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Tallman: The universe is the self-actualization of God

5-6 minutes

The problem with our civilization is we have lost an overarching “great story” everyone can fit their life into and find meaning in, and so life for many has become largely meaningless, just a random series of events signifying nothing.

However, a new, old paradigm is rapidly emerging and it is a game-changer. I say “new, old” because it is based both on science and scripture.

Science is God’s tool revealing more and more how astounding God is. And what science has shown us is that everything evolves. Biblical scholars tell us even the Bible evolved: from Jewish writings of the Law (the rules of life) to the Prophets (self-criticism of inauthentic religious life) to the Wisdom writings (the paradoxes and mysteries of life). The Bible evolved even more with the life of Jesus. We also know from Cardinal John Henry Newman and other scholars that Christian doctrine evolved.

Ilia Delio wrote in *Christ in Evolution*: “In a world of constant change, the meaning and understanding of Christ cannot stay fixed, but must be adapted to each new age.”

Contemporary theologians like Delio say Christ has evolved and is

evolving.

It is important to understand, as Richard Rohr says in his new book *The Universal Christ*, that “Christ” is not the last name of Jesus. Rather it is a title that can mean “the Messiah, Anointed One, or Word of God.” The problem for Christians is we have reduced the Christ largely to Jesus of Nazareth. The Christ is infinitely bigger.

The first three gospel books, Matthew, Mark and Luke are mainly about Jesus. The Gospel of John and the writings of the Apostle Paul are mainly about the cosmic Christ.

The first bible, the first revelation of God, was nature. For tens of thousands of years before the Bible was written, people got all their lessons about God and life from God’s creation. The written Bible is the second revelation of God.

The first word God spoke, the Big Bang, was the Christ who is incarnate in the whole universe. The cosmic Christ is the first incarnation of God. Then, the Christ became Jesus of Nazareth, the second incarnation of God.

In the Book of Revelation, Christ says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (Rev. 22:13) Basically, he is saying “I am in everything.” As the universe evolves, it is the self-actualization of the evolving Christ.

God gave matter the direction, the law, to head toward spirit and then set nature free to decide how to get there. The universe may seem to evolve randomly by itself, but in actuality matter, over vast periods of time, intrinsically moves toward spirit through greater and greater attraction, connection, complexity and consciousness.

If you imagine the 13.7 billion year history of the universe as one

year, science reveals that Jan. 1 was the Big Bang; May 1 was the origin of the Milky Way galaxy; on Sept. 14 Earth formed; on Dec. 17 invertebrates flourished; on Dec. 26 the first mammals appeared; on Dec. 31 at 10:30 p.m. the first humans came into being; and on Dec. 31 at 11:59:59 science was born.

The direction is from matter (stars and planets) to life (plants) to sensitivity (animals) to thought (humans) to spirit (the spread of the great religions across the planet) to science, to science and religion together revealing the glory of God. The direction of evolution is the direction of Christ evolving out of the universe.

John's gospel says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God All things came into being through him. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory." (John 1: 1-3, 14).

Paul wrote "Christ is the image of the invisible God; the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on Earth were created, things visible and invisible all things have been created through him and for him and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1: 15-17). Christ encompasses all of space-time and is the ordering principle or law that holds creation together in one communion.

It is important to understand that this new, old paradigm is not "pantheism," that is, everything is God; it is "panentheism," a theology that God is both incarnate in and transcends the universe. It builds upon the old story but includes the new story of science within it and therefore can be a powerful force for the renewal of our civilization.

What does this mean in the practicalities of life? It means

everything you do is important, not meaningless. Everyone has a role to play in the self-actualization of God. What you do to other people and to the planet you do to God. You are called to fulfil God's plan to build up the world, not destroy it.

Therefore, do not turn from the world in order to find God, as Christians often have done. Turn to the world to find the cosmic Christ in the world and help him evolve out of it. You are called to co-create the planet with God, to bring it to ever greater consciousness and love until the reign of God is complete, and God is all in all.

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