

A home for eternity?



Belton House in Lincolnshire

Lord Jesus, our Way, help us to follow you, dying to self and living to God. Jesus, our Truth, help us to recognise you wherever we meet you. Jesus, our Life, welcome us to live your way, today and for ever. Amen.

Science and faith Part 1 – God the creator

by Caroline Hodgson

Early theologians were preoccupied with the material aspect of creation. Had God created everything out of nothing, or had matter already existed in some form? In the second century the debate was fuelled by the drive to establish “orthodox” doctrine. Gnosticism held that matter was evil, and therefore intrinsically opposed to God. By contrast, most of the Church Fathers, such as Tertullian, held that God had created everything from scratch. During the Reformation, Luther and Calvin advocated a literal

interpretation of Genesis, and numerous attempts were made to reconcile new scientific knowledge with Noah’s flood.

It wasn’t until Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, that a contender entered the arena to challenge traditional notions. Darwin’s observations were shocking, because he was – like Copernicus and Galileo – challenging humankind’s privileged position at the centre of creation.

The debate rages on, although many Christians accept creation as one of God’s mysteries – something that we cannot understand in our lifetime. ☺

“Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’”

Psalm 126:2

Kathryn Fleming *reflects on*
1 Peter 2:2-10 and John 14:1-14

It’s a very architectural sort of day. The epistle reminds us we’re living stones, constituent members of a spiritual house with Jesus the cornerstone. The Gospel offers different buildings. I’ve always loved the King James Bible translation of John 14:2, that has Jesus promising: “In my Father’s house are many mansions”. As a child I imagined a series of stately homes, their doors wide open, so you could choose exactly where you wanted to spend eternity, and I cherished the thought of as much variety in heaven as there are

people to enjoy it. That vision of inclusive welcome is still important to me.

“No one comes to the Father except through me,” says Jesus – and that’s pretty clear, even non-negotiable. The only way that we will reach home safely is the route that Jesus forged for us on the cross, the route of self-giving love that is even stronger than death. I don’t think that means, though, that only card-carrying Christians can expect a welcome home. The Jesus event is indeed once for all – but it is for all. To see Jesus is to see God. To live the Jesus way, denying self and serving others, is to join the royal priesthood, that new body of people who, having received mercy, are become a people of dignity and hope. ☺

World Laughter Day

by Lisa Tulfer

In fourth-century Egypt, a monk called Evagrius Ponticus developed the idea of Christian vices (which would later evolve into the Seven Deadly Sins) and virtues. One of the vices was sadness, the failure to respond joyfully to God’s love, and the corresponding virtue was *hilaritas*, or Christian joy.

Humans express joy through smiling and laughter, so you may want to take part in World Laughter Day today. Started in

Mumbai in 1998 by Dr Madan Kataria, the annual event raises awareness about laughter and its benefits – it is believed to increase people’s well-being, including through the release of endorphins. The logo of Dr Kataria’s international movement has the tagline “World Peace through Laughter”, and the day seeks to unite humanity through the shared language of laughter. In Copenhagen in 2000, almost ten thousand people gathered for a “Happydemic”.

Laughter is contagious. Can you do something today to spread a bit of it? ☺