

## BOOK REVIEW

**O'Murchu, Diarmuid. *Evolutionary Faith: Rediscovering God in Our Great Story*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002.**

Diarmuid O'Murchu is a Catholic priest and social psychologist who has written extensively on new paradigms from a multi-disciplinary point of view. This book draws on both scientific and religious sources as he re-images the ongoing event that is the universe, and considers the role and place of the divine in its eternal unfolding.

O'Murchu explores the implication of 'evolutionary theology', which he defines as working with one major assumption: 'The Originating and Sustaining Mystery has been totally involved in the unfolding process of creation from the very "beginning".' He writes of a 'universe exuding vitality and wisdom, consciously manifesting its innate power in the variety and diversity of all life forms, our home planet being the connective tissue that links our human intelligence with the cosmic wisdom that endows the whole of creation', and of the 'essential embodied nature of all life – personal, planetary and cosmic'. For O'Murchu, '[e]mbodiment is the primary realm in which creative transformation takes place.'

Rather than rejecting evolution as somehow inimical to religious belief, O'Murchu discerns the dynamic immersion of the 'Originating and Sustaining Mystery' in the evolution of the universe, the earth and all life. Where some people might see the involvement of this Mystery as outside the evolutionary process, or as the process itself, the importance of O'Murchu's thesis is that it explicitly places the cosmic story in the realm of theology.

O'Murchu suggests that:

It is time to outgrow the narrowly defined, competitively driven understanding of evolution, favouring the triumph of our successful biological species, with a tendency to overshadow the significance of cosmic and planetary unfolding over vast aeons of inorganic evolution.

It is time to embrace the grandeur, complexity, and paradox that characterize evolution at every stage, a story that continues to unfold under the mysterious wisdom of our cocreative God, whose strategies always have, and always will, outwit our human and religions desire for neat, predictable outcomes.

This book is manifestly Christian, applying its thesis in a Christian context and exploring the concepts of the Trinity and the Eucharist; potentially, this exclusive link to one particular religious tradition limits its broader application. However, the central notion of evolutionary theology has a universal application. It is strongly cosmos/earth-centred, linking human consciousness to the consciousness of the whole cosmos. O'Murchu's thesis gives a dynamic sacred cosmic dimension, with a strong theological base, to the concept of the 'web of life' which is central to any spirituality which seeks to deepen the connections between humans and the universe.