

Interesting Quotes from PRIME  
Questions for Discussion:  
What attracts your heart and mind from the readings?  
What do you wish Delio had developed more clearly?

**9. Teilhard's Christian Pantheism**

In his essay "The Spiritual Power of Matter" Teilhard writes in a lyrical and mystical way of the power of matter, in which divinity is hidden. As he begins to see matter more clearly, every single element of the world begins to radiate divine love shining through the everyday stuff of the world. Teilhard extols matter as the "divine milieu, charged with creative power, infused with life by the incarnate Word."

Because, Teilhard saw matter as the incarnating presence of divinity; God is present in matter and not merely to matter. But, for Teilhard, the Christian God is *here*, in matter.

Do we really believe that God is present in matter? Is matter the same as God? This would be pantheism, and while Teilhard leans in this direction, he is clear that God and matter are not equivalent. The preposition *in* is key. God is *in* matter, meaning that God is the ultimate horizon, the depth and breadth of matter, other than matter (transcendent) yet intimately present to matter (immanent).

**10. Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi: Laudato Si'**

In 1967, historian Lynn White, Jr., blamed Christianity for the environmental crisis. Christianity, he wrote, with its emphasis on human salvation and dominion over nature, "made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects." Because the "roots of our trouble are largely religious," he claimed, "the remedy must also be essentially religious"...

In 2015 Pope Francis wrote the encyclical Laudato Si' (On Care for Our Common Home). It is a work of breadth and depth. Pope Francis has paid close attention to scientific data that indicates that earth is in crisis. Global warming, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, and other factors show that we cannot sustain a first-world lifestyle indefinitely.

The pope highlights relationality as the foundation of all life, impelling him to posit a new metaphysics of relationship grounded in divine love. We are not simply human beings; we are human interbeings and share in the interrelatedness of all cosmic life.

**11. Pope Francis and St. Francis**

Francis of Assisi lived the vision of Pope Francis's encyclical Laudato Si'. A simple man with a big heart, Francis of Assisi communed in solidarity with all of life. He lived dispossessed and dependent on the goods of the earth and the generosity of people. What he received, he gave away, for he had only one aim: to follow the footprints of Christ. The rich theological visions of Franciscan theologians Bonaventure and Duns Scotus are woven into Laudato Si'.

Bonaventure

Creation is like a beautiful song that flows in the most excellent of harmonies. It is a song that God freely desires to sing into the vast spaces of the universe. There is nothing that compels God to create. The world exists by virtue of the free creative power of divine love. Bonaventure views the world as sacramental. It is a symbolic world and one full of signs of God's presence. The world is created as a means of God's self-revelation so that it might lead us to love and praise the Creator.

Duns Scotus

Since God is love, and perfect love is absolutely free, nothing created is necessary. God is like

an artist and creation is the work of divine art. Every single aspect of the created universe exists because of God's absolute freedom and because of God's unlimited love.

The very existence of creation, therefore, attests to God's unlimited love; each being is uniquely created by

the divine will of God. Christ is first in God's intention to love, so whether or not sin ever existed Christ would have come.

### 12. Warming, Warming, Gone! Who Will Survive Climate Change?

We have known for a long time that our first-world consumer lifestyles are damaging the earth and that the most vulnerable on earth, the poor, are feeling the effects of this damage. The ecological footprint first developed by Canadian ecologist William Rees indicates that the American footprint is about 23 percent larger than the earth can sustain. If everyone were to live like an American, it would take about six planets.

If it is a problem of politics and public policies, it is also fundamentally a problem of religion. A famous albeit controversial 1967 essay by Lynn White claims that the source of the environmental problems is religious in nature. Christianity, White indicates, with its emphasis on human salvation and dominion over nature, "made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects ... We will continue to have an ecological crisis, he claims, until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence except to serve us.

Delio asserts:

I do not think the First World will survive the dire consequences of global warming: The internal theological divides (internal wars) of both Catholic and Protestant churches preempt a renewed religious sensibility that leads me to suggest that the future looks grim for the Western world, which is fundamentally built on Christian principles. However, I do think the Third World will survive and rebuild: At the moment the poorest regions of the globe, largely in the Southern hemisphere, are experiencing dire consequences due to global warming. Most notable is the deforestation and stripping of the Amazon rainforest. Yet, the poor know how to live on very little; they are community-oriented and know how to share with their neighbors. Material goods are means and not ends for human flourishing. Religion itself is not an obstacle to working for the good of the earth; primal spiritualities consider the earth sacred.

### 13. Can a Renewal of Inner Space Help Heal the Earth?

In a sense Lynn White was correct. Our ecological problems will continue to deepen unless we recognize the heart of the problem is the existential need for spiritual space.

Our institutional religions do not provide a breathtaking openness for the human soul to soar. Teilhard de Chardin saw the problem early on. He spoke of Christianity as passive, resigned, and consigned to a cosmos that no longer exists. Because spiritual energy is vital to the evolution of life, Teilhard thought that we must reinvent ourselves religiously, and he set about his life's work toward this goal.

By conquering physical space, science has unwittingly shown our deep need for religion. Our souls need a place apart from the physical world of everyday stuff, a place to stretch toward the infinite and wonder about things that do not physically exist. How we reconceive religion in a scientific age is the basis of a healing earth. It is encouraging to note that, although science has conquered space, it has not conquered the soul. The inner universe is still a vast expanse of infinite love and life. The religious imagination must be set free to realize that all that we seek in the outer life can be found in the inner universe, what the poet Rainer Maria Rilke called the "outer space within" where "through us the birds fly silently [where] in me grows the tree."

Pope Francis is right to take the lead in this regard, but his spiritual wisdom is not enough. We need a complete religious revolution- to liberate God from the grip of Greek metaphysics, to liberate divine revelation from the institution of religion, to imagine a new heaven and a new earth. The Christian tradition has all that it takes to make this revolution possible. In a sense, Jesus initiated a new Big Bang: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:49).

#### 14. Beatrice Bruteau, Pope Francis and Global Community

Bruteau contributed insights to fleshing out a new evolutionary understanding of personhood. We are not individual substances but centers of activity. At the most fundamental level, we are webs of energy, fields within fields, which means we are always connected to everything that comprises the world. We never act alone or think alone because the fundamental stuff of life is intrinsically relational.

Bruteau drew a distinction between an individual and a person. She asserted that, if evolution is the rise of consciousness, then an individual has a less complexified consciousness of otherness, whereas a person is one who has a higher level of other-centered consciousness.

Evolution calls us into a new type of holistic consciousness where things are first seen together and then as distinct within this togetherness. The opposite is a partial consciousness of separateness and alienation from nature (and one another)... On the level of conscious personhood we must respond from the center of creative love, acting toward communion, revealing the glory of God. Because God is our root reality and the future toward which we are moving... There is no ending of life in God, only beginning; thus life will always be more than what we can imagine, even in eternity.