

Evolution Weekend 2015: An Ongoing Dialogue

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Grace Unlimited has been observing Evolution Weekend since its beginnings.

http://www.theclergyletterproject.org/rel_evolution_weekend_2015.html

That's what we'll be observing on this last Sunday in Epiphany.

I'm mostly going to repeat something I said several weeks ago, because it fits the topic.

The passage back then was Genesis 1,

but our Psalm for this Sunday (50:1) starts with an echo of Genesis 1:

"The-One-Who-Is,

the God of gods,

has spoken;

he has called the earth

from the rising of the sun

to its setting."

The-One-Who-Is

(YHWH)

"calls" the earth into being.

Since the very beginning,

all that is

has existed

through some sort of ongoing dialogue

with The-One-Who-Is.

Remember what I said about Genesis 1?

Here's an excerpt:

If you keep reading,

Genesis 1 sketches an ancient worldview.

It imagines the earth as a flat disk

supported by pillars

surrounded by vast, chaotic waters on all sides,

including a huge body of water over our heads

that's kept from drowning us by a crystal dome,

studded with stars, sun and moon,

with "windows" in it that can be opened

to let some of the water in as rain.

If you wanted to insist that Genesis is literally true,

you'd have to go way further than the Creation Museum.

You'd have to defend the idea that we all live

under this giant, crystal dome!
You'd have to explain the blue of the sky
as evidence of that huge body of water
over our heads!
Good luck with that.

The writers of the early church knew this couldn't be a literal description.
St. Augustine: "No Christian will dare say that the narrative must not be taken in a figurative sense. For St. Paul says: 'Now all these things that happened ... were symbolic.' ... What meaning other than allegorical have the words: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth?'"
(http://college.holycross.edu/faculty/alaffey/other_files/Augustine-Genesis1.pdf)

So Genesis 1 uses
the terms of an ancient worldview
to say symbolically
that from the very beginning
without literally having vocal chords,
God was in some sort of communication
with a vast, dark, shapeless, fluid mess,
summoning it to become
a luminous, shapely, creative community.
God "spoke" to the chaos creatively,
the chaos responded creatively,
and that's how we got
this intricately interwoven community we call the world,
with all its appealing and devastating surprises.

Like those ancient storytellers,
we can say that's what happened way back then,
because we see a version of it it happening now.
We keep seeing luminous, shapely, creative community
emerging from the vast, dark, shapeless, fluid messiness
of everyday life.

It's like an ongoing dialogue.
Nobody controls it,
and yet it seems to be going somewhere,
no matter how many twists and turns it takes.

It's one of the most basic storylines underlying the entire Bible.
We hear it every Sunday in our Eucharistic prayer:
God's constant communication
summons the world from chaos into community;

the world turns chaotic again;
and again God summons the world from chaos into community,
over and over;
for us who gather the storyline is lived
as God draws us into
the surprisingly renewed and renewing life
of an executed criminal,
Jesus,
who through broken bread and fluid wine
still summons us from chaos into the community
known as the Body of Christ;
the meal itself is both
a realization
and a summons
to community
through brokenness and fluidity;
this is God's very being for us:
the relentless, self-sacrificing summons from chaos into community.

That's the ongoing dialogue we celebrate every Sunday.
It's a concentrated form of the dialogue happening everywhere.
It's not a literal dialogue.
(Remember St. Augustine?)
But calling it a dialogue deepens our awareness,
opens us us to the utter mystery
of what happens around, in and through us
to make us ... us.

Darwin called this dialogue "natural selection."
He wasn't wrong.
The very nature of things displays
a mutually selective process,
often devastating,
yet issuing in unpredictable forms of community.

But some of us,
with these ancient storytellers,
call this process,
inherent in the very nature of things,
a sort of dialogue,
and I don't think we're wrong either.
We just see things in more expansive and engaging terms.

In Genesis 1 God says
this dialogue is
not only natural
but good.

Yes, it can be devastating beyond words,
but the dialogue is going somewhere,
somewhere good,
no matter how many twists and turns it takes.

Let's celebrate that.