

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 23rd January - One Sea, Many Rivers

(As we approach the 3rd anniversary of Daniel's death, this is the 1st extract of 3 from 'Dancing to my Death', where Daniel's searing honesty shines forth as he seeks to understand God's presence in the midst his struggles with cancer and a new stoma.)

TOccasionally the despair lessens, the depression lifts, and possibilities emerge. I have always found a healing in understanding something more deeply. During this time in my life only a stark honesty survives. Tortured questions come unbidden: 'Is there a God at all?', 'What do I really believe?', 'Has my life been all on the surface?', 'Why do I now question so many things about Catholic Christianity?', 'How deep does childhood indoctrination go? How long does it last?', 'Are all religions much the same?' Between waves of shadows, this last familiar question returns. Here behind the drawn curtains of my ward cubicle, I can think what I like!

I honestly have no doubt that all the wisdom traditions and religions stream towards the same ocean of love and final unity. I believe that Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam are all equally in their own way, inspired by the One Being, to reveal different aspects of the Holy Mystery. We are not forbidden to see the titles Tao, Mother of Life, Creator, Brahman, Great Spirit, Gracious Mystery, God, Allah, Yahweh, Reality, Being, Infinite Source as beautiful names for the very same Love. Christianity's contribution would centre around the astonishing and unique revelation that we call Incarnation.

Lord Krishna, in his incarnate immanence and transcendence, in his union with humanity and with Brahman, has been called 'The Unknown Christ of Hinduism'. Jewish scholar Rabbi Rami Shapiro believes that each faith is like a language; each reflects on the mystery by way of its own form and colours. To know God better we need to become more multilingual! And you will be astonished at all the detailed similarities of each religion's revelations.

Again, rather than making superhuman efforts to touch Nirvana, to get to heaven after we die, Taoism and Buddhism remind us that everything real, true and loving is already flowing through us right now in what happens each day. All is perfect just as it is! Our calling is to go with this divine/human flow, to be an essential part of it. This understanding of the mystery of life is the same for all true religions. And it lies at the heart of Christianity. (That is the whole point and purpose of the way I now pray.) So much misleading baggage needs to be discarded so as to set our supple and fragile souls free to fly. The real truth of the Christian community of love as revealed in Jesus is groundless and boundless; it is a dynamic healing and liberation, experienced both personally and universally.

In his *Perennial Wisdom for the Spiritually Independent* Shapiro writes that there is but one Reality (of many names) which is the source and substance of all creation. It is the universal and dynamic being of all evolution, and every thing, and each one of us, is an expression and manifestation of that Reality. Instead of seeking to manifest this vision as fully and faithfully as possible, we tend to identify with, and settle for our many culturally-conditioned, flawed, fearful and closed teachings from our childhood. (pp74,75)