

John F. Haught

“Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life”

Episode 16 of The Advent of Evolutionary Christianity

EvolutionaryChristianity.com



John Haught, a Roman Catholic, is Senior Fellow in Science and Religion at Georgetown University (Washington DC). A systematic theologian, helping to enrich Christian faith with the evolutionary sciences is his foremost scholarly contribution. He is the author of many books including, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God and the Drama of Life*; *God and the New Atheism*; and *Christianity and Science: Toward a Theology of Nature*.

HIGHLIGHTS

This dialogue, by **one of the most influential liberal theologians**, is **unsurpassed for its placement of “the universe as story” at the center of a theology of evolution**. Haught points to the human **psychological need for coherent narratives** as a primary reason to draw forth a meaningful story from scientific facts. Haught’s theology of evolution builds, in part, upon the work of **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin** and integrates a **mainstream evolutionary** perspective with what Haught points to as the core biblical concepts of God: **God as “promise-keeper,” as “self-emptying,” as the source of novelty, as “absolute relationality.”** He challenges both extremes of the science and religion debate to recognize that an ideal notion of God or the universe would not be one of perfect design. Rather, **imperfection and a future that is open-ended** would not only be the most evolutionary; it would be what one would expect of a God who valued “relationality.” This understanding of the universe and God is also, Haught maintains, superb for generating a sense of **hope and possibility**.

SUGGESTED AUDIENCES

All groups that resonate with the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin (and Thomas Berry) will find much to appreciate in this dialogue. Because Haught’s “theology of evolution” is something he has been developing and fine-tuning for decades, all aspiring theologians and clergy (except those who demand scriptural literalism) will be well served to study and discuss this internally consistent, clearly stated, and emotionally evocative way to systematize Christian theology and integrate it with a modern understanding of an evolving cosmos. Secularists may be

challenged by Haught's portrayal of the New Atheists as sharing with creationists an over-emphasis on perfection/imperfection in design in, respectively, arguing against or for the existence of a Creator. But secularists may also find that Haught's attention to meaningful story impels them to give more attention to crafting scientifically accurate and meaningful ways of telling "the story of the universe" from a nontheistic point of view.

BLOG COMMENTS

Judith Elgin says:

More than any of the other speakers so far, John Haught has spoken of Evolutionary Christianity in a very insightful, realistic, and meaningful way. Teilhard de Chardin was also one of the authors who has the ability to make creation reality divine, and John has taken this idea even further. It makes such sense to me. I'm so grateful that you have chosen him as one of the speakers on this subject.

Don Smith says:

Wow! What a great conversation! The ideas which resonated most for me were elevating "The Universe Story" (a great title from a great book) to "The Cosmic Drama"—I love that. As well, the beauty and mystery of an emergent and unfinished Creation: although I've contemplated this, John expressed it in a subtle and evocative manner. This is one audiocast which I need to listen to again and savor the richness of the ideas shared.

KEYWORD TOPICS

Roman Catholicism, Vatican II, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Henri de Lubac, Monika Hellwig, science and theology (as academic discipline), **Alfred North Whitehead, Bernard Lonergan, materialism** (critique of), **emergentism** (support of), **Michael Polanyi, theology of evolution, God as promise-keeper, Abraham, Israel, Jesus, kenosis, God as self-emptying, Bill Phillips, Ian Barbour, Bruce Sanguin, the Creation, Imago Dei, ecology, relationality** (degrees of in the universe), **God as absolute relationality, Martin Luther, sin** (as refusal to relate), **grace, Schubert Ogden, Thomas Aquinas, Charles Hartshorne, Ilia Delio, Gloria Schaab, evil** (as chaos or as stasis), **Intelligent Design** (critique of), **evolutionary atheists** (critique of), **Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Jerry Coyne, God as designer/engineer** (critique of), **"the drama of life"** (as primary metaphor for evolution), **meaning** (as present in an evolutionary understanding of the universe), **the universe as story, narratives** (as source of meaning), **perfection** (as antithetical to God's ways), **creation stories** (as important for meaning), **Epistle of James, Paul Tillich, hope, cosmic history, the future** (as crucial for understanding the present), **"the narrative cosmological principle", God as love, New Atheism** (critique of), **Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg**

BIOGRAPHY

John F. Haught (Ph.D. Catholic University, 1970) is Senior Fellow in Science and Religion at Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University. He was formerly Professor in the Department of Theology at Georgetown University (1970-2005) and Chair (1990-95). His area of specialization is systematic theology, with a particular interest in issues pertaining to science, cosmology, evolution, ecology, and religion. He is the author of many books including, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God and the Drama of Life*; *God and the New Atheism*; and *Christianity and Science: Toward a Theology of Nature*. Haught has also authored numerous articles and reviews.

In 2002 he was the winner of the Owen Garrigan Award in Science and Religion, in 2004 the Sophia Award for Theological Excellence, and in 2008 a “Friend of Darwin Award” from the National Center for Science Education. He testified for the plaintiffs in the Harrisburg, PA “Intelligent Design trial” (Kitzmiller et al. vs. Dover Board of Education). In recognition of his work on theology and science, he was awarded the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Louvain in 2009.

SUPPLEMENTARY WEBPAGE

Listener comments to this audio can be found, and new ones posted, at the following url: <http://evolutionarychristianity.com/blog/general/john-haught-georgetow-evolutionary-theologian/>

SUPPLEMENTARY VIDEO

A variety of John Haught videos can be viewed on YouTube (some are of him in debate with one or more “New Atheists”). Just go to YouTube and do a search using his name.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. **“The universe is a story.”** At the beginning of the dialogue, John Haught recounts the key events in his life that led to his evolutionary worldview and life work as one of the most influential theologians bridging science and religion. He prefaces his reflections by saying, “In many ways, **my biographical contribution here is the story of how I discovered that the universe is a story.**” The sense that the universe is best thought of as a **story**, rather than as a **place** in which things happen, is one of the **worldview shifts** that John Haught and others attribute to the early 20th century Jesuit priest and paleontologist **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**. It is also one of the key perspectives that many in the movement for bridging religion and science point to as an important and enduring personal awakening to, what is sometimes called, **“The Epic of Evolution.”** John explains,

We tend to take for granted that evolution is a story. But what we don't often notice is that **we live in a universe which is already set up for an evolutionary drama from the very start by having three ingredients which are essential to every narrative**, to every drama, to every story. Those three ingredients are, first of all, you need a lot of **accidents**. Secondly, you need a backbone of consistency or **reliability**. And third, you need **time**.

Speaking very simply here, if there were only predictability without any indeterminacy, then there wouldn't be a story. You would know the ending from the very start; it would not draw you into it. Likewise, if there were no consistency, no reliability, no laws of nature, everything would collapse into a puddle of chaos at any moment. So there would be no future; there would be no reality that could unfold. Thirdly, you need time—and, of course, now what we know is that we have not just a short amount of time but deep, deep time and that we have the material for a very, very large and long story.

Question 1: *Before your encounter with this dialogue, had it ever occurred to you that the Universe as a whole is best thought of as **a story—not a place**? If so, was that an important insight for you? If not, can you step into John Haught's shoes and try to understand why it is a centrally important insight for him? Please elaborate.*

2. **Telling your personal story mythically.** John Haught is a very prominent player in the scholarly realm of science and religion, so **he has been interviewed many, many times**. Not surprisingly, he tells his personal story in a succinct, compelling way in which every sentence counts. He tells it in a way that is memorable, even **humorous**, and that also is quite **humble**. For example, he explains that he entered seminary as a young man because, "It was one way of getting away from work on the farm, I suppose. I love basketball, and they had indoor basketball rings and so forth." He also tells his story in a **mythic** way, by taking a childhood hardship and making it into a preparatory step for the adult contributions he eventually would make. He recalls,

I grew up on the farm in Virginia in a very traditional Catholic family—where there were eleven children and one learns "**Darwinian**" processes very early in life: the struggle to survive and so forth—**eating being a contact sport**. So I was in many ways psychologically prepared for the kind of world Darwin delivered to me more explicitly later on.

Question 2A: *Have you made the effort to **encapsulate your own autobiography** succinctly? If so, what led you to do so, and where has telling your story in such a way proved useful? If not, how might doing so be a useful endeavor?*

Question 2B: *Taking two aspects of John Haught's personal story: hardship at the dinner table and serendipity that led him to seminary, can you also **isolate and elevate a single hardship and a single serendipitous event** to become a memorable basis for how you explain (to yourself and to others) what you value most in your life today? Give it a try — and try to be as succinct as John Haught is.*

3. **Teilhard de Chardin as mentor.** One of the remarkable things about **the role of literacy and the spread of public libraries** is that it made it possible, for the first time in our long ancestry as human beings, to be **mentored by people who were dead** or who lived in a distant land. John Haught describes how important accessing such a mentor was to him. He recalls,

More than anything else, what influenced me to get into this kind of life was reading—when I was still in my early twenties—some of the writings of the French Jesuit geologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. I was blown away by his synthesis of deep, christologically centered Christianity with science—and especially with evolutionary science... To this day, what grabs me most about **Teilhard's perspective** is that it provides an alternative to the pessimism, the absurdism, and the cosmic stoicism of much of 20th century intellectual life.

Question 3A: *Does John Haught's summary of the key elements of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's life and thought attract you to want to learn more? Or perhaps you have already encountered this progressive Catholic thinker or have been influenced by someone who, as with Haught, was inspired by Teilhard? Please elaborate.*

Question 3B: *Search back in your own life to your vicarious encounter with a mentor, by way of books or other media. Choose one such mentor and encapsulate their influence on you in just a few sentences.*

4. **Evolution and theology: beyond reconciliation.** John Haught describes how the ideas expressed by Teilhard de Chardin, Bernard Lonergan, and Michael Polanyi laid the groundwork for his own contributions in the field of evolution and theology. Then he talks about how all this fits with the **Bible**. He recalls,

As I developed my **theology of evolution**, I also brought into play my work and study of biblical thought. I found that (and this is pretty much where I stand today) that the biblical framework is much more flexible than people have thought it to be—that you can think about it in terms of a biblical theology where **not only is evolution compatible with faith and theology; it's really the most fitting framework**, you might say, within which to articulate what I call the Christian vision of God and of Christ.

He goes on to explain how an evolutionary framework is a powerful way to interpret the God of the Bible, concluding,

Instead of thinking of God simply as the one who opens up a future for Abraham, for Israel, for the Church, or even for humanity—I came to think of **God primarily as one who opens up a future for the whole of the universe**, the whole of creation.

Question 4A: *John Haught's enthusiasm for doing far more than merely reconciling Christian theology with science is evident throughout this dialogue. Whether you are biblically oriented or not, did it occur to you before this interview that **religion might actually gain by embracing the understanding of an evolving cosmos**? As well, where do you stand in thinking about "evolution" as being a universe-wide process—a process that includes the evolution of stars*

and galaxies and complex atoms and planetary conditions, as well as the evolution of life on this particular planet?

Question 4B: *Overall, and regardless of whether or not you are biblically oriented, are you attracted to the prospect of getting more of what John Haught and many of the speakers in this series have: an **enthusiasm** for living in a universe that is open-ended and in which **evolution happens at all levels**: from the cosmic to the planetary and onward through living organisms and human cultures and even within our own individual lives? If so, **what might be your next steps** for moving in the direction of not only of gaining knowledge about this evolving cosmos but an enthusiasm for it? If, however, you are not inclined to follow this path, do you feel you have fully reconciled mainstream evolution with your faith or worldview? Where are the rough edges where issues remain unresolved?*

5. **God as (1) promise keeper and (2) self-emptying (“kenotic”).** Near the beginning of this dialogue John Haught offers the two main concepts of God that he derives from his study of the Bible. He then proceeds to explain how **an understanding of the science of evolution is very much in sync with these two concepts of God**. The first biblical concept of God is that of a “**promise keeper**” and one who consistently points to a future of possibility. The second is what theologians technically call a “**kenotic**” understanding of God—God as “self-emptying,” especially as expressed through the life of **Jesus**. Both concepts of God present a specific understanding of **God’s “power”** that John Haught finds very attractive. He explains,

So, you picture in our imperfect language a God who, in a sense, **retracts any coercive exercise of power and opens up a space within which something other than God can come into being**. In other words, creation is not divine pyrotechnics so much as what happens **when omnipotence becomes humble** (I say this in very human and inadequate language) and opens up a space for something to come into that space—namely, a world. And if that’s your vision of God and Creation, then it’s not too much of a jump to see that Creation has to somehow, therefore, become itself. It’s not fashioned fully, instantaneously, with complete perfection at the creative beginning of the cosmos. It’s been an unfinished universe from the very start. **The idea of an unfinished universe is, to me, the most important idea that goes along with the idea of evolution.**

Question 5A: *Are you attracted to John Haught’s portrayal of **how an omnipotent God might choose to “retract coercive exercise of power” for opening up possibility and freedom?** Might this concept of God’s power help one feel less confusion about the existence of **evil** in the world? That is, might this contribution of a “systematic theologian” have **practical value** for you—either in your own faith walk or, if you are secular, in how you understand Christian theology in its most science-welcoming and rational expressions?*

Question 5B: John Haught’s concept of God’s power being expressed as “**the retraction of coercive power**” echoes what another speaker (process theologian **John Cobb**, episode 6) called **God’s “persuasive” power**. Both eschew the idea that power equates with omnipotence. Each of these theologians (Haught as a Catholic and Cobb as a Protestant) have had tremendous influence in liberal Christian theology and scholarship—including the

promotion of **feminine metaphors for God** by other Christian thought leaders. *Do you see how shifting one's sense of what "power" means and how it may be exercised could give rise to **nurturing and even maternal metaphors for God** and/or **Ultimacy**? Overall, what is your response to these different understandings of "God's power"?*

6. **Nonliteralistic ways of honoring scripture.** John Haught's enthusiasm for integrating a scientific understanding of evolution with his Christian faith brings him to challenge the notion of a perfectly created Universe that then suffers a "Fall." He says,

Evolution implies that the universe is still coming into being. That gives our own lives a significance that they would not have **if we thought of creation as being perfectly and fully and instantaneously complete in the beginning—and then everything else becomes a kind of falling away from that**, and time becomes, basically, pointless, not getting anywhere. Whereas, an unfinished universe gives significance to each moment. In each moment the universe is—as Teilhard puts it—rising a little bit further out of nothingness. That's really the biblical and theological framework within which I try to make sense theologically of evolution.

Question 6A: *As with many liberal or progressive Christian theologians, John Haught draws tremendous perspective and guidance from aspects of the **Bible**—but not each and every passage (and certainly not each and every passage taken literally). For example, in the quotation just read, you can see that the story and interpretation of "The Fall" is not at all a cornerstone of his theology, whereas it sometimes is for scriptural literalists. So the question is this: If the Bible is significant for you, **are you comfortable with selecting which Bible passages and interpretations to embrace and which to reject or ignore?** If you are more secular in your perspective, do you accept that religious liberals regard that selective use and modern interpretation of ancient texts is the best way to honor scripture—or do you respond to that practice differently?*

Question 6B: *If you are comfortable with, or outright support, the liberal Christian practice of selective use of Bible passages and the importance of updating one's interpretations of those passages, then **where does one obtain the standards for making the choices and interpretations?** Is it something other than the Bible?*

Question 6C: *Do you think that secular people, including **atheists**, derive their standards for **ethical and moral behavior** from a different source than liberal Christians do? If so, from where? If not, is it important for liberal Christians to actively work against the stigma against atheists as being morally ungrounded and therefore untrustworthy?*

7. **God as "absolute relationality" and sin as "refusal to relate."** John Haught gives a lot of attention in this dialogue to **concepts of God**. Early on, he speaks of God as "promise keeper" and as one who values **an open and free future** rather than a determined and fixed future. He also speaks of God as "self-emptying" and therefore as **relinquishing coercive forms of power** in favor of forms that allow the universe and humanity the freedom to bring forth novelty. Later, he elevates the virtue of **"relationality" as both a divine principle and a human virtue**

in the image of God; he characterizes God as “absolute relationality.” Accordingly he refers to “sin” as “the refusal to relate”—including our human refusal to enter into respectful relationship with the natural world, which leads to our environmental problems.

Question 7: *Are you attracted to the way that John Haught uses the root concept of “relationality” to make sense of God’s presence, human virtue in the image of God, and a religious way of viewing the cause of our environmental problems? In what ways — or not?*

8. **Systematic theology.** As a systematic theologian, John Haught’s work necessarily carries him into realms of thinking, precision of language, and layers of connection that not only are complex but that can be difficult to communicate succinctly and understandably to non-theologians.

Question 8: *Is the scholarly discipline of “systematic theology” something that might or does help you in your own faith journey? Please elaborate.*

9. **“Evil” as extremes of stasis or chaos.** John Haught characterizes “evil” as coming in two forms: extremes of stasis on the one hand and chaos on the other. He says,

One way of contradicting what is ideal is to **cling to low-grade forms of harmony or monotony** when it is relevant—especially for a living organism or social entity—to move on toward **novelty**, to something new that would keep it alive. Since **life always involves self-transcendence**, or going beyond, we constantly need to be challenged by the Author of new possibilities of being. The other kind of evil is **the evil of chaos**: when something orderly and good disintegrates when it’s not necessary for this to happen. In fact, the evil of chaos is what we normally mean by evil.

Question 9A: *To what degree did you find this 2-part system of classifying “evil” helpful?*

Question 9B: *Does John Haught’s 2-part classification of evil apply equally well to **human actions** (such as war) and to **natural actions** (such as earthquakes)? That is, do you usually think of evil more as human misconduct and intention? Or does evil also apply to large-scale natural events in which there is no intentional breach of relationality at root?*

Question 9C: *Is there a problem for the public at large if theologians and clergy do not make a **distinction between human and nature’s action**? That is, is it important for religious leaders to inform citizens that there is **no underlying intention to punish or cause suffering when an earthquake triggers a tsunami** in a particular part of the world? What about when someone feels singularly **blessed by God** when they survive an accident or natural disaster while many others do not — that is, is there something ethically troubling with the implication that those who died did not receive (perhaps even merit) God’s blessing? Please discuss whatever comes up for you in pondering these questions.*

10. **Darwin, God, and “the drama of life.”** One of John Haught’s many books is titled, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life*. In this dialogue, John Haught introduces “the drama of life” concept in this way:

There's this idea that God is primarily a designer, or an elegant engineer, and so forth. And since **evolution shows that there is no such thing as perfect design**—there are no perfect adaptations; there are “design flaws” all over the place, as the evolutionary materialists put it—therefore God cannot possibly exist. So what I try to do—and I'm not the first to do this; Teilhard and Whitehead and many others were doing this too—is to emphasize that **the conversation between evolution and theology needs to turn away from its fixation on design. The conversation needs to turn toward, what I call, “the drama of life”** and, underneath that, the whole drama of universe. **The point is not whether design points to deity, but whether the drama or the story of evolution carries a meaning.**

John Haught then continues, saying,

We tend to take for granted that **evolution is a story**. But what we don't often notice is that we live in a universe which is already set up for an evolutionary drama from the very start by having **three ingredients which are essential to every narrative**, to every drama, to every story. Those three ingredients are, first of all, you need a lot of **accidents**. Secondly, you need a backbone of consistency or **reliability**. And third, you need **time**.

Question 10A: John then continues for several paragraphs, elaborating on the importance of story and narrative in our lives and for making meaning. *What is your response to this notion of looking at the evolution of the universe and of life as a story, as a drama?*

Question 10B: *Does thinking of the “story of the universe” and the “drama of life” help you to relate to these very big concepts given to us by science in **relational** ways—in ways that call forth emotions of closeness, of wonder, and of gratitude?*

11. **The demand for perfection, in design, as the ultimate mis-step.** Near the end of the dialogue, John Haught links together three key concepts in his theology of evolution: that of “the universe as story,” “the drama of life,” and the role of God in “retracting power” so as to allow for a future of possibility (of “promise”). Haught does this in a way that **criticizes both the Intelligent Design advocates and the outspoken atheists** for, in his view, precisely the same mis-step. He explains,

This demand for perfection is what I see as the underlying problem in the evolutionary atheist's repudiation of God—as well as in the Christian and Muslim clinging to the notion of God as the designer. There's a kind of perfectionism, a kind of longing to associate God with that which is finished, that which is perfectly and elegantly engineered. The idea of God as Architect ends up with a very, very diminished understanding of ultimate reality.

Whereas a **drama**—even through it takes many billions of years (and for all we know, it might be very early in the story)—at least has the capacity in principle of **carrying a meaning**. We've always, in human life, embedded a sense of meaning of where we came from, where we're going, what we should be doing with our lives. We've done this within the context of myths, stories, dramas, narratives. **It's narratives that make for intelligibility.** But when you are talking about the cosmic drama, it's not over. Coming back to the theme of the unfinished universe that we live in: Who are we at any point—whether religious or non-religious—to say definitively that there is no **meaning in this drama**? There's a fear of that on the part of the **Intelligent Design** people and

creationists, but there's also a sense among the evolutionary critics of religion that if God exists, things have to be perfect.

Question 11: *Whether you are biblically oriented, a secularist, or somewhere in between, what do you think of John Haught's insistence that there is **something of great beauty in the open-endedness and outright imperfections of evolution**? What is your response to his insistence that this story of the universe, this "drama of life" merits meaningful interpretations?*

12. **Linkages between the present moment, the future, and hope.** Near the end of the dialogue, John Haught reaches a kind of poetic crescendo in offering the emotional and existential importance of his carefully wrought "theology of evolution." He says,

The great gift that evolutionary thinking offers theology is the sense that a dramatic banquet has been laid out before us over the many millions of years of life and the billions of years of cosmic history. That should be a source of hope and also a source of strength. We're stronger when we wait and hope than when we possess. Teilhard puts this so nicely in a line from one of his many essays. He says, "The world rests on the **future** as its sole support." Wonderful idea! Whereas, the **materialist** worldview as I see it, and as Teilhard saw it also, is one in which you try to explain everything on the basis of what happened "back there" in the past. But the further back you go in cosmic history, the more things fall apart—are dispersed into primordial atomic entities—in other words, into incoherence. Whereas, the drama of time and evolution has brought about at least relatively more intense forms of coherence up to this moment.

But now situated as we are in this present moment, where are we going to find coherence? By looking toward the future. By turning around in an attitude of hope. **It's only hope that lets the future in. In terms of any present moment in the cosmic story, it's only in the future that we really see things becoming intelligible.** For example, we can really see what an atom is all about when it becomes part of a molecule, or what a molecule is really all about when it becomes part of a cell, or a cell when it becomes part of an organism. That's when each becomes intelligible. So likewise, at this present moment in what is clearly **an unfinished universe**, the coherence and intelligibility of *this* moment cannot be made accessible to us except in terms of the future. And this is why we form images of the future. This is also why we occasionally have to abandon our images of the future, so as to allow a newer and fresher future to come in. If you think in terms like this, as I've been doing for many years, then evolutionary science is such a *natural* discovery.

Question 12: *What was most meaningful, intriguing, or surprising about John Haught's interpretation of "**an unfinished universe**"? What about how he knits together **past, present, and future**?*

13. **Sensitive ways of helping religious students embrace evolution.** The host, Michael Dowd asks several speakers in this series who teach at the university level, how they assist students in integrating modern science with faith. Here is how John Haught explains the way he does it:

The first thing I want to do is to make sure that **I in no way sound negatively disposed toward their hope for ultimate meaning and consolation.** I completely sympathize with how they can

latch on to a particular story in the Bible, or take the Bible in some sense literally. And it's a process. In fact, my course in science and religion was one in which I began to realize that **you really can't make a convert to evolution overnight**. It takes time. Most of the students at Georgetown are in no way biblical literalists, though occasionally I have one from the South or Midwest, and sometimes they come back years later and say of the process that it has finally worked! But you have to be very sensitive, and I think it's more of an art form than anything else. You have to deal with each student individually to see what they are capable of. What I try to do is to just make it possible for students to realize that **the fundamental teaching of Christianity—that God is love—is actually realized much more richly by an evolutionary worldview** rather than the pre-scientific, hierarchical, vertical, static view of nature.

Question 13: *What do you think of John Haught's approach for helping students suspicious of evolution to become open to integrating it with their faith?*

14. **Celebrate the universe as a story.** Michael Dowd gives John Haught an opportunity to end the dialogue with **final words of his choice**. John's choice is brief, and he returns to his main concept of *the universe as story*. Recall that he summarized his personal story at the beginning of this dialogue by saying, "In many ways, my biographical contribution here is the story of how I discovered that the universe is a story." Now, at the end of the dialogue, he chooses in his parting words to return to this central theme. He urges his listeners to,

Celebrate the idea that we have finally discovered that the universe is a story. We didn't know this for sure until the mid-twentieth century. A lot of people still aren't sure of it. We haven't fully appropriated the idea—and that's understandable. It's such a recent idea, but I think **it's going to be the framework for any decent future theology**.

Question 14: *Considering this central theme of **the universe as story** for one final time, where has this dialogue with John Haught (and your opportunity to reflect on it via these questions) taken you in your own faith or worldview journey—and your own way of relating to the cosmos: past, present, and future?*

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