

Life... what is it? Is it eternal?

In trying to answer this question, we fall on different sides of “taking it as it comes” and “exploring the meaning of it”. If you consider yourself a religious person [secular or spiritual] you are really using that religion literally to “put the pieces together”. Such is the root of the word re-ligion [re-linking]. We may know its components, or ways by which life is expressed, but we know it is not any of those things. We breathe when we live, but it requires more than breathing; our hearts beat, but it requires more than that; our brains function as electronic control centres but it is more than that too.

Most of us do a lot to try to keep it and keep it from dying. For a few, religion seems some kind of investment in making sure it does not end or end in death. Yet central to our faith is the retelling of the tragic death of Jesus of Nazareth which only makes sense in the experience of his resurrection. His followers then and now, still struggle with the issue of death although he taught that attempts to “save” our lives will result in losing life; he was harsh in his rebuke of Peter when the latter berated Jesus for talking about going to Jerusalem where he [Jesus] would meet his death.

The human as a “living being” really began when he/she was given something other than breath and a beating heart such as other animals. It happened when God’s spirit was breathed into them. It was the moment of becoming self-conscious. This story is beautifully told in the book of the Genesis, with all the problems, power, pitfalls that came with that evolution.

Although it seems we are speaking of the whole human experience, it is also true that as each person is born into the world, the process begins all over again. It may have taken the first human beings generations to figure out what was happening, but it takes each human being weeks, months. That is why we cannot just adopt religion and put it on like a dress and then claim that we accept and understand all that was part of the experience of those who handed it on to us. You and I have each to be “born again” “born from above” “born spiritually”.

It is another stage of our evolution and the work of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, opening the door for us to move one step further. We move from being self-conscious to being Christ conscious.

The word conscious is related to the word conscience. A healthy conscience is the place we are meant to live our lives. The guiding principle [which is not meant to be some kind of stick over our heads to merit our getting into heaven] is that of knowing God’s love and loving our neighbour in the way we have come to expect love of ourselves. It enables us to say “this is the way I feel when that happens, so she must feel the same way, let me reach out to help her”. Having a conscience is the best indicator of being truly alive and not just being like a tree or a beast of the wild. To use language that is a lot in current use, we move beyond using our reptilian brain. The reptilian brain sees only one of three possibilities for anything else before it: it is good for food; it is an opportunity to reproduce; this is an enemy whom I must fight or from whom I must escape.

This Christ consciousness to which we are called is not a duty, but a chance to share in the nature of God, who is love; and as God is eternal, it is really a call to eternal life, the only life that makes any sense.