

Kevin Treston, *Emergence for Life not Fall from Grace: making sense of the Jesus story in the light of evolution* (Preston, Vic.: Mosaic Press, 2015). Paper. 133pp. £14.99. ISBN 978-1-74324-043-4.

This short text seeks to replace a fall-redemption account of the Christian faith with one based on evolutionary emergentism. Such schemes tend to remind one of the work of Teilhard de Chardin, but major influences on this book would seem rather to be Matthew Fox's *Original Blessing*, Thomas Berry's *The Universe Story*, and the work of Ilia Delio, considered below through her latest book.

There is much to commend in the approach Treston wants to mark out. He is right to suppose that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and behind it surely the teaching sponsored by the magisterium, does not take account of evolutionary understandings of the biological world or our species, tends to trap us in a Christology based on the Incarnation as rescue mission, endorses a problematic biblical literalism, and is an impediment to the evolution of helpful forms of church for our times.

He is also right to suppose that we nevertheless need our origin myths, and that there is work to do to re-understand these in the context of contemporary science.

The book is not, Treston wants to make clear, written for the professional theologian. But even the intelligent lay reader who is his intended reader will become increasingly frustrated by slips that a stricter academic discipline would have avoided. The referencing system in the first part of the book is inadequate – p26 gives '(Smith 6-7)' when there are four Smith works in the bibliography. Later a more conventional use of Harvard is adopted, but typographical errors continue to abound: 'Paul II' for 'John Paul II'; 'Worthington' for Mark Worthing; 'Maloney' for 'Mahoney'; 'noogenesis' for 'noogenesis'; 'Revelations' for 'Revelation'.

General readers will also be saddened that there is no reference to theological thinkers beyond Catholicism. There were crucial omissions even within Catholic writings, notably Daryl Domning's work on *Original Selfishness*. And the crucial problem of how to reconstruct theodicy in the light of Darwinism is never tackled. So although this is the right type of book for a pressing concern in general lay understanding of these issues, I find it hard to recommend this particular attempt.

Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013). Paper. Xxvi + 230pp. £12.99. ISBN 978-1-62698-029-7

There is a common agenda between the Treston book and this essay by Ilia Delio OSF, who is a Senior Fellow in Science and Religion attached to Georgetown

University. Like Treston, Delio wants to celebrate (a particular understanding of) evolution and emergence, and to lament the Catholic Church's failure to engage with this metanarrative. This however is a much more sophisticated essay than Treston's (though not alas free of misprints).

Delio's hero is unmistakably Teilhard de Chardin. Much of the importance of the book lies in the range of the other thinkers that she draws into the conversation, such as Raymond Panikkar, Thomas Merton, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, with nods too at the work of the physicist David Bohm, and the young Jewish mystic and Holocaust victim Etty Hillesum.

Delio develops a thesis around God as love, a love that never coerces the world, but gives itself to the world, hides in that world, drawing it on towards evolutionary fulfillment. Holism is to be embraced, at the expense of mechanism. Like Bonhoeffer and Hillesum, she is convinced that God cannot or will not exercise power in realizing that fulfillment. She writes interestingly and powerfully on that theme.

Two things, however, hold me back from an enthusiastic endorsement of this work. The first is that, as with Treston, there is a failure to engage with the difficulties of an evolutionary scheme. At a scientific level, Teilhard's formulation was much criticized, and there is no recognition of that here. Rather all sorts of scientific voices are drawn in to illustrate the way in which we have moved beyond a Newtonian view of the universe. But Delio, in embracing Teilhard, is effectively moving beyond a Darwinian view, and that move needed a lot more defending. Again, one of the great difficulties of an evolutionary view, theologically, is the problem of the suffering that is intrinsic within evolution, and that is not engaged with at all. As Moltmann recognized in an important section of *The Way of Jesus Christ* in which he takes issue with both Teilhard and Rahner, there is a good case that evolution itself stands in need of redemption. Which leads me to the other great theological difficulty of this scheme, which is that redemption is subsumed, in a Teilhardian scheme, into evolutionary creation. Jesus' passion and death enables him to become the cosmic Christ, so that the Spirit can work in the world. But there is no sense that the Cross and Resurrection, in themselves, *effect* anything, and that will make many readers uneasy.

My other difficulty is that – again like Treston – Delio has neglected vital sources. She makes no effort to engage with critics of Teilhard such as H. Paul Santmire, or yet with Darwinian theorists such as Stephen Jay Gould, who would take a very different view of evolution. Like Treston she would have profited from a greater engagement with Domning's *Original Selfishness* – Domning is cited (and misspelled) but more needed to be said about his view of original sin. But by far the greatest omission from her sources is her Georgetown colleague John Haught. Haught is very important as a theologian who wants to take evolution seriously, and as such he is influenced by Teilhard, but in a much more nuanced way than I find in this work. It is bizarre that his name does not appear in the bibliography.

There is some fine writing in this book. There is some bold engagement with difficult themes, such as transhumanism. But the uncritical use of the term 'evolution' throughout the text vitiates the informed reader's confidence in the argument. I hope that Delio, clearly very widely read, theologically bold, and delightfully willing to move between such sources as Merton, Hillesum, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, between quantum entanglement and emergence, between Plato's cave and what she sees as Newton's, will develop her theme in greater dialogue with crucial critical sources. I would greatly look forward to such a book.

Professor Christopher Southgate, University of Exeter