

their intellectual curiosity. Teaching enthusiastically about Darwin's life, especially how his personality and curiosity led him to observe nature, also helps children and adults realize the creativity of the unique human mind. Reflecting on Darwin's inner conflict about presenting a new view of the world offers us not just a history lesson, but an example of the kind of dilemma which we all face in one way or another when we strive to live authentic and compassionate lives.

People who can engage others in exploring the meanings of the life and work of Darwin and others like him can make many connections—within themselves, between various ideas, and with the learners and their experiences. The creation story is the story of our own lives. Discovering it through valuing open minds, hearts, and eyes can inspire us all to explore our home. This isn't to say that teachers and parents won't be challenged by questions and resistance from unexpected places. In his poem "At the Smithville Methodist Church" Stephen Dunn describes a challenging situation that many families could face:

It was supposed to be Arts & Crafts for a week,  
but when she came home  
with the "Jesus Saves" button, we knew what art  
was up, what ancient craft.

She liked her little friends. She liked the songs  
they sang when they weren't  
twisting and folding paper into dolls.  
What could be so bad?

Jesus had been a good man, and putting faith  
in good men was what  
we had to do to stay this side of cynicism,  
that other sadness.

From  
*The Whole World Kin*

OK, we said, One week. But when she came home singing "Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so," it was time to talk. Could we say Jesus

doesn't love you? Could I tell her the Bible is a great book certain people use to make you feel bad? We sent her back without a word.

It had been so long since we believed, so long since we needed Jesus as our nemesis and friend, that we thought he was sufficiently dead,

that our children would think of him like Lincoln or Thomas Jefferson.

Soon it became clear to us: you can't teach disbelief to a child,

only wonderful stories, and we hadn't a story nearly as good.

On parents' night there were the Arts & Crafts all spread out

like appetizers. Then we took our seats in the church

and the children sang a song about the Ark, and Hallelujah

and one in which they had to jump up and down for Jesus.

I can't remember ever feeling so uncertain about what's comic, what's serious.

Evolution is magical but devoid of heroes.

You can't say to your child

"Evolution loves you." The story stinks  
of extinction and nothing

exciting happens for centuries. I didn't have  
a wonderful story for my child

and she was beaming. All the way home in the car  
she sang the songs,

occasionally standing up for Jesus.

There was nothing to do

but drive, ride it out, sing along  
in silence.

What story do we need to tell our children? Here is my response  
to Dunn's poem and to the many parents and religious profession-  
als who search for a wonder-filled way to tell our creation story to  
children.

When a child wonders where we came from,

We go out into the night and build a fire to keep warm,  
and look up at the sky.

We sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"

And sing happily

Because what is inside each of us

Is just like the star.

When a child wonders who loves her, we hold her hands  
and sing

"You Are My Sunshine!"

When families come to share in the potluck, and time  
comes to offer blessing,

We light the Chalice flame, for life and love and memories  
and each other, and sing,

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!"

When families bring their pets to be blessed, we sing,

"We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands!" and  
"All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir"

Our heroes are

long-ago people who developed language, fire, art,  
and cooking

leaders all over the world, like Abraham, Moses, and  
Harriet Tubman,

who helped people find their way to new places to live  
in peace and freedom

teachers like Jesus (yes) and the Buddha and others,  
who taught stories about loving people

and YOU who keep the journey going on!

Our story of evolution

is NOT of what is extinct.

Our story of evolution IS

of what survives

of what has been transformed and lives on

of what we are becoming

of the future which lives after us.

Our story is not of disbelief.

Our story is of belief and faith

in the story of you and you and you,

in the stories of love and hope,

in the stories of hurt and reconciliation,

in the stories of changing and growing.

We people of the one creation, which is still ongoing, have our  
old and new stories to tell. And we have the great power of real-  
izing that we are part of the new story which is ever evolving, ever  
becoming, ever being told. That is the sense of wonder, a gift which  
has been handed to us by people like Charles Darwin. Now it is  
our turn to pass it on to the next generation, in the paradise we  
continue to create here on our earth.