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Decay, Change and Renewal

My computer is now a few years old and I found it was getting slower and slower. While it was starting up, I could do more than make a cup of coffee - I could prepare a three course meal. I mentioned it to someone who knows about these things. 'Have you tried Linux?' he asked. Suppressing the suspicion that Linux might be a prescription drug for older clergy, I shook my head. Now, a month later, I have indeed tried Linux. And very good it is too. My old computer has a new lease of life; it starts quickly, it responds well to every mouse click - and it hasn't cost me a penny. Linux, I have learnt, is an alternative operating system for computers, alternative, that is, to proprietary brands like Windows XP or Vista. Designed by computer enthusiasts, it is 'open source', and is regularly improved by its users, and available free. It doesn't clutter up the computer's memory with unnecessary frills, and for users like me it is as near perfect as you can get. My computer marches on into a bright new future and has escaped the recycling centre for a good few years yet.

If that person hadn't suggested Linux I would almost certainly have bought a gleaming new machine. A different take on my problem of having an older machine provided me with a surprising answer. In the process, the problem has gone. It strikes me that religion too has that same ability to tweak and challenge our perceptions of what we need. Dissatisfaction can clutter up life to the extent that we may feel trapped by our situation and unable to function properly. And then someone comes along and asks whether we've tried looking at things from a different angle. When we do, life can take on an extraordinary new character. John has a visionary glimpse of God's throne in the Bible (Revelation 21.5) in which he hears God say: 'Behold, I make all things new.' That newness of life, that sheer unexpectedness of opportunity which life can afford is something which experiences of worship can capture.

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