

THE GOD-WORLD-I TRIANGLE.

CHAPTER 7.

AN EVOLUTIONARY CHRISTMAS MEDITATION.

When Jesus was born he cannot have had any conception of what his vocation was. But the Almighty must certainly have had the clearest idea of what He hoped Jesus would achieve. He may have hoped, to use Canon Professor Raven's metaphor, that Jesus would fulfil Evolution as an individual. But we all know that Evolution is not a pre-ordained plan. It is like a river, with eddies near its banks, whose detailed course over obstacles is wholly unpredictable; except that the central nervous system in living creatures always seems to become more complicated, until it blossoms into consciousness. So Man was probably planned from the beginning. And no doubt the Creator hoped that Jesus would have a compassion for the sufferings of Mankind, particularly in disease, and an instinct through his communion with Himself, that there was often a remedy. So He no doubt hoped that Jesus would have the confidence to dare to believe that he could ennoble Nature's Evolution, so that it became God's Evolution, and so perform remarkable cures. Of course Jesus knew nothing of science nor of Evolution. I do not suppose for one moment he was familiar with Greek science, or the views of Heraclitus that all matter was in a state of flux; he talked about evil spirits. But I do not think the nomenclature matters all that much. Confidence is the important thing. And Modern healers seem to confirm that the Gospel healings should be taken literally. If so, it is readily understandable that Jesus should have wanted his disciples to be able to do all he had done, and even greater things. But his disciples seem to have lost the art of healing within a generation. The New Testament tactfully draws a veil over the flaming row which developed about preaching the Gospel to the gentiles; but as usual in human affairs parochial matters monopolized the agenda, and essential matters were lost sight of. Personal salvation became an obsession, and the problems of building a viable Kingdom of God in this world of space and time were ignored. They still are 2000 years later.

Sadly, we have only one glimpse of Jesus' spiritual development, before his baptism; and that is the story of his being in the Temple talking to the Elders for three days, while his parents looked for him in vain. At the time of his baptism, John the Baptist suggested that their roles ought to be reversed; but Jesus demurred. So evidently, both men had some idea of what his vocation was; but we get no hint of how that came about.

All we are told is that immediately afterwards Jesus felt strongly, maybe irresistibly, moved to go into the desert, and be alone. Once in the desert he had plenty of time to think,

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but what was he to think about? The first temptation was fair enough: to turn stones into bread. This must have been more than just a response to his physical hunger; it must signify Jesus either became aware that he had unusual power, or realized that if he had not, he was no Messiah. All his promptings that he was, must be delusions. Hence the second temptation: to throw himself off a pinnacle of the Temple, and prove one way or another, if he was or not. The third temptation reflects that Jesus was now thinking in terms of a Kingdom, and of a World conversion. And there was no earthly point in his preaching that “the Kingdom of God was at hand”, unless he had a clear idea in his mind of what that kingdom would be like. His idea was a Kingdom of Love; and the Romans could be relied on to maintain Law and Order. But the Romans have gone; they left over 1500 years ago, yet you cannot criticise Jesus for failing to see that the religion he was starting would bring the Roman Empire crashing down in ruins. I do not think he ever intended to challenge Rome.

So our situation is different from that confronting Jesus, and is more like that facing Confucius. **We** have to maintain Law and Order. Now Confucius insisted that humaneness was the fundamental norm not only of human conduct, but of political and civilized government. Persuasion is better than coercion. Violence is the breakdown of politics; a good example removes the need for coercion. It is hardly sensible to kill those who have not “the Way”, (the Way of virtue), in order to uphold those who have the Way. But the Legalists in China thought that Confucian values are all very well for the few who are up to them, but the Ruler has to concern himself with the whole population; and that means coercion, because some people only understand the language of fear. In the Book of Lord Shang, war and killing are permissible so long as the aim is to abolish them! We have the same problem now. And certainly the Creator had no intention of bringing the Roman Empire down for centuries.

I appreciate that in talking about the transition from Nature’s Evolution to God’s Evolution, I am challenging the basic assumption of science: that causation is universal. This originated in the Greek idea that Fate was inexorable, and more powerful than the gods; and through the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages, it ended in the debate about science ruling out our Freewill. This was finally scotched by the proof of Godel’s theory by Mr.J.R.Lucas. So causation is an inference in the minds of scientists, as they watch their experiments. To imagine that science’s equations, or laws, are somehow attached to physical particles, is surely an example of modern magic? When you **will** to get up out of a chair, you have creation out of nothing. In simplistic terms, I understand, the brain sends an electric current along the nerves to get the muscles into action. Where did the current come from? It is probably far more complicated than that. But where did the complicated process come from?

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The human will has interrupted the equilibrium that had existed a moment before. And look at it how you will, that is creation of something out of nothing. I subscribe to the traditional view that science only deals in probabilities. And that means there are always exceptions.

Jesus was one of them! Albert Schweitzer in his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, one of the most famous theological texts of the modern era, reviewed a hundred or more years of German theological scholarship, and concluded that Jesus was driven by his apocalyptic consciousness to his death, a forlorn death in which he felt forsaken by God. Schweitzer recognised Jesus was one of those tremendous creative personalities in whom the eternal energies which move the world are revealed, who set world history in motion time and again, and who oblige mankind to follow the path to spiritual advancement. But Schweitzer also agreed with the view that Jesus was completely mistaken about the timing of his Second Coming, and possibly about its manner; and he himself then felt driven from the study of theology to practical love, and went to Lambarene as a doctor.

Jesus held his apocalyptic views because late-Jewish scholarship held such views. We are all children of the culture, in which we live; Jesus could not be an exception to that. He could modify such views, but not abandon them. The modern world has to say the end of all things will come with the fulfilment of Evolution. If someone says it will come by Divine intervention, he simply makes himself a laughing stock. The Church both does, and is.

Anyone who remembers the Second World War knows that we escaped defeat by a hair's breadth. Dunkirk was not just a miracle; it was a whole series of miracles. The victory of Nazi tyranny would have been the end of everything worthwhile. Someone has to keep the secular world going. If you abolished the Law Courts, a kingdom of love would not descend. Within months the gangsters would get the upper hand, and you would have terror and chaos, as William Penn found in the early years of his administration of Pennsylvania. The Christian kingdom of love may be what the soul longs for in its relationship with God, but it fails to provide a way of life to those struggling to maintain a decent just society. The man-in-the-street sees this with crystal clarity, even if Church leaders are blind to it. So he goes off to the pub or his golf club, as his tastes lie. And nothing will change until the Church sees Jesus as a child of Evolution, as well as a participant in it, as we all are.