



## **From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism: Making the Shift**

Online E-Conference | 14-30 April 2007

### **PANEL PERSPECTIVES**

**REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION FROM BARTRAM BOOKS**

### **Postscript: Continuum**

*From: Heal the Earth, Heal the Soul*  
**Collected Essays on Wilderness, Politics and the Media**  
*(forthcoming: May 2007)*

**Dr. Michael Frome**

*Port Washington, Wisconsin, USA*

I wrote earlier in this book that environmental leaders of forty or fifty years ago were missionaries who gave us broad shoulders to stand on. Yet now I recognize the world has changed dramatically since their time, and maybe mine too.

It frightens me to observe the upheaval in this country and everywhere else on earth as well. I feel strange and uncomfortable in this modern, dehumanized new age.

For example, in years past we didn't talk much about global warming because we did not fully understand it or its implications. Now I daresay that global warming is widely recognized as a threat to civilization. But it isn't simply global warming that concerns me; it's the sum and substance of its causes more than its effects.

I mean that supertechnology has led to superconsumerism, and that advanced means of production have enabled the manufacture of more goods than people need or logically can use. In consequence, to keep the system going, people must be persuaded to buy and use more, and more again, and never mind the waste of it. That is what advertising, marketing and mass media are meant to do, and why more people mean more consumers, everywhere.

In the onward march of globalized trade and commerce, every part of the world is encompassed and exploited. The earth is treated as a commodity to be surveyed, bought and sold and converted into merchandise. The air, water and land all are polluted and poisoned and degraded in the process with toxic

materials applied to induce some product or other to grow faster, cheaper and more profitably.

In this global atmosphere, people are separated from land and nature. Traditions and entire cultures are overrun and obliterated. In a globalized economy, standards of living are not raised but lowered. As I see it, globalization, with its competition for materials and markets, does not bring people together as neighbors and friends but drives them apart with fear and hatred of each other. It leads to war, one war after another, in which the innocents are the victims.

While writing these lines in late 2006, I received a letter from an old friend and compadre, Dick Carter, who as director of the High Uintas Preservation Council in Utah has long labored for a noble cause "You are a true elder in the most meaningful sense of the word," he wrote, "and I only wish we could step back in time where far more hope prevailed. The idea that things will always and simply get better as the arrow of time moves forward is not true."

My friend has a strong point there. History shows that yesterday's victory must be won again and again or likely will turn into tomorrow's defeat. Laws and regulations have their place, but only people make things work: people who are alert and involved and who keep in there swinging, who sets their sights higher, and never lower them.

At the same time, I enjoy and find encouragement in the mood reflected in a note from Martha McCracken, a friend in Puerto Rico. She addressed the issue of global

warming, but said she reminds people that even baby steps forward can make a difference. Yes, they do. Then she wrote: "If I didn't have faith I wouldn't be able to cope but I know there is a God who gives us the freedom to make a mess of our world and our lives but still loves us. I see good all around me: I see it in the laughter of children, the wisdom of the elders and the energy and hope of young people."

Personally, I wish God took a stronger hand. I've learned something about religion, though without adhering to it. I do, however, read and choose biblical selections that stir, stimulate and support ideals that reach beyond religion, such as:

*"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"*

(from Hebrews 11:1)

I cannot think of any way to say it better. But I will try to express it a little differently. Like Martha, I see good all around me, too. Earlier I said that environmental leaders of forty or fifty years ago were missionaries, and then I wrote that they want us now to work together through tough and trying times, to sound the alarm and to alert the public, from the grassroots to Washington, in defense of wild places. I know many, many people who are doing that, out of conscience and conviction, and without fear or favor. That is continuum....