

This reflection is an extract from Episode 2 of 'An Astonishing Secret – The Love Story of Creation and the Wonder of You' video course, therefore please read as if being spoken.

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 31st January – One God, many theologies.

Our Popes have used the phrase 'One God, many religions, many theologies.' Let us look at some examples of how faith is presented from two familiar but contrasting theologies: A Sin/Redemption or a Theology of Creation – a theology of nature and grace

Image of God

In the story of Sin/Redemption God is seen as a distant, watchful, controlling and punishing father. He allows Bad things to happen, babies die disasters destroy people and possessions this God this powerful God could stop these things of God wished.

But in this Love story of a Theology of Creation, God would appear as a mother or a source of love, a source of life, a beautiful artist, an intimate, incarnate, indwelling presence. God is one who weeps when we weep who is happy when we are happy, one who loves us unconditionally in a way we probably will never understand in this life.

The world -The notion of the world itself, which again is obviously such a central part of God's own presence. The theology of fall redemption sees the world as a place of exile, part of the punishment for that original sin, cast out of paradise - the world the flesh and the devil. The world is not to be trusted it is tainted.

Our mystics tell us that to fall in love with the world is the way we fall in love with God. In the theology of a love story the world would be seen as a good place, a holy place, God's body. As Pope Francis says in the very opening of his encyclical, for us to see the world as our mother, our sister. It is divine love itself incarnate, the very heart of God in time and space. What a change of understanding that is even in our lifetime.

Evolution - Evolution is scarcely mentioned in our Christian, Roman Catholic teaching. It is seen as mere theory, a threat and a challenge to God's power. As though if evolution happened and God had nothing else to do with it

Whereas in fact the love story would see evolution of us as God's way of working with us, as the work of the Holy Spirit. So suddenly evolution is coming centre-stage in our understanding of our faith. I think it would be almost impossible now to write theology without evolution in as its very heart-beating centre, the unfolding of the 14 billion years of growth and development and evolving of all things.

Evolution is seen as a priceless revelation of what God is like. If you want to know God, look at the way the world is developing around you. Evolution is part of our own infancy. It is God's way of preparing us for the emergence, 2000 years ago, of Jesus the human one, the Son of humanity. Evolution, which is another word for growing, will continue till the end of time.

Incarnation– In the Sin/Redemption story, incarnation is seen as atonement for an original sin, Jesus the victim of an angry father and the world is the punishment and so on. It is a pretty severe understanding of debt paid, a job done, God pleased again.

Incarnation in our story would be the whole reason for creation. God's Plan A didn't go wrong, and Jesus was the reason for Plan B so to speak. The majority of the Roman Catholic church still believes that creation went wrong, and that incarnation means that Jesus came to redeem us from the devil so to speak. It isn't that there was no need for that. Incarnation is the golden moment of Christianity. There never was a plan B. God's creation is unfolding as it will. God's delight in it and in us is changed in no way whatever. The final revelation of the divinity of all people and of all things - that's what incarnation is - revelation.

Human growing pains, suffering and death - Again in the theology of fall redemption suffering would be the curse of original sin and our connection and complicity in it, the banishment from Eden. So many aspects of our lives come under that heading of punishment, that we missed our chance, paradise is lost.

Whereas In our theology of nature and grace it is about the blessing of being, the necessary experiences of life on earth, the only way to grow and evolve. The work and presence of the Holy Spirit the only way for life in time and space to thrive. We are asked to see again the bigger picture, the wider evolution the birthpangs and of the human race. 'If you dare to live be prepared to grieve' .

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All of this, dear friends, is a lot to take in. It is so deep and especially if it is new to you, and especially if it seems to contradict something you believe in, something you were told. It makes it more challenging still. But remember it is faith and remember it is courage. I would suggest just to breathe, relax, give yourself a moment to see if any of those wonderful revelations has stayed with you, if one has attracted you more than the others. Let me end with these few sentences

'At the core of a living theology is the beating, broken, beautiful heart of God.

It beats at the heart of the world, in the rhythm of your own pulse.

And it is one and the same love-energy permeating every aspect of life.

Good theology is indeed about the Love-story of Creation and the Wonder of You.' DJ O'Leary

(An Astonishing Secret video course can be accessed at <https://astonishingsecret.org>

A DVD set of the video course can be obtained from Pauline Books and Media

<https://www.paulineuk.org/browse/dvds/item/astonishing-secret/5031446770610>)