

Hi folks, this is the painting that I sent you and then hastily withdrew when I went back for a closer look. I have recomposed and repainted it and I am now happy that the painting represents accurately the image that I have in my head, inspired by the words in Colossians 1:17, 'He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.' The passage is part of a characteristically Pauline description of Jesus Christ.

From the start of my journey as a Christian artist I have felt comfortable representing the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove since the Holy Spirit appeared in that form at Jesus's baptism. In recent days I have thought and prayed extensively for the Holy Spirit to guide me in representing Jesus Christ. The outcome of this meditative prayer is that I am comfortable representing Jesus Christ incarnate, fully man and fully God, with the caveat that, like the representations of the Holy Spirit, the images are set in context to help us in our Christian journeys. I believe that the context is what protects us from the potential heresy of idolatry.

Verse 15 of Colossians 1 begins 'He is the image of the invisible God', referring, of course, to Jesus Christ. This has been very helpful in my ponderings since it has helped me to realise that the hand that I painted when I was 17, was the hand of Jesus Christ 'for in Him all things in heaven and on earth were created'.

In this morning's homegroup we were considering encounters with God with reference to Luke's writing, (excerpts from Luke 24, the Road to Emmaus, Acts 2 Pentecost, Acts 9 and 10, Saul/Paul, Ananias, Peter and Cornelius). I realised that, just as the disciples on the road to Emmaus were a very long time recognising Jesus, so too was I. Almost ten years before I came to faith, I painted that painting showing the creation of the universe, with life in the green spiral to the left (oil pastels and pencil on paper). I had painted a whole series of entirely abstract paintings using colour blending to prove to myself that my art teacher was wrong and that I was not 'useless'. I wanted to paint a picture that represented something. I thought about what to paint and this picture of a hand with the forming universe pouring out through its palm came into my head. The only thing I could do was paint it, and so I did.

I was persuaded to exhibit it in the local Church art exhibition. The vicar looked at it for a very long time, turned to me and said, 'It is a very odd painting for an atheist to paint.' He was right of course, but, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, I was on a journey with Jesus Christ, but He was not yet ready for me to recognise Him.