



## The Dangers of the Cosmic Christ

### A Review of *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* by Matthew Fox

BY BOB DEWAAAY

*"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." (Matthew 24:5)*

Matthew Fox's 1988 book, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, has proven to be a seminal work. Fox's ideas are largely accepted as fact by contemporary people. For example, the notion of "Mother Earth" as a spiritual being (understood through the lens of pantheism) has only gained more prominence, and is now virtually ubiquitous, since Fox wrote his monograph.<sup>1</sup> Many others have shared his neo-pagan ideas.

I review Fox's book now to show that his false ideas are dangerous and have no Biblical grounds to be accepted into any Christian theology although Fox cites Scripture often and shows a good grasp of its content. I will show the Fox's *Cosmic Christ* is not the Christ of the Bible. Yet much of modern evangelicalism is rife with ideas akin to Fox's.

The seduction that draws people to their "Mother" is spiritual and insidious. There is no logical and rational means of proving that earth is indeed a goddess who is being abused by humans who fail to worship her. She is not lacking worshippers, but is lacking any necessary qualities of deity like eternal, non-contingent existence. If she were truly a goddess she could take care of herself. The God of the Bible is not going to be damaged by humans, but humans are most certainly threatened by God who will come in judgment for those who reject His Christ! For example:

*And He will judge the world in righteous-*

*ness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. (Psalm 9:8)*

And

*I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all it contains. (Psalm 50:11, 12)*

Fox is seriously deceived when he claims that Mother Earth is the Christ who is being slowly killed by humans. Christ will come in judgment, a fact Fox ignores, but the basis of the judgment is His Word (John 12:48) and His gospel—not failure to bow before the earth goddess.

#### THE CRUCIFIED "MOTHER"

In Matthew Fox's theology, Mother Earth is goddess who is the source of the blessings we need but is under severe threat by an evil patriarchy (Fox: 17). He claims, "The only hope for Mother Earth is a spiritual awakening" (Fox: 16). He cites environment threats in a manner similar to what Al Gore did in his 1992 book *Earth in the Balance*. Earth is being "crucified" according to this thinking:

Already the human race has begun to feel the effects of the wounds we have inflicted on Mother Earth. We have begun to

put our hands in her lanced side and in her crucified hands and feet. (Fox: 16)

He has substituted the creation for the Creator, and thereby rejected the true atonement for sins offered by Christ through His work on the cross!

Fox substitutes the goddess for true work of Christ which saves us from the wrath to come by paying the price for our sins on the cross. Any threat of future judgment by the God of the Bible is ignored or rejected by Fox, who views it as in the imagination of those who see God as an evil patriarchal monarch who judges the whole earth. The Biblical doctrine of future judgment by a transcendent God whose moral Law has been broken has no place in Mother Earth theology.

For example, Fox states: "Matricide—the killing of the mother principle—is being committed against Mother Earth, mother brain and mother creativity; against mother religions and mother wisdom; against youth, against mother church, mother compassion and fatherhood as well." (Fox: 33). True Christian beliefs, according to Fox, are relics of "patriarchal agendas" and "patriarchal religious institutions." Thus the God of the Bible is rejected in favor of Mother Earth who has even shed her blood: "The blood of Mother Earth crucified . . ." (Fox: 33). The solution is called "an awakening in our mystical consciousness" (Fox: 34).

Fox knows the Biblical material about Jesus Christ very well. He, however, redefines it in terms of his Cosmic Christ. For example:

He died at the hands of men . . . just as Mother Earth is dying at the hands of a patriarchal civilization gone mad with its attraction to matricide. Both Jesus and Mother Earth appear to be victims of the same pathology.

Mother Earth is not failing humans; rather we a failing Mother Earth" (Fox: 148).

The Biblical doctrines of redemption and atonement are understood well enough by Fox and his many subsequent followers but they are rejected as a serious cause of the perceived problem: "But a fall-redemption theology—the most influential tradition in Western religion—fails to do so [celebrate creation-centered spirituality]. When such ideology prevails, religion itself contributes to the cause of matricide in the West." (Fox: 149). Fox's 1988 work set the stage for what many, including Emergent teachers, take as gospel truth. The prevailing view that I see and read about involves rejection of the truth of the blood atonement for sin provided once for all by Christ in favor of the worship of Creation.

Fox takes Christian doctrines derived from the Bible, distorts and perverts them, and presents his readers with Mother Earth as the goddess who must be served by all humans. Future judgment where the entire earth is destroyed as taught in the Bible utterly offends those who worship the false goddess of pagan culture. But the Bible says "*But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men*" (2Peter 3:7). To avoid this judgment we must flee to Jesus Christ through the gospel. Yet Fox proposes a false "expiation," using stolen Christian terminology: "Is the nailing of Mother Earth to the cross no expiation enough with which to awaken the human race?" (Fox: 151). We can either have the true removal of sins offered by Christ, or Fox's seductive neo-pagan version. We cannot have both.

### COSMIC MYSTICISM

Fox merges old and new to create a cosmic mysticism that provides religious practices as well as unbiblical beliefs for his pantheism. He suggests the need for a "paradigm shift" that will take everyone from the "individualism of the Enlightenment and industrial age" to

the universal, cosmic Christ. He claims that Jesus' parable of the wineskins supports this idea (Fox: 82). The key thing is to jettison rationality attached to once-for-all Biblical truth to a mystical romanticism. It strikes me that much of this is what eventually became the Emergent Church. Out with the old—rational truth—and in with the new—cosmic mysticism.

To achieve this paradigm shift Fox proposes ideas from the Middle Ages. He states:

In terms of the history of spirituality, this paradigm shift is from the three stages of purification, illumination, and union that mysticism inherited from Proclus and Plotinus (*not* from Jesus or the Hebrew bible . . .) to the four paths of delight (*via positiva*) letting go (*via negativa*) compassion, i.e. celebration and justicemaking (*via transformativa*). (Fox: 82)

He then instructs us to "enter the mysteries" which move us from rational truth to the Cosmic Christ. Christian writers such as Ann Voskamp have written very successful books promoting the same threefold path of mysticism and pantheism as that of Fox.<sup>ii</sup> The Cosmic Christ has penetrated even supposed Biblical Christianity and thus destroyed gospel preaching in the church.

Fox combines his historic mysticism with new mysticism from brain hemisphere ideas. As with most postmodern writers, Western Civilization is used as a foil to what Fox promotes. Yet ideas from questionable Western science are conscripted to serve the mysticism of the Cosmic Christ. For example, "A crucial dimension of this imbalance in the West is the stunted growth of our mystical awareness and the underdevelopment of our mystical brain." He points to the need for the development of "right brain" mysticism as part of the solution to this non-existent problem. Fox states, "The left lobe accomplishes analytic and verbal processes for us, and the right lobe accomplishes the synthetic, sensual, and mystical tasks" (Fox:

18). In fact, this division between left-and-right brain hemispheres as used to support mystical ideas is bad science and has been debunked. While rejecting the science of the West, Fox and his many followers try to use it to promote their mysticism.

Fox, like Al Gore after him, promotes the idea that the universe is a hologram, with each part containing the whole. He cites a brain researcher and a physicist who claims the validity of the hologram analogy, with "each part being the whole and the whole being each part." He cites others such as Fritof Capra who uses science to promote Eastern ideas. Fox concludes, "ours is a time of emerging awareness of the interconnectivity of all things. Mysticism is all about interconnectivity" (Fox: 19). Indeed, pagan, mystical religion does teach the interconnectivity of all things and denies the transcendent God of the Bible who existed before all things and who created all things. Pantheism loves mysticism and hates the God of the Bible who is both Creator and Judge.

Fox, like many other mystics, rejects Biblical Christianity as teaching patriarchy and the transcendent Father God. Fox does this by redefining biblical ideas in terms of the Cosmic Christ, who is Mother Earth. Like eco-feminism, he claims that the mother principle was repressed by male-dominated church leaders and needs to be rediscovered. Fox writes, "Religion and culture that represses and distorts the maternal will also repress the ancient tradition of God as Mother and of the goddess in every person" (Fox: 31). Supposedly Jesus came to restore mystical creativity to change that.

I was once in a seminary class where the idea that the Fatherhood of God was deemed not acceptable to women who had bad father images in experience. The professor was looking at a few passages where God was portrayed using feminine imagery to supposedly help with this problem (which stems from psychological theory). There was testimony in class from someone who claimed she could not come to God if he is seen as "the Father." I contributed this

thought:

Whatever we can say about God in His eternal essence transcending gender categories, there is one truth we cannot escape. God came to Earth as Jesus Christ, fully human and fully God, who lived and ascended to heaven as a male person. Jesus is the only way to salvation. If someone refuses to come to God, if doing so means having any male associations, then they will not come to God at all because we cannot escape the truth that Jesus was a male person.

That ended the discussion.

One of Fox's great heroes was Meister Eckhart, a 13th and 14th century mystic. He cites Eckhart approvingly in deifying the creation (Fox: 121). This includes the deification of humans. Fox summarizes and cites Eckhart:

Divinity wants to birth the Cosmic Christ in each and every individual. 'The Creator gives birth to the divine child in the innermost part of the soul and gives birth to you with his only begotten Son as no less.' How do we know that God is birthing the Cosmic Christ in us? By our ability to find the Cosmic Christ in other creatures. (Fox: 122)

This is one way the mysticism of the feminine goddess is expressed—"birthing." It is interesting to me that in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the divine child within idea was expressed as psychological theory. I ran into it when doing research in seminary.

Fox decries the lack of mysticism in churches. He wrote in 1988, and the problem today is not a lack of mysticism but that mysticism of the sort Fox teaches has nearly destroyed the evangelical movement. It is interesting, however, to read Fox's justification for the need for mysticism. Here is an example of how he deceives his readers:

Much of the wisdom literature of

Israel came from Egypt where a mother goddess was worshipped. Isis was from Ethiopia—thus we are speaking of a black mother goddess as being behind much of this biblical literature. Another reason mysticism doesn't fit with patriarchal education and religion is mysticism doesn't fit well with patriarchal education and religion is mysticism cannot fit into the wineskin of exclusive left-brain religion or education (Fox: 43).

Fox's twisted and false ideas have sadly deceived much of the culture so that religion and education are indeed now mystical. The result is the utter uselessness of much contemporary religious education.

#### MYSTICISM AS ENTERING THE SILENCE

Silence and the journey inward is a key feature of Fox's mysticism, and these themes are common today in many writers. As I said in a radio debate a few years ago, "The spiritual winds are blowing from the East." In that vein, Fox claims, "In the creation tradition, all people are mystics" (Fox: 58). He sees mysticism as how one finds the "true self." The one who finds the true self is to, "utter images from that silent space" (Fox: 59). This means that one is to find the mystic within, and this inner mystic is characterized by silence.

Exactly how does one judge "silence" to be true or false? That I ask such a question, as I have found from debates with Emergent and postmodern adherents, shows that I am stuck in modernity in my left brain hemisphere. I am a relic of the rationality of modernity and thus naïve for thinking in categories such as "true" or "false." When describing "propositional truth" in a debate, my postmodern opponent rejected any adjective attached to truth. Why? Because to him truth is relative to persons in their own group and cannot be subjected to discernment as to veracity. But the Bible commands us to make

such judgments.

Fox claims, "The mystic is also a befriender of silence" (Fox: 59). Christian teachers of spiritual formation regularly prescribe silence as a discipline. The Bible never tells us to enter silence. Quietly trusting God does not mean shutting off the mind. It means believing God's promises which are objective and revealed in the Bible. Silence says nothing and has no promises. God revealed Himself in history objectively through words. At Sinai Israel heard the ten "words." Jesus is called the eternal Word (John 1:1). There is no Biblical support for the idea that silence reveals anything. The faith of the Bible calls us with words to place our faith in Christ who died on a cross and was raised in real time and space. The true Christian faith has no place for myths, fables, and certainly not for silence.

Fox's claims are in direct opposition to the teachings of the Bible, though he claims to gain insights from the Bible. For example, "Words can obscure the presence and power of the Divine as they so often do in worship services that have lost touch with their mystical roots" (Fox: 60). He cites Meister Eckhart as saying "wherever this word is to be heard, it must occur in stillness and in silence." This is utterly absurd. Silence has nothing to say. In true, divine revelation, God speaks words in human languages so we can know and understand Him. These words are meaningful to Him and us, thus there is true revelation. This is the nature of the Bible.

Ironically, those like Fox who reject rationality and truth expressed by words, write books that contain words, express ideas that can be distinguished from other ideas, and convey objective meaning. I was able to read Fox's book and understand his meaning, as much as it is understandable. Some parts are utterly absurd like a "soundless voice" and must always be devoid of meaning. But ultimately he gets his mystical ideas across, and readers understand what he is saying. So by validly communicating with words (albeit communicating spiritual deception), he ironically disproves

postmodernism. It turns out that words, not silence, communicate ideas.

There is a dark side to the silence, which mystics have called “the dark night of the soul.” Unlike the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of those who trust in Christ, which include the “joy of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17), mysticism leaves its followers vulnerable to darkness. This darkness cannot be explained as personal evil to be rejected and resisted, because that would not fit their panentheistic worldview. Fox suggests that we must embrace the darkness: “Apathy results when we flee from the mystical invitation to *be with* the darkness” (Fox: 61). I agree that mysticism leads to spiritual darkness, but disagree that it is a good thing. Jesus Christ is light, not darkness. Consider this: “*Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life’*” (John 8:12). We must not embrace the darkness as Fox counsels.

### THE MYSTICAL INNER CHILD

Pop psychology popularized the idea of the inner child, who was oppressed and suppressed by shaming messages from those around him. This inner child, like Jesus, was driven to Egypt says John Bradshaw and others who wed psychology with New Age religion. The repressed but pristine inner child is “recovered” through processes taught by experts in the recovery movement. But the Bible teaches the sin nature, not a pristine inner child. We need redemption, not recovery.

Fox teaches his own version of inner child theory:

A mystic is a child at play—the mystic within us is the child within us. Meister Eckhart frequently defines mysticism as “unselfconsciousness.” . . . To the extent that adults allow children to be children and do not project adulthood onto them, all children are mystics (Fox: 61).

He also cites occultist psychiatrist Carl Jung to support the value of “infantile

fantasy” (Fox: 61-62).

Christians should know that inner child theory is nothing more than fantasy and is a repudiation of the Biblical doctrine of sin. If there is a pristine inner child to be recovered then our problem is not sin, but lack of consciousness of our own potential divinity. Cosmic consciousness supposedly comes when enough people encounter their divine inner child and live accordingly. The Bible says that we are lost sinners bound for hell and need repentance and faith. The message of Christianity and that of Fox and his heroes could not be more opposed to one another.

Fox considers the inner child to be divine: “The divinity that the mystic encounters is invariably a youthful, childlike divinity—the child within is the divine child” (Fox: 62). He conscripts the birth narrative of the gospels to distort the truth of the incarnation: “This is another theophany, a heavenly canticle sung about the *glory* of divinity, i.e., the Cosmic Christ being born in the child Jesus” (Fox: 101). Rather than Christ being the pre-existent, transcendent Creator, he is considered a child into whom the Cosmic Christ is born. This is blasphemous—since all have an inner divine child, Jesus is hardly unique, according to Fox who cites mystic Thomas Merton to make his case (Fox: 101). Fox’s Jesus needed to find himself: “Jesus, like all of us, wrestled with his *true self*” (Fox: 72). He “entered the mysteries” and invited others to follow him” (Fox 72-73). Thus Fox’s false Christ is the sort of mystic we all supposedly should and could be. Do not be deceived, this is a blasphemous lie. He says, “Divinity wants to birth the Cosmic Christ in each and every individual” (Fox: 122). Thus he has a “different Jesus” as Paul warned against (2Corinthians 11:4).

### MYSTICAL “REDEMPTION”

The evangelical ideas of personal salvation from God’s wrath and the forgiveness of sins against His moral law have no place in the false theology of the Cosmic Christ. In postmodern theology

persons are not redeemed, but the cosmos is. For example, Emergents mock personal salvation as a consumer product sold to the naïve and unsuspecting. We believe in personal salvation because there are real, individual names which either are in or not written in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 3:5; 13:8 etc.). This truth is now offensive to most people because they have been deceived by Mother Earth theology. Rather than us needing salvation from our sins, we are the saviors who redeem Mother Earth by embracing the beliefs and practices of neo-paganism.

Fox cites the Book of Hebrews to redefine Christ as the High Priest: “This in itself is a statement on the Cosmic Christ, because the priest is a cosmic mediator in this respect, not a preserver of the cult as such [he means biblical Christianity] but a bearer of the prophetic gift of divine compassion that permeates the universe” (Fox: 93). Creation-centered spirituality has no place for the One who died for sins, once for all, to bring us to God (1Peter 3:18). Their Christ is about saving the cosmos, not lost sinners: “Jesus as priest is the Cosmic Christ who reconciles all creation in God by healing the human consciousness that has been at war with the creation” (Fox: 93). Fox’s summary of the Book of Revelation shows his priorities: “The wounded Cosmic Christ ushers in visions and possibilities of relieving the injustices that create so many wounded ones on earth” (Fox: 99).

### SEXUAL MYSTICISM

Fox creatively finds sexual, spiritual mysticism in the Bible and uses his distortions of Scripture to promote spiritual and sensual wickedness. Being ahead of his time in 1988, his ideas are now the norm in our culture. Fox wrote: “In fact, the Cosmic Christ is radically present to all sexuality in all its dimensions and possibilities” (Fox: 164). This assessment could never come from taking the Bible seriously according to the Author’s intent. For example, what about the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah? But Fox ignores the Bible’s

moral teaching and says, “The Cosmic Christ celebrates sexual diversity—‘in Christ there is neither male nor female’ says Paul (Gal. 3:28) (Fox: 164). He transforms the passage about salvation by faith through Christ, into homosexual behavior which Paul condemns in Romans 1. The biblically illiterate can be easily deceived by such sleight of hand. But Fox concludes “The Cosmic Christ can be both female and male, heterosexual and homosexual” (Fox: 164).

The Song of Solomon is Fox’s support for the idea of cosmic, mystical sexuality in which anything goes. He makes impertinent claims that should make any Christian recoil in abhorrence. For example, “Every time humans truly make love, truly express their love by the art of sexual lovemaking, the Cosmic Christ is making love” (Fox: 172). Pantheism makes this conclusion reasonable in his mind. Fox explains his understanding of the Song of Solomon: “The Song of Songs may well contain within it profound treatment of sexual love as divine love an entire spirituality that could offer a new starting point . . . for a theology for sexuality today” (Fox: 172). He ties this to his cosmic mysticism.

Fox’s seductive ideas are now widely popular, though not necessarily because he taught them. There are other versions of spiritual sexuality, such as found in some Eastern religions. What is happening is that the ground for morality anchored in the truth of the Bible has been rejected in favor of a sensual spirituality with no boundaries. There is a lack of fear of God who will bring judgment on those who do not repent and turn to Christ (the Biblical one).

Pantheism has serious implications that involve dangerous spiritual wickedness. The seduction of the church has produced an “anything

goes” spirituality that can be found just as well in churches as in Eastern religion. Fox makes this shocking claim: “All lovemaking (as distinct from ‘having sex’) is Christ meeting Christ. Love beds are altars” (Fox: 177). If God is seen as “in” everything, then such shameful ideas make sense. Fox promotes his sensual ideas: “The Cosmic Christ paradigm that reawakens us to a sexual mysticism is a necessary part of any authentic renaissance” (Fox: 178). Paul has a totally different assessment: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (Romans 1:18).

### CONCLUSION

The Cosmic Christ is a false Christ, not the Christ of the Bible. We have been warned about such false Christs:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1John 4:1-3)*

The pagan consciousness of contemporary society is fertile ground for the Cosmic Christ who offers no salvation from God’s wrath, but only a mystical cosmic consciousness. Demonic deception is real, but Fox never concerns himself with the possibility that he has been deceived. Nor do his followers.

I believe that the Cosmic Christ is a prelude to the Antichrist, whose spirit is

already at work in the world. People are being seduced by this spirit. It pulls them away from the gospel into a false ecumenism: “The urgency of Mother Earth’s plight at the hands of matricidal forces which imperil all peoples, nations, and religions would seem to indicate that the coming of the Cosmic Christ—and of the era of global ecumenism—cannot be put off any longer” (Fox 233). The Bible gives a conflicting assessment to this: “Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14, 15). We need Biblical truth and turning to God on His terms to save us from the lies of the Cosmic Christ.

### END NOTES

<sup>i</sup> Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1988)

<sup>ii</sup> See my review of Ann Voskamp’s work: <http://www.cicministry.org/commentary/issue120.htm>

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