

CREATION : A SCIENCE FANTASY.

CHAPTER 3.

A NEW BEGINNING.

So we have the two created worlds side by side: the world of science with its mechanical models, which may be illuminating, and the world of the human mind in its infinite variety, confident that it will never again be overawed by science. A new beginning is possible; and looking round at the contemporary scene, it looks very much as if a new beginning is necessary.

Things are in a bad way for religion. The C.of E. is marching majestically towards terminal decline, although its members seem remarkably nonchalant about it. The situation is brought home to them by ever more strident calls for money from ever smaller congregations; so their nonchalance is probably due to their knowledge that they have no idea what to do about it.

The political scene is as bad. For nearly a thousand years Christendom has fought to keep Islam out of Europe. After their astonishing initial success in overwhelming the Christian kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, the Arab generals were first checked at Constantinople in 718 AD, and at Poitiers by Charles Martel in 732 AD. But a Turkish invasion got as far as the gates of Vienna in 1683. And Prince Eugene, the friend and comrade in arms of the Duke of Marlborough, spent twenty years campaigning in the Balkans to drive the Turks back, crowned with success at his victory at Zenta in 1699. Ignorant of nearly a thousand years of European history, the EU politicians in Brussels have welcomed millions of Muslim refugees into the heart of Europe, where they will (unless returned from whence they came) replace the Christian tradition of the native inhabitants, which in the modern world rests on a precarious basis. The EU politicians have no idea what they have done, no idea what to do about it, and are unfit to rule.

It is not for me to offer political advice. But I will comment on the present disastrous religious situation.

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This was triggered by the insane German attempt at world conquest between 1914 and 1945, which involved in their Belsen and Buchenwald camps obscenities which sank to a depth of depravity lower than that of Genghis Khan or Tamerlane. Rather naturally the Muslim world awoke to the folly of so-called Christian countries, and to the dream of a Muslim Caliphate.

But the trouble began much earlier. The Risen Christ is supposed to have said after his resurrection, which we celebrate at Easter, that all power in heaven and earth had been given to him. And we do all pray, day in day out, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” Yet as we look at the contemporary scene, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that however much consolation Christianity has given to countless individuals, it has had remarkably little impact on the way the countries in the world are governed. Indeed Gibbon’s view was that Christianity was a subversive influence, rather than a beneficial one, and a principal factor in the decline and fall of Rome. And one does tend to conclude, either that it was a vain, foolish boast on the part of the Risen Christ, or that the efforts of his followers must have been remarkably inept. How could anyone, for instance, think that it was sensible to try to apply the gospel of someone who resolutely refused to get involved in secular affairs, to mould secular institutions? And to go on doing it for 900 years?

Some people think that to go on trying to solve a problem, by a method that has failed many times in the past, is a sign of madness. But I think that would be a simplistic view to take of the history of the Church. It was not as innocent as madness. It is not necessary to go further back than the claim first made by Hildebrand, or Pope Gregory VII, in the 11th century, that the Church was the supreme political power in Europe. He ought, of course, to have said he was the chief servant of the various Kings of Europe; but in fact he said that in the name of Christ he was their Master. Hildebrand was no fool; he was a stern and implacable idealist. With imperious courage he conceived of the world as a single Christian polity, governed by an infallible Pope. This claim continued to

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be made all through the Middle Ages, all through our Tudor period, all through the Thirty Years War, 1618-1648, and was still alive at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. In all the centuries when the Church should have been working out the correct relationship between church and state, its thought was ruled by this theocratic philosophy. Is it any wonder that a reaction set in?

The Christian Church has always persecuted heretics. It is amazing how people who have been persecuted themselves, once they get a little power, turn round and immediately persecute others. However the Church's persecution of heretics only broke out into open warfare with the Hussite wars of the 15th century. John Hus may have said, "Oh sancta simplicitas!" as he saw an old woman hobbling toward him with a bundle of faggots to add to the pile that were to burn him; but there was nothing "simple" about those who decided to burn him, only treachery. War broke out in 1419, and for 12 years the Hussites overwhelmed the papal forces sent against them; and the Papacy was prepared in the end to negotiate a settlement. Then internal discord among the Hussites resulted in their being overwhelmed themselves.

Persecution continued during our Tudor period. We, in Britain, largely escaped the horrors on the Continent; but Gibbon compares favourably the relatively modest persecutions of the Roman Emperors with the appalling atrocities committed by the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands at that time.

Then a century after the Hussite wars, the Reformation broke out in 1517. There was an attempt at reform with the Council of Trent, which Luther wisely declined to attend, having the example of John Hus before him. But with the triumph of the Jesuits at the Council, reform was abandoned, intolerance returned, and the Bohemians again rebelled, after the defenestration of Prague. This time they were crushed completely, and Bohemia only recovered its freedom in 1919.

Then the German Lutherans had to be dealt with; and after political ineptitude, the papal attempt to bring them to heel resulted in the Thirty Years

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War, 1618-1648. And the Papacy would have succeeded here too, but for the politics of Richelieu, a French cardinal, and the arms of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. The war ended with exhaustion in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. And even with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the same principle of the supremacy of the Church could be said to be still alive. So when all these centuries of religious madness were over, what followed?

So when sanity at last prevailed, it is not surprising that religion had lost its fervour. with our own Glorious Revolution of 1688, and the practical tolerance of Locke's philosophy, and in France with the Enlightenment and the rise of the Encyclopaedists, who preached a mechanical universe in the wake of Newton's Principia. The vision of a world created by God had gone, and religious enthusiasm was replaced by tradition. And as science secured one triumph after another in its understanding of Nature, the demoralised Church, apparently incapable of thinking the problem through, seized on one initiative after another to raise enthusiasm again. All of them had a brief success, and then they withered. In contrast science went from strength to strength, and by the end of the 19th century was made so confident by its success that scientists literally thought they had little more to discover. Only modern physics disabused them of their hubris. But in the meantime the public had learned to admire science's success, and still does. Modern physics means nothing to the public. And though there was a time when the creed and dogma of the Church had achieved a coherence that satisfied the Western spirit, that moment was now well passed. In the Church today enthusiasm means waving arms and singing choruses. It fills churches; but as an antidote to Islam I fear it is utterly useless.

Could there be any more convincing proof of the folly, and wickedness, of this claim made by Hildebrand, in the 11th century, and continued long afterwards, that the Church was the supreme political power in Europe, than the complete collapse of the Church's morale in modern times? And did not the two German Wars of the 20th century demonstrate that the political inspiration of the

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Church was bankrupt, after 900 years of meddling? The Church should have been content to be the “leaven” of society, which was after all Jesus’ concept.

Of the Church’s contributions to the life of society since the last War, the document “Putting Asunder” is a good example. It was meant to give the wise advice of the C.of E. to the secular world on marriage and divorce. I analyse it at length in my book, Man’s Relationship with God, and describe it as a shambles of imprecise thinking. Unfortunately its proposals were incorporated into legislation, leading to divorce virtually at will; and the result, in my opinion, has been a social disaster from which it will take us generations to recover. I would have thought it was obvious that an era of 2000 years has ended. Although the Church can still offer devout souls great consolation, its political efforts have been both malicious and ineffective. We have to begin again; and as most clergy seem incapable of original thought, perhaps we should seek inspiration elsewhere.

There was a brighter side to the Middle Ages. At its best the Medieval world provided the common man with a vision of the world created by God. The function of this vision was well described by Wolfgang Pauli in a conversation one evening about science and religion, at the Solway Conference for atomic physicists in 1927. Such a vision provides a spiritual framework within the grasp of the simplest member of the community, which he can feel embraces the whole wisdom of his community, and which is therefore able to guide his daily conduct. (An account of the conversation can be found in Heisenberg’s *Physics and Beyond*, Chapter 7). In colloquial terms, every character in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* has the religious patter on the tip of his tongue; in contrast to today, those who go to church have the rudiments of religion; but those who do not, know nothing about it at all.

But as Pauli prophesied at that conference 90 years ago, once the parables and symbols of religion have lost their persuasive force for ordinary people, the old values will collapse like a house of cards, and unimaginable horrors will

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take their place. And that is exactly what is happening today. It may take one or 2 years to train a soldier, and 2 or 3 years to train a sailor, but it takes 300 years to create a naval tradition. And my guess is that it takes much longer than that, to create the tradition in a population to be law-abiding. And if politicians are so foolish as to pass laws which nobody respects, and tax worth-while institutions out of existence, and judges fail to sentence crime properly, then the law-abiding community will not see the point of continuing to be, and will cease to be, law-abiding. You have lost something priceless, and you will not get it back again by a change of government. It will take hundreds of years to get it back; and a country may resort to tyranny to enforce Law and Order in the meantime.

Let us at least recognise that society needs religion, in the same way that men need women (and women need men). Every religion recognises the difference between right and wrong. They may have different views on what is right, and what is wrong; but at least they agree on the difference, and nobody else does that – for long. The great virtue of the minor prophets of the Old Testament is that they preached that God was a God of Righteousness, who hated iniquity. They may sound blood-thirsty; but their God was a God of the whole world, not just of the Jewish people; and He hated iniquity particularly among His own people. It was a sterling message. But it does not answer the question which religion is to prevail, and where? Islam may be the religion for the Middle East. But what about the indigenous Christian culture of England?

How is the religion, founded by the Son of God himself no less, likely to fare in the battle here for the hearts and minds of men? Surely that religion, or that philosophy, will win which enables men to reach their full stature as men, and so become whole human beings; irrespective of who began the religion? Only by becoming whole, will men of any culture do much to create a better world. And the world today does not share the Christian view of Jesus. Muslims think he was a deluded prophet; Jews think he was a blasphemous prophet. The secular philosopher ignores him. That is not a good start. Jesus, who was not an

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original thinker, he spoke as the Spirit told him to speak, chose to base his teaching on the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, written about one hundred years before he was born. In this he eschewed resistance to violence. This was wise at the time, with the Romans in power; but is it sensible now? His forty days in the wilderness was nothing like long enough for him to think things out afresh, but only long enough to decide which of the current philosophies to adopt, that he knew about. I think he chose well. But he was not always cautious in his speech; one of the last things he said at his trial before the High Priest was that they would see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God, coming in clouds and glory. Well, they didn't see it, and we have not seen it in 2000 years. Maybe he was mistaken, or maybe he was determined to be crucified; but those who heard him appear to have thought the claim insane, because they ceased to treat him with any respect. It is embarrassing for us that he talked so extravagantly. It does not help that Christians fail to understand this.

The response of the Church has been to indulge in an extravagant adulation of Jesus. Everything he did was perfect; he never made a mistake. When he told the Phoenician woman that she was "a dog", that was not being abominably rude, it was absolutely right. That was how Jews regarded Gentiles at that time. When he cursed the fig tree, and it withered, that was not a childish outburst of bad-temper; it was absolutely right, because it showed the power of faith. It is almost sickening! If you are human, mistakes, failures, suffering are going to be part of your experience. If they are not, you are not human. You may be a god walking around in human clothes; but whoever you are, you are not human. And part of the teaching of the Church is that Jesus was a Man!

So let us try to begin again. There are two ways for Christianity to do this; the more respectable is to leave the historic Jesus some way behind. St. Paul did; he only mentions him once in all his letters. He preached Christ crucified and resurrected; he preached the incarnation. Recently a Jesuit, in 2011, published a book, in which he said that if Evolution was true, as he

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believed it was and as he thought most people did, in the sense that stardust had evolved into US, then Jesus was not a second Adam to put right what had gone wrong. Nothing had gone wrong! So far as it went, Evolution had been a triumphant success. I agree. He went on to say, that meant that original sin had no place; there had been no original Adam to commit the original sin. And that meant that the doctrine of the atonement had to go as well. I agree. Finally he said that the Incarnation was planned from the beginning. Again I agree; and fifteen years earlier in my book, *Man's Relationship with God*, published in 1996, I urged the reader to put himself into the position of a creator, so far as he could. And on page 225, I said it would be a mistake for you to condemn mankind to a consciousness limited to the mortal world; and on page 226, I said that you, the creator, would have to provide a Redeemer. So yes, the Incarnation was planned from the beginning.

Hermann Weyl, the Swiss mathematician, in his book *Space-Time-Matter*, in Chapter III discusses Galilei's Principle of Relativity (or Newton's first law), and says that the union of space and time gives rise to difficulties, and their solution is one of the greatest feats of human intellect, and is associated above all with the names of Copernicus and Einstein. To imagine in the Medieval World that the Earth is not the centre of the Universe, but merely a minor planet in the solar system, was an act of genius (despite Aristarchus having had the same thought 1800 years earlier). And to imagine that space and time were not absolute (as Newton had to assume to construct his theory of gravitation), that there was no aether and no simultaneity, was also an act of genius. Hence Weyl's homage to Copernicus and Einstein. It is impossible for the ordinary mind to question the firm assumptions of those around him. Even Roger Bacon, 1210 until at least 1292, who wrote that the greatest science was experiment, and who did more than anyone to break the stranglehold of scholasticism, and open the door to scientific research, could not question that biblical truth took precedence over experimental truth. He was a Franciscan,

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and could hardly defy the whole discipline of his Order. Besides he spent long years in prison for daring to question as much as he did!

So what are today's unquestionable assumptions that must be questioned?

The other way of beginning again is to treat Jesus as his disciples did at first, just as a man. A good man, a gifted man certainly, probably a charismatic man of great charm, who loved a party; even a man filled with the spirit of God. The prophets of old had been filled with the spirit of God, and perhaps he was one of them. But above all, he was a leader, someone who seemed to know where he was going. Where was he intending to go? Well, he saw himself as destined to fulfil the Law and the Prophets; and people could interpret that in a number of ways. He interpreted it as meaning that he should preach to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. He had no interest in a wider mission.

It was St.Paul who became convinced that he must preach to the Gentiles, which means us. And very sensibly he left the historical Jesus behind. The Gentiles would have had no interest in him. St.Paul preached Christ crucified and resurrected. He was right; the important thing was the Incarnation, and its meaning for us. To concentrate on the historical Jesus, and whether he could have dodged the crucifixion, and gone to live happily with Mary Magdalene, with whom he was probably in love, is speculation we can do without. The fact is he did not dodge it. The one thing that nobody considered was that Jesus might have once been sitting on a throne in heaven, and had come down to earth as part of the process of Evolution, which of course was God's way of leading mankind from spiritual childhood to spiritual maturity. Nor were the Jewish High Priests exactly children. No-one had these esoteric thoughts.

It is all very well to speculate on the Creator desiring to taste his own creation, and find it was not a children's party for Him to enjoy, but a very bitter pill for him to swallow. But it is flying in the face of common sense to imagine that Jesus grasped the full implications of his Ministry at the start. His violent denunciation of Bethsaida and Capernaum makes no sense, unless we credit him

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with expecting them to repent. In other words, when he preached that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, he did actually think that it was a realistic possibility. Disillusionment came later. But for us it is crucial to bring modern science to bear on the problem, which the Church never does. For Jesus to have believed it was his vocation to fulfil the Law and the Prophets necessitated him identifying himself with the archetype of God in his psyche, either the wise old man, or the perpetual youth. There is evidence that Jesus did both. In Mathew's Gospel when he first sent out his disciples, after choosing them, his commission included raising the dead, Chapter 10 v.8. Near the end of his life, in one of his interminable rows with "the Jews", they questioned how he could have seen Abraham? And Jesus replied that he was alive before Abraham, and therefore had lived from all eternity, John Chapter 9 v.58. There are other examples.

Jung says it is pathological to identify oneself with an archetype, but I regret to say one often has to do it, in order to lead an effective life. Another way of putting it is to say that occasionally in life one has to hazard everything, including the hazard of doing something, which some people think is pathological. One does not do it every day of the week; if one does, then very soon one will come a cropper. One does it when the stakes are sufficiently high. Probably once in a lifetime is enough for most people. In a sense, making the risen-Christ a daily companion is identifying with an archetype. But for most Christians a better choice is an indwelling with the Creator himself, confident that Jesus' cross and passion make this a legitimate choice. I am sure it does; I do not understand why, but I am sure it does. One can then get to grips with the modern world.

If one thinks about it, the Creator must have watched mankind for at least a hundred thousand years, living as a hunter-gatherer, in small family groups. Probably He had watched this for many hundreds of thousands of years. And He must have wanted Man to progress to living in larger communities, to develop a culture, learn to work metals, precious metals to create art, develop language,

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writing, eventually civilization, and above all Law and Order, without which nothing is possible, not even the life of the Saviour. This gospel cuts right across the ethos of the Sermon on the Mount, with its emphasis on non-resistance to violence. So there must be great tensions in heaven; but that is none of my business. It is sufficient that it is a legitimate choice for me.

You need choice. You need both the alternatives. The rigid harshness of the Common Law needs to be modified by the flexibility of Equity. Justice needs to be tempered by Mercy; not endless Mercy needing to be stiffened occasionally by Justice. That is putting it the wrong way round. Here even Cranmer stumbles once, although normally he gets it right! Probation should not be the automatic recommendation for every criminal offence, even if serious. Without choice, without the need for judgement, one follows automatically.

And if you think about it, the ethos of the Sermon on the Mount is utterly hopeless for someone entering the legal profession, which is all conflict, never mind the Army which is all training for violent conflict. Business is competitive and involves conflict; even teaching if the maintenance of discipline is involved. In all these instances an indwelling with the Creator is infinitely to be preferred to a wholly ineffective communion with Jesus. An indwelling with him is suitable for medicine, and the ministry of healing outside medicine, in some teaching, and for the do-gooders, genuine and sanctimonious. The prayer of humble access invites us to have this indwelling with Jesus; but its elegant prose should not blind us to the truth that Jesus' promise actually was different.

This is the prevalent assumption that no clergyman, or woman, dare question. But the simple fact of the matter is that if one wants an indwelling with God, which is what the communion service is all about, an indwelling with the Creator is a far more sensible choice for anyone who envisages having a career involving conflict. It is a view I have held for more than 50 years.

However, if one goes to the Last Discourses, and to the final prayer of Jesus before his passion, one finds that Jesus promised to anyone who loved

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him, that both God the Father and he himself would take up their abode in that person. So it is not a question of choosing the one indwelling or the other; it is simply choosing which is more appropriate in any particular circumstances, when both are always available. Those who say differently do not know their New Testament! So my suggestion that to maintain Law and Order and a proper administration of society, you need an indwelling with the Creator to see what needs to be done, and to avoid making a shambles of it as so many politicians do, does not show me as being unconventional. It shows me as orthodox.

It does not matter whether Jesus was the incarnate Word of God from all eternity, or a good man in whom the Creator was pleased to dwell and whom he filled with the fullness of His spirit, Jesus had to fulfil the process of a normal man. He had to be tempted to doubt whom he was, and he had to identify with the Imago Dei in his psyche, with all the risks of doing so. If the Word of God had been excused this, we could all have greatly admired him, but not followed him, save by hiding behind his sacrifice. As a Saviour of the human race, he would have been useless.

However many people do not want a communion with God. In fact most people don't. They think they can live perfectly satisfactory lives without it. They may be right. They are more likely to get to the top of the greasy pole; and if one has a healthy ambition, many young men see that as a commendable aim. It is only later that one begins to realise one may have to dedicate oneself to a worldly goal with the same single-mindedness as the service of God demands. And this reveals the essential falsehood of living for oneself. We all to some extent lead a public life; and I understand that Winston Churchill, when asked about his priorities as a Member of Parliament, replied "Country first, Constituents second, Party third". And "Self"? Where does "Self" come in? Nowhere at all! In public life, we should be public spirited.

But more of this in the next Chapter.