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Review of Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness

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Inspired throughout by the Jesuit paleontologist and mystic Teilhard de Chardin, theologian Ilia Delio, OSF, retrieves the original meaning of catholicity as wholeness to denote the church, connects this concept to contemporary cosmology, and urges kindling in ourselves a new consciousness of belonging to the whole in this evolutionary age. The multi-award-winning author and Villanova University professor accomplishes her project skillfully over nine chapters in which she explores catholicity from its Greek roots to its appropriation by early Church Fathers, unraveling through the centuries, resurfacing in Big Bang and evolutionary scientific findings, emerging in the human mind, manifesting in Jesus, functioning in the church, and embracing the present lovingly as the only way toward the future.

Delio's exploration of catholicity in *Making All Things New* epitomizes systematic theology at its best. She draws upon her well-trained knowledge of cosmology in its fullness to yield a meaningful theological approach to living in the world in ways that demonstrate our awareness of the human relatedness to all others—people, species, and systems. To achieve this approach requires no less than “putting on the mind of Christ,” which she shares poignantly in chapter 8 as “a deep awareness of oneness with God and neighbor, a consciousness of belonging to a whole” (155). Not surprisingly, she

points in chapter 9 to Pope Francis as a model of catholicity who “could help move the Church to a new level of consciousness and a new community of life for the world” (185). Our taking his encyclical *Laudato Si’* seriously and following his many examples of openness to others should help realize her hope for the future.

This new level of consciousness that Delio prescribes stimulates her thinking cogently about God in relation to the world. In chapter 7, she builds upon Teilhard's understanding of God-Omega as a transcendent force who is distinct from the world but vital for the newness that occurs by drawing the universe into the future. She uses terms familiar in process theology to describe God's activity— influencing, persuading, and luring but never determining outcomes nor interfering in or interrupting the cosmological to biological evolutionary processes. Trying to describe God's activity in relation to the world is always challenging, but Delio's efforts to explain how God contributes to the “self-creation of each entity” are laudable (143).

The self-creative ability of entities that constitute the universe persists as an important theme in *Making All Things New*, and Delio underscores the significance of human self-creativity and the responsibility it entails. Having emerged from prior hominids with a capacity for reflective consciousness and an innate disposition for catholicity, humans need to wake up to the disparities, divisions, and destruction that are inhibiting our sense of unity with all others, recognize that we are parts of a whole, orient our lives to living cooperatively and creatively in the world, and “wildly fling ourselves into the arms of divine Love” as the “only real way into the future” (200). Her wake-up call is compelling.

Theology professors will find this first contribution to the series *Catholicity in an Evolving Universe*, which Orbis Books recently launched, helpful for student learning, reflection, and action. The theological, spiritual, scientific, economic, aesthetic, and environmental perspectives scheduled for future contributions promise to enrich undergraduates and graduates. Delio's position as the general editor of this series assures high quality in the forthcoming volumes.