

CREATION-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY

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I. GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

- There has been a quantum leap in people's consciousness about ecological problems. We are actually in a grave global ecological crisis which has the following manifestations:

1)alteration of planetary circulations and exchange— *exchanges of energy between sun and Earth are being altered with consequences for global warming and increased transmission of damaging ultraviolet radiation;*

2)land degradation—*cropland and food production capacity is being degraded by erosion, desertification, and salinization;*

3)water quality degradation— *both surfaced waters and groundwater are being polluted by agricultural chemicals and landfill leachates;*

4)deforestation and habitat destruction. . .This is the massive destruction of forests. When one tree is cut, 500 other species die with it because of their dependence on the tree;

5)species extinction and biotic alterations. .-The difference between death and extinction is the permanence of extinction. Dead trees and plants will regenerate but extinct species will forever be erased from the face of the earth. The fast rate of extinction of species is truly alarming

6. wastes and global toxification. .Not only are natural habitat destroyed, the earth itself is being poisoned by the gases and wastes that human beings are pouring into it,

7)human and cultural degradation: *long standing human cultures that have lived sustainably for centuries are rapidly degraded and extinguished by non sustainable development.* (Calvin B. deWitt , “ The Religious Foundations of Ecology” in Judith Scherff (ed), The Mother Earth Handbook (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1991), pp253-254.)

II. THE PHILIPPINE ECOLOGICAL SITUATION

The Philippines has been one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world. The Philippines is an archipelago of more than 7,100 islands. Its complex geological history and long periods of isolation from the rest of the world are primary reasons for its high levels of biological diversity and endemism. But this is under tremendous threats. For example there is less than 18% left of our virgin forests compared to the pre-Spanish times. Our coral reefs and mangroves are depleted due to harmful fishing practices. There is massive erosion, siltation , and toxification of our soil. Our waters, ground and surface sources , are being poisoned by fertilizers and pesticides. The state of our ecological crisis is bemoaned by our bishops in their encyclical on ecology.

One does not need to be an expert to see what is happening and to be profoundly troubled by it. Within a few short years, brown eroded hills have replaced luxuriant forests in many parts of the country. We see dried up riverbeds where, not so long ago, streams flowed throughout the year. Farmers tell us that, because of erosion and chemical poisoning, the yield from the croplands has fallen substantially. Fishermen and experts on marine life have a similar message. Their fish catches are shrinking in the wake of the extensive destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests. The picture which is emerging in every province of the country is clear and bleak. The attack on the natural world which benefits very few Filipinos is rapidly whittling away at the very base of our living world and endangering its fruitfulness for future generations. (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines , 1999)

The main causes of our ecological problems are:

- ◇ **profit-oriented extractive economy (GLOBALIZATION)**
 - ◇ **deforestation**
 - ◇ **mining**
 - ◇ **destructive fishing methods**
- ◇ **toxic emissions and wastes from industrial activities and vehicles**
- ◇ **use of ecologically unfriendly energy sources**
- ◇ **ecologically unfriendly agricultural and fishing practices**
- ◇ **overpopulation**
- ◇ **inefficient waste management**
- ◇ **unethical use of biotechnology**
- ◇ **consumption-driven lifestyles**
- ◇ **ecologically unfriendly projects (i.e. dams, etc.)**
- ◇ **mechanistic cosmology and misinterpretation of Genesis 1:26-28- This passage mandates stewardship and not plunder of the earth.**

III. TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL HEALING

We have come to the point that if we do not do anything substantial and fundamental in our lifestyle and activities, the damage to our earth can come to a point of no return. So there has to be a serious commitment to ecological healing, development and protection. What everyone first of all has to be aware of are the following sound ecological principles:

- **Life is an interconnected web, not a hierarchy.**
- **Nature is not a lifeless machine but a sacred living organism.**
- **Humans are not above nature but are part of it.**
- **All parts of the ecosystem have intrinsic value.**

- **There is no “free lunch”. We have devastated mother earth. Now is payback time.**
- **Nature knows best. As long as we don’t aggressively interfere with it, it can heal itself.**
- **Healthy systems maintain diversity. We should maintain it by avoiding cash crops, etc.**
- **Unity in diversity. The richness of diversity must be geared to one common goal—the enhancement and protection of our environment.**

It is not enough to know these principles, we have to engage in concrete actions and develop eco-friendly habits. Here are some sound ecological practices:

- **ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND CONSCIENTIZATION-** Ecology should be taught in all levels of the school. Seminars and informal conscientization programs must be initiated
- **ECOLOGICAL ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM-** Collective action, mass rallies and protests are necessary for those in authority to legislate and to implement eco-friendly laws. Violators should be punished
- **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-** There should be lobbying for more sustainable development projects and denouncing of dependency on foreign countries for food sufficiency.
- **“SAPAT NA” PRACTICE-** This is a practice of indigenous people of getting from nature what they need and just enough to give others a chance also to fulfill their needs. It advocates simplicity of life style.
- **ZERO WASTE MANAGEMENT-REDUCE, RECYCLE, REUSE-** Households, schools, convents and other institutions should institutionalize these practices so that it becomes a second nature to people
- **ORGANIC, BIO-DIVERSE FARMING AND TREE PLANTING-**More people should engage in small bio-diverse farming and planting of organic vegetables. Everyone should engage in planting more and more trees in all the spaces available.
- **HEALTHY FOOD CAMPAIGN-** People’s health is a part of ecological health. Soft drinks and junk foods should be banned from school canteens.
- **NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION-** Institutions should connect and collaborate with the efforts of environmental groups for ecological protection and preservation.
- **COMMITMENT TO ECO-JUSTICE-** Foreigners are usually very careful about cutting trees, etc, in their own countries but are conscienceless when they devastate the forests of third world countries. This is ecological injustice.

IV.CREATION-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY

- According to Brian Swimm and Thomas Berry, ecological healing consists in everyone working together to bring about what they call the ecozoic era which they define as: **A NEW PERIOD OF CREATIVITY PARTICIPATED IN BY THE ENTIRE EARTH COMMUNITY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE INTEGRAL FUNCTIONING OF THE PLANET BY BRINGING THE HUMAN ACTIVITIES ON THE EARTH IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE OTHER FORCES SO THAT A CREATIVE BALANCE WILL BE ACHIEVED.**

TO BUILD AND NURTURE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, TO BRING ABOUT THE ECOZOIC ERA IS TO GO ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

A. CHANGE OF THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Creation-centered spirituality presupposes a change of theological focus from a sin and redemption perspective to a creation-centered perspective. Matthew Fox provides a helpful schema to show the difference between the two:

- **CREATION-CENTERED**

Starting point: : Dabbar-God's creative energy

Image of God: Father, Mother, child

**Image of Christ -: Prophet, artist, cosmic, son of God
who calls other to their divinity**

**TRINITARIAN CONCEPT-God as Creator, Prophet ,
Divine transformer**

**IMAGE OF HUMAN BEING-Royal person who can
choose to create or destroy
Dialectical soul and body relationship**

CONCEPT OF FAITH

**Trust- Total surrender because one is loved unconditionally.
Openness to the radically new- risk rather security
Leap into the dark**

SALVATION AND PROCESS

**Healing of people of God and cosmos
Build up kingdom-cosmos
Salvation-total and concrete
Struggle for justice and to balance the cosmos**

SIN AND REDEMPTION

SIN

mainly Father

**Mainly historical, ontological
Son of God**

**underdeveloped theology of
Creator and Spirit**

**Human being as essentially
sinful
dualism of body and soul**

**Faith as assent to a body
truths. Security in being saved
because one is a law abiding
citizen**

**Build up of Church
Abstract and purely spiritual
struggle to clean one's soul
A-political-keep status quo**

Prophetic-critical of status quo
Eternal life-now and the not yet, death natural event

eternal life- only in future
death-wage of sin

● **HOLINESS AND SANCTITY**

Cosmic hospitality
Ecological and cosmic
Hospitality to all being
Discipline to birthing
Celebration of passion
Imperfection part of nature and growth

Keeps soul wet so that it grows, expands
and stays green.
Emphasizes original blessing
Vertical, horizontal and circular
Humility-befriending the earth (humus)
Hopeful
For the powerless and oppressed

quest for perfection
egological
purity from the world
mortification of body
suppression of passion
return to past state of perfection

keeps the soul clean

emphasizes original sin
mainly vertical
despising of one's soul

