



A Sky Full of Children

Madeleine L'Engle

I walk out onto the deck of my cottage, looking up at the great river of the milky Way flowing across the sky. A sliver of a moon hangs in the southwest, with the evening star gently in the curve.

Evening. Evening of this day. Evening of my own life.

I look at the stars and wonder. How old is the universe? All kinds of estimates have been made and, as far as we can tell, not one is accurate. All we know is that once upon a time or, rather, once before time, Christ called everything into being in a great breath of creativity – waters, land, green growing things, birds and beasts, and finally human creatures – the beginning, the genesis, not in ordinary Earth days; the Bible makes it quite clear that God's time is different from our time. A thousand years for us is no more than the blink of an eye to God. But in God's good time the universe came into being, opening up from a tiny flower of nothingness to great clouds of hydrogen gas to swirling galaxies. In God's good time came solar systems and planets and ultimately this planet on which I stand on this autumn evening as the Earth makes its graceful dance around the sun. It takes one Earth day, one Earth night, to make a full turn, part of the intricate pattern of the universe. And God called it good, very good.

A sky full of God's children! Each galaxy, each star, each living creature, every particle and subatomic particle of creation, we are all children of the Maker. From a subatomic

particle with a life span of a few seconds, to a galaxy with a life span of billions of years, to us human creatures somewhere in the middle in size and age, we are made in God's image, male and female, and we are, as Christ promised us, God's children by adoption and grace.

Children of God, made in God's image. How? Genesis gives no explanations, but we do know instinctively that it is not a physical image. God's explanation is to send Jesus, the incarnate One, God enfleshed. Don't try to explain the Incarnation to me! It is further from being explainable than the furthest star in the furthest galaxy. It is love, God's limitless love enfleshing that love into the form of a human being, Jesus, the Christ, fully human and fully divine.

Was there a moment, known only to God, when all the stars held their breath, when the galaxies paused in their dance for a fraction of a second, and the Word, who had called it all into being, went with all his love into the womb of a young girl, and the universe started to breathe again, and the ancient harmonies resumed their song, and the angels clapped their hands for joy?

Power. Greater power than we can imagine, abandoned, as the Word knew the powerlessness of the unborn child, still unformed, taking up almost no space in the great ocean of amniotic fluid, unseeing, unhearing, unknowing, slowly growing, as any human embryo grows, arms and legs and a head, eyes, mouth, nose, slowly swimming into life until the ocean in the womb is no longer large enough, and it is time for birth.

Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ, the Maker of the universe, or perhaps many universes, willingly and lovingly leaving all that power and coming to this poor, sin-filled planet to live with us for a few years to show us what we ought to be and could be. Christ came to us as Jesus of Nazareth, wholly human and wholly divine, to show us what it means to be made in God's image.

Jesus, as Paul reminds us, was the firstborn of many brethren.

I stand on the deck of my cottage, looking at the sky full of God's children and know that I am one of them.