

Life's Deepest Questions

Before the Mystery of God

Job 23:1-10; Ecclesiastes 3:1-22; John 1:1, 14 and 18; I John 4:7-8, 12 and 16

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My proposal for today's reflection refers to four biblical passages but they are chosen not to be carefully interpreted but rather in the way they speak to my central concern in this presentation – life's deepest questions as we live before the face of mystery, the mystery to which we point with the word-symbol God. Already you may say the task will be to bring to awareness our deepest questions but, more than that, to seek some understanding of the reality to which our word God points. And you would be right.

Before I move into my subject, let me give you an assignment. If you could have an answer to one, deep, ultimate question about reality, about God, about your human future or any other large question that looms before your mind when consciously thinking about it, or when in a semi-conscious, somewhat dreamy state, what would that question be? Maybe you know immediately because you are one of those persons who can't help yourself but wonder what it means to be human, is there a God, where is your life, the life of humanity, heading, will there be an End, a consummation of some sort, will there be one end for all or will there be a great divide of "sheep and goats"?

Perhaps you are simply busy with getting through your days and seldom wonder about such ultimate questions – enough to worry and wonder about the stock market, our broken political system, your health and that of those you love, your children, your grandchildren.

You see what I'm saying. Some simply can't help themselves – the wonderers and worriers, and some stick to life's practical concerns. I suspect those who wonder may have had rather intensive and extensive exposure to life's ultimate issues and perhaps those of a more practical bent have not been immersed in a family or community where ultimate issues are daily fare. But even such sometimes lie awake wondering.

Sometimes it is triggered by a crisis. Remember the suffering of Job. One of the most pathetic and moving cries ever recorded is found in that profound drama of Job.

Job Replies: My Complaint is Bitter

Then Job answered: "Today also my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy despite my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his dwelling! I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me.

Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; but he would give heed to me. There an upright person could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.

If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him.; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold." (Job 23:1-10)

But there are others – I am one of them – that just can't help themselves, crisis or smooth sailing, the wondering seldom ceases.

The Hebrew poet who authored the *Book of Ecclesiastes* was such a person. Critical studies of the text assure us that this was not the wise King Solomon though tradition has made him the author. *Ecclesiastes* is part of the Wisdom section of the Hebrew scriptures and was probably written in the middle of the third century BCE – around 250.

The Wisdom literature of the Old Testament is an attempt to gain knowledge of human existence in order that one may know how to live – how to live wisely, how to live well. It's a special genre of literature. It has a different nuance, a different tone, than so much of the rest of Scripture. It raises those questions about the nature of our experience of being human, seeking to find the meaning and purpose of it all. And it reads that meaning and purpose off from experience itself; it doesn't go to a priest, it doesn't go to a sacred text, it doesn't go to an institution, but rather the sages of the tradition of Israel were careful observers of life, trying to discern meaning and purpose from what was observable and what could be comprehended within the parameters of human knowledge and human understanding.

With *Ecclesiastes*, we come to the farthest extreme of wisdom in the Hebrew scriptures. The author purports to have lived widely, broadly, deeply. He tried everything – pleasure, riches, work, everything that his heart desired he granted to himself. And, in the end of it all, his conclusion was that human life is empty. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity says the Lord." Chasing wind. He is a person who, having entered broadly into human experience, concludes that its meaning and its purpose are not discernable by the human mind. Just reading from human experience, he can find no ultimate purpose. He doesn't deny that God is, he doesn't deny that God will hold us accountable, but God is largely absent and God

is inscrutable. The meaning of our human existence is inscrutable. So this is a very pessimistic account of what it means to be human. He simply says over and over and over again...there is nothing new under the sun...whatever has been will be again...it's an endless cycle...a dead end street. Or, as in the title of the French existentialist Camus' novel, *No Exit*. That is his analysis of the human situation from what he sees in human experience. He recognizes that the human person isn't satisfied with that. He himself isn't satisfied with it.

The familiar third chapter speaks of the full spectrum of human experience – for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die.

After a considerable list of “times” and “seasons” and the full spectrum of human experience, he makes about as positive statement as it is to be found in the whole poem.

What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.
(*Ecclesiastes 3:9-13, NRSV*)

I came upon a translation of those verses which I like. I'm not enough of a Hebrew linguist to know if the Hebrew text justifies this rendering but I must say it seems to capture cogently what I sense the poet is trying to say in verses 11-13:

God has made everything beautiful in its own time and has put an eternal yearning in our hearts even as we live before the Face of Mystery. I know there is nothing better for humankind than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they live – to eat and drink and take pleasure in all their endeavors.

I confess “Face of Mystery” is my phrase but it fits and I think is faithful to the writer's intention – a sense of past and future but no way to figure out what God is up to. Consequently, “eat and drink and take pleasure in all their endeavors.”

Let me pause here. Have you identified your ultimate question for which you long for an answer? My babbling on has made that rather impossible unless you live consciously with that question so that immediately you respond, “I wish I knew the answer to.....”

Well, we can't go around the room and hear your questions. I hope simply raising the question has perhaps brought to your awareness that, indeed, you do wonder about deep questions of our human existence, the movement of history, the meaning of it all.

When I was still preaching regularly, pre-retirement, on Saturday morning I would check out the Religion section of the *Grand Rapids Press*, hoping to find some essay or article of religious news that would connect with the sermon on which I was working – maybe underscoring the theme or maybe some claim, in my opinion, so incredible it reinforced my claim to the contrary. Well, having announced my theme, “Life's Deepest Questions Before the Mystery of God,” you can imagine how excited I was to open the latest issue of *The New Yorker* (August 15 & 22, 2011, p. 87ff) and find an essay entitled “Is That All There Is?”, subtitle “Secularism and its Discontents,” by James Wood, a critic at large. On the opening page against a black background are billowing clouds on which sets a throne; the throne is empty! Obviously the essay will deal with the disappearance of God which, for my purposes would have been interesting but not really my point. The article however aims precisely at my announced theme. The essay begins:

I have a friend, an analytic philosopher and convinced atheist, who told me that she sometimes wakes in the middle of the night, anxiously turning over a series of ultimate questions: “How can it be that this world is the result of an accidental big bang? How could there be no design, no metaphysical purpose? Can it be that every life – beginning with my own, my husband's, my child's, and spreading outward – is cosmically irrelevant?” In the current intellectual climate, atheists are not supposed to have such thoughts. We are locked into our rival certainties – religiosity on one side, secularism on the other – and to confess to weakness on this order is like a registered Democrat wondering if she is really a Republican, or vice versa.

These are theological questions without theological answers, and, if the atheist is not supposed to entertain them, then, for slightly different reasons, neither is the religious believer. Religion assumes that they are not valid questions because it has already answered them; atheism assumes that they are not valid questions because it cannot answer them. But as one gets older, and parents and peers begin to die, and the obituaries in the newspaper are no longer missives from a faraway place but local letters, and one's own projects seem ever more pointless and ephemeral, such moments of terror and incomprehension seem more frequent and more piercing, and, I find, as likely to arise in the middle of the day as the night. I think of these anxieties as the Virginia Woolf Question, after a passage in that most metaphorical of novels “To the Lighthouse,” when the painter Lily Briscoe is at her easel, mourning her late friend Mrs. Ramsay. Next to her sits the poet, Augustus Carmichael,

and suddenly Lily imagines that she and Mr. Carmichael might stand up and demand “an explanation” of life:

For one moment she felt that if they both got up, here, now on the lawn, and demanded an explanation, why was it so short, why was it so inexplicable, said it with violence, as two fully equipped human beings from whom nothing should be hid might speak, then, beauty would roll itself up; the space would fill; those empty flourishes would form into shape; if they shouted loud enough Mrs. Ramsay would return. “Mrs. Ramsay!: she said aloud, “Mrs. Ramsay!” The tears ran down her face.

Why is life so short, why so inexplicable? These are the questions Lily wants answered. More precisely, these are the questions she needs to ask, ironically aware that an answer cannot be had if there is no one to demand it from.

The essay is excellent – worth the price of the magazine! I cite it here because it underscores that deep questions of life come to all of us one time or another, whether we are seriously religious or claim to be totally secular, atheist, agnostic, militant or mild. Our cultural history moves in waves. It is senseless to think religious faith and practice will fade completely from the human story with secularism and/or atheism becoming dominant and vice versa. The fact is humans are self-conscious beings who wonder, ask questions, and recognize they live in the face of mystery.

As I acknowledged above, my title points to deep questions, but such questions before the face of Mystery, the mystery to which we point when we use the word-symbol God. As I wondered, read, reflected in the latter years of my ministry I referred more and more to the source and ground of reality as mystery rather than God *per se*. God is such a loaded term so filled with our preconceptions – loaded with pre-critical traditional content. My dear deceased friend and last mentor, Dr. Duncan Littlefair, in his early years at Fountain Street Church, did not use the word “God” at all because it carried such baggage for most religious folk. In order to say something new in heavily churchied, widely traditionally religious Grand Rapids around mid-century, that word-symbol was quite useless. And I suspect that continues to be the case.

I’m sure the use of Mystery as a symbol for God in my case, particularly in the early 90’s was the consequence of realizing the Christian tradition’s idea of God was a personal Being outside of our cosmic reality – not really an old man with flowing beard as often caricatured – nonetheless a “superhuman.” The human created in the image of God according to the Genesis stories, God’s Being would be reflected in human being, except God was omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent, etc.

It is not my purpose to pursue that further. I mention it because when I was becoming more and more sensitive to what I was coming to see as the wrong signals given off by the word-symbol God, I fled to the designation “Mystery,” and I kept the Mystery – the Mystery had no “contours,” really no content.

About this time it was my good fortune to come on a work by Gordon D. Kaufman, a theologian at Harvard Divinity School, who died in July of this year. In a major constructive theological work, *In Face of Mystery*, Kaufman wrote of God as Mystery in light of our present knowledge of the cosmos, of the human story and the human person. In a following volume, *God, Mystery, Diversity*, he dealt with “Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World.” It was Kaufman who helped me understand Mystery as applied to ultimate reality rather than a term to enable me to avoid using the word God.

Kaufman opens chapter 6 of the latter volume entitled “Mystery, God, and Human Diversity” with a quote from the great Catholic theologian Karl Radner.

What is made intelligible is grounded ultimately in the one thing that is self-evident, in mystery. Mystery is something with which we are always familiar, something that we love, even when we are terrified by it or perhaps even annoyed and angered, and want to be done with it....what is more self-evident than the silent question that goes beyond everything which has already been mastered and controlled...? In the ultimate depths of [our] being [we know] nothing more surely than that [our] knowledge, that is, what is called knowledge in everyday parlance, is only a small island in a vast sea that has not been traveled. It is a floating island, and it might be more familiar to us than the sea, but ultimately it is borne by the sea.... Hence the [deepest] question for [us humans] is this. Which [will we] love more, the small island of [our] so-called knowledge or the sea of infinite mystery?

Kaufman adds, “This profound mystery – or better the many mysteries – of life provides the ultimate context of our existence as self-conscious beings. Paradoxically, then, it is in terms of that which is beyond our ken that we must, on the last analysis, understand ourselves.” (p. 96)

And he then defines “Mystery” as he employs the term.

“Mystery” (as I am using the word here) does not refer to a direct perceptual experience of something, as do words like “darkness” or “dense fog” (when we cannot see anything), or words like “unclear” or “obscure” (when used of some distant object that we cannot discern well enough to identify with confidence). It refers to bafflement of mind more than obscurity of perception. A mystery is something which we cannot think clearly, cannot get our minds around, cannot manage to grasp. If we say that “life confronts us as mystery,” or “whether life has any meaning is a

mystery,

or “why anything at all exists, instead of nothing, is a mystery,” we are speaking about intellectual bafflements. We are indicating that what we are dealing with here seems to be beyond what our minds can handle. Thus when, in theological discourse, we call attention to the mystery of human existence, the mysteries in which we live, we are reminding ourselves that in theology we are dealing with matters at the very limits of our intellectual capacities; we are involved with profound puzzles, conundrums that we cannot solve and that we should not expect to solve. We must be cautious at every point, therefore, about what we take ourselves to be achieving in our reflection. In theology a question mark must be placed behind everything that is said.

Sometimes (as in the ancient Greek mystery religions, from whence our modern word comes) “mystery” is thought of as descriptive of some object of arcane theological awareness or knowledge – perhaps God – rather than as prescriptively applying to us, to the limitedness of our knowledge and the questionableness of our attitudes. This way of thinking opens the door to obscure – but often exciting – claims, claims for which no grounds can be offered but which may seem theologically important. Speakers or writers may announce, for example, that they are in a position to “unveil” some particular mystery for us, allowing us to see what we could not otherwise see – like a landscape after the fog has lifted, or a dark room after a light has been turned on. The use of perceptual metaphors in talk of this kind only helps to encourage confusions; for this way of speaking leads us to suppose that we are being given information about realities hidden from others, possibly “secrets known only to God.” However, I want to point out that when we say of something that “it is a mystery,” this does not in fact tell us anything specific about that of which we are speaking, or which we are seeking to understand. Rather, it calls attention to something about ourselves: that we seem to have reached a limit to our powers at this point, and we may, if we are not careful, easily become confused or misled. The word “mystery” in its theological employment, thus, should be taken as a kind of warning that our ordinary ways of speaking and thinking are beginning to fail us and that special rules in our use of language should now be followed: take unusual care; beware of what is being said; the speaker may be misleading you; you may be misleading yourself; attend to what is being said with critical sensitivity to its problematic character. (p. 96f)

I found Kaufman’s discussion of mystery so very illuminating. The context of our lives is mystery – not a mystery that will become clear with more penetrating analysis, greater intellectual prowess, deeper piety – no; rather, “it is in terms of that which is beyond our ken that we must, in the last analysis, understand ourselves.” In my field of interest – the theological – I must go in with eyes wide open; what I am dealing with is beyond what our minds can handle.

Strange calling to which I responded! One's whole orientation turned to that which is unavailable! And the deep ultimate questions one must face in oneself and in one's community are questions for which there is no intellectual answer that doesn't end with a question mark! As Kaufman contends, it is precisely because mystery pervades our search and research that "we must engage in relentless theological criticism of our human faiths, their symbols, and the practices they inspire."

Religions (and theologies) have a critical role to play even if they do not convey absolute dogmatic information about the mystery that is behind our reality. Kaufman claims,

...a major function of religions (and of theologies) is to present human beings with visions of the whole of reality. That is, religions (and theologies) provide construals of the ultimate mystery within which human life transpires – construals that are sufficiently meaningful and intelligible to enable us humans to come to some understanding of ourselves in relation to the enigmatic context within which our lives proceed, and which are sufficiently attractive to motivate women and men to live fruitfully and meaningfully within this context. (p. 98)

Reflecting on my own wrestle with the mystery and life's deepest questions, one of the most illuminating and liberating insights Kaufman's work gave me was the idea of theology as a human imaginative endeavor. I felt a load lifted. I still remember saying to my people, "If you grant me that theology is a human imaginative construct you are on a slippery slope and I will have great freedom to construe the faith." Kaufman's statement explains,

One of the most important features of the understanding of theology as our own imaginative construction is that it requires us not to confuse *our* ideas and reflection – especially when we speak of God – with that ultimate mystery with which we are attempting to come to terms. This helps keep us honest in our theological work, on the one hand, and it acknowledges, on the other, the full independence of God from what *we* may think or say. In reminding ourselves that God is mystery to us, we allow God in God's concrete actuality to be whatever God is, quite apart from our conceptualizations. In this respect, the concept of mystery, just because of its emptiness and openness, can help us face in a very direct way what it means to take God's reality seriously, to confess the God that is truly *God*, the ultimate reality not to be confused with any of our human imaginative constructions. (p. 99)

One can only imagine how many religious wars would have been averted, how many church divisions could have been avoided, how many personal/family wounds would need not have to have been inflicted if the human family had early

on learned that, in its quest for ultimate truth, it had to do with human imaginative constructs rather than claims of absolute divine revelation.

Let me be clear; this is not a cop-out; it is simply the necessary consequence of our human historical situation. We have come to see the long history of the cosmos, the billions of years of cosmic evolution, the emergence of consciousness, of self-consciousness – the human being. All of this has only relatively recently been available in terms of cosmic time. But prior to this exploding “revelation” of the cosmic process, the advent of the Enlightenment, the modern with the emergence of the empirical approach to nature and human critical rationality surveying the long evolutionary process of which we are part, the deep questions of human existence had long engaged the human family. The mythology of ancient peoples, the great religions as they emerged addressed those questions.

From our historical perspective it is easy to expose their naivete’ in terms of our knowledge of the evolution of nature, the emergence of the human. God, caricatured as an old superman with flowing beard pulling the strings of the universe, can easily be mocked and a three-story universe with heaven above and hell beneath, assumed by ancient religious conceptuality, becomes laughable. Add to that outmoded cosmology and God-concept all the anguish of religious conflict, violence, war and one doesn’t have to be terribly profound to make a case for the abolition of religion in the cause of human wellbeing.

The contemporary militant atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens have fodder enough for their anti-religion campaign. And then there are the softer attacks by New Age types who suggest spirituality as opposed to religion, failing to recognize religion is simply the form one’s spirituality takes and spirituality without practice – prayer, ritual, liturgy – and community is weak pabulum.

David S. Toolan, S.J., has written insightfully on the subject of New Age spirituality. In *CrossCurrents*, a journal of The Association for Religious and Intellectual Life, Fall, 1996, he wrote an excellent piece, “Harmonies, Convergences and All That: New Age Spirituality.” Under the heading “Testing Syncretism” Toolan writes,

Almost by definition popular movements are out of balance – and this one is. In part, the imbalance is a reaction to an aberration at the heart of organized Christianity, to the fact that for centuries both Catholic and Protestant churches inverted a great Pauline maxim, conveying the impression that where grace abounds, sin doth more abound. For that very reason, both the church and the unchurched draw a distinction these days between “organized religion” (bad) and “spirituality” (good). The latter has to do with experiential practice – the kind of thing parishes too rarely offer but the local spiritual growth center does in profusion. (p. 376)

There you have it – “a reaction to an aberration” – as the militant atheists rail against an old Theism built on a worldview undone by the progress of scientific knowledge. Toolan concludes his critique of New Age Spirituality thus:

Your average New Ager has discovered the interior life and is captivated by the vision of being a responsible global citizen, a one-worlder. But all too often the energy of this vision, unsupported by any institutional means of realization, is drained away by the individualistic habit of turning everything into a consumer item for the exclusive benefit of the omnivorous self. New Age spirituality is not Buddhist enough, not self-nourishing enough. And let me say it outright: it is not Catholic enough, in the sense of a commitment to a church that denies us the luxury of retreating to a private enclave of the like-minded when hell rages on our streets and paradise is indefinitely postponed.

One who would face seriously the deep questions of our human existence need not be distressed by the explosion of knowledge of the cosmos, of growing understanding of the history of the human family, the psychological and biological probing of the human person. New knowledge, fresh understanding is to be welcomed. No need to deny scientific development that puts old issues in a new framework. No need to defend old ideas in whatever field – biblical interpretation or credal expression – that obviously reflect understanding now shown to be simply wrong.

The reason the advance of human knowledge can be welcomed and theological conceptions and biblical claims need not be defended against that advance is that those credal and biblical claims were simply human beings seeking ways to live and be with life's deep questions in the framework of their worldview. The ancient religions were affording people of their times ways of being in the presence of mystery – their own best efforts falling short of unveiling the mystery because the mystery cannot be unveiled through intellectual analysis. That is the crucial insight that must be recognized. Once recognized, new knowledge is welcomed, old answers can be discarded, and we can continue to live in the presence of mystery with ancient ritual, communities of faith, realizing that beyond our keenest intellectual pursuit that lays bare the secrets of the universe, there lies a realm/being on which all rests that cannot be penetrated.

So what is your one ultimate question to which you would desire an answer? Do you remember the Peggy Lee hit song, “Is That All There Is?”

Is That All There Is?

I remember when I was a girl
Our house caught on fire
And I'll never forget the look on my father's face
As he gathered me in his arms
And raced to the burning building out on the pavement

And I stood there shivering
And watched the whole world go up in flames
And when it was all over
I said to myself
“Is that all there is to a fire?”
Is that all there is?

And when I was twelve years old
My daddy took me to the circus
The greatest show on earth
And there were clowns
And elephants
Dancing bears,
And a beautiful lady in pink tights flew high above our heads

And as I sat there watching
I had the feeling that something was missing
I don't know what
But when it was all over
I said to myself
“Is that all there is to the circus?”

And then I fell in love
With the most wonderful boy in the world
We'd take long walks down by the river
Or just sit for hours gazing into each other's eyes
We were so very much in love

And then one day
He went away
And I thought I'd die
But I didn't
And when I didn't
I said to myself
“Is that all there is to love?”

I know what you must be saying to yourselves
If that's the way she feels about it
Then why doesn't she just end it all
Oh no, not me. I'm not ready for the final disappointment
'Cause I know just as well as I'm standing here talking to you
that when that final moment comes
and I'm breathing my last breath
I know what I'll be saying to myself
“Is that all there is?”

Is that all there is?
If that's all there is, my friends, then let's keep dancing
Let's break out the booze and have a ball
If that's all there is

Good question; not, in my opinion, a very good response. If we can't find an intellectual answer to our deep life questions, where do we turn? How about the way of the heart? Pascal famously said, "The heart has reasons the reason knows not of." The knowing of the brain is not our only way to know, maybe not even our most important when it comes to life's ultimate issues.

What is ultimate reality? Mystery. But is that all we can say? I value the suggestion, the claim of John's Gospel and the First Letter of John. In the Gospel, chapter one, we read, "No one has seen God." That is repeated in I John 4:12. So mystery is acknowledged. But in John 1:14 the "Word" (*Logos* in Greek – the rationality of the universe) becomes "flesh" – human and, according to the Gospel writer, the human is the clue to the mystery of God. And the writer of I. John goes further – God is love and the one who dwells in love dwells in God. I take it what we have acknowledged cannot be known intellectually can be experienced – the experience of the heart where love dwells.

This has been a growing edge for me – Rifkin's *Empathic Civilization* argues persuasively that empathy is at the core of the human. Sorokin in *The Way and Power of Love* argues powerfully that love is at the core of the cosmos, the grain of the universe. Jesus said, be Godlike – love your enemies. Love, compassion, grace – those are the ingredients of a fully human existence.

Finally one must choose – the way of intellect which hits a wall or the way of the heart that experiences the heart of the mystery. The two ways are set forth starkly by two great thinkers – the biologist Jacques Monod and the theologian Hans Küng. The alternatives are matters of the posture of the heart. It is a matter of looking at the data, and then trusting or not trusting.

Jacques Monod is a world-class biologist, a Nobel prize winner who wrote the book *Chance and Necessity*. What he describes in these little lines that I will read could very well be the modern description of the human situation to which the writer of Ecclesiastes referred. Monod writes this, "If he [that is, the human person] accepts this negative message, [that is, what he can read from the human situation, the cosmological situation], in its full significance, then one must at least awake out of his millinery dream and discover his total solitude, his fundamental isolation. He must realize that, like a gypsy, he lives on the boundary of an alien world, a world that is deaf to his music, and as indifferent to his hopes as it is to his sufferings or his crimes." That is honest and hard hitting, and clear eyed. If there is no one home in the universe, then we are alone and the world is deaf to our music. The world is indifferent to our hopes, to our

sufferings, to our crimes. So says Monod, so says the writer of Ecclesiastes. That's as much as you can decipher. That's as much as you can discern just from the observation of human experience. An equally intelligent twentieth-century person, Hans Küng, in his book *Does God Exist?* Wrote this: (This is the other side of the other side of the coin. This is written by one who trusts.) "To trust in an eternal life means, in reasonable trust, in enlightened faith, in tried and tested hope. To rely on the fact that I shall be one day fully understood, freed from guilt, and definitively accepted and can be myself without fear, that my impenetrable and ambivalent existence..." He agrees with Monod, he agrees with the writer to the Ecclesiastes – "my impenetrable and ambivalent existence." Like the profoundly discordant history of humanity as a whole will finally one day become profoundly transparent, and the question of the meaning of history one day finally be answered.

Finally one must choose. In my experience it is the way of the heart that brings peace and wellbeing. Recently I conducted a funeral. There were wonderful tributes offered about the deceased – a fine human being who had done so much good for so many. The family brought his favorite CD, *Ronan*. It is by an Irish tenor, Ronan Tynan. The number selected was "Going Home" whose two verses were separated by "Amazing Grace." The music was beautifully rendered. When it was over that whole large gathering sat in quiet peace - it was a beautiful moment. The impact was palpable.

Reasoned discourse has its place; no denigration of that. But music is another medium; it moves the heart and suddenly one "knows" what cannot be known – and all is well.

Whatever is your deepest question, listen with your heart to the music of the universe – and you will know beyond knowing and

all will be well

all will be well

all manner of things will be well.

References:

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