

Good Friday Reflection by Chris Baker



Crucifixion 001 by R S Connett

The future of the planet is very much uppermost in my mind at present. About a month ago I visited our daughter Flossie in Vancouver in Canada's Pacific NorthWest and we had the most amazing week hanging out on the beautiful Gulf islands that lie between the mainland and Vancouver Island. It's hard to describe the quality of the light out there, even on a rainy and misty day and the juxtaposition of water, mountains and majestic pine rain forests that stretch as far as the eye can see. You are surrounded by the most stunning wildlife - bald headed eagles, humming birds, seals and of course whales; one lives in state of heightened expectation that you will catch a glimpse of a water spume or a tail. But bathing one's soul in this beautiful creation is ever more tinged by doubt and guilt - how much carbon and other forms of pollution did I inflict on Mother Earth to just go out for a week and hang out with my daughter?

Then of course, we are in the midst of a series of demonstrations by the Extinction Rebellion movement - peaceful, good natured. And yet already the media in this country are turning against them on the grounds of inconvenience and gross stereotyping - labelling them as naïve hypocrites or extremists. The media it seems, is simply unable to comprehend the nature of the imminent threat that is facing the human race and in particular our children and grandchildren. I often wonder - do these editors and journalists ever listen to their children?

I have just finished reading a book by the American theologian Catherine Keller called a *Political Theology of the Earth - Our Planetary emergency and the Struggle for a New Public* (Columbia University Press, 2018). Much of book muses on the passage of time - what she calls the speedy-slow contraction of worldly time - with reference to what is happening to our glaciers. Here is an account of a recent visit with her family to the Glacier National Park in the US, when she realised, '... that the name will soon be a lament, an epitaph' (p.70). She continues, 'I hadn't paid much attention to US glaciers before. Now I learned that of the 150 glaciers that existed in the park in the late nineteenth century only 25 remained. Global warming is taking them out'. "The trend is consistent, there's no reversal," comments Daniel Fagre, research ecologist and director of the Climate Change in Mountain Ecosystems Project, who has been the U.S Geological Survey lead investigator for the Benchmark Glacier programme since 1991. All the glaciers will have died by 2030. "Outliving these glaciers is a little like outliving our children," Fagre says. "You pray it never happens. 'Glacial pace' doesn't mean what it used to." (p.70)

So with these thoughts weighing heavy in my mind, when Dilly asked me to do some reflections on a depiction of the crucifixion, I typed in the words 'eco-crucifixion' - because that is what it seems to me we are doing at this very moment - crucifying our planet. And this is one of the images that came up. It instantly drew my attention - as did the text that the artist RS Connett - supplied beneath it. It is called Crucifixion 001 and was intended as a study for a much larger series called EPITAPH concerning, Connett says, '...my trepidation and anger over the changes I have seen, and see coming, in our world'.

He continues, 'I need to express the horror I feel as I watch our planet become a garbage dump. I must express my disgust of those people who, in spite of power and money, choose to make this situation worse rather than better. I paint my dismay, as I watch our rights as citizens steadily erode in the name of 'safety'. I need to express my fear of looming destruction by war, weather, crime or disease. In the short time that I have lived, I have seen SO MANY beautiful natural things destroyed through foolishness, ignorance and avarice.

Life has already ended for thousands of species. The end of more living things than has occurred since the mass extinctions of the dinosaurs, 200 million years ago. These extinctions are ON OUR HANDS. In many cases, these are not extinctions, these are GENOCIDE'S! These paintings are my small attempt to make people think about what is happening. I'm not sure we can stop it.'

I wonder what you make of this picture? Does it succeed in getting you to think about what is happening? If so, why and how?