Spirituality
Soul Seeing



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Advent — from the Latin for "a coming, an approach, or an arrival" — is upon us. This season is more than a sentimental, reminiscent waiting for a new baby Jesus. The need for adult Christianity and Jesus' actual message is so urgent that we cannot allow the great feast of Christmas and its preparation in Advent to be watered down in any way. The suffering, injustice and devastation on this planet are too great to settle for an infantile Gospel or Jesus. Jesus taught that the "reign of God" or the "kingdom of God" asks a great deal of us personally — surrender, simplicity and solidarity with suffering.

Advent is a time to focus our anticipation on the eternal and cosmic Christ, beyond and before the child in the manger. Jesus is the microcosmic expression of the macrocosm, the union of human and divine, psychic and physical, in a single life and person. The Christ includes and goes further than Jesus, beyond space and time. Jesus is a concrete and personal embodiment of universal love. Christ is the blueprint and icon of God's loving presence and plan — always and everywhere. It is to this adult and cosmic Christ that we say, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

The creation poem in the first chapter of Genesis portrays a joyful, creative outpouring of love. The Big Bang is really the first moment of Incarnation in our universe, before Jesus even took on human flesh. God takes shape in color, movement, shape and texture — incarnate and present in each living thing. From the moment of our universe's inception, along the slow stages of evolution, and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we see that life is headed somewhere good. We can trust that death simply brings new forms of love making itself known.

Thus, ever since, Christ has "come again" — and again and again — in every created thing, drawing creation toward greater wholeness, fullness and union.

"And the Word [or blueprint] became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. … For of his fullness we all received grace upon grace" (John 1:14, 16).

The mystery of Christ is revealed whenever you are able to see the psychic and the physical coexisting, in any moment, in any event, and in any person. God's hope for history seems to be that humanity will one day be able to recognize its own dignity as the divine dwelling place, which it also shares with the rest of creation. (If we

cannot honor our own human dignity, how could we possibly recognize and honor the inherent dignity of warblers, winter wheat, or water itself?)

God creates things that create themselves, and we are called to be co-creators with God (Romans 8:28). Rather than Jesus coming to fulfill us, we have come to fulfill the cosmic Christ (Colossians 1:17-20, 24).

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Evolution, the idea that something is unfolding and coming to a fullness, is an active, ongoing process. We are all a part of this movement of the ever-growing cosmic Christ that is coming to be in this one great act of giving birth (Romans 8:22).

I don't know when it will happen or what it will look like to reach the tipping point, for the Christ mystery to come to fullness. All I know is that this meaning, planted in the middle of things, gives us direction, purpose, hope and confidence.

We're still living in the in-between, slowly edging forward, with much resistance and push back. Creation is "groaning in anticipation … standing on tiptoe waiting for the revelation of the sons and daughters of God" (Romans 8:22-23). Evolution is never a straight path, but three steps forward and two steps back, as we see throughout Scripture, history, nature and in our own lives. We fight change and death to our small selves; we avoid uncertainty and the unknown.

Yet the descent into darkness is necessary to all life, to transformation, and to fresh expressions of God. Creation begins with the Spirit hovering over a formless, dark deep to bring forth light and life.

When we demand any completion to history on our terms, when we demand that our anxiety or any dissatisfaction be taken away, saying as it were, "Why did life let me down? Why didn't I get what I wanted or expected?", we are refusing to say "Come, Lord Jesus." We are refusing to hold out for the full story.

Foundational hope demands a foundational belief in a world that is still and always unfolding. To stay on the ride, to trust the trajectory, to know it is moving, and moving somewhere always better, is just another way to describe faith. Evolutionary thinking is actually contemplative thinking, because it leaves the full field of the future in God's hands and agrees to humbly hold the present. Evolutionary thinking allows both knowing and not knowing, at the same time.

"Come, Lord Jesus," the Advent mantra, means that all of history must live from a kind of deliberate emptiness, a chosen non-fulfillment. Perfect fullness is always yet to come; we do not need to demand it now. This keeps the field of life wide open to grace and to a future created by God through our surrender and creative participation.

This is what it means to be awake, what it means to be in Advent — aware, alive, attentive, alert, anticipating. Advent is, above all else, a call to full consciousness and a forewarning about the high price of consciousness.

"Come, Lord Jesus" is a leap into the kind of freedom and surrender that is rightly called the virtue of hope: the patient and trustful willingness to live without closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our satisfaction is now at another level, and our source is beyond ourselves. We are able to trust that Christ will come again, just as Jesus has come into our past, into our private dilemmas, and into our suffering world. Our past then becomes our prologue, and "Come Lord Jesus" is not a cry of desperation but an assured shout of cosmic hope.

This is the good news the angels gave Mary and the shepherds in a very specific and concrete way. We can now trust that history — and our small roles within the larger story — is moving in a positive direction. We who know the end from the beginning, who trust the Christ mystery, must participate in the movement toward the fullness of every living thing's union in love. We are the second coming of Christ!

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