

Matthew Fox - Creation Spirituality

The following articles was posted in four segments on the January Adventure FaceBook page.

CREATION SPIRITUALITY: OVERVIEW

Whether we realize it or not, we're embarking on a new (to some of us) journey as we explore Creation Spirituality and Matthew Fox's new world vision.

To consider what Creation Spirituality constitutes, Dr. Fox suggests that we first consider what it is not...and that is "Original Sin" or the fall/redemption spirituality, which is the dualistic and patriarchal model that has dominated theology, Bible studies, seminary since the 400's, attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.)

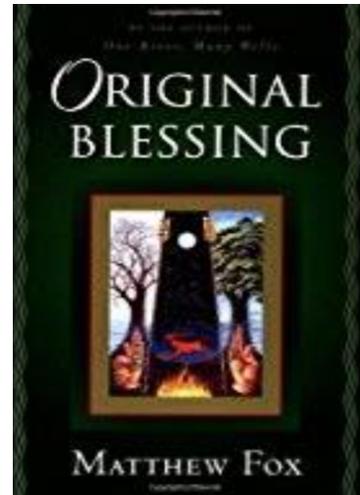
Because the fall/redemption tradition considers all nature "fallen" and "does not seek God in nature but (only) inside the individual soul," it is not just silent toward science but hostile to it. Dr. Fox quotes Professor Michael Polanyi pointing out that Augustine "destroyed interest in science all over Europe for a thousand years" because, for him, science "contributed nothing to the pursuit of salvation."

Dr. Fox continues: "To recover a spiritual tradition in which creation and the study of creation matters would be to inaugurate new possibilities between spirituality and science that would shape the paradigms for culture, its institutions, and its people.

"What would happen if science and religious traditions agreed to birth together a creation-centered spirituality recovering two sources of wisdom: nature via science and that of nature via religious tradition?"

The creation-centered tradition has a past; it has historical and biblical roots; it "boasts a communion of saints" tracing its roots to the ninth century B.C., with the psalms, wisdom books, the prophets, Jesus and much of the New Testament. But, says Dr. Fox, "it is utterly new to our culture." Adding "there is indeed a newness to what our generation will do with it: to what forms and expressions we will create along with current scientists, mystics, artists, peace and justice workers, feminists and Third World peoples."

And so the Original Sin transforms into the Original Blessing in Dr. Fox's teachings, recovering the more ancient, more universal wisdom.



References: Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality* (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1983), 12-

CREATION SPIRITUALITY: HISTORY

Drawing on the experiences, writings and rituals of all wisdom traditions, Creation Spirituality runs too deeply and broadly to be considered as “founded” or invented by one

person, or, indeed, by one tradition. Nevertheless, as Dr. Matthew Fox immersed himself in studies at L’Institute Catholique in Paris (1967), traditions — including the ancient J source of the Bible, indigenous cultures, eastern and western spiritualities, and contemporary science — were brought coherently together for him. The term “Creation Spirituality” was coined for Dr. Fox by the French theologian MD Chenu, with whom he studied at L’Institute.

Matthew Fox’s subsequent teaching and writing career led him to discover more and more deeply these common threads, and the Principles of Creation Spirituality (outlined in our next post) came to be identified. From his own perspective as a former Dominican priest, he writes “Creation Spirituality is not a newly-invented path, but, for the 20th Century Westerners, it is a newly-discovered path.”

According to encyclopedia.com: “Often called a spirituality of earth and cosmos, Creative Spirituality views creation as a primary revelation that is perpetually emerging. Fox asserts that this creation-centered consciousness can be sought and found in the oldest traditions of the Hebrew Bible (the J source, mentioned above) and especially in the reflections of medieval Christian mystics such as Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1327), Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), Julian of Norwich (1342–c. 1415), and Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210–1280).”

The late Thomas Berry* said of Dr. Fox that “he might be the most creative, the most comprehensive, surely the most challenging theologian in America.” Dr. Berry contended that the Western philosophical split between (1) religion, (2) science and humanity, and (3) creation must be mended by recognizing the profound spiritual dimension of the fifteen-billion-year epic of cosmic evolution, or the “universe story.” Dr. Berry spoke of the need for a common creation story that understands the human not only as an intimate part of a sacred, evolving universe, but also as the being in whom the universe has become conscious of itself.

Dr. Matthew Fox gives us this story.

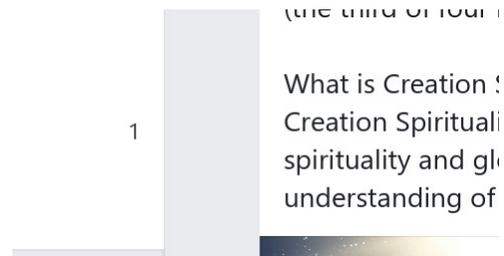
*Thomas Berry, C.P., PhD (1914 – 2009) was a Catholic priest of the Passionist order, cultural historian and ecotheologian (although cosmologist and geologist – or “Earth scholar” – were his preferred descriptors). Among advocates of “ecospirituality” and the “New Story,” he is famous for proposing the idea that a deep understanding of the history and functioning of the evolving universe is a necessary inspiration and guide for our own effective functioning as individuals and as a species. He is considered a leader in the tradition of Teilhard de Chardin. (Source: wikipedia)

In addition to "Original Blessing," cited in the previous post, Dr. Fox develops the conversation between Western spirituality and other traditions in "One River, Many Wells" 2004; with science in "Natural Grace" by Fox and Rupert Sheldrake 1996; and with the passionate creativity of art in "Creativity" 2004.

Excerpts were drawn from Dr. Fox's website article on Creative Spirituality and encyclopedia.com.

CREATION SPIRITUALITY: PRINCIPLES

What is Creation Spirituality? "Honoring all of creation as Original Blessing, Creation Spirituality integrates the wisdom of Eastern and Western spirituality and global indigenous cultures, with the emerging scientific understanding of the universe, and the passion of creativity. It is both a tradition and a movement, celebrated by mystics and agents of social change from every age and culture. It is also the tradition of the historical Jesus himself since it is the wisdom tradition of Israel." --Matthew Fox



PRINCIPLES

==> 1) The Universe is fundamentally a blessing. Our relationship with the Universe fills us with awe.

==> 2) In Creation, God is both immanent and transcendent. This is pantheism which is not theism (God out there) and not atheism (no God anywhere). We experience that the Divine is in all things and all things are in the Divine.

==> 3) God is as much Mother as Father, as much Child as Parent, as much God in mystery as the God in history, as much beyond all words and images as in all forms and beings. We are liberated from the need to cling to God in one form or one literal name.

==> 4) In our lives, it is through the work of spiritual practice that we find our deep and true selves. Through the arts of meditation and silence, we cultivate a clarity of mind and move beyond fear into compassion and community.

==> 5) Our inner work is a four-fold journey involving
—awe, delight amazement (known as the Via Positiva);
—uncertainty, darkness, suffering, letting go (Via Negativa);
—birthing, creativity, passion (Via Creativa); and
—justice, healing, celebration (Via Transformativa).

We weave through these paths like a spiral danced, not a ladder climbed.

==> 6) Every one of us is a mystic. We can enter the mystical as much through beauty (Via Positiva) as through contemplation and suffering (Via Negativa). We are born full of wonder and can recover it at any age.

==> 7) Every one of us is an artist. Whatever the expression of our creativity, it is our prayer and praise (Via Creativa).

==> 8) Every one of us is a prophet. Our prophetic work is to interfere with all forms of injustice and that which interrupts authentic life (Via Transformativa).

==> 9) Diversity is the nature of the Universe. We rejoice in and courageously honor the rich diversity within the Cosmos and expressed among individuals and across multiple cultures, religions, and ancestral traditions.

==> 10) The basic work of God is compassion, and we, who are all original blessings and sons and daughters of the Divine, are called to compassion. We acknowledge our shared interdependence; we rejoice at one another's joys and grieve at one another's sorrows, and labor to heal the causes of those sorrows.

==> 11) There are many wells of faith and knowledge drawing from one underground river of Divine wisdom. The practice of honoring, learning, and celebrating the wisdom collected from these wells is Deep Ecumenism. We respect and embrace the wisdom and oneness that arises from the diverse wells of all the sacred traditions of the world.

==> 12) Ecological justice is essential for the sustainability of life on Earth. Ecology is the local expression of cosmology, and so we commit to live in light of this fall: to pass on the beauty and health of Creation to future generations.

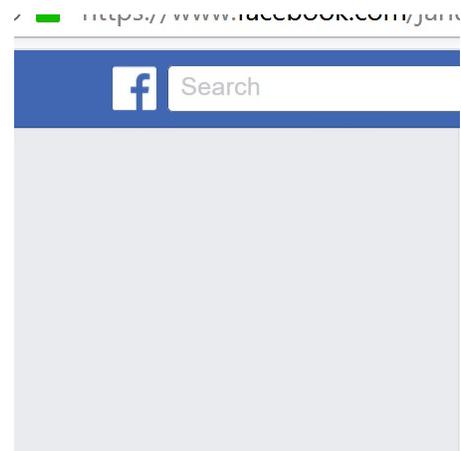
Amen.

Source: <http://www.matthewfox.org/what-is-creation-spirituality/>

CREATION SPIRITUALITY: Enlisting a world-wide action community

Dr. Matthew Fox's newest book, "Order of the Sacred Earth, An Intergenerational Vision of Love and Action," (OSE) moves Dr. Matthew Fox's passion for Creation Spirituality from theory and principles to enlisting a world-wide action community.

Dr. Fox tells of the birth of his inspiration: "On September 17, 2014, I was awakened at four o'clock AM with a simple and clear mandate: 'Do this!!!' Later in the day I wrote the following note to myself on a scrap of paper, spelling out what the dream had told me to do: 'To launch a new "religious" order which is in fact a spiritual order that is deeply ecumenical and creation-



centered, allowing for people to more easily and joyfully carry on their varied vocations to save Mother Earth within a loose but real sense of community. It would take us beyond Institutional Religion and Institutional Education as we know them.”

Fleshed out with two 30-somethings, Jennifer Listug and Skylar Wilson, OSE proposes creating a loosely bound spiritual Order of people from different backgrounds, different beliefs, and different persuasions “who share a sacred vow to become the best lovers (mystics) and defenders (warriors) they can on behalf of Mother Earth.”

This collective vision foresees a new world order where adherents will do the inner work to overcome biases that prevent whole-hearted collaboration. According to Listug, “We are (now) missing a larger order of purpose that unifies us, inspires us to make decisions about our lives and our world that are in support of equality, justice, sustainability and love.”

The book itself, “Order of the Sacred Earth,” embodies this loosely- bound community. Introductory commentaries by the three creating visionaries are followed by 19 brief essays written by accomplished individuals from widely varying fields of study and expertise. Each of the writers comments on “What might a new, inclusive, spiritual Order contribute to our world?”

Dr. Fox adds that the coming of fruition of OSE in 2017 coincides with of the Order of St. Francis (the 807th anniversary being celebrated) and the Order of St. Benedict (its 800th anniversary) along with the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation — but it is “more than a coincidence. There is something finished — but not forgotten — about these past movements. The eras that spawned them are behind us.”

Thus, this inspiring book does not suggest creating a new institution. Rather it opens a wonderful conversation about the possibilities of such a spiritual movement, inviting every participant to imagine how their gifts can best contribute.

January Adventure 2019 will surely be filled with imagining new ways to implement these visions. To have this visionary, this prophet, this mystic — Matthew Fox — in our midst, here at January Adventure 2019, Epworth- by-the-Sea — at this time in our country, in our world, and in our universe — is truly an opportunity, a privilege and an honor.

This article was written in light collaboration with January Adventure by new Adventurer Anne Camp. Says Anne: “I knew very little about the 76-year-old Dr. Fox and was delighted by the opportunity to read, review and share with you Matthew Fox’s new book. If you can’t wait to get a head start on the conversations, you can order OSE at <http://www.matthewfox.org/.../order-of-the-sacred-earth-an-in....>”

Also check out <https://www.facebook.com/Orderofthesacredearth/> from which the photos of Skylar and Jennifer and the Bookshelf were taken.
