



Image by [April Price](#) from and licensed by [Pixabay](#)- a gulf fritillary caterpillar



The imago emerges. Image by [GLady](#) from and licensed by [Pixabay](#)

“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.”¹

As many of you know, I love butterflies - and moths, too for that matter ² - and know a fair bit about the former.

I am fascinated by Lepidoptera, and in particular their process of metamorphosis, which has engaged human attention for centuries. Two millennia ago, the Latin poet Ovid ³ chose the word and its attendant stories for one of his great works, retelling ancient Greek myths and focusing upon humans who attracted the malign and benign attention of gods and got turned into non-human forms as blessings or punishments for various transgressions. Narcissus was one such.

“Bullfrogs and butterflies
We've both been born again”⁴

There's always more to learn and much we don't know. Some butterflies appear able to gain energy from the sun as if they have tiny solar panels in their scales. Some can hibernate. Many mysteries are hidden both in their tiny bodies and in their amazing - and perilous - life cycles.

As yet, no one can explain the sensory apparatus that is packed inside a butterfly's antennae.

Then there are the wondrous changes they undergo. The process of metamorphosis takes these small insects from caterpillar to pupa to imago (its adult form). And even where such matters can be explained in technical terms, it is still a wonder.

It's easy to admire a beautiful day-flying insect, but not so easy to gasp with delight at its often-ugly younger forms. Consider the above images!

What do caterpillars do? Answer- they feed. They are eating machines, chomping away all day in order to bulk up and fuel their changes, as they grow and cast away skin, again and again.

Many gardeners loathe them for their depredations. But beware! Not all caterpillars are the early stages of butterflies- many are sawflies and the infant forms of other insects.

My analogy is this - we are spiritual caterpillars.

The scriptures say we are being changed from glory into glory ⁵... so we are in fact already magnificent, even when we cannot perceive it.

Because ... we are created in the divine image.⁶ Because... our devotions lead us on.

Because...in Him we live and move and have our being. ⁷ We are participants in divinity.

Because...we will indeed mature into an imago- via a metaphysical metamorphosis - into something unimagined and unimaginable.

Consider the puzzles posed by Christ Jesus' post- resurrection appearances.

See how St. Paul gropes for images to illustrate the next stage of our existence in 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

C.S. Lewis has imagined this about our imago stage: - ⁸

"About the resurrection of the body... I have only speculations to offer.

The principle behind these speculations is this. We are not, in this doctrine, concerned with matter as such at all: with waves and atoms and all that. What the soul cries out for is the resurrection of the senses. Even in this life, matter would be nothing to us if it were not the source of sensations.

We already have some feeble and intermittent power of raising dead sensations from their graves. I mean, of course, memory.

You see the way my thought is moving. But don't run away with the idea that when I speak of the resurrection of the body I mean merely that the blessed dead we'll have excellent memories of their sensuous experiences on earth. I mean it the other way round: that memory as we now know it is a dim foretaste, a mirage even, of a power which the soul, or rather Christ in the soul ('He went to prepare a place for us'⁹) will exercise hereafter. It need no longer be intermittent.

Above all, it need no longer be private to the soul in which it occurs. I can now communicate to you the vanished fields of my boyhood - they are building- estates today - only imperfectly by words. Perhaps the day is coming when I can take you for a walk through them.

At present we tend to think of the soul as somehow "outside" the body. But the glorified body of the resurrection, as I conceive it - the sensuous life raised from its death- will be inside the soul. Recognise that God is not in space but space is in God.

I have slipped in 'glorified' almost unawares. But this glorification is not only promised, it is already foreshadowed. The dullest of us knows how memory can transfigure - how often some momentary glimpse of beauty in childhood is

*'a whisper
which memory will warehouse as a shout.'*



Don't talk to me of the 'illusions' of memory! Why should our present vision be more 'real' than what we see from ten years' distance? It is indeed an illusion to believe that the blue hills on the horizon would still look blue if you went to them. But the fact that they are blue from five miles away; and the fact that they are green when you are on them, are equally good facts... [some scenery] may not have been so radiant in the past when it was *then* present, as in the remembered past. That is the beginning of the glorification. One day they will be more radiant still. The bodies of the redeemed of the whole New Earth will arise- the same yet not the same as this. The body was sown in corruption - marvellously, it is raised in incorruption."



Silver-washed fritillary on hemp, Eartham Woods, 3-8-2020, Image by David Cooke

"... Matter enters our experience only by becoming sensation (when we perceive it) or by conception (when we understand it). That is, by becoming soul. That... soul ...will... be raised and glorified; the hills and valleys of Heaven will be to those you now experience not as a copy is to an original, nor as a substitute for the genuine article, but as the flower to the root, or the diamond to the coal.¹⁰ It will be eternally true that they originate with matter; let us therefore bless matter.¹¹ But in entering our soul as alone it can enter - that is, by being perceived and known - matter has turned into soul.

I don't say the resurrection of this body will happen at once. It may well be that this part of us sleeps in death and the intellectual soul is sent to Lenten lands where she fasts in naked spirituality...

Then the new earth and sky, the same yet not the same as these, will rise in us, just as we have risen in Christ. And once again, after who knows what aeons of silence and the dark, the birds will sing out and waters flow, and lights and shadows moved across the hills, and the faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition.

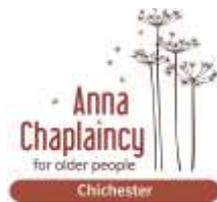
Guesses, of course, only guesses. If they are not true, something better will be. For 'we know that we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'"¹²

Dearly beloved, let us not fear these changes, because even as we change, we are already beautiful, because love is in the eye of the beholder, and we are beheld by the Greatest Lover of them all, Christ Jesus.

In our cocoons we often perceive little, and darkness can press us and oppress us. But let us take courage! The turmoil and travails of pupation is nothing to the glory of the imago, and even as we pupate, God's loving gaze holds us, and His grace works our metamorphosis.¹³

Love and blessings, David

Chichester Anna Chaplaincy



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¹ Angelou, M. (2014) *Rainbow in the Cloud: The Wit and Wisdom of Maya Angelou*. London, UK. Virago: 97

² We have 59 species of butterfly in the UK, and approximately 2,500 moths, of which some 400 are day flyers

³ Publius Ovidius Naso (circa 43BC - AD 18) *Metamorphoses*.

⁴ Children's song lyric by Barry McGuire, Agapeland Music, 1978

⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:18

⁶ Genesis 1: 27

⁷ Acts 17:28

⁸ Lewis, C.S. (1964). *Letters to Malcolm, chiefly on Prayer*. London UK. HarperCollins: 162-166, edited by me.

⁹ John 14:3

¹⁰ Lewis beautifully illustrates this idea in the final novel of his Narnia series, 'The Last Battle' where he depicts the ending that is not an ending of Narnia. See Lewis, C.S. (1956) *The Last Battle*. London, UK. Bodley Head

¹¹ For a detailed consideration of the divine nature of matter, and the concomitant divinization of the cosmos, see *Le Milieu Divin* by Teilhard de Chardin, (1960) London UK, Collins

¹² 1 John 3: 2

¹³ Genesis 16:13

