

In the renewal of our religious imagination, we need the help of creative people whose eyes are open. Simon Tolkien compared such people to gold prospectors who catch the glint of a tiny piece of gold in the mud¹. A Christian imagination recognises in the ordinary, hints of ultimate meaning and a promise of final fulfilment. Human beings are not, as Stephen Hawking asserted, ‘chemical scum on an average-sized planet, orbiting around a very average-size star, in the outer suburb of one of a million galaxies.’² We are summoned to an encounter that will fulfil all our hunger for some plenitude of meaning which embraces all the small ways in which we make sense of our lives.

Terence, the Roman playwright, said: ‘I am human, and I reckon nothing human alien to me’³, For Christians, nothing human is alien to Christ. Every attempt to grapple with the fundamental questions of our lives - how to love, how to be just, how to be free, how to face suffering and death - helps us to understand Christ, the one who is most human of all.

Jesus said to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as the crisis of his death approaches: ‘How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!’ (Matthew 23.37). In Christ, God is gathering all things into one. As after the Feasting of the Five Thousand, everything is gathered up, so that nothing is wasted (John 6.12), no scrap of human wisdom or insight should be thrown away.

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¹ He shared this with me in a private conversation.

² Quoted by Tim Crane ‘Reduced to clear: What happens when a religious leader takes on consciousness.’ In Times Literary Supplement(TLS) , July 27 2018 p.12

³ Ed M. C. Howatson *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, Second Edition. Oxford University Press. 1993. "Heau'ton timōrū'menos", 77, pp. 260–61.