universe and the earth say to us when we are attuned to listen.

Part V, the last part, is called A Vision of the Second Coming, The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance. It deals with sexuality, sexual mysticism, the child and youth, something called adultism, the arts and artists, reinventing the human, play, creativity, work, worship, education, ecumenism, lifestyle. You should read it. It is the new paradigm described in a good deal of detail, under a lot of headings. This is what we want to be, a pattern we would like our children to choose to be, because it will make us and them belong to the earth, to the cosmos, and participants in the task of advancing the earth and its inhabitants toward their true destiny. Certainly it will involve the individual in responsibility, not for oneself alone but for the whole of the human enterprise. Lone personal salvation away from the earth can no longer be a Christian goal.

I have been working out a version of the reinvented human, (it's a Thomas Berry term), that goes something like this: Since the cosmos and the earth brought everything in it and on it into being, it is the function of each species to fulfill its nature. So it is the function of humans to be *fully* human and to develop human characteristics, and abilities within the constraint that the mother, Mother Earth, be honored, completed, and celebrated. That fits in very well with the text of Part V and it provides a place to make a point. It is a repetition of a point I make every time I get a chance. Human work available after human well-being has been provided for must be devoted to the objective of becoming more fully human and to "completing" the earth; making the earth a more glorious place, not making it a wasteland. The human journey is an aspect of the earth journey. Earth destiny and human destiny are inextricably entwined in each other. The fate of the land and the fate of its inhabitants are identical. One can produce all sorts of statements on that theme. Fox does a wonderful job of describing a human race realizing the potential for being fully human, fully integrated into earthly life. I think that's what it's all about.

Once, years ago, Thomas said to me that unless Christ is understood as a cosmic event, Christ is meaningless. Fox has brought his own deep scholarship to this matter, and he has brought wisdom and prophecy and mysticism. The book is not only aimed at those whose principal interpretation of reality derives from the Judeo-Christian scriptures, history, and tradition. Fox finds the Cosmic Christ to be a real presence in all sorts of religions and traditions. Whatever is authentic, whatever acknowledges the truths of science, and mysticism and art have found the message of the Cosmic, the Cosmologic Christ, for Fox defines cosmology to be "our joyful response (mysticism) to the awesome fact of our being in the universe (science) and our expression of that response by the art of our lives and citizenship (art)." The message of creation and the message of the divine are identical. Fox does not say so and I don't know if he would, but I can accept the proposition that creation is the embodiment of the creator; it is impossible for them to be out of synchrony.

TRANSPORTATION, ROADS AND AUTOMOBILES

NORTH CAROLINA HAS EMBARKED ON A TWELVE-YEAR-8.6 BILLION-DOLLAR ROAD BUILDING PROGRAM. CFRSL WILL CONDUCT A FORUM TO TALK ABOUT TRANSPORTATION AND ROADS AND WHAT'S GOOD FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS ON MAY 25TH AT CATES AUDITORIUM AT MEREDITH COLLEGE IN RALEIGH. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EXPERT EDSON TENNYSON OF ARLINGTON COUNTY VIRGINIA WILL SPEAK TO PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS.

NORTH CAROLINA SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, JAMES HARRINGTON HAS BEEN INVITED TO PRESENT THE VIEWS OF HIS DEPARTMENT. THOMAS BERRY, WHO WILL BE IN TOWN AT THAT TIME, WILL MAKE SOME REMARKS. AN OPEN FORUM TYPE PANEL DISCUSSION WILL FOLLOW.

ADVISERS TO CFRSL

Stephanie Bass, Peter Berg, Thomas Bery, Wendell Berry, Hal Crowther, Billy Cummings, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen
David Maenke, Hazel Henderson, Bill Holman, Evelyn Mattern, Charles Mulholland, John Papworth, Anne Pflaum,
Beth Pflaum, Zach Ralston, Sallie Ricks, Robert Rodale, Kirk Sale, Jane Sharp, Charlene Spretnak, Clay Stalnaker, Brian Swinnee