

When the book of Genesis says that God made humanity in his own image, it must have meant something other than God made us little copies of himself. Whatever it is that is God-like in humanity must be something of our essence, something of our interior selves, something of our basic spiritual nature, hidden deep beneath the multi-layered ungodliness of our everyday lives.

Leaving aside the really big unpleasant stuff like cruelty, perfidy, treachery and indifference, it can be difficult indeed to see the image of our creator even in the less dramatic, more everyday ways we are. The reflection of the Godhead is glimpsed, if it can be seen at all, through a glass always dark and always half empty. From our infinite capacity for self justification to our endless ability to dodge the blame; from unsatisfiable appetites to precocious self-centredness, our divine spark is so often obscured, and perhaps most pervasively in our craving for convenience, our love of the easy way, our hardwired desire to take the road of least resistance and to risk the minimum of effort and expenditure for the maximum reward.

So, the supermarket search for the parking space closest to the entrance, where we will grumpily waste 10 minutes of our life circling round till we find it, as long, of course, as we don't have to reverse into or out of it.

Or the, quite frankly murderous mood that can overtake even the meekest, sweetest, Werther's Original toting Grannie when confronted with the inconvenience of a wait in the eternity that is the Post Office queue.

And then there is the notion that everything you could, should, or would want to know about God can be found conveniently deposited in here, whether here is a Bible or other Holy Book, or here is a tradition of a faith, sect or Church.

We approach the ultimate mysteries as if God had created our craving for convenience, and given us religion to satisfy it. And of course our rabbis and immams, our priests and pastors are more than happy enough to pander to that belief. It's easy. Whatever life throws at you, whatever crisis of the spirit comes your way, just dip into this handy depository of wisdom, and in an instant the answer is there.

Is it? If only it were really that simple. If only all the answers had been set down in black and white 2000 or so years ago, or decided at ecumenical councils, or in denominational confessions or catholic catechisms.

It is not only unappealingly arrogant to think that that might be the case- that we have it all sorted and sewn up and in here- but that convenience can come with a far higher price than we actually want to pay. Here is the danger.

Our Christian books and traditions are products of many things: divine inspiration and heavenly revelation; long thought and meditation and debate and argument, and *also* the cultures in which those inspirations, revelations, thoughts, debates and arguments happened.

God is outside of space and time: and yet his revelation is mediated through us, who are anything but timeless. We are products of our times and places: even when we claim, as the church often does, that we're not, we most certainly are. We are fixed as firmly and immovably as the hills in the concerns and obsessions, attitudes and viewpoints, fears and values of the world as it is when and where we are in it. *And we always have been.*

As the rain water trickles down through the mountains it picks up the taste of those rocks as it goes, and so it is with knowledge from above. And however we like to look at it, those minerals are not the essence of what we drink, they are just something the water has picked up along the way.

It's very convenient really to think that all we need in our relationship with God was somehow set in stone all those years ago, but I don't think that is the case, and these are the words that tell me why it is not.

*'See I am making all things new'*

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If, as many do, you were to base your view of Christianity on what you see reported in the news media then you would conclude that for years now we have been behaving less like Christ, and more like the proverbial dog in a manger. Yes, you can't believe everything you read in the newspapers- and nothing if it's the Daily Mail- but it is true that for some of us, at least, we are growling and snarling in the straw. Which is odd, really, because Christianity is not the promoter and guardian of traditional values; it is the promoter and guardian of *Christian* values, principal of which is to make all things new. There is nothing at all wrong for us, in getting with the programme.

*'See I am making all things new'*

The words of the Creator are not '*I have made* all things new' but '*I am making*'. Jesus speaks of a process that is ongoing, a process which does not end till all the processes of history end. All things are being made new, because the process of creation *has not finished yet*.

So it is wrong as well as probably rather silly to bang on, as some do, about what the church has taught for 2000 years as if such a long length of time spent saying something makes whatever is being said right. It doesn't. It doesn't automatically make it wrong, but an argument is right or wrong on its own merits, independent of the amount of time it has been held. Slavery is wrong, no matter that the church thought it was right for near on 1800 years. Mixed race marriages are right, equal marriage is right no matter that Christian Scriptures condemn them. Many churches rely financially on interest from their investments, even though usury is entirely un-Biblical. Bible teaching has it that women must not speak in church, must cover their heads there and be obedient to males. And Samaritan women musn't even look at a Jewish man. Oh, and lippy children should be stoned to death.

Sometimes, we can change with the times. We have been most Christ-like when we have changed *ahead* of the times, making new what has become obsolete by the movement of time. One day, everything on earth, everything we cling so tight to now, all our human customs and institutions, everything created by human hands and human ingenuity will be changed beyond recognition, gone as we know it, and fully transformed by Christ.

What the faith teaches about Christ cannot change- he is, as the letter to the Hebrews says, the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. But what it teaches about the world outside, what it teaches about what God wants for the everyday intricacies of human society, interaction, behaviour and culture by its very nature will change, because as part of creation, humanity will change. All of creation is in the process of changing, indeed it is one of its defining attributes, perhaps the principal way creation is different to its creator.

By and large, the Church does not any more preach about the need to conquer Palestine and slaughter its inhabitants, the wickedness of the Philistines and Edomites, the importance of the Temple, how to live a godly life in the 3rd century BC or how to accommodate oneself to the civic and cultic demands of the Roman empire because, even though vast swathes of our Holy Scriptures are dedicated to those

very topics, the places and peoples, with their situations and real-life dilemmas that led to their writing, have all gone.

Do not be afraid of change, of newness in your life. God is making all things new, and of course, every second of every day that includes you. Even when he is making you older, as with unarguable certainty he does, year on year, he is, year one year, making you new. Even when your eyes close for the very last time, he is making you new.

God is not a butterfly collector or a museum curator, collecting perfect specimens to be preserved in aspic, pristine forever in his display cabinets. All His works are works in progress, progressing towards their destination, the New Jerusalem.

Lets us pray that during the year to come, there will be a time reflected in what we have said and thought and done in the busy rush of our lives, a time when can truly say 'See, he is making *me* new.' And we *are* making a new world'.