



THE
LIVING
GOD

FRANK ARUNDELL

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Cover: “The Hubble Deep Field”
Courtesy of the Space Telescope Science Institute

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle reminds us of the ironic saying that we should count no one happy so long as he is still living. We would not call Priam happy when he came to such a bad end. But the phrase indicates also that some kind of closure is needed before life's full drama and importance can be measured. Like history in general, personal history cannot possibly be "one damn thing after another" until the last thing. Form is necessary for a whole, and being a whole is necessary for personal history. The quest to manage life and death implies a rejection of this final and defining form. The endless ability to redo things or start again would guarantee this. In the end, technical deathlessness, were it actually possible, would drain life and action of their drama and importance rather than extend or heighten them. Horizontal deathlessness would therefore not in fact be human deathlessness. It would be more like death by ennui.

David S. Crawford

"The Gospel of Life, The Integrity of Death"

COMMUNIO: Catholic Journal

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In Jesus we have defeated death, and are brought to new life. Christians, therefore live not only toward death, but always away from death.

Hans von Balthasar

By knowing Christ we know the face of God, ... In Christ the distant God becomes close ... we can only be witnesses of Christ, ... by knowing him personally, and truly meeting him in our life of faith, we can contribute to the novelty of the world, to eternal life.

Benedict XVI

Be still for once. Don't try to think of so many complex and varied things. Give these deeper realities of the spirit a chance now to rise to the surface: silence, fear, the ineffable longing for truth, for love, for fellowship, for God. Face loneliness, fear, imminent death! Allow such ultimate, basic human experiences to come first. Don't go talking about them, making up theories about them, but simply endure these basic experiences. Then in fact something like a primitive awareness of God may emerge.

Karl Rahner SJ

With one thought most of us can conceptualize the cosmos. When we look “up” into the night sky we are looking at only a minuscule piece of the universe. Space probes, the Hubble Telescope as well as the Arecibo and soon the ALMA Radio Telescopes show us objects billions of light years away. The marvels of astronomical science produced by the imagination

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of the human mind enables us to peer into the past and contemplate the future; how it began and how it will end, or whether it will end is scientifically “unknown”. We know “being” *is*, but do we know *what* being is? “Being seems to be an extremely broad concept encompassing objective and subjective features of reality and existence. Anything that partakes in being is also called a “being”, though often this use is limited to entities that have subjectivity (as in the expression “human being”). (Wikipedia) The imagination does not stretch far enough for the mind to access “being” or to understand it except subjectively, as an I or me, or a you, a they or an it.

Quite a few years ago Desmond Morris tells us:

Everything we do has an inborn, genetic basis, and all our activities show similarities to those of other species. Man is unique, though, in the way in which he has built on these animal patterns, exaggerating and elaborating them to an astounding degree or suppressing them with damaging consequences.

Morris sets out to show that, despite our inclination to believe otherwise, human behavior is full of animal instinct and reaction, and that whatever the species, we all share remarkable similarities. A fascinating, candid and entertaining exploration of man in the animal kingdom, this work sets out to expose our foibles and celebrate our triumphs in an attempt to understand emotion, language, social behavior and custom. It also shows how, despite many fascinating superficial differences, every one of the 5000 million human beings alive today share an almost identical genetic inheritance. Morris discusses the body language, gestures, facial expressions, sexual signals and the territorial instincts which, with slight variation, we all seem to

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share. Desmond Morris is an expert on animal and human behavior. Many anthropologists will argue the details of evolution but few, if any, will discredit it, as was once the case. Morris spent most of his life looking at the past to find the connection between what we were, to what we are now, rather than to what we will be. It is my understanding that there is no after-life in his studies.

Since Morris' very popular sociological oriented books we have had The Human Genome Project (HGP). It was an international scientific research project with the goal of determining the sequence of chemical base pairs which make up human DNA, and of identifying and mapping all of the genes of the human genome from both a physical and functional standpoint. We have come a long way in understanding human hereditary traits and from whence we came. Francis Collins, its Director, shocked many of his fellow scientists by telling the world of his belief in God: ROCKVILLE, Maryland (CNN):

I am a scientist and a believer. As the director of the Human Genome Project, I have led a consortium of scientists to read out the 3.1 billion letters of the human genome, our own DNA instruction book. As a believer, I see DNA, the information molecule of all living things, as God's language, and the elegance and complexity of our own bodies and the rest of nature as a reflection of God's plan... I have found there is a wonderful harmony in the complementary truths of science and faith. The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome. God can be found in the cathedral or in the laboratory. By investigating God's majestic and awesome creation, science can actually be a means of worship

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With all due respect to Dr. Collins we don't know of anybody who has ever bumped into God in either a cathedral or a laboratory (with the exception of the Eucharist) like Adam and Eve bumped into him in the Garden of Eden. But we certainly do agree that we can vaguely comprehend the Father as Spirit; our enabler, in his “majestic and awesome creation”; in the “elegance and complexity” of nature including ourselves. “Soul” being “the life of the mind/body complex” made in God’s image, especially since the brain to mind transformation which started us imagining.

Karl Rahner put it plainly:

If we are seeking to find a place of encounter between man and the God who may possibly reveal himself. This place is the transcendence of man in its specifically human character.

For us, this “specifically human character” is obviously our inspired imagination. Now that does not mean that our imagination is wholly fictional. “The faculty of imagining, is the ability to form new images and sensations in the mind that are not perceived through senses such as sight, hearing, or other senses.” Like the aesthetic process it is an amalgamation of our consciousness; our sub consciousness through feedback; illusions, phantasms, conceptions, memories, feelings, emotions, etc., all certainly instructed by our senses but ranging far beyond merely local phenomena into regions of the fantastic where art music and literature are woven.

Matthew 4: 12 says:

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and

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Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’ From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near’” (or is at hand).

One might say that the Kingdom of Heaven is finally humanly accessible since the birth of the Redeemer, the Messiah, promised through the Jews, who has been sent to bring the Good News of “redemption” to mankind. We know through Jesus’ testimony that the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven is not “of this world” but is surely partially accessible in this world. In fact it is “within you.” In other words, as human beings we can participate in the Life of “Being Itself”; the life of God in the Spirit while we are still alive by keeping the Commandments of Moses and by participating in the sacraments instituted by Christ in his church. The Sanctifying Grace, which comes from our heavenly Trinitarian Deity is the condition in which we sincerely can proclaim our faith. Upon reflection, there is a palpable certainty of the presence of grace as something beatific living in our lives along with us.

There is a caveat though, the Son of Man had to die for us, to fulfill the prophesy of redemption for us have a *full* share in the Life of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit in what is called Heaven after we die, and a partial share as sanctifying grace while we’re alive. There are literally hundreds of references and parables relating to the Kingdom of Heaven in the scriptures. The parable of the “mustard seed” is one of the best loved:

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“He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’”

“He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.’

Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

‘I will open my mouth to speak in parables;

I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.’

*Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’ He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!’”***

Matthew 13: 31

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, ‘The kingdom of God is not

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*coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" **For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you' (or within you.)***

Luke 14: 20

The grace of God is the life of God joined with our life. Man is always free to cancel that living presence. Serious sins called "mortal" sins are said to kill the the grace of God within us, whereupon any sincere plea for mercy is always answered by the God who is Love, fortunately for us through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, with a firm purpose of amendment of course.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11: 28

In our opinion the heaviest burden a person can bear is the burden of serious sin. In today's relativist, secular world, to relieve the burden of guilt for wrong-doing is to simply deny God, thereby denying "sin." The "time," one sage said, "becomes whatever you want it to be." This way one can be completely free of all constraints. It is interesting to note here that is exactly the idea Freud had in his therapeutic elimination of guilt which he blamed primarily on religion. More specifically, on the mistaken idea of the existence of God, only the civil law is restrictive. When even that becomes burdensome in a democracy it can be legally changed to suit any inordinate consensus. In this way much of sin is reduced to self satisfaction. Commandments are only suggestions. With no

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God, take whatever you want, even if it doesn't belong to you; kill your perceived enemy, or a child in the womb if you wish. Screw your neighbors wife as long as she's willing, or have a fling with your neighbors husband for a change with only legal repercussions if you're not careful. There's no restitution, just don't get caught and spoil the fun, etc., etc. It's all a matter of being "natural," a new normalcy if you will. Get rid of the guilt... and just be happy! 😊

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

Matthew 16: 24

If God is everywhere, then Heaven is everywhere that God is. The objective for us is to get where God is. Since the Kingdom of God has been begun on earth with Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, following him leads us out of temptation and delivers us from evil. Jesus is not a mythical figure like the gods of antiquity, but flesh and blood which this world wounded and killed; a body "raised up" that has drawn all people to himself.

Jesus said:

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth"

John 4: 24.

Without grace, any proof of God is impossible. The convinced atheist will not even look for inferences from something that

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“aint.” With sanctifying grace, the life of God is accessible, not only does it encompass all things, but in fact it is within us. We can say this is true (faith) because we sense it. Our brain and our neural-network tells us the truth of the presence of the Spirit, of God. Worship is “a *profound* feeling of love and admiration” specifically for God. As a figure of speech the word worship is often used in more common contexts, as the worship of money or the worship of power and so on. Fulfilling an obligation in a church on a Saturday or Sunday, may not exactly be worship. Although meeting with others in the name of God brings God into their midst with or without the sensation, with grace, one is definitely conscious of the immanent presence of God; the Father, Son and Spirit are truly present, even if imperfectly true, but it is tactual; one is cognizant of it. One senses it; feels it.

Since the mind is surely a reality, cognition of the Spirit is a formal reality without specific dimensions or shape. Sin deals only with the finite as it dispenses with any sensation of God’s presence and serves only self satisfaction. The Eucharist, the “body of Christ,” has the same cognitive influence under the appearance of bread and wine once consecrated with the words of Christ by a properly ordained priest. In the Mass it is Christ who is both the giver and the gift as it always has been since the “last supper” in the upper room the night before he died, and yes, he did die. In fact without a Good Friday we never would have had an Easter Sunday as the old adage says. For us English speaking people Shakespeare gave us this marvelous passage from Hamlet which causes us pause when considering our human demise, physically not much different from the disintegration of every other living thing. Where do we go from here is the worrisome question.

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*For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
**But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?**
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action*

Shakespeare

While Hamlet was pondering “to be, or not to be”, one is bound to ask whether the Bard’s suggested cowardice is due to the reality of our eventual death or due to our concern over how we lived our lives. Conscience, a strictly human phenomenon is certainly in play here. What puzzles the will for Hamlet is “that no traveler returns.” But wait!, there was a “traveler” who returned, Jesus of Nazareth, according to Scripture, if you have the grace to believe in scripture. Jesus miraculously restored Lazarus back to the life we know out of compassion, back to Homeostasis. What ever killed Lazarus was reversed and he was unbound and rejoined his family. He

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did this while a large crowd looked on in utter astonishment. Since death belongs only to earthly time, Lazarus would obviously die once again.

The gospels give us other examples of Jesus' power over life and death in his "earthly" time with us. His mission of redemption, or reconciling human-kind to their Creator had begun with the Kingdom of God among us. In other words, through him, we already started on our heavenly journey; our life with God, by following what he had been sent by the Father to tell us: "Our Father, who art in heaven"; "through him, with him, in him," and in us. It is only through Christ that God's whereabouts is made known to all of us, and that whereabouts, that kingdom if you will, is not of this world. The Resurrection of Christ, the single most important event in human history, brings closure to misunderstood Creation. We are redeemed from oblivion, from death to everlasting life, by the plan that was in place from the very beginning and is now and ever shall be for those made in God's image. That image is our freedom.

No matter how broad our powers of transcendence, our imagination as a gift of humanity is, it is not able to perceive what Jesus has prepared for those who keep his word. Our human weakness which generally evolved out of our self-oriented animal nature became clear to us after the brain to mind transition, when God, albite in strange ways, became (probably gradually) known to the primitives, opening the way to the later monotheism of the Jews and finally to the Incarnation at the "fullness of time." It really seems a bit of a waste to project into an un-projectable future which we are told is not in this world, rather to simply hear the words of Jesus

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and make every effort to live in them as we would live in a home. While our earthly life lasts we should trust that a sincere loving effort, through the grace of God, will take us from this life to everlasting life unconcerned about a death that merely belongs to time.

...as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is God not of the dead, but of the living..."

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that "he is one, and besides him there is no other"; and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength", and "to love one's neighbor as oneself",—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Mark 12: 26

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29th Sunday of the year

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

“Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must never let go of the faith that we have professed. For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin. Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help.”

Gospel Acclamation Jn14:6

“Alleluia, alleluia!

‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,’ says the Lord;

‘No one can come to the Father except through me.’

Alleluia!”