

## Gloria Shaab

### “Dwelling in the Word: Divine Revelation in the Cosmos”

Episode 20 (transcript of audio) of The Advent of Evolutionary Christianity  
[Evolutionary Christianity.com](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com)

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**Michael Dowd (host):** Welcome to Episode 20 of “[The Advent of Evolutionary Christianity: Conversations at the Leading Edge of Faith](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com).” I’m [Michael Dowd](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com), and I’m your host for this series, which can be accessed via [EvolutionaryChristianity.com](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com), where you too can add your voice to the conversation.

Today [Gloria Shaab](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com) is our featured guest. [Gloria](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com) is a Catholic evolutionary theologian and [Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Berry University](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com) in Miami Shores, Florida. Her scholarly work focuses on [God as Trinity](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com), [evolutionary theology](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com), [feminist theology](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com), and the writings of both [Arthur Peacocke](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com) and [Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com). Our conversations centered around “Dwelling in the Word: Divine Revelation in the Cosmos.”

**Host:** Hello Gloria Shaab, and thank you for joining in this conversation on evolutionary Christianity.

**Gloria:** Well, hello Michael Dowd, and thanks for the invitation. I am excited to be a contributor.

**Host:** Well, I am excited to have you as a contributor. Gloria, the first question I have been asking all our guests is to share a little of your own story. How did you get to be where you are, both professionally and intellectually?

**Gloria:** I am a Catholic theologian. I am an [Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Berry University](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com) in Florida. I am also a Sister of [St. Joseph of Philadelphia](http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com), Pennsylvania. I am a late bloomer; I received my PhD in 2005 at the tender age of forty-eight. So as far as I was concerned, I had to hit the ground running in terms of publications and that sort of thing.

My work in evolutionary theology I entered into through the back door, because my interest actually started with my doctoral dissertation at Fordham. What happened was that I wanted to explore the question of the mystery of God and suffering. I was basically looking for an effective paradigm through which to do that, and some of the classical paradigms simply either did not fit my perspective, or they were not approved by my dissertation committee. So in the

midst of that I had remembered reading the classic, the masterpiece by [Arthur Peacocke](#) called [Theology for a Scientific Age](#), in which he makes a wonderful case for the notion of the creative suffering of God.

So that is really how I entered into using an evolutionary paradigm. But by and large, it is very consistent with [Catholic systematic theology](#), which has always believed that God's self-revelation comes first through Creation and then the cosmos. Since evolutionary theology is essentially about the ongoing and continuous Creation of that cosmos, it provides an avenue for ongoing and continuous communication about God and about revelation. And so that is how I got into it. I had to learn the science in order to be able to do the theology.

**Host:** Yes. Well, I think that is true for many of us in this series. It is that we started with ministry, or theology, or our faith tradition. Then we got fascinated by, or turned on by, or excited by the science and then have learned that. There are a few of us who have been part of the series that started first on the science side. But for most of us, I think we started with the theology side.

I love the title that you gave to this conversation: *Dwelling in the Word: Divine Revelation in the Cosmos*. I am wondering if you can say a little more about that.

**Gloria:** When I selected that title, *Dwelling in the Word*, it is really a reference to a truth—a Christian truth. As a matter of fact, to a Jewish and Christian truth, because it extends to the Jewish and Christian scriptures. But it is a reference to a truth that is as ancient as the *Book of Genesis*, and as Christian as John's prologue in which the Word becomes flesh. But it is also as contemporary as evolutionary theory.

If we look at our scriptures, without too much of an effort of interpretation, if you look in the *Book of Genesis*, basically what you have is, "And God said, 'Let there be light.'" So even as early as *Genesis*, the very first book of our scriptures is, "Then God said." God spoke. God *communicated* God's Self. God's Word brought the world into being. And so the world in which we dwell, the world in which we live is metaphorically, hermeneutically at any rate, a Self-expression of God.

The way in which God has revealed God's Self from the beginning is through the cosmos, through human experiences, preeminently in Jesus Christ, and through the continuing evolving Creation of the cosmos that happens through the evolutionary processes. We continue to dwell in that which finds life through God's Self-communication, through God's Self-revelation, which we call "The Word."

**Host:** I have come to think myself of [revelation](#) in a different way, as a result of embracing an evolutionary worldview. I now see that revelation happened not just in the past, in the distant past, as recorded in scripture and interpreted throughout the tradition. [I also see God communicating—Reality communicating—Itself, Himself, Herself to us via evidence](#): by cross-

cultural evidence and historical evidence. And that allows for us to think about [divine guidance](#), divine communication, divine revelation in a completely *present* way. It is not just in the past. It is current. In fact, [every scientific discovery can be seen as God revealing](#) a word, a fact, a truth.

**Gloria:** Absolutely. There is no question about it. As a Catholic theologian, I am always dealing with the relationship between uppercase Revelation (with a capital “R”) and lowercase revelation, lowercase sacrament. But the point is that they are intrinsically connected with one another. To borrow a phrase that [Karl Rahner](#) uses, the condition for the possibility that the Word could become flesh in [Jesus Christ](#) was that the Word became matter in Creation.

**Host:** Oh, say more about that.

**Gloria:** Well, in order for the Word of God—who, theologically we talk about in the second person of the Trinity, the prologue of John that says in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God—in order for that Word to have become flesh, there had to be a cosmos, a material world, into which this Word takes on human flesh. Aside from the whole miracle of the Incarnation, what is so miraculous is that it isn’t simply a demonstration of God’s love for us that God becomes present in our history. Rather, God becomes present in our history within the very materiality, the very stuff of the cosmos, the very stuff of Creation. So the Creation isn’t simply the stage on which at some point the Word becomes flesh. In an evolutionary context, the Word of God spoken at Creation, metaphorically and analogically, that brings Creation into being—that Word of God comes to a fuller, more vibrant, and (as Christians would suggest) a preeminent expression in Jesus Christ, who is part of the very matter of the universe.

**Host:** I love the way you said that. I was asked recently about how do I see Christ in an evolutionary context. Of course, there is a lot made between distinguishing the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. I think the biggest difference for me is the difference from at one time thinking of this divine being as being outside the universe who is sort of plopped down on Earth, and then extricated, who goes back out—which is the traditional notion interpreted literally. I went from that view of Christ to seeing that everything and everyone, including Jesus, emerged out of billions of years of creative process and which I call grace. I see that and I experience that as a more *intimate* relationship to God, but also as a more *emergent* understanding, a more incarnational understanding—not just of one individual incarnated, but the entire thing is Incarnational grace.

**Gloria:** You are basically tacking right into some of the core points and core constructions I have done in my first book, which was called [The Creative Suffering of the Triune God](#), but that

is going to be more fully developed in a book that is scheduled for publication in 2013 with Anselm Academic Press, titled, *Intimate Relations: Creation, Incarnation, and Grace in an Evolving Cosmos*.

**Host:** Say more about what that book is about.

**Gloria:** I think as Christians, we probably don't delve deeply enough into the notion of Trinity. But it is so consistent and so compatible—at least from my perspective and that of the late [Arthur Peacocke](#), who is my scholarly mentor in this whole project. It is very consistent with looking at an evolutionary worldview, looking at God's action within Creation, the God–world relationship, but without resorting to a paradigm that limits God or that somehow dualistically separates the spirit from matter or the divine from Creation. So essentially in that book, the argument that I want to make is that we don't need to look at Creation, Incarnation, and grace as somehow occasional or episodic events. Science has helped us, to some extent, to get past the notion that when we talk about God as Creator, this is something that happened in a long distant past and somehow has ceased. Somehow it was an original act—and that's it.

What we know, because of the sciences, because of evolution, is that Creation is ongoing, that God is involved in *creatio continua*, not just an original Creation. The interesting part is that so many of the things that I can surmise in this dialogue between science and theology, I can trace back to [Thomas Aquinas](#). What Aquinas said was that the notion of God as Creator isn't essentially a onetime act, but really to talk about the relationship between Creator and Creation is an ongoing relationship.

“Creation” refers to the nature of the relationship between God who creates and what has been created. So in that sense, it is an enduring relationship. It is an intimate and enduring relationship, not simply an original event. If we look at the Incarnation from an evolutionary perspective, the thing that we realize is just what you were saying, Michael. Essentially, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, became flesh, but within the structures and entities and processes and matter that characterizes the rest of Creation, the rest of the cosmos. And by doing so, He entered into, again, an enduring relationship with all matter.

**Host:** I remember hearing a physicist a few years ago say that we now know physically, and there would be hardly any physicist in the world that would deny this or debate this, that if you take a deep breath, you can know for certain that you are breathing in probably at least three atoms that were once a part of the body of Jesus Christ—literally. It is just stunning how interconnected things are.

**Gloria:** That is the absolute point, which doesn't deny [bodily resurrection](#) or anything else. It affirms what the [Council of Chalcedon](#) decided: that Jesus Christ was truly human, in addition to being truly divine. And to be truly human means to possess an enduring relationship, just like the rest of us, with the cosmos of which we are a part, and from which the very molecules

and stuff of our body, our humanity, and our personhood emerged. So Jesus is part of that holy emergence of the human person.

Then, in terms of an evolutionary view of grace, the issue here is that grace is not simply a thing that somehow intermittently or episodically God decides to distribute to certain persons. I have this vision of grace, and it would be similar to what we would consider God the Holy Spirit. It is an image of grace that pervades, is immanent within the creative processes of the cosmos. Taking the evolutionary perspective of whole-part interaction, or top-down causation, in some sense grace is almost like an energy that continues to bombard the universe with life, with energy, with love, with possibility. So again, grace in an evolutionary perspective isn't something that simply happens once in a while. As [Catholic theology](#) says, "The giver is the gift." Grace as a gift of God is actually the gift of God's very life in and through the processes of the cosmos. It is available to people as gift, available to the cosmos as gift, and promoting the ongoing creativity of the cosmos itself.

**Host:** What it is reminding me of is that one of the great tasks of contemporary theology and ministry is to re-examine some of the core concepts of our faith tradition. You have just been talking about Creation, Incarnation, grace. Other core elements, such as Original Sin and Salvation, all these concepts that are central to our faith, we can look at again, and talk with each other, and really wrestle through what some of the ways are that we can understand these core concepts—ways that have integrity with our tradition, yet also make deep sense from an evolutionary, emergent understanding.

**Gloria:** Actually, the professional role of a [systematic theologian](#), which is the area of theology that I am trained in (and as you know, there are different areas of theology—historical, sacramental, and liturgical), but the role of a systematic theologian is to do just what you said. It is to take the eternal truths that were revealed and have been revealed, for instance, in unique ways at particular times through our history, and look at them through a hermeneutical lens, an interpretive lens, that understands that no theologian—whether they are a biblical theologian, whether they are a patristic, a scholastic, or a contemporary theologian—no theologian does theology in an ahistorical vacuum. The authors of scripture, inspired as it was, were inspired within a particular faith tradition, historical context, gender, life experience, cultural influence, language, etc. By the very nature of Revelation being historical (which of course makes it particularly meaningful in the realm of history in which it is revealed), by that very nature, what it says is that in order for those deep truths, for the living Word of God, to continue to echo throughout the centuries, then we have to make sure that the historical symbol system or the historical influences in which it was originally articulated do not impede people of different ages from understanding the depths of the truth that this Word of God is revealing.

So to really grasp what a theologian in any age has said about God, and somehow to try to translate that into meaningful language about God for the present age, the first thing that I

would need to do as a systematician (and I think we all need to do it as Christians) is put on the interpretive lens. I like that metaphor. I talk about it as putting lenses on—to look through the interpretive lens with which that theologian saw the world. That is the basis of biblical hermeneutics. It is the basis of any kind of interpretive action. It is that first we need to see what the theologian at that time was seeing and saying, and then consider how do we translate that truth into language and symbol systems that are meaningful to people today?

So for me, of course, the lens that I use when I look at certain doctrines is Catholic Christianity. God as Trinity—I do not think we nearly appreciate that nature of God enough, frankly. The other lens I use, of course, is evolutionary theory. And as my biography states, I also use feminist insight. So those are my lenses. What I try to do is to rearticulate the deep truths of God's Self-revelation and ongoing Revelation for the age which God has made me responsible for as a theologian.

**Host:** I am really glad that you talked about interpretation so much. You did not use this language, but I interpreted it as [what a holy act, what a responsibility it is to interpret](#). One of the things that really struck me when I first realized this as a profound insight is that for any time, any tradition, any passage of scripture, any story that says [“God said this”](#) or [“God did that.”](#) what follows is always an interpretation. It is an interpretation of what some person or group of people thought, or felt, or wished, or sensed that reality was saying or doing. Almost always, is justification after the fact or to make a theological point.

If we forget this, if we fail to honor this, we are going to trivialize what God is up to today. We are not even going to be aware of how reality is speaking to us, how the divine is communicating and guiding us today when we forget that ours is an interpretive act—because, otherwise, we are going to be expecting bullhorns from the sky or whatever.

**Gloria:** Well, absolutely. One of the core concepts, of course, of Christian theology from time immemorial is the notion that God is incomprehensible mystery. [Augustine](#) had that wonderful saying: “If you think you have understood, then what you have understood is not God.” If what we have done is to limit, to box in, to say that somehow this is the last word, the last Revelation of God, then Augustine would say that what we think we understand is not God, because by nature God is a wholly incomprehensible mystery.

I am a teacher. I am a teacher of undergraduates and graduate students. I often say to my students that if we take the idea of mystery as that which is totally unknowable and totally unfathomable, then we theologians are out of a job. We have nothing more to say. But [Karl Rahner](#) had a wonderful definition of mystery. What he says is that “mystery is not the unknowable, but the infinitely knowable.”

**Host:** Wow. I had heard that many, many years ago. I had forgotten it.

**Gloria:** The revelation of God is ongoing. It is infinitely knowable. I always think that this is something that the poets have known, and those of us involved in theology and religion are somehow waking up to it.

**Host:** It is also the artists—the artists, the poets, the musicians, the storytellers. They take what is felt, what cannot be articulated in rational verbal words, and they help us to feel it in a way that moves us emotionally. It is one of the reasons why I think that we are at the time now in history when we have had enough of an articulation of the [Great Story](#)—the [Epic of Evolution](#), what is sometimes called “[Big History](#),” which is the history of everyone and everything. Now is the time for all the different kinds of artists to embody this story—to help the rest of us feel it and take it into our bones, and have us move our bodies.

**Gloria:** What a more critical time in history could we have? It is a time of ecological devastation. It is a time of global violence and global oppression that is literally unmatched at any other time in history. As you are speaking, it reminds me I have certain favorite poems that have guided a lot of my theological journey. One of them, and you are probably familiar with it, is the work by [Christopher Fry](#) called [A Sleep of Prisoners](#). The part that I love, and it goes right with what you were just saying, Michael, is that at a certain point he says, “Thank God our time is now. When wrong comes up to face us everywhere, never to leave us, till we take the longest stride of soul we ever took.” He goes on to say that “affairs are now soul-sized.” And I like to say, yes—cosmic in dimension at this point. He continues, “The enterprise is exploration into God.” And then my favorite part, and for students, especially if you think of it from an evolutionary perspective: “It takes so many thousand years to wake, but will you wake, for pity’s sake?”

Will we wake to the emergence? Will we wake to the self-revelation of God that is happening within the cosmos and its history at this time? And will we use the lenses and tools that have been provided to us to allow God to offer, as the scripture says, “See I am doing new things. Can’t you perceive it?”

**Host:** Yes. I love it...this idea of the self-revelatory nature of the Divine. The way I have been speaking about it in my [Evolutionize Your Life](#) program (also [here](#)), is that you cannot understand how [God \(or Reality\)](#) created complex life, if you do not understand extinctions. You cannot understand how God (or Reality) created healthy soils, if you do not understand glaciers. You cannot understand how God (or Reality) created the Periodic Table of Elements—or planets, or life—if you don’t understand supernova explosions and red giants. And you surely cannot understand how God created mountains and oceans and continents, if you do not understand plate tectonics.

[All of those things have only been revealed in the last hundred and fifty to two hundred years.](#) It is like so much of what we now understand about how God actually created the

universe, including ourselves, could only have been revealed once we had telescopes, microscopes, and (most recently) computers. That is part of the self-revelational nature of the Divine. At least that is how I see it.

**Gloria:** I am right with you on that. A task that I undertook in my first book about the creative suffering of God was to take the different claims—for instance, that [Peacocke](#) and [Schaab](#) were making in this book—and one of the things that I ended each chapter with was an evaluative summary along certain criteria. The first was fit with data—and not just the data, for instance, of evolution, but the data with Christianity. In other words, how do the data of evolution and the data of the Christian tradition dialogue and in some ways coalesce? In different terms, from different perspectives, with different lenses, but how in some ways are they telling the same story in different words? The second was a criterion of simplicity—Occam’s razor. Let us go for the simplest explanation, instead of engaging in circumlocutions to preserve things that perhaps God is actually trying to ask us to reinterpret, or visions of God that God is asking us now to revise by our study of the cosmos and its processes. One of the last criteria was the criteria of fecundity. Will this perspective bear fruit? Can it inspire further scholarship? Can it inspire further insight? Can it inspire new ways of seeing and talking about God?

Frequently, in the course of human events and cosmic events, sometimes I think what we do is we look at the human and cosmic event and we retrieve images of God, concepts of God, beliefs about God unconditionally in some sense, uncritically. What we do is we interpret the cosmic history or the human history with these, in some sense, classical interpretations of who God is and how God acts in the universe.

What I know that I am called to do as an evolutionary systematic theologian is, if I truly believe that God is revealing God’s Self through the cosmos, then what I need to do is to look at the cosmos and say, What is God revealing God’s Self to be? How is God revealing God’s Self to act within the situation? Those are not just theological questions or scientific questions. [Miriam Therese MacGillis](#) used to say that these are *contemplative* questions. We need to look at the cosmos and bring it to prayer, and bring it to contemplation, and bring it to study and ask, What is this Word of God saying to us at this time in history about who God is and how God relates to the world?

**Host:** Well, I just want to mention—because I do not think I have shared this on this series yet—that Miriam Therese MacGillis was my main teacher of this [Epic of Evolution](#) early on. In fact, my 20-year-old daughter, Miriam Joy, is named after Sister Miriam, who is a gifted popularizer of this sacred evolutionary understanding. Many of us were turned on to this perspective by her [Fate of the Earth](#) tape years ago.



**Gloria:** Oh, sure. When I was a young sister some twenty-five years ago, we had the opportunity to have a weekend workshop with [Miriam Therese MacGillis](#). Every time she would introduce a new fact or introduce a new insight, she would say, “This is a contemplative question. It is a question that requires us to enter into the mystery of God being revealed within history, within this cosmic event.” As [T.S. Elliot](#) says, that if we do that, then “we shall never cease from exploration. And at the end of our exploring, we will arrive at the place where we started, and know it for the first time.”

It is not as if we expect to find some radically different divine. But like any other deep and intimate relationship with any other being, any other person with whom we are relating, the journey brings us into fuller, deeper understanding of the Being whom we knew from the beginning, but only in fragmentary ways.

**Host:** You know this ‘relationship theology,’ for lack of another term right now, that you are speaking about brings me back to an earlier topic in this conversation, which is small “r” revelation and large “R” Revelation. [One of the things that I feel called to do as part of my own sense of life purpose is to so lift up evidence that in my lifetime evidence will be seen as capital “R” Revelation](#). This is divine revealing of *what is so* about the nature of reality. And we can, to use religious language, give God glory. We can honor Reality in that process, and that can call us to live a life of greater integrity, and greater justice, and greater sensitivity to all other life forms, and a greater commitment to the health and the wellbeing of this planet and all of its species.

**Gloria:** Exactly. Over the past couple of years I have been doing some consultation work with an organization called the [Center for Earth Jurisprudence](#). You may be familiar with it. Tom Berry was sort of an instigator with it. [Sister Pat Siemen](#), who is an [Adrian Dominican](#), is on the forefront of this Earth jurisprudence movement, and she is the founder of the Center for Earth Jurisprudence, which is actually based presently in the law schools of both [Barry University](#) and [St. Thomas](#), both of which are here in Florida. One is in Miami (St. Thomas is in Miami), but [our law school](#) is up in Orlando. Beneath the legal arguments for Earth jurisprudence is a very theological concept: that all Creation has intrinsic value because it is the Self-revelation of God. As [Tom Berry](#) would say, every time we cause the extinction of a species or we cause the death of part of God’s Creation, what we are actually doing is reducing the Revelation of God. What we are actually doing is suppressing a way in which God desired to reveal God’s Self, which we squander because of not realizing the intrinsic value of everything in Creation, simply as the Creation of a good God who looked at all things and said, “This is good. This is good. This is very good.”

So any time our actions cause the destruction or devastation of a part of the cosmos or of a part of the Earth, in a sense what we are doing is literally silencing God in some way, literally truncating God’s Self-revelation.

**Host:** Yes, exactly. I remember [Thomas Berry](#) saying once that if we lived on the moon and all we knew was the desolation of the moon, then our concepts of God, our images of God, our understanding of the divine would all reflect the barrenness of the lunar landscape. If we have a glorious understanding of the divine, it is only possible because of our experience of the natural world.

**Gloria:** Absolutely. To somehow suggest that God's Revelation of God's Self cannot be ongoing through Creation as it continues to evolve, to me, is to box God in. It is to limit God. I mean, part of the passion of my life is to suggest that God is way bigger, and way more majestic, and way more expansive than any of us can conceive. Most of the time I am saying to myself, "Your image of God is too small. It is too small. Allow God to reveal God's Self as God desires to. And don't box God in. Don't make God small."

**Host:** Our tradition suffers to the degree that we think of God and limit God in traditional ways. One of the things that I was shocked to discover less than a year ago is how so many atheists, like [PZ Myers](#) (PZ Myers is the most widely read science blogger in the world), are [encouraging people to read their Bibles](#). When I first found out, I was like, "Say what?!" One of the things PZ pointed to was that this guy, Mike Earl, has free listening online to his book, called *Bible Stories Your Parents Never Taught You*. Now, Mike Earl is an atheist, and [Bible Stories Your Parents Never Taught You](#) was for me a painful experience to actually listen to. I did not want to hear what he was pointing out. But one of the things that he said was, if you are a literalist, if you accept the picture portrayed in, say, the Hebrew Scriptures—what we Christians call the Old Testament—as the literal understanding of God in all of its literal detail, you would be forced to conclude that the morality of the Old Testament can be summed up as, "Obey the Lord or die." The summing up of a crass reading of the literalist's understanding of the New Testament would be, "Believe in Jesus or fry." Our own government—the United States Department of Defense—defined terrorism as "the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate others in the pursuit of goals that are generally religious, political, or ideological."

Now we all know that God cannot possibly be 'a cosmic terrorist.' Yet that is sort of what we are forced into. It is one of the reasons why PZ Myers can say, "There is no surer way to make an atheist than to get them to actually read scripture." What he is trying to get at there is that scripture interpreted literally is a trivializing of it. That is why I find that the work you are doing and the work of so many people who are in this conversation series is helping us to see that an evolutionary understanding of God, a God understood as revealed in and through this 13.7 billion year process of grace and creativity, is a far more majestic and glorious (and yet also intimate) understanding of the Divine than the biblical writers could have possibly had.

**Gloria:** Well, right. It all goes back to, as you are pointing out clearly, an interpretive stance, which is the *refusal* to interpret in some sense—although to interpret something literally or fundamentally is, in fact, a choice of interpretation. But it is a choice of interpretation that negates all of the historical, cultural, and social influences that we take for granted when we read other kinds of literature.

I think it was [Rowan Williams](#) who said, “In spite of everything, we go on saying ‘God.’” But the thing is, we have to continue to fathom what it means when we say ‘God.’ So we have to do the hard work, I think, the really hard work of reading and interpreting the Word of God—not only the Word made scripture, not only the Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, but also primordially the Word of God made cosmos, the Word of God made matter. And the only way to do that in this contemporary age is to do it in dialogue with evolutionary science. If we do not allow that to happen, if we won’t put those lenses on, then we are never going to be able to, in some sense I believe, share the vision of God.

The [Benedictines of Erie](#) in their new psalter have this wonderful line that ends one of their Psalms. It simply says, “Everything is full of sacred presence.” Everything is full of sacred presence. And then with the corollary: Everything has the capacity to reveal the living God.

The more fully we enter into what science, what evolutionary science, what quantum physics, what all of the sciences are telling us about this marvelous world, this marvelous cosmos in which we live, how can it not redound to the glory of God? That is what the Psalms have told us for ages. Look at Creation. It redounds to the glory of God. Now we can say, look at evolutionary theory, look at scientific revelation, scientific understandings of this universe, and let it redound to both the glory of God and to a deeper, fuller knowledge of God—more so than we can ask or imagine.

**Host:** You know I am reminded of [Peter Mayer](#)’s song, “[Holy Now](#)”, which Connie, my wife, turned into a music video and [posted on YouTube](#). Are you familiar with the singer-songwriter Peter Mayer?

**Gloria:** I am not.

**Host:** He is just one of the most amazing singer-songwriters in this movement.

Gloria, I have one question that I wanted to come back to. It was sort of what I asked at the beginning. Did you grow up with an evolutionary understanding? Where along the line did you come to fully embrace science, and fully embrace evolution?

**Gloria:** I have to tell you that I cannot give enough credit and enough thanks to the late [Arthur Peacocke](#). Within the last ten years of having read his work and having seen the marvelous implications, this permeated the way I think about things. And so as I say, at this point, I often find myself saying, “Peacocke and Shaab would say...” because I somehow cannot separate

the two. *[laughter]* I can't pretend that Arthur Peacocke did not have just a marvelous influence on my thought. But the ironic part is that what I found was that Arthur Peacocke was very consistent with Catholic theologians, like [Rahner](#) and like [Thomas Aquinas](#). When I sent Arthur my proposal for this book that was based on his evolutionary theory and theology, he was so gracious, with the humility of a scholar. Then he said, but I am a bit daunted by the comparison with Thomas Aquinas. *[laughter]* But it was really Peacocke who instilled in me the love for the dialogue between evolutionary theory and theology. Once awakened, you can't fall back to sleep.

**Host:** That is so great!

**Gloria:** An evolutionary perspective has as an essential component of its processes the notion of emergence, the notion of movement, the notion in many ways of *future*. This, born of the reality that we are surrounded by, immersed in, in touch with God everywhere we turn. Every creature, every event is a means by which God is present to us and is communicating with us. Believing is seeing. It is not the other way around. Believing that God is actually present within every creature and every event, and is trying to communicate with us through every creature and every event, attunes us to that presence of God. So if we really believe that God is immersed in this evolutionary universe, then we are more able to see it. And if we are more able to see it, then in fact we really are dwelling within the Word, and dwelling within the ongoing Revelation of the Divine.

**Host:** Beautiful. Gloria, thank you so much for sharing all of your ideas with our listeners here today on the leading edge of faith.

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## A SLEEP OF PRISONERS

Dark and cold we may be, but this  
Is no winter now. The frozen misery  
Of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move;  
The thunder is the thunder of the floes,  
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.  
Thank God our time is now when wrong  
Comes up to face us everywhere,  
Never to leave us till we take  
The longest stride of soul we ever took.  
Affairs are now soul size.

The enterprise  
Is exploration into God.  
Where are you making for? It takes  
So many thousand years to wake,  
But will you wake for pity's sake!  
  
— *Christopher Fry*

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