

Windows of Wonder

*My heart overflows with noble words. To the king I must speak the song I have made.
My heart as nimble as the pen of a scribe (Psalm 45:1.)*

In a nutshell ...

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There are a myriad of ways to tell this story. I wanted to find my way of telling it at this moment in time. To try and capture in the best and most simple way I could what is the very essence of the story, a bit like the trunk of the tree, from which sprout numerous branches and leaves and fruit, and whose roots sink into the vast depths of the earth below. And as I grow, and as I hear others telling the story in their unique ways, so my own narrative will evolve and become enriched. But it has to become my story. I have to find my way to discover and to give birth to it, to nurture it, to love it, to share it, to tell it and pass it on. ..

The heart of God

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God in his most holy love could not help but create. To do so and to continue to do so is her nature. And all to which she has given birth, is good, and full of beauty, and holiness, and bears the imprint of its creator. How could it be otherwise?

But creating in love also means to create newness, uniqueness and difference. It means to play with newness, to innovate, to dream, to celebrate difference. It means, too, to create the potential for further innovation and newness, and to write this into the script.

And creating the potential for change and renewal in this way brings with it the capacity to die as well as to live, the space for decay, so that new life and new forms of life may emerge, that in turn can experiment and innovate and play, and in turn themselves give birth.

And so the sister story of evolution fits like a glove, further revealing the paradox which is at the heart of this wonderful story: The mystery of a love that gives itself, that moves over and steps out of the limelight, so that the future may replace the present, and which has learned to make mistakes so that learning and improvements can be made along the way. But it shows itself too in the fierce fight for survival that destroys all in its path so as to demand its space in the future. And all of this God did, and found delightful, and continues to do and find delightful. And this is what we mean by love. And wherever we look we can see this pattern, whenever we tune in to the song that is deep within us. For God, the Spirit of love, remains at the heart of this story...blessing and forming and anointing every step of the way.

The heart of humanity

But to love is also to relinquish control and to grant freedom, the freedom to choose: to choose to love or not to love; to create or not to create; to grow or not to grow; to connect or not to connect; to allow the gift to emerge or to block its path.

And nowhere in creation is the capacity to choose greater than in human beings, in whom the capacity for reflective consciousness has developed. Men and women have free will, the freedom to choose for good or ill. This is both profound and awesome. And it is a prerequisite for total love. This is a free will that can choose to love with great courage, to co-create beauty and harmony, to forgive all: and many of those who have developed this expertise of the heart we think of as saints. But, by the same token, free will allows the space not just for transient error, but for the wholehearted, fully chosen, rejection of our true humanity and even for the development of a new story that can be truly evil and wholly destructive. So much so that it can even take on a life of its own and infiltrate or saturate the whole fabric of a culture or a society.

In this sense the myth of Adam and Eve is full of truth and wisdom. Not a one-off historic event in a garden at the dawn of creation, it is rather the story that we face every day of our lives.

For within the personal evolution of each of our hearts there is a kind of battle for survival. On the one hand the ego seeks, by hook or by crook, to ensure its own pre-eminence. Demanding attention, it is reluctant to leave the stage, resisting its own mortality and refusing to die. It will not accept death. It wants to run the show, and fascinated by its own performance, it will do whatever is needed to get its way.

On the other hand the human heart, tuning in to the truth that we are loved totally by a God who finds us wonderful, begins to see that the path to new life is through living life to the full and playing a full part in the creation story, whilst recognising that this at some stage will lead to suffering and death.

A simple, graceful awareness of the ego, though, and how it is operating, is often enough for it to be disarmed, creating the space and allowing the grace for us to choose our true heart's desire. We know too that this is not a one-off struggle, but a constant challenge to which we must attend, for the ego does not back down for very long, but will always re-surface in some shape or form. The wonderful thing, though, is that God loves us in our full humanity, the light and the shade, our weaknesses and our tendencies to go off course, just as he does our instinct for love and truth. It is precisely through our weaknesses that the graced nature, the natural grace of our humanity can shine through.

The heart of Jesus

The emergence in history of reflective consciousness within human beings also set the scene for the kairos, the favourable time, for God to fully become part of that humanity, by becoming flesh in the person of Jesus. Here God demonstrates his absolute solidarity and oneness with his creation, by becoming part of it. Fully man and fully God, Jesus revealed to us what our hearts intuitively already know: that we are utterly and tenderly loved in all our precious humanity, that we are the apple of the eye of a God, who cannot help but love us with every fibre of her being.

Through the incarnation, we are shown that there is no line, fine or otherwise, between what is holy and what is sacred, between the spirit and the flesh, the sacred and the secular, the human and the divine. Our bodies, like that of Jesus, are temples of the love of God, the Holy Spirit, and to live our lives to the fullest, true to our calling, is to contribute our part to the task of creation. Jesus, through his own free will, emptied himself and became a man. Throughout his life on earth, in the way that he lived, the truth that he revealed and the life that he gave, he continued to follow his heart, embracing everything that life threw at him, including the most agonising torture and death. He overcame the depths of despair and darkness, of cruelty and death before being raised to life by his Father. In this he revealed the overwhelming power and faithfulness of Love, the same Spirit that hovers over the chaos and brings life and meaning to all creation.

Through the sacrament of his death and resurrection, celebrated within the Eucharist, Jesus gives himself to us as the Bread of Life, as a sign of his intimate and inseparable connection with a world and a universe that is itself a Eucharistic celebration. He demonstrates beyond all doubt that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is ours through Jesus the Christ. Through him, all is forgiven and all is redeemed, and will be forgiven and will be redeemed, so long as we in turn can learn to forgive from the heart.

We begin and end with the heart.

The above story is my attempt to outline a theology of nature and grace, a theology which is the heart of theology, the theology of the heart.

It is the Core. It offers a cipher, a lens, through which to consider other theologies, to help draw out the shapes and patterns of truth. It provides a melody that allows for improvisation and harmony.