

WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE COSMOS.

CHAPTER 5.

Before speculating on how the Creator might view his own creation, let us consider how man looks at creation. Science today has swept the board, both in the discipline of its thought, and in the mechanical devices which fill our lives. In thought, it has recovered the cosmic attitude, which Christendom has not had since the Middle Ages. In comparison with this, the parochial attitudes of past generations are not worth bothering with, except as part of our general education; empire, glory, and the rest. Science is not the whole truth; but this priceless service to mankind, of recovering a cosmic attitude, is not to be lightly thrown away. Let us then look at the cosmos through the eyes of science.

Science today views the cosmos as a whole, and does so in two principal ways; through the astronomical world of seemingly infinite distances, and the evolutionary world of seemingly infinite time. Pascal was only aware of the contrast between the incredibly large distances in the heavens and the incredibly small distances of ultimate particles; and the contrast terrified him in its immensity. Chemistry had hardly begun in his day; but the debate whether matter consisted of atoms, or was infinitely divisible, had been going on for a long time. But now zoology and palaeontology between them have discovered the abyss of time; that is to say how incredibly slowly the evolutionary forces of geology, of biology, of even the development of mammals, work. These changes have occupied at least hundreds of millions of years, in contrast to the idea prevailing in Pascal's day that it was a matter of thousands of years only.

A generation passed, and Newton brought reason and order to the movements of the heavenly bodies, in what is sometimes said to be the greatest act of scientific inspiration ever made. Newton regarded space and time as absolutes, and considered the laws of motion governing bodies of significant mass in the space-time continuum. The velocity of light was not known accurately; and it must have seemed sensible in the solar system to think in terms of simultaneous events. He then applied his laws of motion to the paths of planets discovered by Copernicus, and the geometrical laws of those paths as revealed by Kepler, and produced his theory of gravity. He produced order, out of seeming chaos; although he himself had considerable doubts about force acting at a distance. But now that both the velocity of light and the huge galactic distances are known, it is meaningless to talk of simultaneous events in this context. When you have to admit that two events may appear in the order A-B to an observer on one side of them, and in the order B-A to an observer on the other side, because on an astronomical scale light takes years to travel, it is prudent to abandon absolute time.

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And with the discovery that the velocity of light is the same, whatever the source is doing and whatever the observer is doing, and that there is no means of discovering whether the furthest galaxy is leaving us with a velocity approaching that of light, or whether we are leaving it, it is prudent to abandon absolute space too. So Newton's hypothesis needed modification, even though it is still good enough to get men onto the moon. All of which leads, as Einstein has taught us, to a unified view of the whole of creation that is within our potential knowledge, and to a field theory of electro-magnetism and gravity, as opposed to Newton's force theory. Besides absolute space and time depend on man thinking he is a detached observer of the Universe; and he isn't. He is part of it.

More recently evolution has greatly modified our thoughts. Whether Darwin was right about the mechanism of evolution, and I would have thought it probable he was wrong at least in his emphasis, he was absolutely right that the entire created world has evolved from the incredible abyss of the past, and will continue to evolve into the future, so long as we allow it to continue. We are all immeshed in its structure, whether we like it or not. And it is hardly a coincidence that devotion to duty whatever the cost has been taught in many societies, for many centuries. It was a recognition that a man or woman only had significance insofar as they tried to play their effective part in society. My Theory of Consciousness only takes place in the world of relationships; it is meaningless apart from this. And this world of relationships is part of the mesh of creation as a whole. A life which is not woven into the tapestry of society is almost a wasted life.

Teilhard de Chardin in his "Vision of the Past" says much the same thing, but he develops the theme. When you study the morphology of living creatures back into the past, he says, you not only find that the past is an incredibly long time ago, you find that evolution itself is being swept along by a current in which it is continually changing. Not only is the abyss of time as fearsome as the contrast between the large distances of astronomy and the small distances of atomic particles, but evolution is not like a set preconceived plan; rather it is like a river with eddies near the banks, always changing and totally unpredictable, except that it seems always to head for ever greater and greater consciousness. If the grand plan of the Nature changes with every occasion on which it is thwarted, so as to remain completely adaptable, there is not going to be any permanence in subsidiary matters either. Of course Nature's plan for inorganic chemistry is not going to change, at least not noticeably; but in the mental or spiritual world of our everyday life, which is part and parcel of the same world, the change is noticeable enough when someone of public significance fails to do what is manifestly their duty to do. So my view is there is no permanence either in substance or in

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thought. Goethe was right; theology is the creation of intelligent men for the benefit of their contemporaries. It therefore evolves like everything else, and no form of thought is immortal. In other words, Einstein's postulate that in the world of space/time no one frame of reference is better, or worse, than any other, does indeed dispose of any permanence of thought.

Not only does a study of the past suggest that evolution is like a river, forever changing as it makes its way through time, until at last it triumphantly ends in consciousness; but he also says in his *Vision of the Past*, that once consciousness appears, it takes over the development of evolution. Unlike all animal species which become mutually infertile once they have specialized enough, man continues to be able to breed with all other men. The ability to communicate, either in words or in other ways, seems to preclude the division of mankind into separate species. So not only do thought and will have an ability to get the muscles into action, permeating the whole being and extending apparently to the ends of one's fingers and toes, as anyone with any physical skill knows; but thought and will seem to be able to influence mankind on a global scale as well, moulding the development of his evolution. If this is so, then it is forlorn to try to expel the world of the spirit from the teaching of biology; because thought and will, which greatly depend on belief and faith, are apparently ultimately supreme in the biosphere. He went further, and suggested that evolution, as controlled by thought and will, was heading for a point of convergence, in other words was heading for a goal, as opposed to being on an endless journey.

Teilhard de Chardin, being a Jesuit and a Christian, saw this point as Christ, because this is what the New Testament and St. Paul's Epistles in particular prophesy. But suppose we leave the gods out of it, what could this point of convergence be? My view was that it would be immortality of a kind; with a remote chance of literal immortality, and a much greater probability of metaphorical immortality. Anyone who reads my book "Man's Relationship with God" will see this opinion writ large in almost every chapter. And on page 327, I state categorically that, "My choice was to think that the interpenetration of two minds might so enormously increase the imagination of both, that I was justified in choosing this as the next step forward". I was saying that, in my opinion, the interpenetration of two minds was the next step towards the final consummation of this convergence. I had no idea what the subsequent steps were; and still have none; but at least this idea indirectly provided the inspiration to master my profession, and one often has to settle for less than perfection. Anyway at the end of the day when something actually works, and enables you to earn money and earn a living, naturally one tends to think there is something in it. So my unhesitating opinion is that the next step in the evolution of mankind is the translation of this

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interpenetration of two minds from the world of strict military discipline, where its virtue has been recognised for long enough, into the civilian world of equally strict self-discipline. And I see nothing wrong in calling the ease and grace of the mutual understanding that should follow “metaphorical immortality”. It is still man’s point of view; and I may be wrong. So now let us look at the cosmos from a different point of view.

Suppose our speculation that there might be a Creator is correct, what would His view of the cosmos be? How would He view his own creation, and in particular its beginning and its end? My answers of course are speculative; I would not claim for one moment to have any inside knowledge. But these questions were the concern of the Old Testament prophets too; and they all knew that the Rule for prophets was that they must prophesy truthfully. The moment they falsified their prophesy, and indulged either in egotism or in soothing words, which would please those listening to them, the penalty was death. However parochial some of their prophecies were, they spoke the truth as they saw it. Yet they had no hesitation in putting words into the mouth of God. At the beginning of Chapter 35 of my book, “Man’s Relationship with God”, I express the view that the solution to the apparent irreconcilability of the temporal and the eternal is to look at things through the eyes of a creator. So imitating the prophets’ boldness, what does speculation reasonably impute to the Creator.

The Creator would have a purpose in mind, when he began his creation. When you consider the extent of the Universe, when you consider the complexity of it, when you consider the time it has taken this Universe to mature, nobody would have created it without some clear purpose in mind. One does not take all that trouble, simply to indulge in a hobby. Nor does one create something so vast, inhabited by stars some of which have terrifyingly high temperatures, and others terrifyingly high densities, unless one intends to impress somebody. Particularly one would want to impress any little creatures who were inquisitive enough to seek out knowledge. So the odds are, He would want his Universe to evolve into consciousness; that is to say He would want little creatures to appear who were able to reflect, not only that they knew certain things, but also that they knew that they knew. And he would want to ensure that the more these little creatures knew, the more they would be impressed. He would create a Universe so unbelievably complicated, that the deeper man delved, the more it was obviously beyond the human mind to grasp. It might be possible to sketch some of its harmony mathematically; but the moment man thought he had more or less got the measure of it, new worlds would unfold more complicated than ever.

He would of course also have an end in sight. This would entail his keeping the strings of power ultimately in his own hands; so that if the whole of mankind rebelled, they

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would ultimately be compelled to submit to his omnipotent power, and consent to be put to death. It would be heart-breaking for him if the whole experiment of creation were to fail; but at the same time it would be unthinkable to allow a successful rebellion. He might allow man to think his rebellion was successful for a time; but it would be essential that this was complete illusion. There must be a Day of Judgement.

So the moment the human mind condescends to think there might be a Creator, a Day of Judgement becomes a racing certainty. It may be we shall all be saved; if so, and looking round at how appalling some people are, a healthy spell in purgatory would seem a likely fate for most of us. Or it may be only a few will get through the wicket-gate, and the great majority go down the smooth wide road to perdition. The Divine Justice is likely to have some features in common with the human idea of Justice; but at the same time be dramatically different. So perhaps the safest conclusion, because the subject is so nebulous, is that the first may be last, and the last first.

But what is, or could be, the point of it all? It is difficult to believe the Creator would want to condemn His creatures; He must want them somehow to make the grade. Most judges express a distaste for sending their fellow men to prison; so much so, that a few fail to do so when it is obviously necessary. Sometimes one gets a fleeting impression that a few judges actually enjoy doing it, especially when it amounts to pulling down someone who has been in authority. But a Creator would hardly enjoy condemning his creation, unless he were a sadist; and the world is so beautiful, and its construction so infinitely delicate, that if it was created it was not by a sadist. Indeed the prophet Isaiah puts into the mouth of Jehovah the words, "What more could I have done for my people?" And I am inclined to agree that the created world, as opposed to the desecrated world, is a much better place than any of us deserves. So what is the point of it all?

Let us go back to the Old Testament prophets and to Moses, who is said to have known God "face to face". In modern jargon that means he had a astonishing grasp of the realities of the spiritual world, at least as compared with his contemporaries. And since most people today have no grasp of it at all, except in the army; we may safely conclude Moses was a giant, whereas we are pigmies. And his view was that the first essential was to love God, with all the heart, the soul, the strength; and this together with all his other commandments must be kept in men's hearts. There must be nothing half-hearted about it. Now no-one wins that sort of love, without giving quite a lot in return. Christians think He gave his own Son to get it; and it is by no means inconceivable. I would not presume to speculate what purpose Muslims attribute to Allah; perhaps even asking the question is

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forbidden. But you do not get anyone's love, without asking for it, albeit silently. And unless the suicide bombers ply their trade for love of Allah, then they are not martyrs; but they are what most people think they are – murderous thugs.

From the Creator's perspective, the only people in danger of condemnation are those who do not consider that they have a vocation, because they are the only people who have no intention of throwing themselves into any activity with any enthusiasm. If you have no love of life, you can hardly expect to find much favour with the Creator, who took so much trouble to create your life. But as Bach explains in his Cantata "Mache dich, mein geist, bereit", this condemnation simply means being overtaken by the sleep of eternal death: extinction. Putting it another way, if a man has no interest in living immortally in this world, he is unlikely to find immortality in the next, if the next world exists. But in the diminishing Christian world of here and now, it is at worst a misfortune if an atheist or agnostic consider themselves to be without a vocation; because life may then seem to lack a sense of direction or purpose. But a Christian who does not have a vocation might legitimately fear he was in greater peril, because he has the means ready to hand to find out what his vocation is. The standard Christian belief, right or wrong, is that God has some purpose for each one of us in his scheme of things; and if so, then it is one of the first duties of any Christian to find out, or at least to try to find out, what that vocation is. And the converse of course is that a Christian who has a vocation, who refuses to use it to advance the kingdom of heaven, and the Christian who prefers to follow convention rather than find out if he has a vocation, are both actually obstructions. And in a less merciful world they might legitimately fear they would have to be removed; very much as the dinosaurs had to be removed before Man could safely appear, and replace them.

But again the standard Christian belief, right or wrong, is that God does not condemn a man, or woman, who declines to do what he knows or believes is His will; He accomplishes His purposes in other ways. This is an antique and limited way of saying, that when someone puts number-one first, and fails to see himself or herself as enmeshed in the fabric of society, if not ultimately in the fabric of all creation, an heir of the past and a guardian of the future, the plan of creation in the universe will have to change if he or she fails or refuses to do his or her duty. Now if God changes his plan every time someone refuses or neglects to do his or her duty, this is exactly what you would expect by studying the nature of evolution. Indeed it is the same with us in our human affairs. The elder von Moltke remarked that no plan of operations can look with certainty beyond the first serious contact with the enemy; after that subordinate commanders must be allowed to act on their own initiative. Similarly, a planned

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cross-examination seldom survives the first significant answer; but detailed planning allows you to improvise, whereas without planning you would not be able to do so. So, even judging Him by our standards, it would be absurd not to credit the Almighty, if He exists, with a willingness to adapt to every changing circumstance, and every occasion on which He is thwarted by man's disobedience. Were it otherwise, you could put the clock back; and you never can. His conduct and the changing nature of evolution seem to be remarkably similar, if not identical. It may be speculation whether God does, or does not, exist. But it is beginning to look like a speculation to which any sensible man can comfortably subscribe.

Viewing creation in this perspective, one might be tempted to think the myths and superstition that embraced religion in the past could be safely left behind. But there is a need for caution; it is true that action in the world of affairs demands confidence above all, but at the same time there is hardly any graver sin than for a man to believe himself virtuous. The Jacobins of the Terror and the September Massacres thought themselves virtuous; and no-one wants to imitate them. At least not unless he has in mind to tread the same path as they did. As Cromwell said to the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk, "I beseech you...think it possible you may be mistaken". Someone who fancies he is infallible, is capable of falling into any error, of inflicting any tyranny, of being guilty of any betrayal. So there may be something to be said for subscribing still to the old myths, because with great beauty they teach humility. [It is not relevant to consider the situation of those who deliberately choose evil, at this stage.]

Expressing it in simple terms, you are not going to get people going to carol services in the days before Christmas, in order to praise the Creator for providing an ever changing evolutionary plan. They will go to praise Him for providing a Saviour; but not for providing an idea. So the whole point of trying to grasp the truth, even the relative truth, of an idea, such as the changing nature of evolution, is to have a more mature understanding of how priceless the provision of a Saviour was. The Saviour tried to give us himself; to share his godhead with us if he had it, and his immortality if he did not. And apart from a brief flowering of Islamic culture between 900AD and 1200AD, the entire flowering of modern science and technology, including the recovery of the art and science of warfare, has been in the civilization and culture of the Christian West. In other cultures, of course, there were people as intelligent as in the West; but for some inexplicable reason it did not happen there. The whole thing, the whole evolution of the modern mind, is due to the Saviour setting us free from the darkness and superstition of the world which he entered, and being willing to set our spirits free. And this modern mind is no mere fashion, because it is based on modern

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knowledge. Reverting to antique language, he set us free from sin; because as St. Paul wrote, if you do what you think is impure, it is impure for you. And at what a cost did he free us?

Carl Gustav Jung is the only person, whom I have come across, to suggest that God needs man, as much as man needs God. So if there is a Creator, everything points to His wanting the love of men and women; but His purpose in doing so, in this world at least, is likely to remain shrouded in mystery. How otherwise could man's love remain disinterested?