whether the model of the Prophet (peace be on him) is to be emulated (imitatio Muhammadi) but only on which basis, i.e. how to do it (p. 138)? This explains the absurdity that even the radical opponents of tradition still tend to base their Sunnah critique on that very Sunnah.

May Allah preserve of it all that is authentic and helpful as guidance.

Murad Wilfried Hofmann


One of the characteristics of the modern age in the realm of religious thinking and spiritual contemplation is — in my opinion — confusion. The scientific mind of the twentieth century which does not heed to, or so it claims and tries to prove, any irrational or undefined or undefinable objective, phenomenon or idea seems to be forgetting itself and rushing towards all sorts of messages and ideas introducing itself in the name of spirituality, mysticism or metareligious consciousness for reasons repeatedly dealt with by writers from the East and the West in the field of mysticism and clearly illustrated in the introduction of all books having been published and being published under the title 'mysticism' or 'spiritualism'. This state of affairs does not trouble the western mind at all, the mind which seems to have concluded for itself that religion is a matter of faith and individual consciousness, not a matter of science and human reason. What matters here is the individual happiness and personal satisfaction, not the objective reality, well-defined sound theory or clear-cut spiritual conception or theologically backed rationally consistent mystical practices.

These type of pseudo-mystical and spiritually superficial and religiously shallow writings and movements are becoming very popular in the west and in many parts of the world among groups that could not adopt themselves to the teachings of any particular religion, any behavioural philosophy or creedal system. Since Humanism without any

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religious tradition of prayer and worship. In this light, one might see not only that it is a very reasonable belief that there is a creator God, but also that it is natural and appropriate to worship and pray to God. Even though the claims of Christianity transcend what unaided human reason can establish — one does not become a Christian for scientific reasons — I hope to show that it is entirely reasonable to accept the Christian faith, and that if its claims are true it does provide a fuller understanding of the real character of this beautiful and awe-inspiring universe" (pp. 11–12).

Written two years after God, Chance and Necessity, this book deals with issues which arise as a result of belief in a God-created universe. (God, Chance and Necessity was basically a book which sets out to refute arguments against theism.) The book is divided into sixteen chapters and includes an "Introduction" and a "Conclusion".

"Christianity and the Scientific Worldview", the first chapter of the book, sets the scene for the whole book. The goal here is to reconcile traditional views of creation with the modern scientific worldview and Ward does this by simply showing how the scientific view of the creation of universe contains within its processes necessary conditions for the existence of human life. The four basic forces — electromagnetic, gravitational, the weak and the strong nuclear forces — that make up our universe, also establish a set of relationships between the fundamental particles (quarks) that enable them to build into the protons, neutrons and electrons that form the atoms of various elements. Accepting the traditional Big Bang arguments, Ward concludes that after all, "human beings are not peripheral to the universe". Likewise, the inevitable destruction of the universe (Big Crunch) does not diminish meaningfulness of human life, rather, it may even give greater meaning to life for the significance lies "in the process of life itself and the way in which its various elements fit into an overall pattern within it" (p. 25). Relating the evolution of life in the universe to the Christian doctrines of creation, the chapter concludes that a creator God might have originated an evolutionary cosmic process with the final goal of a sacramental community of love.

However, the book starts to lose its scientific veneer in the second chapter "The Trinity and Creation", as Ward attempts to present the three-fold Christian vision of the purpose of cosmos without any solid relationship of this vision with the scientific data. There is, however, a weak thread which tries to relate the vision of things to come in the Christian theology to the scientific outlook, but this is rather an indirect link.

"Sacred Cosmology: the Genesis Creation Narratives", the third chapter of the book, takes us back to the heart of the debate at the
interface of science and religion. Ward recounts the two creation narratives found in the Bible. "What the Bible provides is a sacred cosmology", he writes, "a spiritual interpretation of the universe's origin, nature and destiny, not a scientific cosmology" (p. 43).

Explaining the symbolism of the first creation narrative (Genesis 1: 1-2: 3), Ward writes:

The first story begins with a formless dark void, tohuwabohu — the waters of the 'great deep'. The sea is the symbol of chaos, the formlessness that always threatens ordered creation. But over that chaos sweeps the spirit of God, the divine breath or wind (Ruach) which was creative power, and bringing form and order into being. The first act of God is the pronouncing of a word, 'Let there be light', . . . so the world comes into being as the expression of a divine purpose (pp. 44–45).

The second great creative act, according to Ward, is the ordering of chaos. Referring to the powerful passage in Psalm 74: 13 and 14, Ward relates this ordering to the defeat of the chaos-monster. Ordering creates space for the third divine act of creation: the emergence of the realm of earth which becomes the mother of life. This is followed by the fourth divine act: the ordering of time and the fifth act: the appearance of living creatures. Life is blessed by God so that it flourishes and multiplies.

The fifth divine act is the bringing forth of the mammals from the earth with reflective awareness and deliberate movements. Among the animals, God creates humankind, "in the 'image and likeness' of God" (p. 47). Humans are given dominion over all living things. Humans are capable of a conscious relationship with God. Their creation finishes the work of creation and history begins. This first creation story ends with God resting on the seventh day, the shabat.

Ward then summarizes the second creation story which employs a totally different symbolism for the depiction of four spiritual truths. First, the Formation of humans from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7) enlivened with the 'breath of life'; second, the garden of delight (Eden) where all things can flourish in total dependence on God; third, the responsibility of humans to till and keep the garden (Revelation 21:2) and fourth, the appearance of Adam's 'helper and partner'. These creation stories are related to the scientific worldview in the fourth chapter of the book, "Explaining the Universe".

Theistic explanation of the universe is necessarily a consequence of seeing the goodness of God's wisdom and Ward attempts to "prove" it on the basis of simplicity and elegance of the universe, remaining conscious that such a "God hypothesis" may be objectionable to both the religiously committed as well as the opposite group.
Building his case further, Ward takes us to the limits of science by resorting to the well-established fact that we cannot measure all properties with absolute precision. These limits to the accuracy of measurements mean that either we cannot formulate totally accurate physical laws or there is a fundamental indeterminacy in the basic laws of physics. In other words, there would always be gaps which cannot be explained by the laws as we know them.

But if the world is really an embodiment of Divine goodness, what about human suffering and the presence of evil? The universe may be elegant, mathematically beautiful, amazingly intricate and awe-inspiring but it is also filled with evil and suffering. If God is good then He cannot intend those things, as Ward puts it (p. 91). Any one who believes in a universe created by God has to come to terms with the presence of suffering and evil. This is the classic dilemma which has been addressed by thinkers of all religious traditions. Ward's answer is simple: Evil comes from the free will given to humans who resort to evil, more often than not. God does not prevent evil from existing as long as He wills the agents to be free.

"The Soul" is the strongest chapter of the book. The philosophy of materialism starts to fall apart when it comes to explaining the soul which is recognized by all humans to be the part which provides consciousness of so many immaterial processes ranging from thoughts to sensations. Though, of course the neural networks of the brain can explain the physical part of that highly complex phenomenon called consciousness, the materialistic worldview has no satisfactory explanation for a whole range of other human experiences.

The last six chapters of the book have very little to do with science; there are too many "compromises", too many "perhaps" and too much effort to accommodate as many viewpoints as possible. This trend is even formulated in the "seven principles of global pluralism" (p. 168) which insist on an all-inclusive approach, allowing maximum freedom to every one, seeking a convergence of views. In a world ripe with indifference, religious and ideological clashes, this is rather a welcome approach but it is at the cost of a clearly stated stand on certain basic issues. The virgin birth of Jesus can be taken as a miracle, "however, the symbolic value of the narrative can be retained even if its literal truth is denied" (p. 175). Ward's tone is full of hope. He is imaginative and sensitive. "The future of this cosmos is not a blowing out into endless nothingness, but the beginning of endlessly new forms of communion with the creator" (p. 212). One just wishes that he was not so much inclined toward accommodating "all" viewpoints to the detriment of his own position.
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