

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF JESUS.

CHAPTER 18.

So having advanced the hypothesis that we have left the purely mechanical aspect of Evolution far behind, like bows and arrows in warfare, and that Evolution is now transferred entirely to the mental and spiritual worlds so far as Man is concerned, let us revert to the mind of Jesus, to see what he had to contribute. Or rather what the modern mind would see it could contribute, when looking through his eyes.

But first let us try to look for a moment through Jesus' own eyes; but expressing it in the first person. Being a carpenter in Nazareth, I would not have read Herodotus; but I might conceivably have realized that the world was waiting for a world religion, although my idea of history would have been limited to Samuel, Kings, Chronicles. It would have been pretty parochial. I would have seen that I must displace the authority of the Scribes and Pharisees, both by saying, "... but I say unto you..", and also by mighty acts of power which were beyond anything they could do. But I would not have discredited the religion they professed; I would have accepted that. In other words, I would have accepted the world in which they lived; and used such power as I had only to do good. How much I had, only experience would show. I would have wanted to discredit them; but I would have realized that my acts of power would only discredit them, if I could honestly say that they could have done all that I had done, if they had had the Divine authority. I would have wanted to meet them on equal terms. The battle-ground I would have chosen would simply have been, "Who has the Divine Writ?"

Any unnecessary display of power would show me up as a magician, and would do my cause no good at all. So I would have avoided it. Besides, no prophet dare be egotistical; quite apart from Divine disapproval, egotism destroys one's sense of strategy. Certainly my followers, if I had any, could not have carried on from where I left off, if I had indulged in egotism; which was one of the promises in the Last Discourses. I would have wanted them to be able to do all I was able to do, and greater things still when society had made away with me. Only by claiming to be filled with God's spirit, and by telling my disciples that they could be similarly filled, could I claim to be the Messiah fulfilling the law and the prophets, and carrying things a stage further. So I would not have sought to free the slaves, nor to undermine Roman power by refusing to pay taxes and threatening fire from heaven if there were any reprisals; I would not have sought to change society, only the way people behaved in the society which we all accepted. To attempt more was beyond me.

But what would I do if people refused to listen; or listened attentively, but without any intention of doing more than listen? The obvious alternatives would be either to back down,

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF JESUS.

or raise the stakes. The Gospels say Jesus raised the stakes. If the raising of Lazarus has any truth in it, from then on it was a fight to the death. I am not sure what I would have done. Emmerich de Vatel would not have approved of a refusal to make any compromise.

If Jesus worked all this out when he was tempted in the desert, and I suspect he did, his Ministry would have to be pretty parochial; and so it was. He considered his mission was to the lost tribes of the House of Israel. He never deliberately preached to the gentiles. He was steeped in what we call the Old Testament; and if he had tried to preach to the gentiles, he would have had almost nothing to say which they could have understood. So wisely, he did not. Nor did he try to persuade his followers that he was a god. On one occasion when he was accused of making himself out to be the equal of God, he quoted the psalms as saying, "Ye are gods"; in other words there was no difference between him and them. But the crucial reason why he did not, and could not, explain that he was a superior species of being to his disciples was that they could never have followed him, if he had done so. They could only have admired him. He would have prevented them from carrying on from where he left off. He would have ruined the entire purpose of his Ministry.

We must now translate ourselves to the present day; and leave behind the parochial circumstances in which Jesus preached. I still have not read Herodotus; but I have a moderate grasp of the 2000 years of history since the temptations in the wilderness. And it would be quite absurd for me to pretend I was a Bedouin, and very foolish to turn my back on such modern knowledge as I have. Today, you could say the world is crying out for any credible religion; just as in Jesus' day it was crying out for a world religion. But today, there isn't the remotest prospect of starting a new religion; the inauguration of the "Religion of Reason" in the aftermath of the French Revolution was a complete farce, and lasted no time at all. So I would conclude that today we have to be satisfied with the religions which we have got, and make do with them. Jesus reached the same conclusion; he modified Judaism. I know of course that the early Church failed to develop a political philosophy, and has never developed one; instead it became obsessed with doctrine. So Islam was able to fill a practical and emotional vacuum, and propagate a religion, which was very much concerned with how the state functioned. Nevertheless I too would want my modification to be "other worldly", though in a sense more in keeping with modern knowledge, and modern needs.

I would want to carry the modification of Man's Evolution a great deal further than anyone had taken it so far. Of course I would have welcomed Teilhard de Chardin's view that Evolution was like a river, flowing round or over obstacles, rather than being a preconceived plan. Yet I would assume that the Creator was probably a participant in this process, though

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF JESUS.

in an unobtrusive and undemonstrative way. On rare occasions He acts dramatically and chaotically, as at the resurrection; but not every day of the week. So I too would want to be undemonstrative; the days of mighty signs from heaven have gone. No more Mount Carmels! No more raisings of Lazarus. I would stick to what I knew about, which was the human mind.

I would reject the idea that the future lay with computers and thinking machines; computers are machines that do arithmetic rather quickly, and certain things they do admittedly much better than we can. On the whole though, they are but pale imitations of the human brain; and not imitations at all of the human mind. So I would set out to create an indwelling between someone else's mind and mine. In this indwelling there would be a "clear beholding", to use John Ruesbroke's language. No deceit, no manipulation, no bargaining, and a willingness to disagree with courtesy. There would be no barriers; each could see into the other's soul, by the simple expedient of the thoughts of each taking place in the mind of the other. At whatever distance, and in whatever circumstances. I would not encourage them to shout, "Jesus is King!" More likely to agree that the Rule of Law was one of the greatest creations of the civilized mind; and if the historical Jesus were to say, "But my Sermon on the Mount contradicts this!" to reply politely but firmly, "Much has happened in the last 2000 years, and we prefer our opinion to yours". However I do not think he would say this. The historical Jesus was ever a realist; and I feel sure he would accept that times have changed.

This would be the blueprint. And if experience showed that this companionship was a more successful arrangement than conventional friendship, then there would be nothing to stop it replicating itself in others, in endless glorious variety. Not the same monotonous replication that you get in microbiology. From time to time, things would go wrong; they always do. But if experience showed that this blueprint was also very much more successful in running the administration of society, than the average give-and-take of civilian life, there would be no reason why it should not replicate extraordinarily fast, and take over. And in no time at all (in evolutionary terms) you would have created a new heaven and a new earth; and the old heaven and the old earth would have passed away. When this stage was reached, they might all want to shout, "Jesus is King"; but for myself I would prefer not to! All this fanciful mental and spiritual structure has as its foundation the assumption or belief that it was both possible and sensible to reconcile symbolically England and Germany after the War.

But a word of caution. There remains the problem of evil; and Emily Bronte in her novel, *Wuthering Heights*, gives a warning of what might happen if two people attempted such an intimacy without God. She said clearly they would destroy themselves. I think she was right. I didn't make that mistake. I may have made many others; but I did not make that

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF JESUS.

one. This is my chief objection to theories of human behaviour, which are mechanical in orientation; they bypass the problem of evil, and I suspect bypass it deliberately to avoid dealing with it. But you do not spend your professional life in the Law Courts, without recognizing that the problem exists; you meet it every day in Court, in the manipulation of the lists for personal advantage, in misrepresenting the evidence in cross-examination, in speeches that ignore the evidence that has been given, in summings-up that defy the guidelines of the Judicial Studies Board, the list is endless. Evil ignored does not go away.

I have been defeated by evil many times; but I do not think I have ever ignored it, not for long anyway. So I cannot take seriously expositions of human conduct that do ignore it. And I ask myself when I read one, whether I am expected to become so naïve as to ignore it myself, or whether the purpose is rather to create a climate of public opinion which denies there is any cohesion or brotherhood in society. To create a climate of opinion which suggests a community in which we are all just individuals, with no comradeship, no pity, no generosity to strangers, and above all no forgiveness towards enemies. Or is it more charitable to think it is like Marshall Foch, a rational military man obsessed with an irrational military idea?

I have been considering, in a superficial way, some of the problems inherent in modifying a religion. This has been a somewhat artificial enquiry, because to appreciate that Jesus will not have read Herodotus, nor learned what we should understand by a sense of history, is not even to begin to appreciate the problems he had to face. Even if one is widely read, it is almost impossible for us today to imagine what life was like for ordinary people in those days. Of course he did not want to be arrested for subversion, by challenging Roman rule; his vocation was to show us the Father, that is reveal the type of relationship he believed he had with God, and try to convince us that we could share in it too. To have been arrested for subversion would have ruined everything. So he exhorted his listeners to turn the other cheek, walk the second mile, render to Caesar what belonged to Caesar etc. To use these sayings as a blueprint for life in a democracy today, with freedom of speech, freedom of movement, modest economic independence, is not only absurd, it lacks all intelligence. When I see him, in my imagination, listening to his so-called followers preaching that we should turn the other cheek to terror, and allow all the social advantages we have won over hundreds of years to be extinguished, and what is more do it in his name, I see him tearing his hair in frustration and anger. How dare they invoke his name as an excuse for conduct which is not only crassly stupid, but despicably cowardly as well. He was never a coward; and it is very unlikely he would ever approve of cowardly behaviour.

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF JESUS.

So what would his plan be today? Or what was my plan, which I dared to think he would approve? In any situation, it is generally best to start from the tradition of the culture in which one has been brought up, because it is unlikely that one will think of a good plan all by oneself, from scratch. Better to lean on the wisdom of one's forebears, and adapt whatever appealed to them. Now in Western culture, there has been a fairly consistent tradition of thinking that the human soul was fitted for immortality of a kind, either literally or metaphorically, either in this world or in the next. The Jehovah's Witnesses are insistent that the idea of the immortality of the soul is Greek in origin; and it is correct that it does not feature in the Old Testament, and not much in the New. In the New Testament the idea is rather that the soul dies, and either then or later is resurrected. But parallel with this has been the tradition of thinking that Adam was the perfect man, who would have lived for ever, had he not eaten the apple and fallen from grace. Even in 1940, Mr. C.S.Lewis in his remarkably popular book, *The Problem of Pain*, was prepared to postulate that when Man was created, either in the Neanderthals or some other species, for a brief moment he too was in a state of perfection, until he too fell from grace. And this, despite the literal truth of the Adam and Eve story having been banished for most of us to the realm of allegory nearly a century before, by the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. Mr. Lewis does this to make the entirely valid point that Man in harmony with his Creator, assuming that there is a Creator, is an entirely different species from man in disharmony with his Creator. The Fall was, and is, catastrophic; not a technical mistake or aberration. It is tantamount to a change of species. It is however deeply written into the human psyche of the Western world to think that immortality in the flesh is possible sometime, somewhere.

So this was the obvious starting point; to modify the old doctrine that a second Adam had come and saved us from the catastrophic harm the first Adam had inflicted on us, so that it was more in keeping with Evolution. Well, I hedged my bets, and sought an indwelling with another, within the envelope of the Divine indwelling, as I have said a number of times; and if a literal immortality came along, well and good; if it did not, too bad! Maybe I fudged the challenge of a lifetime; but I do not think so. I think I got it right; had I attempted more I would have over-reached myself, and of that only I am judge. And many people would say, I over-reached myself even as it was. But anyone who takes the trouble to read "Man's Relationship with God", will find on page 222 this plan modified to embrace mankind, rather than another individual. But it is naturally the same plan. Let us now consider what plan the biologists of cumulative genetic selection have got for the future of our species? How do they propose to save us from an Evolutionary cul-de-sac? As far as I know, no plan. Bankrupt!

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF JESUS.

The only criticism I have of Mr. C.S.Lewis is that he mistook hope for the future for historical fact. I agree with Dr. Johnson the idealized savage has never existed. But I agree with Mr. Lewis entirely that the harmonious union of God with Man might well dramatically change the bio-chemistry and physiology of man's body, and his potential length of life; no-one can know before it happens. Similarly if a man and a woman ever became truly one, they would cease to be able to distinguish between their own desires, and the others' desires. Indeed their joy would be that it did not matter whose desires they were. There would be no distinction between self and other; just as there probably was none with primitive tribal man.

You find the same idea among the Jehovah's Witnesses too. They say they believe literally in the story of Adam and Eve; but they also look forward to a paradise on this earth during the 1000 year Rule of Christ. Well, if this is not just imagination, they must believe that faith will affect the inner workings of the body too, as I have indicated. In one of Teilhard de Chardin's books, there is a footnote suggesting that although man was created from pre-man, only one man and one woman were created; so it was metaphorically Adam and Eve! Well, I'm sceptical. But the only point I seek to make is that it is deeply written into the human psyche to think that immortality in the flesh is possible sometime, somewhere.

To sum up: if you are an immortal person, you can only **be immortal**. You cannot think about it, because there is no insight into immortality, if it exists outside space and time. All thoughts about immortality are the flawed thoughts of mortals. Yet I believe Professor Whitehead was right: we are all immortal as well as mortal; they are aspects of the life we lead. And my perfectly relaxed consciousness is a glimpse into this reality. And I suspect if you are steeped in immortality, you do not want to be anything else, even if it involves your being crucified.