

DIVINE RADIANCE IN HUMAN EVOLUTION

Diarmuid O'Murchu

ORBIS  BOOKS
Maryknoll, New York 10545

Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.orbisbooks.com.

Copyright © 2025 by Diarmuid O’Murchu.

Published by Orbis Books, Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1989, 1993 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

Manuscript editing and typesetting by Joan Weber Laflamme.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: O’Murchu, Diarmuid, author.

Title: Divine radiance in human evolution / Diarmuid O’Murchu.

Description: Maryknoll, NY : Orbis Books, [2025] | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: “A Christian theology incorporating insights from paleoanthropology, evolutionary biology, and archaeology”— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024055242 (print) | LCCN 2024055243 (ebook) | ISBN 9781626986121 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9798888660676 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Theological anthropology—Christianity. | Evolutionary biology—Religious aspects Christianity. | Science and religion.

Classification: LCC BT701.3 .O53 2025 (print) | LCC BT701.3 (ebook) | DDC 233/.11—dc23/eng/20241206

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024055242>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024055243>

Contents

Introduction	vii
1. A Context Too Long Neglected	1
<i>Theological Change in the Twenty-First Century</i> / 2	
<i>Our Bankrupt Anthropology</i> / 5	
<i>Classical Greek Anthropology</i> / 8	
<i>We Are the World</i> / 10	
<i>Individuality, Relationship, and Personhood</i> / 13	
<i>The End of Dogmatism</i> / 15	
2. Our Human Story and Divine Revelation	19
<i>Christian Salvation</i> / 20	
<i>Our Sacred Human Narrative</i> / 22	
<i>Entering Deep Time</i> / 27	
<i>The Human Narrative as a Faith Story</i> / 28	
3. God's Chosen Earthlings.....	33
<i>Earthlings at Home in Creation</i> / 36	
<i>Our Earthiness in Focus</i> / 39	
<i>Programmed to Cooperate</i> / 41	
<i>The Relational Matrix of Christianity</i> / 44	
<i>Reworking the Theological Tradition</i> / 49	
4. The Grace of Human Creativity	51
<i>The Patriarchal Context</i> / 52	
<i>Reclaiming Our Authentic Story</i> / 54	
<i>Our Ancient Artistic Flair</i> / 55	
<i>Imagination, Visualization, Discrimination</i> / 57	
<i>The Artistic Flair</i> / 59	

	<i>The Religious Dimension</i> / 62
	<i>Where Grace Abounds</i> / 65
5.	God beyond the Culture of Civilization67
	<i>Toward a Discerning Mind and Heart</i> / 69
	<i>Religion as a Mechanism for Management and Control</i> / 72
	<i>Religion as Projection</i> / 73
	<i>Naming the Projections</i> / 74
	<i>Relational Aspirations</i> / 76
6.	The Spirit Breaks Through81
	<i>Exploring the Great Spirit</i> / 82
	<i>Can Christianity Accommodate the Great Spirit?</i> / 84
	<i>Moving beyond the Ex Nihilo Creator</i> / 87
	<i>The Spirit of Paradox</i> / 90
7.	Artificial Intelligence and the Evolutionary Human93
	<i>The Rise of AI</i> / 94
	<i>The Climate Emergency of the Twenty-First Century</i> / 102
	<i>Grounding Our Identity as Earthlings</i> / 104
	<i>Super-Intelligent Earthlings</i> / 105
8.	Doing Theology in an Evolutionary Way109
	<i>Tradition and Recapitulation</i> / 110
	<i>Confronting the Anthropocene</i> / 113
	<i>Creatures of a Relational Creation</i> / 116
	<i>Works Cited</i>119
	<i>Index</i>127

Introduction

Over the centuries, Christian theology has flourished as a vision of robust faith, centered on an all-powerful God who is known and loved for the salvation this God makes possible for human beings. The doctrines of theology have focused on the mystery and meaning of God, and theology's influence has been largely determined by a particular understanding of the human condition, with the ultimate goal of saving human souls.

As a human-based enterprise, the theological landscape has changed dramatically. Particularly through the scientific study of human origins (paleoanthropology), we no longer understand the human to be a codependent sinful being. We are, rather, complex evolutionary creatures, flourishing over a time span of some seven million years.

Over long time spans, human beings have exhibited a resilient creativity, reflecting and illuminating the creativity of the Godhead itself. The mystery of human becoming opens up the mysterious meaning of God in a profoundly new way. The new horizons of our human evolutionary narrative invite us into a novel exploration of that which grounds everything in sacred meaning, the human and nonhuman alike.

In the twenty-first century, theology is embracing the enlarged wisdom arising from cosmology, evolutionary theory, quantum physics, ecology, and the new biology. Strangely, however, there seems to be little recognition of the advances being made in the field of paleoanthropology. Incorporating insights about human origins has revolutionary implications for our understanding of incarnation and God's embodied presence with humans and our ancestors throughout our entire seven million years.

Our current spiritual awakening follows an interdisciplinary trajectory and transcends much of the past dualistic split between the sacred and the secular. We are invited into the enlarged scientific horizons of our time. Particularly for the present work, we are tasked to learn from the amazing discoveries we are making in relation to our long evolutionary narrative on this earth. On several fronts, secular resources seem to be outpacing sacred learnings of the past, calling forth a spiritual exploration that can engage peoples from several wisdom traditions, some religious, others of no particular religious allegiance.

This book is for all those people who are seeking new spiritual meaning amid a decadent religious world, where inherited doctrines and dogmas lose meaning and relevance at a rapidly increasing rate. It explores how the divine Spirit still continues to renew the face of the earth, reawakening within the human spirit an organic evolutionary wisdom too long suppressed and denied.

Welcome to the exploration!