

Daily Meditation 10/26/1961

Origin of Deep Ecumenism in My Writings

Good morning.

In today's meditation I'm telling a story about how I was approached recently to talk more about my understanding of deep ecumenism.

And I first began by telling the story that the word itself came to me in conversations with Joanna Macy and Buddhist eco-activist for telling me about deep ecology. And I felt, well, that's a wonderful phrase to adapt to ecumenism, because too much ecumenism at that time -- it's about 25 years ago, I guess -- was people meeting and exchanging theological position papers at each other.

I was interested in something much deeper than that: the shared experience of spirituality and of action for social justice and so forth. But then, as I reflected further on this question, I realized that in this book, which is a very early book for me, *Western Spirituality: Historical Roots, Ecumenical Routes*, which I edited, I gathered articles from many authors.

This was explicitly dealing with ecumenism, too. So among the ecumenical articles, one was by Sister Jose Hobday...she called it "Seeking a Moist Heart: Native American Ways for Helping the Spirit."

Then Monika Hellwig, another woman theologian, talked about gifts and insights from Hasidism: that she herself was Christian, but she was speaking about the Hasidic tradition.

James Kenney, who was very active in the World Parliament (of Religions) for many years, offered a wonderful article on the development of a Russian spiritual vision, "Fullness in Emptiness."

And I also have in the book a marvelous article by Nicolas Berdayev, of one of my favorite theologians, really, a Russian Orthodox theologian, called "Salvation and Creativity: Two Understandings of Christianity"... so his emphasis is very much on creativity; a wonderful thinker!

And there's an article here on the finest music in the world: "Exploring Celtic Spiritual Legacies: The Celtic Tradition," by Mary Aileen Schmiel.

And there was an article on "Yoga in the Western Consciousness" by Justin O'Brien, a very committed yoga instructor and philosopher. And "The Spiritual Insights of the American Transcendentalist" by a historian and Dominican, John Alexander. And Ronald Miller, a very fine interfaith teacher, wrote a very fine article on "The Spirituality of Franz Rosenzweig." Ronald Miller had been a Jesuit for many years; Franz Rosenzweig was an important Jewish thinker. And Richard Woods, with a very good article on William Ernest Hocking, "Mysticism, Protestantism, and Ecumenism: The Spiritual Theology of William Burns Hocking."

And my article in here was on the four-fold path of creation spirituality as taught by Meister Eckhart -- it's the first time I ever wrote about Eckhart or about the four paths of creation spirituality. And my mentor, Pere Chenu, gave me permission to really combine two articles of his and translate them; we called it the "Body and Body Politic in the Creation Spirituality of Thomas Aquinas."

Dr. Rosemary Ruether offered a fine article on "Patristic Spirituality and the Experience of Women" in the patristic period of the church. Jon Sobrino, a liberation theologian from South America, wrote about "Christian Prayer and New Testament Theology: A Basis for Social Justice and Spirituality." And Helen Kenik, a biblical theologian, who did her doctorate under Walter Brueggemann, did a very fine article,

"Toward a Biblical Basis for Christian Theology," where she lays out the themes in the Hebrew bible, especially around kingship and what it means in terms of responsibility for justice and eco-justice and so forth.

So my whole point is that Rabbi Heschel says that --how does he put it? He says that the human soul is born of the past...the human soul is born of the past. And we have to discover that past in order to create a fuller future.

And the past includes of course the lineages that we've inherited as a culture, as a community or various communities, and that's important, but we don't want to stop there. We also want to do the the mixing with the wisdom of the other communities of the world, the other cultures, the other religions.

And I think this is coming to a crescendo today, as we all face the extinction spasm and our own extinction as a species, with the pressures of climate change and so much else.

So I do think that the theme of deep ecumenism and ecumenism is something that all of us are asking about today, and being called to respond in a thoughtful as well as an active way.

Thank you; we'll see you tomorrow.