Quakers and the New Story

By Mary Coehlo

It was only in the last century that scientists have been able to connect their many discoveries in astronomy, geology, evolutionary biology, and other subjects into a continuous story of the origins of human beings, the earth, and all its beings. It is an origin story we never could have imagined. It tells us of the unbroken, unfolding of the light and energy of the great flaring forth (big bang), the formation of the elements in the stars, the beginnings of life on Earth and the remarkable evolutionary story of life on this planet to its present great diversity. Human beings have arisen within (not out of) this story. Upon learning the story, innumerable questions about human identity
and the nature of the earth and cosmos immediately come to mind.

A group at Friends Meeting at Cambridge in Massachusetts has been meeting monthly, some of us for eight years now, to ponder the implications and revelations of the story. We find it profoundly engaging to explore the depth of our belonging within the story from both scientific and spiritual points of view. We have been informed by Brian Swimme’s video series *Canticle to the Cosmos* and *The Powers of the Universe*, by the writings of Thomas Berry, and by the books *Evolutionaries* by Carter Phipps and *Evolution's Purpose* by Steve McIntosh. Recently a member of the group spoke to us about Teilhard de Chardin and his Mass on the World.

We have found the New Story can strengthen the witness and understandings of Friends. It offers a home for the Light, a depth of belonging that deepens human self understanding as earth beings, and important changes in perception of human relation to the life systems of the earth. The shift in consciousness offered by the new story is one important change among the many required for the survival of the human species and the great diversity of species that yet remains.


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