**Methodism with a future, if all cells begin to devise a plan to create something New!**

By Rod Mitchell

It is time for the ark of Old-time Christianity to look for a new place to land, seeking to create a redesigned foundation.

So where better to start than with a new Creation story? Yes, let us start at the very beginning! Bending our thoughts to this task and wanting it to be a collective project, we can do no better than turn to the most reliable and productive story that the best minds and finest scientists of our day have given humanity at this point in time.

In 1859 Darwin kicked off the evolutionary-drama model that has proven the most useful story of Creation’s beginning and unfolding to date. So much so that a modern, initially conservative Christian scholar like the Rev. Michael Dowd could write a book with the evocative title, *Thank God for Evolution*.

But Evolution science is dense and massively detailed, so maybe a simpler modern parable may be more manageable, intellectually and emotionally. In the book by Bruce Lipton called *Spontaneous Evolution*, he tells the following story:

“If you find it hard to imagine that we can ever get from the crises that we are facing now to a more loving and functional world, consider the tale of another transition. Imagine you are a single cell among the millions that comprise a growing caterpillar. The structure around you has been operating like a well- oiled machine, and the larva world has been creeping along predictably. Then one day the whole machine begins to shudder and shake. The system begins to fail. Cells start to commit suicide. There is a sense of total darkness and impending doom.

But from within the dying population of cells making up the body of the larva, a new breed of cells begins to emerge, called Imaginal cells. Clustering in community, they devise a plan to create something new from the wreckage. Out of the decay arises a great flying machine – a butterfly- that enables the survivor cells to escape from the ashes and experience a beautiful world, far beyond imagination. And here is the amazing thing: the caterpillar and the butterfly have exactly the same DNA. They are the same organism, but are receiving and responding to a different organizing signal.”

This is an excellent scientific story to use to begin to re-imagine the Christian Church with a future. Yes the Church needs to be a cocoon where the Christic Imaginal cells are able to operate, so that people’s ‘Old Self’ is transformed into a wonderful ‘New Self’(a superhuman being full of Christ-like abundance. (In his book *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, by Henri de Lubac, the author describes the characteristics of such a super human.)

Jesus in the tomb must have experienced the action of the God/Spirit Imaginal cells working mysteriously to transform him into a new human being. The Upper Room is another potential cocoon where Imaginal cells are activated, as is the last week leading up to Easter weekend. Jesus entering Jerusalem was like entering a cocoon; and later, outside Jerusalem, Jesus rose into a new quality of life – inviting his disciples to participate in being led by the Spirit to build a new humanity.

I believe this Imaginal-cell scientific story drama, can bring about a healthier and more enriching theology. It allows for a reworking of the wonderful but ancient Creation story, and also provides a necessary opportunity to get rid of the Sin and Punishment model as the platform for Salvation.

If God in our new Creation model acts as a creative source of the characteristics of our Imaginal cells in the universe, then transformation can be much more positive in character. Brokenness and mistakes can be seen as part of the natural unfolding of the universe. But not a universe in need of punishment. Instead the universe needs to evoke our wonder, appreciation, encouragement, creativity, and wisdom: all of these needing to be built into humanity’s own growth and development.

Now turn to look at Imaginal cells within a single individual. Martin Luther King’s speech, ‘I had a dream’, captures just this sense of his own Imaginal cells in operation. Colin Gibson’s new and inspirational hymns and music fall within the functioning of Imaginal cells in action. Therefore, we can ask do meditation and contemplative practices activate the Imaginal cells? Or are there other practices we need to learn about? What about some of the practice held by native spiritualties or held within other religious traditions?

So let me finally say that i believe that Imaginal cell development will give us a positive future and a way to get there from here – into a world full of colour as we take flight into the wonderful imaged future.