

A Pause from Book Reviews

This month I would like to reflect on the wondrous, grace-filled event Christians have just celebrated, Christmas, the birth of God incarnate to declare God's endearing and ongoing love of all creation. I will reference Ilia Delio, in her book, "The Hours of the Universe," and Kristin Swenson in her book, "God of Earth." You may be reading this at the tale end of the season of Christmas, or the beginning of Epiphany. Swenson refers to Christmas as "the season of the birth of the God of earth." And Epiphany is the season of revealing who that God of earth is, and why he came.

Swenson reflects on the Christmas season this way: "I'm not against the celebration of a Middle-Eastern boy born two thousand years ago; but if that's a moment of God's incarnation, as Christianity would have it-- divinity becoming of earth -- then it is universal and ahistorical in its implications. In terms of this book, the attention, love, and care the baby Jesus draws forth from us by his very nature as a poor infant is the same as earth's -- to attend, care, to take delight and to worry over the earth is to worship the newborn God."

Then Swenson takes the birth of Christ into a deeper, intimate place. "Much has been made of the heart as manger, of making ourselves more compassionate for the sick, generous to the poor, more committed to making peace on earth. All of that is good and important. But this is not merely a God of humankind. This is the God of earth, capable of exorcising the worst from ourselves and quietly, silently, entering in to 'be born in us today.' This is prayer. Let our innards be the manger where the newborn God of earth rests his downy head. Let our minds, our hearts, our muscles, and nerves, bones and blood be the place where she is born."

Delio helps us understand what God incarnate in Jesus wanted us to understand. "We can read the history of our 13.7-billion-year-old universe as the rising up of Divine Love incarnate, which bursts forth in the person of Jesus, who reveals love's urge toward wholeness through reconciliation, mercy, peace, and forgiveness. Jesus is the love of God incarnate, the wholemaker who shows the way of evolution toward unity in love. In Jesus, God breaks through and points us in a new direction; not one of chance or blindness but one of ever-deepening wholeness in love. In Jesus, God comes to us from the future to be our future. Those who follow Jesus are to become wholemakers, uniting what is scattered, creating a deeper unity in love. Christian life is a commitment to love, to give birth to God in one's own life and to become midwives of divinity in this evolving cosmos. We are to be wholemakers of love in a world of change."

May the God of earth, revealed through love, come to reconcile all things in him, in heaven and earth, fill your hearts with grace, joy, and peace in the new year.

John Hanson