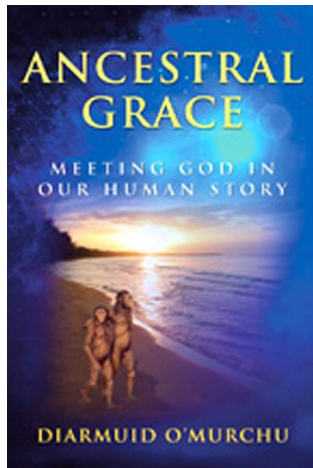


BOOK REVIEW

O'Murchu, Diarmuid. *Ancestral Grace: Meeting God in Our Human Story*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008.



This is a fascinating and immensely readable book from the author of *Quantum Theology*, *Evolutionary Faith*, and *The Transformation of Desire*.

In *Ancestral Grace* O'Murchu traces the story of humankind from the beginnings in Africa seven million years ago through the life of Jesus to the present. He blends history, anthropology and spirituality to show why the human lack of consideration for the entire story, and the wholeness of its unfolding, has led to an incredibly narrow and damaging worldview. O'Murchu argues for a much broader understanding, one which sees God as an ongoing and integral part of the journey.

He effectively moves the human from the centre position in the story of creation, based on what is now known of evolution. The human species evolved over some several million years within a universe that is 13.7 billion years old. Many billion more years will unfold once humans, and even the earth, are gone. It would be a very narrow view indeed that saw God as only incarnate within this very minute moment in the entirety of creation and, within that moment, only within the last two thousand years.

While this insight may fill some Christians with dread, it is key to whether or not this era of life within the evolutionary story of earth will continue. The Hebrew/Christian-based traditions, together with ancient Greek philosophical thought, placed God outside, over and above the process, while placing the human at the center of the creation story, with human redemption as its centerpiece and culmination, the focus of the drama. Alongside this belief framework came belief in some sort of immortality for the individual soul, a state above the corruption of the body, in which perfection is achieved, a belief that puts the human outside the evolutionary story and its ultimate fate.

O'Murchu invites readers to embrace their mortality as a crucial step towards understanding their place within the dynamics of creation. The real key to rich and abundant life for generations to come rests in humans coming to terms with the dynamics of birth, death, and rebirth in order for life to exist at all, much less for life to move towards greater levels of consciousness.

Without death the whole process would come to an end very quickly. It is so often a fear of death, and projections of individual mortality, that lead to the destructive tendencies that mark so much of the history of the human on the planet. Only when humans let go of individual ego and of nationalist, religious, economic and other forms of ego, can the regenerative and healing dynamics of earth begin to carry the mystery of the evolutionary story to a rich, new unfolding.

With thanks to <http://www.ecologicalhope.org/book-reviews/ancestral-grace/>