



We Mercies

## Care for Creation

As you take the next step, remember the traditional custodians of the land

### THE SCIENCE AND RELIGION DEBATE

Since the days of the Enlightenment, at least, there has been a rather virulent debate about whether science and faith can be reconciled. Certainly the account of creation in the Bible does not fit literally into contemporary scientific theories and findings. Where is the debate now? How significant is it for our spirituality and Christian life?

Ilia Delio is a Franciscan Sister with an academic background in both science and theology and has written about the reconciliation of them both. She is visiting Australia later this year and some of our sisters are attending. We hope to hear from them next year.

Meanwhile, here is a summary of one of Ilia's recent articles.

*The church has a vital role in helping the world move forward toward unity through the Gospel values of peace and justice, but such movement will not happen unless there is a conscious awakening to the expanding universe and the evolution of biological life, an awakening to the cosmos as our home. Can the church revitalize the Gospel life as one that embraces change, complexity, chaos, future and new creation? Can we envision the emergence of new forms of Gospel life? I do not think this is possible unless we reconnect ourselves – not simply to the world in which we are living – but to the world we are discovering through science and technology.*

*British psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist makes a convincing argument that the perils of the modern age and, I would add, the internal conflicts of our divided church, are the result of a divided human brain. By this McGilchrist means that the left hemisphere of the human brain has become functionally disconnected from the right hemisphere.*

*The right hemisphere begins with a relationship to the world at large, not seeing it as a separate object, ripe for manipulation. ...It thrives on*

(Ed.  
Anne McLay)

November  
2014

*relationships. The left hemisphere is the narrow beam, precisely focused attention, which enables us to get and grasp. It is good for manipulating the world and controlling the parts. The predominance of the left brain is shown in either/or thinking. It is adept at procedures but sees them as ends in themselves. It is not in touch with the world; rather it receives its information from the right brain, which is connected to the world....*

*I would suggest that a shift toward left-brain dominance in Western Christianity emerged with the rise of scholasticism. Knowledge of God and the things of God began not with experience (the right brain) but with the hypothetical question (the left brain).*

*By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholicism was a set of rules and instructions found in a manual. Seminary education became a compendium of brief doctrinal definitions and statements....*

*Have we constructed a church that is the image of the world the left brain has made internally, where appeals to the natural world, art, the body and spirituality, have been cut off and ironed out of existence?*

*Catholicity [as distinct from Catholicism] is an inner orientation toward the dynamic of making whole....It relies on patient and consistent attention to the unfoldings of the world. Catholicity belongs to the human person who has an inner wholeness, where the right and the left brain work together. The "catholic mind" seeks to bring together experience (right brain) and information (left brain) to create meaning that can be returned to the world through new horizons of insight that undergird new connections. The sacramental imagination, nurtured in the liturgy through ritual, music, and art, is aimed toward the "catholic brain".*

*We are not created to live with isolated, abstract ideas but with ideas that translate into new realities. ... We pursue knowledge not to control but to organize life for a greater unity, a deepening of being which is a deepening of love.*

*It is important that theology begin with the right brain, with passion, connectivity and experience of the real, to process this information (left brain) in such a way that contributes to the evolution of self and world. We are created to be part of evolution and to illuminate the mystery of God in evolution. Teilhard de Chardin summed it up when he wrote: "To discover and know is to actually extend the universe ahead and to complete it".*

*([globalsistersreport.org/church-and-divided-brain-7086](http://globalsistersreport.org/church-and-divided-brain-7086))*