

# THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

## Creational Spirituality

IN NORTH AMERICA the two most prominent proponents of the creational spirituality represented by this issue of *The Way* are the Passionist, Thomas Berry and the Dominican, Matthew Fox. The present note will seek to provide readers with a few entry points into these writers and the movement which they help to lead. It will then reflect regarding several points of the new creational paradigm which may be expected, as the movement matures, to evoke contrary reactions from more traditionally minded people.

Two good places to begin to listen to Thomas Berry are a recent issue of *Cross Currents*, and a slim paperback where two of his essays stimulate responses from several others.<sup>1</sup> The former of these sources contains three of Berry's essays, together with his 'Twelve principles for reflecting on the universe', along with appreciations of his thought by Brian Swimme, Arthur Fabel and John Grim. In the first of his essays, 'Creative energy', Berry touches on several of the recurring motifs and theses which characterize his thought. Here is a first vantage point for meeting Berry the cultural historian. He enumerates historical periods as: 1) archetypal or divine; 2) the period of classical culture; 3) the modern period; 4) the emerging ecological age. He lays out the dichotomy existing between modern science, focused on creation, and traditional Christian religion, focused on redemption. He highlights the urgency of the present situation from the standpoint of the well-being of the total community of earth's citizens and the furtherance of the cosmic process. He then calls for a responsive 'mystique of the land', needed to counteract the destructive industrial mystique. He sees mythic and archetypal energies as crucial in this effort to ward off disaster, and he celebrates the fact that a postmodern science has opened itself to the recognition of such energies throughout the universe. The human contribution is needed, but must be set within the contribution of the universe.

The ultimate custody of the earth belongs to the earth. The issues we are considering are fundamentally earth issues that need to be dealt with in some direct manner by the earth itself. As humans we need to recognize the limitations in our capacity to deal with these comprehensive issues of the earth functioning. So long as we are under the illusion that we know what is good for the earth and for ourselves, we will continue our present course with its devastating consequences on the entire earth community (*Cross Currents*, p 186).

The statement typifies Berry's call for a shift from an anthropocentric or homocentric to a biocentric paradigm.

A second essay, 'The new story: comments on the origin, identification and transmission of values', picks up in greater detail the dichotomy between the mystique of redemption espoused by the Christian community and the mystique of creation emerging from the new science, which has rediscovered psychic and even mystical dimensions of cosmic processes. The 'Christian redemptive mystique is little concerned with any cosmological order or process since the essential thing is redemption out of the world through a personal Saviour relationship that transcends all such concerns' (*Cross Currents*, p 191). But this excessive redemptional emphasis is now played out. Nor is there any real hope in the present dialogue of believers with the scientific community (Berry is not here referring to the kind of dialogue in which he himself has been involved), at least to the extent to which the scientific community attends only to the physical dimensions of nature, and the religious community neglects the new cosmology. 'Surface agreement is not depth communion on the level of sound cosmic-earth-human values. Both traditions are trivialized. Their extrinsic union is even more trivialized. The human venture remains stuck in the impasse' (*Ibid.*, p 192). For Berry the redemptive myth as traditionally understood must yield. The new story, the primary revelation, is not the story of Jesus, his life, death, exaltation to the role of the cosmic Christ, as in Teilhard, but rather the story unfolded by the new physics and the new astronomy.

In this context Berry raises the question of the source of our values. His response is congruous with his total vision. 'It can be said that whereas formerly values consisted in the perfection of the earthly image reflecting an external Logos in a world of fixed natures, values are now determined by the sensitivity of humans in responding to the creative urgencies of a developing world' (*Ibid.*, p 194). This new paradigm for identifying values has three dimensions (here, as elsewhere, Teilhard is both echoed and transcended): differentiation, subjectivity and communion. It is the task of education to communicate this new vision of values to successive generations. 'In all these studies and in all these functions, the basic values depend on conformity to the earth process. To harm the earth is to harm the human; to ruin the earth is to destroy it' (*Ibid.*, p 198). Here Berry in effect proposes for both moral and spiritual theologies a kind of new *tantum quantum* principle, a rational alternative to our present ecological concupiscence. But however grim the immediate prospects, given the rapidity and intensity with which humans are destroying their essential life context, 'the basic mood of the future might be one of confidence in the continuing revelation that takes place in and throughout the earth' (*Ibid.*, p 198). For me this sentence suggests that Berry shares the basic optimistic mood of the Enlightenment in its adherence to evolutionary theory.

Berry's two essays in the Lonergan-Richards volume apply his vision to economics and to religion. 'Economics: its effects on the life systems of the world' calls for a reconceptualization of what has been called 'the dismal science'. 'The primary objective of economic science . . . must be the integration of human well-being within the context of the well-being of the natural world. This is the primary purpose of economics' (Lonergan, p 9). The essay, like others, manifests Berry's wide acquaintance with the literature and movements of the specific fields to which he applies his basic cosmo-cultural vision.

'The earth: a new context for religious unity' is as radical an approach to ecumenism as one might find in Christian circles. Noting that a fundamentalist revival is taking place in non-Christian as well as in Christian traditions, Berry goes on to critique Vatican II's view of revelation as primarily verified in Judeo-Christian revelation. Instead, he espouses a view which distinguishes 'microphase membership' from 'macrophase influence' in each of the world's revelatory traditions, and which affirms qualitative, not merely quantitative differences among all the world's religions. Christianity is then no longer seen as containing in fullness or primacy what is found less perfectly in other religions. Instead, in and through the uniqueness of each tradition, and allowing for enduring microphase membership, all the religions in their aspect of macrophase influence can enrich one another. But the context and bond of solidarity is to be found in no one of these traditional religions or in all of them together. It is the new myth, disclosed through the labours of the new science, which provides the Ariadne thread.

For the first time the entire human community has, in this story, a single creation or origin myth. Although it is known by scientific observation, this story also functions as myth. In a special manner this story is the overarching context for any movement towards the creative interaction of peoples or cultures or religions. For the first time we can tell the universe story, the earth story, the human story, the religion story, the Christian story and the church story as a single comprehensive narrative (Lonergan, pp 37ff).

Against the background of the teaching of John and Paul, Aquinas and Teilhard,

it should not be difficult to accept the universe itself as the primordial sacred community, the macrophase mode of every religious tradition, the context in which the divine reality is revealed to itself in that diversity which in a special manner is 'the perfection of the universe' (Lonergan, p 38).

Although it is only within the past several years that Berry's powerful vision has found widespread publication, his essays and lectures have been influencing a growing circle of disciples and others for more than a decade. One illustration of how the new cosmology has begun to find a lived realization is Genesis Farm, in the rolling countryside of western New Jersey, not far from the Delaware Water Gap. Here Sister Miriam Therese MacGillis O.P., with a small group of associates, is developing 140 acres of farm land in an effort to realize part of the vision of Thomas Berry, with whom Sister Miriam has studied, and also of the Swiss philosopher, Rudolph Steiner. Though modest and unassuming in outreach, Genesis Farm has already enlisted a sizeable group of families in a co-operative approach to living interactively with the larger earth community. There are initial plans also for a Montessori school which would begin the learning process by exposing children first of all to the book of nature. In Canada and the United States several other brave new ventures are helping to translate idea into movement, conviction into practice.<sup>2</sup>

The other principal name associated in Roman Catholic circles with creational spirituality is that of Matthew Fox. For more than a decade this Dominican priest has published and lectured extensively on behalf of creation-centred spirituality, and also, with colleagues, initiated a centre at Oakland in California, where the new vision shared by Berry, Fox, Swimme and others is being disseminated through courses and other programmes.

Fox brings to this endeavour a special interest in historical Christian thinkers such as Aquinas, Eckhart and Mechtilde. Whereas Berry tends to be more philosophical and cosmological, Fox more expressively links the creational movement with the most varied theological, pastoral and spiritual concerns of the day. The literary temperaments of the two men are strikingly different. Berry's passion is mediated through writing that is sober, detached and intellectual, whereas Fox's passion is more 'up front', more effusive, with a penchant for play, satire and hyperbole that enchants some and exasperates others. But his basic theses are quite congruous with those of Berry. And the presence of Brian Swimme, a former student of Berry, in Fox's immediate circle, signalizes the relationship between the two principal leaders of the movement.

The two more substantive of Fox's volumes would appear to be *A spirituality named compassion*, published in 1979, and *Original blessing*, published in 1983.<sup>3</sup> The former of these seeks to correct the privatized and sentimental understanding of compassion which the author sees as its imprisoned state in recent centuries. As he develops the theme, it becomes more closely integrated with justice, and with the passionate struggle to develop the world. Central to the volume is a sharp contrast between the spiritual images of climbing Jacob's ladder, an image favoured in

mainstream spirituality, which Fox sees as fostering the male mystique of conquest and competition, and 'dancing Sarah's circle', a metaphor much in favour in feminist circles. An important chapter, calling for a creative shift from a fetish with the cross to an exploration of the empty tomb, shows Fox laying out the same contrast of creational and redemptional motifs that we have seen in Berry. The book finishes with chapters relating this new understanding of compassion to the worlds of the new physics, the new economics, and the new politics. Like *Original blessing*, the book has the character of a manifesto. In all the fields examined Fox shows himself well acquainted with the literature and with current trends. Though the phrase originated elsewhere, we may say that both Berry and Fox are engaged in weaving a seamless garment and a consequent consistent ethic of life. In both cases, especially that of Berry, the primary source of the new paradigm is the work of the new science in disclosing the fascinating oneness of cosmic life in its evolution.

*Original blessing*, Fox's more recent presentation of his views, is a sprawling examination of no fewer than twenty-six themes. One would be hard put to find a recent trend in any of the physical, behavioural, social, or other disciplines unrepresented in this enthusiastic display. Readers are invited to savour pleasure, to understand humility as earthiness, to find in panentheism an acceptable *via media* between theism and pantheism, and so forth. But these engagements constitute just the *via positiva*, the first of four paths in creation spirituality. The *via negativa* seeks to show that there is room in this new spirituality for emptying, kenosis, even a theology of the cross. Despite Fox's severe strictures against 'sin-centred spirituality', this section of *Original blessing* retrieves for the new paradigm such traditional themes as healing, forgiveness and sacrifice. The third path, the *via creativa*, weaves into the seamless garment such themes as cosmogenesis, birthing and motherhood, artistic creativity and trinitarian symbolism. In the fourth path, the *via transformativa*, Fox finds a norm for judging the quality of human creativity, and a way back to the realization of the promise of creation. Compassion, the motif of his earlier book, recurs here as the primary term which names the end-beginning towards which the whole process is moving. Three appendices offer, in turn, indications of a family-tree of historical creation-centred spirituality (a somewhat bizarre rating system assigns four stars e.g. to Hildegard, Eckhart and Francis, three to Benedict, Dominic and Dante, with lower ratings for Cassian, Clare and Catherine of Siena); a handy two-column contrast of the features of fall-redemption and creation-centred spirituality; and an annotated bibliography. Readers looking for a single, readable introduction to Fox's version of the movement might do best by choosing *Original blessing*.

Before listing some major points of tension between the creational movement represented by Berry and Fox and prevailing traditional

versions of Christian spirituality, it may be helpful to situate the movement as a whole within the present moment. Together with the feminist movement, with which it is closely allied (sharing a basic critique of the patriarchal and hierarchical past, and a general vision of alternative modes of living and thinking), the creational movement is bringing us to the heart of the human and therefore to the heart of spirituality. The passing on of human life through generative love between women and men, together with the situation of this process within the larger generativity of earth and the cosmic process—how could spiritual theory and practice be more radically challenged than in the call to assume the burden of these intertwined problems? Both movements, especially in the intertwining, serve to question the adequacy, and even the relevancy, of spiritualities focused more or less exclusively on traditional themes and specific current interests e.g. personal prayer and devotion, liturgical practice, psychospiritual development, the linkage of spirituality with pastoral and ecclesial concerns, and the like. It is, as we Americans are fond of saying, 'a new ball game', one that needs to be played with a sense of urgency, given the growing cultural breakdown of relationships between men and women and between humans and their earthly environment.

Second, we will be better disposed to accept the presence of creational spirituality if we have recourse to the now familiar notion of a paradigm shift. In the great doctrinal crises of Christian history, underneath the *sic et non* of particular clashes, lay the fact that, especially in times of significant cultural change, new frameworks for the language of faith were required. A recent important example would be the 'sea change' noted by John Coleman, the shift within less than half a century from speaking of lay apostolate to the language of Christian ministry.<sup>4</sup> Another notable shift has had to do with the locus and method of theology, or of an important way in theology, the way of theological reflection, as it is called, whose paradigm strikingly differs from those of magisterial or academic theologies. In such shifts the same basic elements of faith remain but are put in a new framework. What was formerly highlighted is now somewhat muted, or vice versa. The enterprise is fraught with the opposite risks of infidelity to a normative heritage and stultification in lifeless forms. In times of such paradigmatic shifts, impasse between conflicting views is normal. My sense is that the feminist and ecological movements within the Church are bringing a sea change more demanding than any that have gone before, precisely because they touch not this or that facet of divine revelation but the very heart of what it means to be human creatures of God.

Third, those of us who feel threatened in our convictions by either or both of these movements (and the present writer would describe himself as one of Teilhard's 'waverers') may profit by words of wisdom written

more than half a century ago by Ronald Knox in *Enthusiasm*. The witty monsignor, older readers may recall, graphically described a recurring phenomenon in Christian history, verified in crisis situations concerned, for example, with Montanism, Pelagianism, Methodism, Jansenism and the like. A tiny group of individuals comes to the realization that something is rotten in the Denmark of institutional Christianity, that the gospel is not being lived, in fact is being corrupted. They begin the effort within the established Church to call all back to real Christianity. Knox is especially helpful in portraying what generally happens in such situations: a breakdown in communications, mutual recriminations and consequent stereotyping, leading eventually to a tragic break, and the spawning of a new 'heresy', (which, he sagely observes, will go on to become institutionalized and so fair game for some subsequent movement of enthusiasm).

However enlightening, Knox's volume falls short of describing the present situation in one major respect. The principal inspiration for the new creational spirituality, most clearly in Thomas Berry, is coming from outside of traditional Christianity, from the new physics and the new astronomy perceived as constituting a new myth and a new mysticism. Earlier forms of enthusiasm, even perhaps as recently as Teilhard de Chardin and, in another example, liberation theology, looked to Christian and biblical sources as the basis of a prophetic critique of the present establishment. In the present instance, however, the situation appears to be reversed. Within this form, at least, of the ecological movement, it is the mainstream of Christian tradition, including the Biblical sources, which is being exposed to critical scrutiny in the name of a revelation which is not primarily the Christian version. Despite this major difference, however, Knox's observations can be helpful for dialogue.

One of the questions to be considered is whether any particular stance of creation-centred spirituality is provisional and methodological, or firm and substantive. One may here recall Bonhoeffer's moratorium on God-language a few decades ago. Here both Berry and Fox have called for a moratorium on redemption language, and we have seen that, in Fox, the new creational paradigm seeks to make space for familiar redemptional themes. This would seem to point to no more than a revisionist position, challenging but not abandoning a distinctively Christian stance. At other times, however, the language of the movement suggests more radical options.

With these remarks as background, the following are several areas where tension appears to exist and dialogue is certainly called for in evaluating the new movement within the Christian Church.

There is first the question of the immanence and transcendence of humankind within the material universe. That traditional understandings are here vulnerable, as tainted with Platonist, Stoicist, even Manicheistic

versions of the matter-spirit relationship, will be widely admitted. Even prior to the rise of creational theology efforts have been made, for example by Karl Rahner, Teilhard de Chardin, and many biblical theologians focused on the Jew-Greek motif, to shed the dichotomy which has doubtless plagued this philosophical and theological base of spirituality. Further back in history, the struggle between Platonists and Aristotelians in searching for soul-body formulations acceptable for Christian faith was highly conflictual. It will not do, therefore, to lump all prior views together as dichotomous, nor should the vulnerability of proposed alternatives be overlooked. The paradigm of Thomas Berry, for example, by which the human becomes a function of the earthly and the cosmic, and humankind is viewed as part of the cosmic whole, deserves scrutiny. Berry makes it clear that the human community retains distinctiveness within the cosmic community, by its capacity for reflective consciousness. But can this distinctiveness, together with the quality of freedom (not highlighted in the essays of Berry which I have read), consistently maintain itself within a whole-part paradigm? What is this whole, indeed, and is it capable immanently of yielding at the high point of the cosmic process such a subject as the human subject? Even if the other members of the earth and cosmic community are not to be viewed as mere things, sheer tools for human manipulation—here the Stoic *favi-uti* paradigm adapted by Augustine is quite properly left behind—but as conscious subjects possessed of their own innate dignity, how can such a status be affirmed for them without the reduction of human dignity? There is question here not merely of affirming that humans are immanent in the earth and cosmos, but of consistently and adequately differentiating their nature and role from the rest of the creation. Evolutionary origin does not exclude a qualitative discontinuity between the human and the prehuman. The human voice is indeed, representatively, the voice of the universe, but not reductively so. Karl Rahner has emphasized the risk taken by God in endowing humans with the freedom to say 'No', even to the Creator. Equally real and no less poignant is our power to say 'No' to the rest of the cosmos, as the present ecological crisis makes clear. When the genetic code is transformed in humans to become a cultural code, the language of part and whole may no longer be appropriate; or perhaps a more dialectical expression of the human-cosmic relationship still needs to be found.

The above discussion may make it appear that tensions with traditional formulations are a rather abstract and purely philosophical matter. But there are implications for the task of relating the commitment to human justice, a primary sign of the times in the past few decades, to the commitment to the rights of the nonhuman citizens of the planet and the universe. It is not that creational spirituality dichotomizes the two. On the contrary its new paradigm serves to integrate them in a single vision



of justice. But, from a psychosocial point of view, there remains the danger that for people whom modern culture has all too effectively manipulated into self-disparagement, the call to deanthropocentrize their vision of life will deplete, not replenish, the energies available for the struggle for justice for both humans and other creatures. In a review of Santmire's *The travail of nature*, James McCue has written: 'It is anything but clear that the problem is rooted in the view that *humankind* is the apex of creation. It would seem much more the case that we are threatened by a view that can not even take *humankind* seriously.'<sup>5</sup> Though McCue unfortunately goes on to speak of the role of humankind as 'manipulator and exploiter of nature', his point is well taken. At the very least we need to scrutinize the attack of creation-centred spirituality on anthropocentrism from the standpoint of motivation and self-image. Put in pragmatic terms, the question might be whether moderns despise themselves and other humans because they despise the earth they tread, or vice versa. To the extent that the latter is the case, the present call would seem to be not to exchange an anthropocentric for a cosmocentric spirituality, but rather to work more seriously at the ecological implications of honouring God's image in self and in other humans.

Second, and closely joined to the anthropological question is the Christological one. If a traditional spirituality will be reluctant to let go of anthropocentrism, it is perhaps primarily because of a commitment to a Christocentrism which affirms, in whatever language, that Jesus of Nazareth in his exaltation has become the centre of creation and history as well as source and paradigm for the larger christification of humankind and the cosmos. Admittedly, Christological discussions of the past century have called into question such 'high Christologies' as those of many Church Fathers, and even of the Johannine tradition within the New Testament. Alternative interpretations of our basic credal formulas, such as Rahner's effort to recast Christological faith in both eschatological and evolutionary terms, are well known. Rahner has also sought to show that death and resurrection need not be conceived as rendering persons acosmic. At what point would an acceptance of the 'new story' require a substantive relinquishment of the basic Christological faith which has energized the Christian community since its inception? On the other hand we need to ask how, in face of the insights of creational spirituality, this traditional faith is to be reinterpreted. And as a materialistic understanding of personal resurrection has yielded, in the swing of the pendulum, to a focus on the transformed life of the cosmos within cosmic history, what needs to yield on each side of the argument? In any case, the new movement has brought us to a new and dramatic asking of the question, 'Who do you say that I am?'

Closely linked to the Christological theme is the question of relating Christianity to other world religions. Reflection on past history should

make us wary of condemning out of hand Berry's views as expressed above. Today we wince at the recollection of how recently the position that there is no salvation outside the Church was honoured as irreformable dogma. Interreligious dialogue in our own day has stretched our ecumenical tolerance, and made us appreciate better the freedom of God in revealing himself beyond the borders of Christian faith. Even against the background of such a history, however, Berry's view, which appears to make the new scientific myth normative for situating all of the world's religions, will require probing discussion.

Similarly linked to the Christological question is the sharp contrast of creational and redemptional motifs in both Berry and Fox. The issue is one of major importance for spirituality. What paradigm and what kind of language promise to provide the energies needed for a sustained struggle against our culture's assault on all of God's creatures?

What needs first to be said is that, as already noted, establishing a new paradigm often brings enthusiasts to disparage the old one. This is notably the case when Fox characterizes the Augustinian understanding of grace as 'sin centred'. Augustine is surely vulnerable to the criticism he so widely receives on the basis of the Neoplatonic, Stoic and even Manichean admixtures in his thought. Yet it is also clear that he is a champion, against the Manicheans, of the goodness of creation; against the Stoics, of the value of human passion; and against the Neoplatonists, of the incarnational principle. His theology of grace, centrally expressed in his distinction between the grace of the first Adam in paradise and the grace of the second Adam in the paschal mystery, is a faithful rendering, at a special historical moment, of the Christian myth of creation-sin-redemption. To attribute to him the invention of original sin is a gross simplification of history. Because of his anti-Manichean convictions, he did consistently refuse to attribute evil to the material creation. Still, his vision of the City of God portrays humans not as acosmic, but as sharing their transfigured state with a transfigured material world.

This recognition of Augustine's contribution to creational spirituality leaves open the question, debated by Thomists and Scotists in the late Middle Ages, and again by developmentalists and liberationists in our own day, whether a creational-developmental or redemptional paradigm, or perhaps both, is needed to empower us for our enormous tasks. But it seems clear that, whatever the language, each Christian theology must take account, without dichotomy, of the goodness of creation, the dark reality of evil, and the victory of grace in Christ Jesus. Donald Senior, in the Lonergan-Richards volume, has noted that, under the rubric of redemption, a rich variety of specific metaphors and symbols is available. Even granting that certain theological and devotional expressions of the mystery of the cross have contributed to contempt for self, others and the earth, we must remain open to the possibility that no predominantly

creational-developmental paradigm can match the power of the cross in motivating passionate involvement in the tasks of history. Also, without strong eschatological and even apocalyptic ingredients, creational-developmental approaches to our predicament may be too bland for motivating perservering commitment.

Third, there is the God question, which creational theology and spirituality place in a new light. Who and what is God within the new myth, and how compatible is this with who and what God is at the core of Christian faith? The question involves both the concept of creation, the related concepts of divine immanence and transcendence, and the question, much discussed in our own day, of the personal or impersonal character of the divine source of all. Both Berry and Fox chime in with a widespread reaction against the excessive influence of divine transcendence, especially when this is robed, as it has been since the Old Testament, in the cultural dress of patriarchalism, hierarchalism and militarism. In what I have read of Berry, I do not find an understanding of the divine which includes the radical createdness of the universe in relationship to a transcendent Creator. His characteristic reference is not to God but to the divine as revealed in the universe. Fox strongly affirms the creator God, but, as already seen, understands God from a panentheistic standpoint. Even though the formal theological notion of *creatio ex nihilo* emerged not in the bible but in Christian history, its role in Christian spirituality, especially when accented in the direction of transcendence, has been enormous. God as the One who simply is, the creation as radically contingent for its very existence on the will of God—this notion has done much to shape our spiritual heritage. From Augustine's cry of the creatures in his *Confessions*, 'We are not the One, but he made us,' to Ignatius's Principle and Foundation, divine transcendence has been a perennial source of spiritual energy. Critics are quite right when they find the divine immanence in creation less accented in the past, though they sometimes neglect the tradition of the creative and indwelling Spirit which flourished many centuries before its appeal to feminist and ecological movements.

Finally, there is the proposal of the 'new myth' as enunciated by Thomas Berry. Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, like Berry and others, have seen that religion is more deeply a matter of myth and symbol than of the doctrinal and moral formulations consequent upon them. Ideas do have consequences, but the most powerful ideas are those which emerge from a people telling a story of origins and destiny. For traditional Christians, Berry's enunciation of his view from the standpoint of myth is stark indeed. When he speaks of traditional myths losing energy, he does not except the Christian story. And though Christian belief and the Christian communion have a place within the new myth, that place is not central. Like the other religions of the world, Christianity has to

identify itself within the radically new context constituted by the emergence of the new myth from the scientific yet mystical study of cosmic process. The attractiveness of such a vision, especially for breaking down the walls of separation between different peoples, religions and cultures, is manifest. It is also clear that Christian theology, despite the great strides it has taken in ecumenical understanding, is far from offering a vision capable of galvanizing humankind's energies under the present global threat. No small part of the contribution of the new movement may turn out to be its power to stimulate creative reflection outside of its own circles, which may in turn help to constitute a new paradigm still to be identified. How a theocentric, Christocentric, anthropocentric understanding of reality—and my own assumption has been and is that Christian commitment contains all three of these—can be modified in the light of the new myth is not clear. Presently I see the situation as one of impasse, awaiting creative resolution.

A final thought occurred while preparing this note: could the oft-quoted statement of the episcopal synod of 1971, extended to meet the ecological crisis, not serve as horizon or common ground to which most, if not all, might have recourse?<sup>6</sup> It would go something like this: 'Action on behalf of the earth, and participation in the defence, development and transformation of the global environment, fully appear as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the cosmos and its deliverance from every oppressive situation'.

Thomas E. Clarke S.J.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Cross Currents* 37 (Summer/Fall 1987) nos. 2-3, pp 178-224; A. Lonergan & C. Richards, *Thomas Berry and the new cosmology*, (Mystic CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987). Berry's own Riverdale Center (5801 Palisade Avenue, Bronx NY 10471) issues *The Riverdale Papers*, volumes 1-10 and continuing. Brian Swimme has published a volume which, in dialogue form, joins his own reflections to those of his mentor, Thomas Berry: *The universe is a green dragon*; (Bear & Company: P.O. Drawer 2860, Santa Fe, NM 87504). Bear & Company publishes extensively in the ecological area. Of Berry's 'Twelve principles for reflecting on the universe' it may be said that they are important abbreviations of his system which do not, however, engage what is most challenging in his thinking.

<sup>2</sup> *Genesis Farm Newsletter* (Box 622, Blairstown NJ 07825) is in its fourth volume.

<sup>3</sup> *A spirituality named compassion and the healing of the global village, Humpty Dumpty and us*, (Minneapolis: Winston 1979); *Original blessing: a primer in creation spirituality*, (Bear & Company: Santa Fe NM, 1983). Among Fox's other works is the volume edited by him, *Western spirituality: historical roots, ecumenical routes*, (Notre Dame IN: Fides 1979). More than a decade ago Fox founded the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality (Holy Names

College, 3500 Mountain Boulevard, Oakland CA 94619) which offers academic programmes in creational spirituality and allied themes. Fox has also launched, with others, a new magazine called *Creation* (P.O. Box 19216, Oakland CA 94619).

<sup>4</sup> J. Coleman, 'The future of ministry', *America*, March 28, 1981, pp 243-249.

<sup>5</sup> *Commonweal*, October 4, 1985, p 539.

<sup>6</sup> See J. Gremillion (ed.), *The gospel of peace and justice*, (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1976), p 514.