The Role of Humankind In the Success of the Planet Earth

Theme of the Conference

We live in a time of immense peril to the future of planet Earth. What will draw us through the enchanting spell cast by technology, dominion and wealth to a more harmonious, egalitarian, peaceful, just and Earth-centered way of living?

In this conference Heather Eaton and Thomas Berry will focus on how ecofeminism, a combination of the two currents of ecology and feminism, provides a guiding light to social transformation, justice and Earth healing. Ecofeminism, in its ecological aspect, is concerned with the totality of the relations of organisms and their environments and with sustaining the web of life against the disruptions resulting from human aggression. In its feminine aspect, ecofeminism examines the patterns of domination and mistreatment of women, the features of culture and consciousness that support those patterns, and the struggle to obtain social equality for women. It also concerns bringing to awareness and elevating the feminine elements of life as a correction to the dominance of masculine ways of being that have injured not only women but also men and the Earth.

Ms. Eaton believes that a feminist analysis is central to an understanding of the ecological crisis and the feminist vision is essential to a new cultural story. She states that "the basic idea of ecofeminism is that within the matrix of causes of the ecological crisis is the connection between the exploitation of the Earth and the misogynist definitions and treatment of women." Beginning with this central understanding, Ms. Eaton will develop key insights emerging from ecofeminism that challenge our understanding of human relations and our categories of separation from the Earth and from each other. She will also connect ecofeminism to the new cosmology as articulated by Thomas Berry and develop the need for the inclusion of justice and the sociopolitical task of dismantling crippling structures of domination as a central theme in the formulation of our social vision.

Thomas Berry, an historian of cultures, said, "We are fortunate to have Heather Eaton as our featured speaker. She will examine our ecological situation with a feminist analysis. In the view of ecofeminism, we have not yet even begun to understand the relation between our attitude toward the Earth and our understanding of the feminine. A cultural change is needed that will profoundly alter every aspect of our lives, from education, religion and spirituality to politics, law and economics. This will result from an appreciation, perhaps for the first time since the origin of the classical literate civilizations, of the feminine dimension of the universe."

There will be abundant time for discussion as we enter more deeply into the socio/political/cultural aspects of these issues. Our basic purpose is to clarify for ourselves and for others the role of the human in the success of planet Earth.
Heather Eaton earned her Ph.D. in Theology from the University of St. Michaels, Toronto School of Theology Interdisciplinary Program in Theology, Feminism and Ecology in 1996. Her major areas of study were contemporary religious concerns: Feminist Perspectives on Religion, Ecology and Religion, Liberation Movements, Contemporary Feminist Ecological and Liberational Theology, and Religion and Science. Minor areas: Gender and Science. The theme of her dissertation was “A Critical Inquiry into an Ecofeminist Cosmology.”

Thomas Berry, geologist and cosmologist has produced a substantial and highly respected body of work on how the human relates to creation. He is the author of THE DREAM OF THE EARTH, and co-author with Brian Swimme of THE UNIVERSE STORY. It is Thomas who, following on Pierre Teilhard De Chardin, has placed the human, body and soul, firmly in Earth's evolutionary succession, firmly involved with the whole order of the Universe and totally dependent on the community of life. It is Thomas who has stimulated philosophers and theologians to reexamine their anthropocentrism and broaden their comprehension of cosmology to take in the startling discoveries of empirical science over the past hundred years.

We are sad to announce that Jim Berry, founder of CFRSL, died on September 7, 1997. Jim had already completed plans for this year's conference and while his presence will be missed deeply, we know that Jim will be with us in spirit. We are happy to dedicate this year's conference to Jim in honor of his tireless efforts, boundless compassion, and loving spirit.

Camp New Hope is located on NC 86, north of Chapel Hill on 165 acres of rolling pinewood and hardwood forest. This retreat-conference center has two fresh water lakes and recreation facilities: An excellent kitchen staff provides delicious meals (vegetarian).

Camp New Hope is 3.1 miles north from exit 266 on I-40, and 3.5 miles south from exit 165 on I-85.