

Jesus Rode a Dinosaur

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him...(Jn 1:1-2).

“We Armenians were Christian when your people were still swinging on trees.” This politically incorrect comment is a favorite of my colorful and very patriotic Armenian-American friend Aram. He reserves it for arguments with European & American visitors to Armenia who are ignorant of Armenia’s heritage. Aram has lived in Armenia for twenty years and seen many foreign missionaries come through Armenia, spreading the gospel of their church, their government and their culture. Some are very respectful of Armenia’s heritage and people, but some feel themselves superior and this is his way of knocking them down a peg. I must admit I never thought one of his one-liners would make it into a sermon.

Yet today, if we have ears to hear, John the Evangelist says something that might knock down all Christians a peg-be they Armenian or Adventists -before lifting us back up with some truly good news. Now John’s delivery is not as witty as Aram’s, so it is easy to miss, but it is right in today’s reading. John writes, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him.” Do you see it? Attention Armenians, Baptists, Catholics, anyone who thinks they are the most special because they are Christian: John says that the entire cosmos was already in some sense Christian when we all were swinging on trees and dinosaurs roamed the earth. If I may turn St. John’s words into a one-liner; “Jesus rode a dinosaur!” (or more precisely Christ did). Because, from the very beginning was the Word, the Christ...and all things were made through him.

If all Christians had taken this line seriously from the early days of Christianity, I wonder if there would be more Christians in the world, and if the world would be much more Christ-like. Because realizing that Christ existed from the beginning keeps all believers humble, especially Christians, and it magnifies the significance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ’s original presence should humble any evangelicals who believe that they alone are God’s elect, when all people of all times are God’s elect. It should humble any Jews who believe they are exclusively chosen, when all people have been chosen. It should humble any Armenians who brag that we were the first Christians, when the first Christians were the cosmos and every quark within it. Any god who saves some but not others, or a god that loves some more than others, is a god that is too small; a god made in our own image instead of we made in God’s.

The fact that the Christ existed from the beginning of time, makes sure our Lord is not too small. It doesn’t make Jesus less special or less than we believe, in fact it makes Jesus more special and more what we believe. We have always insisted that the Lord was at once Jesus and Christ, Jesus the man who lived and died in 1st century Judea, and the Cosmic Christ who always existed; at the same time. As Jesus, He remains the fullest personification of God that the world has known, the lover and healer of mankind. But at the same time, he is the Christ, the Word, the inner logic and force that binds all creation. All people of any background, all animals, the stars and sand were created by God and through Christ. This does not make Jesus Christ less special, it merely corrects a persistent and tragic misunderstanding of Him throughout the ages. Jesus was never meant to be the exclusive savior of this tribe or that one, rather he was meant to be the inclusive savior, of everyone, of all things. Peacocks and rocks; Hindus and Jews.

So what about Hindus and Jews? How is Jesus Christ with them? Catholic theologian Karl Rahner would call them anonymous Christians. Not the bad Hindus, they are just bad. Not the bad Christians, they are just bad. But all who are good, true and beautiful, Moslem, Hindu or Jew, participate in the life of Christ which is in all things, even if anonymously. We can and should invite them to know something more about Jesus and the church, but rest assured that they are already known by Christ. As St. Augustine said, “God has many that the church does not have; and the church has many that God does not have.” So therefore, let us humble ourselves and magnify Our Lord by remembering John’s explosive one-liner that “In the beginning was the Word.” Christ is indeed hidden within all people and all places from the very beginning, it is our simple joy to recall the incarnation of Christ into the world as Jesus, into our hearts and our lives, and allow for the rising up of all things into God’s grace, which is the shape of all creation, now and always; amen.