

"Blessing" Offers Hopeful Approach to Christianity

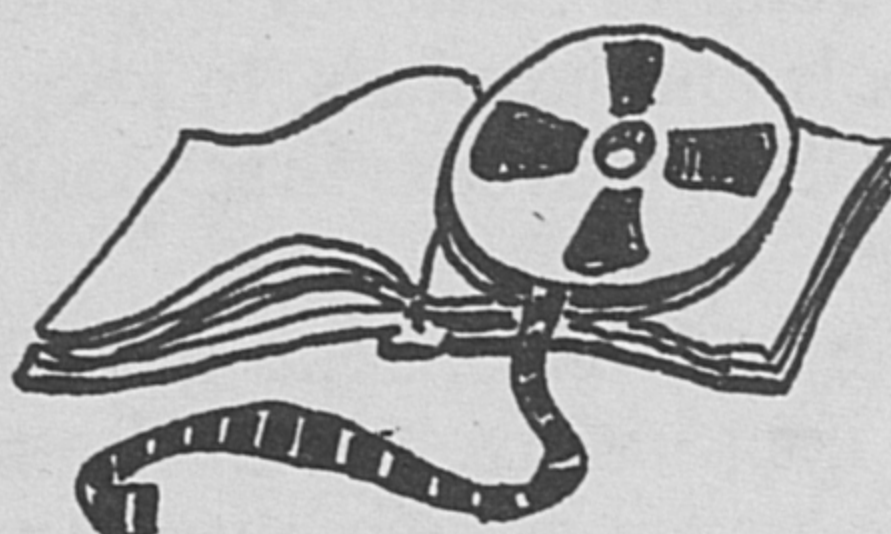
"Original Blessing," Matthew Fox, Bear & Company, Santa Fe, NM, 1983.

by: Carrie Coy

"Original Blessing" is an ambitious and timely book. Its message is that Christianity as a religion has feminist, creation-centered roots that are more ancient than those of its modern day patriarchal incarnation. Matthew Fox, the book's author, has embarked on something of a crusade to revive creation-centered Christian spirituality, a religion which emphasizes the divinity of creation, and has been preserved by poets and mystics through centuries of overt repression. Original Blessing, which he describes as a Creation spirituality primer in "four paths and twenty-six themes", is his most thorough effort to date.

The book's message seems particularly relevant in light of the increasingly lopsided view of Christianity presented by right-wing fundamentalists. I unearthed "Original Blessing" from my pile of unfinished books after I attended the public hearing for S.278. Reading Fox's gentle message helped me redirect my anger toward its proper target and reaffirmed my conviction that there is little true Christianity in the rantings of militant fundamental-

ists. The sense of hope in breaking a long-held conspiratorial silence permeates the book, particularly as Fox recounts the reactions of people to his lectures.



Fox, who is a Dominican scholar and educator at the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality at Holy Names College in Oakland, California, has authored several books on Christian creation spirituality. In all of them fall/redemption Christianity is his target. He notes that today's patriarchal, ascetic approach to Christianity is comparatively new. The attitude that suffering is wages for sin, and that all life begins with original sin is the legacy of St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) whereas the creation-centered tradition traces its roots to the ninth century B.C. with the very first author of the Bible, the Yahwist.

Comparing the two spiritualities, Fox says the fall/redemption ideology, in con-

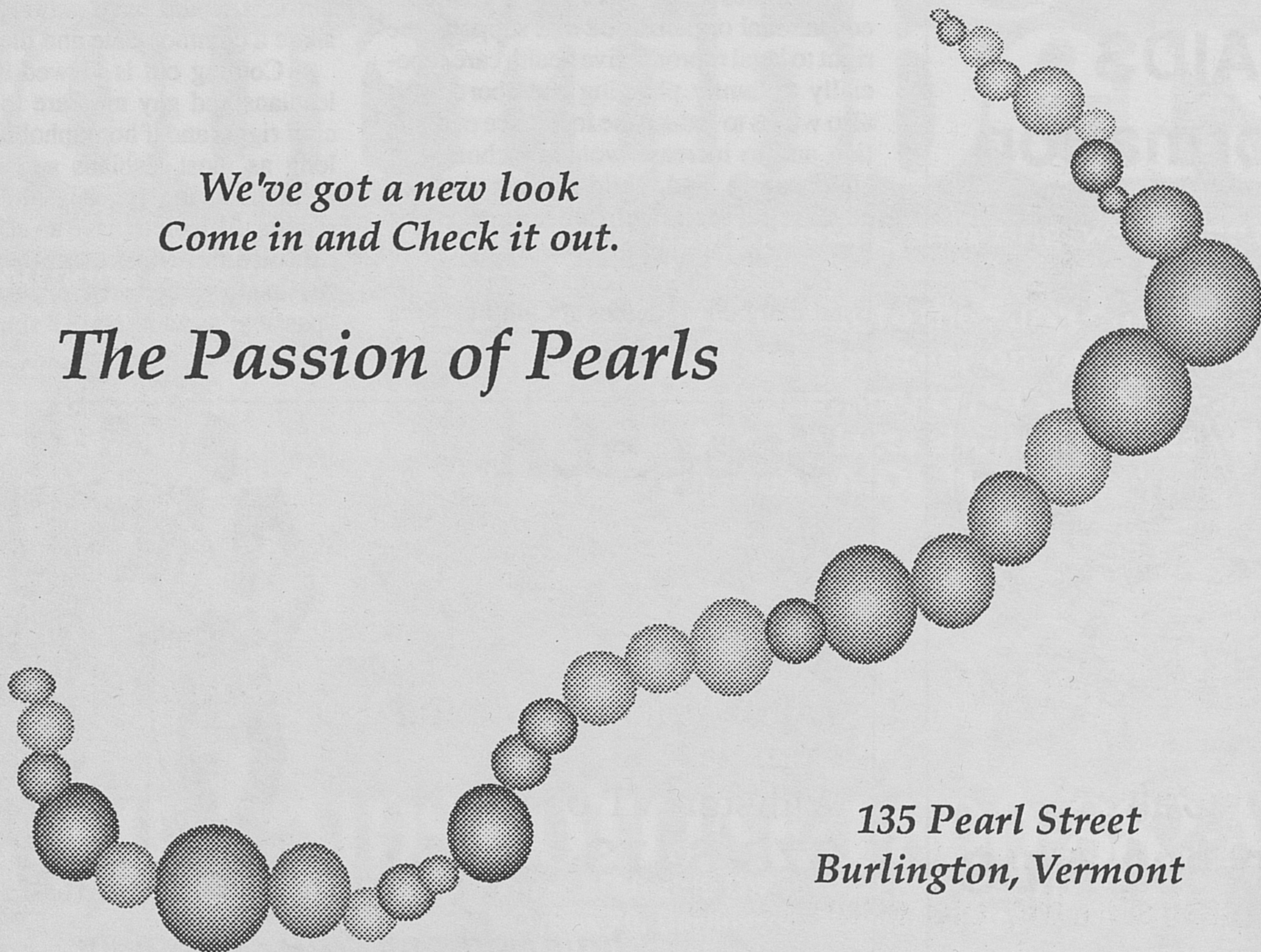
trast to creation-centered spirituality, "...does not teach believers about the New Creation or creativity, about justice-making and social transformations, or about Eros, play, pleasure, and the God of delight. It fails to teach love of the earth or care for the cosmos, and it is so frightened of passion that it fails to listen to the impassioned pleas of the anawim, the little ones, of human history. This same fear of passion prevents it from helping lovers to celebrate their experiences as spiritual and mystical. This tradition has not proven friendly to artists or prophets or Native American peoples or women."

Creation-centered spirituality is a spirituality of the powerless, the anawim, he writes, fall/redemption spirituality is an ideology of the powerful. Fall/redemption ideologies help to keep the poor poor. "They do not encourage the trust," he writes, "the creativity, the moral outrage, the prophetic call and bonding that the oppressed need to her." In fall/redemption ideologies, one group, namely the dominant political group, sets itself up as the criterion of what is natural and what is creation, as God meant it to be. Gays and

(Continued on next page)

*We've got a new look
Come in and Check it out.*

The Passion of Pearls



*135 Pearl Street
Burlington, Vermont*