

Christian Faith and Ecology in an Unfinished Universe

Report on lecture by John F. Haught

Eco Church at St James's, in partnership with Living Spirituality Connections, hosted this lecture by John F Haught, distinguished Research Professor at Georgetown University, on 2 June.



Professor Haught with the event Chair, Rev Lucy Winkett.

Professor Haught emphasised the importance of religion learning from findings in geology, biology and cosmology, and of integrating these into our contemporary theological understandings. He focused on the importance of a sense of purpose and meaning in the universe. He related what he had to say closely to the content of *Laudato Si*, the Pope's encyclical on care for our common home, issued in 2015, which is informed by modern scientific understandings of our place in the universe. Professor Haught is also greatly influenced by the writings of radical theologian Teilhard de Chardin, who regarded the universe as in development towards a future where all will be fulfilled.

In John Haught's view, like Alfred North Whitehead and Process Theology generally, the universe has always been restless, and the divine is a source of novelty and disturbance as much as of stability.

He spoke of the importance of regaining a deep sense of connection with nature, which had been present in the Medieval period, but largely was lost after Descartes and the Enlightenment. This connection was also lost as a result of the "ontology of death" which became dominant in Christianity, and which enables us to tolerate the death of nature.

It is vital that we re-form our connection to all things, which has been present from the first movements of the Big Bang. The values of physical constants were set at that time that

later enabled the components of life and mind to develop. In the new cosmic story which we have gained from scientific endeavours, there is a sense of deep time, in which human life appears very late in the history of the cosmos.

John Haught suggests that an important way of reconnecting with all of life is to recognise the anticipatory view of the evolution of life, in which we are still moving towards fullness of being, and need to be patient about our lack of complete understanding of the purpose of life at this time. We need to retain a sense of hope about the future and to trust that what's going on in the cosmic drama is leading towards greater revelation of beauty and meaning in the whole of life.

Feedback from participants in the event included: "A revelation!", "Absolutely excellent", "brilliant", "inspiring to deep thought and new awareness of a comprehensive view of the world and the cosmos still unfolding.", and "Please more talks like this. Really inspiring."

Professor John F Haught is author of over twenty books: if you'd like to read some of them, a good place to start is:

