

DOING THEOLOGY IN AN EVOLUTIONARY WAY



Diarmuid O'Murchu, MSC





Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.maryknollsociety.org.

Copyright © 2021 by Diarmuid O'Murchu.

Published by Orbis Books, Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: O'Murchu, Diarmuid, author.

Title: Doing theology in an evolutionary way / Diarmuid O'Murchu.

Description: Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, [2021] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020031304 (print) | LCCN 2020031305 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781626984042 (print) | ISBN 9781608338689 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Theology—History—21st century. | Creation. | Evolution—Religious aspects—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BT28 .O17 2021 (print) | LCC BT28 (ebook) | DDC 230.2 dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020031304>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020031305>

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>ix</i>
-------------------------------	-----------

Part One: **The Inherited Theological Landscape**

1. What Is Theology?	3
<i>Faith Seeking Understanding</i>	4
<i>Contextual Understanding in the Twenty-First Century</i>	6
<i>New Scientific Wisdom</i>	9
<i>The Evolutionary Imperative</i>	13
<i>Theology, Old and New</i>	15
<i>A Spirit-Evolving God</i>	19
2. The Codependent Paradigm	23
<i>The Anthropocentric Deviation</i>	25
<i>The Flawed Creation</i>	28
<i>The Fall and Redemption</i>	29
<i>From Paul Back to Jesus</i>	33
<i>Beyond the Disempowering Cross</i>	37
<i>Let the Paradigm Die!</i>	41
3. The Imperial Judeo-Christian Paradigm	43
<i>Creation: God's Own Starting Point</i>	44
<i>Israel as Symbol</i>	46
<i>Israel and Jesus</i>	48
<i>Enter the Church</i>	50

Clericalized Power	51
Popular Devotion	53
Heresy and Monolithic Truth	54
Incarnational Altruism	56
<i>Eschatology: Disillusion or Fulfillment</i>	57
4. Progressive Christianity:	
Beyond Clericalized Theology	59
<i>The Progressive Option</i>	61
<i>The Clerical Shift</i>	64
<i>Faith Community Reconfigured</i>	67
<i>The Christian Focus</i>	69
 Part Two:	
Theological Horizons of the Twenty-First Century	
5. Theology's Paschal Journey:	
The Paradoxical Imperative	77
<i>The Paradoxical Imperative</i>	80
<i>We Are the Sixth Extinction</i>	84
<i>Christ's Death and Resurrection</i>	87
<i>Religion's Paschal Journey</i>	93
<i>Continuity and Tradition</i>	95
6. The Originating Spirit	99
<i>Out of the Depths</i>	101
<i>The Spirit in Genesis</i>	104
<i>Spirit and the Creative Vacuum</i>	108
<i>All Is Energy</i>	112
<i>Meaning from Within</i>	114
<i>Spirit Will Not Be Bound!</i>	117
7. Creation as Embodied Birthing	119
<i>The Body and Embodiment</i>	120
<i>Creative Birthing</i>	123
<i>Bringing Jesus to Birth</i>	125
<i>And the Birthing Continues</i>	128
<i>Healing the Wounded Body</i>	130
<i>Birthing in the Power of Sexuality</i>	135

<i>Birthing Empowerment</i>	139
8. The Evolutionary Imperative	141
<i>Conceptual Clarity</i>	142
<i>New Horizons</i>	145
The Spell of Solidity	145
Sense of Direction	146
Driven by Consciousness	148
Imbued with Paradox	149
Lateral Thinking	150
Cooperation	152
<i>Beyond the Religious-Scientific Collusion</i>	154
<i>The Anthropological Shift</i>	156
<i>The Trinity in Evolutionary Context</i>	158
<i>Faith in an Evolutionary God</i>	161
9. Empowering Incarnation	163
<i>Whither Deep Incarnation?</i>	164
<i>Embodiment Reenvisioned</i>	168
Relational Identity	171
The Sensuous Body	172
Transhuman Embodiment	172
<i>Interreligious Grounding</i>	173
<i>Dislodging the Postcolonial Baggage</i>	176
<i>Letting Go for Letting Be</i>	180
<i>Toward an Incarnational Church</i>	183
<i>Theological Embodiment</i>	185
10. When Theology Embraces Spirituality	187
<i>Spirituality and Consciousness</i>	189
<i>People of the Story</i>	191
<i>Changing Worldviews</i>	192
<i>Spirituality Informing Theology</i>	194
<i>Toward a More Integrated Spirituality</i>	197
<i>Conclusion</i>	201
<i>Bibliography</i>	203
<i>Index</i>	215