

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 24th July

Force-field of Love

In her book 'The Emergent Christ' scientist and Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio calls for a transformation in our consciousness regarding the implications for our faith of a new scientific awareness. Teilhard de Chardin puts it succinctly; 'Creation and Incarnation are two moments of the one act of God's self-giving love . . . There is a deep compatibility between Christianity and evolution.' St Thomas Aquinas warned us that 'if we get creation wrong we get God wrong'.

The Evolutionary process towards deeper expressions of beauty, truth and goodness is guided by the careful, absolute love of God. To reject evolution, according to palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, is to reject God, because evolution is Love incarnate. He called for Christians to 'divinise' the earth by our consciousness of being at the heart of evolution, and by blessing its unfolding in our commitment to peace, compassion, justice and creativity.

Theologian Rudolf Bultmann wrote that the light that shone in Jesus first shone in creation. Jesus is a unique evolutionary step in the development of humankind, embracing the world from the very beginning. Delio writes, 'In this respect, the whole of creation beginning with the Big Bang is incarnation . . . We who are baptised into cosmic evolution have a responsibility to evolve and to help this creation evolve towards unity.' When we talk about incarnation we are talking about creation – God's dynamic Word uttered into time and space in the first nano-second of existence.

To be a Catholic Christian today is to be whole-heartedly engaged with a scientific age that rejoices in the principles of quantum physics and evolution. Evolution is not background to the human story; it is the human story, the unfinished process of continuing incarnation. It is profoundly changing our understanding about the world, about ourselves, about God. And the Risen Christ is the unifying heart of it all.

'Resurrection', wrote Pope John Paul II, 'is a qualitative leap in the history of evolution toward a new world which already permeates this world of ours, transforms it and draws it to itself . . .' In 'Evangelii Gaudium' Pope Francis writes of a love that encircles the world like a vital and irresistible force-field 'secretly woven into the fabric of history'.

For believers these insights may first threaten, then astonish, and finally transform their relationship with the God of Jesus. Johnson quotes theologian Norris Clarke; 'Must not the personality of such a Creator be one charged not only with unfathomable power and energy, but also with dazzling imaginative creativity?' TV star and physicist Dr Brian Cox once said that if he were a believer he would be so proud of a God who could create such an astonishing universe.

But who will open for us this delightful sacramental vision of the 'New Universe Story', redeeming us from a deadly dualism that denies Incarnation and gracing us with what Delio calls 'a spirituality of interior freedom'? Who will teach us to read the Gospel with evolutionary eyes? Perhaps the grand old Catholic intellectual tradition and the forgotten 'Catholic imagination' need to be resurrected and invigorated so as to radically revise and enrich our theology, our spirituality and our liturgy.

In 'Canticle of the Cosmos' cosmologist Brian Swimme wrote that every child should be told this: 'You come out of the energy that gave birth to the universe. Its story is your story; its beginning is your beginning'.

All of us, children of the universe, already sense this wonder and will soon learn to protect and to nourish the loving, evolving heart of our divine Mother Earth. And to adore.