



ANCIENT SKIES

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THE SPACEMAN'S APOTHEOSIS

BY GEORGE T. SASSOON*

The following graffito appears on the wall in the Camarillo Cafe in Berlin, Germany:

Nietzsche: Gott ist tot
Gott: Nietzsche ist tot

I pondered these words and the way they summarize the essential futility of philosophy, that science which asks all the deepest and most fundamental questions about life, but which never finds any answers to them. Yes, Nietzsche is dead, but God is still with us - or is he? It was another philosopher, I think, not Nietzsche, who said: "if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."

Does God exist? Or did we in fact invent him? Recently I was reading a book on comparative religion and something struck me very strongly - that there are basically two sorts of religion in the world. Firstly, there are what may be called shamanistic belief systems - there are no "gods" as such, merely elemental spirits - the spirits of woods, mountains, rivers, rain, thunder, lightning, sticks and stones even. Such religions are characterized as "primitive", no more than nature worship, and the function of their priests, or shamans, is to placate these forces of nature, to perform rituals intended to bring about the increase of game animals and successful hunting. Such religions are probably sufficient for the spiritual needs of the hunter-gatherer tribes. They provide some form of reassurance that they can themselves influence the world around them. In fact, these religions predominate in the areas of the world where the living is hardest - northern Siberia and arctic Canada, for example.

Then in contrast to those simple religions, in

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other parts of the world we find quite different belief-systems. There is no worship of impersonal spirits, but instead a veneration of "gods" of human or near-human appearance; "gods" who appeared on Earth in the distant past, who had miraculous powers, and then as suddenly disappeared again.

Why should it be that there are two basic types of religion? If spirit-worship is good enough for central Asian tribes, Eskimos or Inuit, and for many native American peoples, why was it necessary to invent real, physical "gods" with names, personalities, and all the attributes of living beings?

Many of us in Europe and America, with our advanced technological society, feel little need of religion. Perhaps this is because we do in fact control the world we live in and have no need to pray to the spirits of the natural world. Nevertheless, our ancestors invented these "gods", whose personalities gradually coalesced into the single God of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Why should this be?

If you say that our monotheistic religions have always been so, you should look at some of the earlier Jewish and Christian religious writings. Here you will find not one omnipotent God, but a host of angels, demons and other entities, of whom the great Jehovah is but one. There is even a branch of religious study known as angelology, dedicated solely to the study of these beings and their organizational hierarchy.

How do we account for this? The simplest - and therefore the best - way is to admit that there were at one time more advanced beings on this planet, and that our religions are the relics of factual accounts of things that actually happened.

Why should our ancestors invent all this material about demons and angels, when the religious urges of other peoples are satisfied by a simple belief in the forces of nature? Why did they invent these strange tales of superbeings? How did this help them live their harsh and brutal existences? And why should they give them human characteristics?

It is an extraordinary fact that we have these two types of religion coexisting on our planet - on one hand the worship of nature, of elemental spirits - and on the other, these legends of visitors from the sky.

Even in our own day and age, we have an example of how this second type of religion can come into being - the cargo cults of New Guinea. At some time in the 1930's, American servicemen landed in remote parts of the island, bringing with them chewing-gum, Coca-Cola; all the "benefits" of western civilization. The local people accepted these gifts eagerly and enjoyed them for a while and then the visitors departed, as suddenly as they had come. Greatly disappointed, the locals tried to lure them back, building rough airstrips with crude wooden models

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of aircraft on them, in the hope that these would lure their benefactors back from the sky.

They told legends of their "gods", the men from the clouds bearing gifts - and as time went on, religious beliefs developed and the "gods" coalesced into a single deity - "John Frum". It is believed that the Americans introduced themselves as "John from Chicago", or "John from New York", or wherever, and so "John Frum" became the generic name given to them.

More recently, these people have come into regular contact with Western cultures and must by now understand the origins of their strange religion, and yet it still goes on. "John Frum" is their God - he has no connection with the white visitors of more recent years.

From studying the cargo cults, we can see how contact with a superior technical culture can give rise to a religion, to a set of mystical beliefs, and indeed to a system of magic.

Consider what might happen if a helicopter were to make a forced landing in the jungle, in the territory of some uncontacted tribe. Peering through the undergrowth, a local hunter would see this huge bird coming down from the sky, with a great roaring of wings. After it had settled, a being in dazzling clothes would appear from it, with magical rods in its hands, and proceed to manipulate them on various parts of the bird. If he were unfortunate enough to drop a rod, he might utter a Word of Power, then suddenly, the machine fixed, he would jump in and thunder off into the sky again.

To the local tribesman, this whole process would be indistinguishable from magic - as Arthur C. Clarke put it - and he might be tempted to imitate it. With magic wands and words of power, mystical diagrams, bottles of foul liquids and other aids, he might attempt to conjure up the great bird from the sky. His practices would be indistinguishable from the antics of mediaeval magicians, who used such techniques to summon up demons with varying degrees of success.

Are these ancient magical rituals based on observations of ancient astronaut technicians at work? Certainly the diagrams and symbols used look very like electronic circuit diagrams, and these and the techniques used go back to ancient Jewish practice.

Of the other spaceman-god religions known to us, I should mention the ancient Greeks and Romans, with their gods and goddesses cavorting on Mount Olympus. Then we have the Ancient Egyptians, with their multiplicity of animal-headed gods.

When Christianity was introduced into the Roman Empire, it was finally embraced with enthusiasm and the old gods of Olympus were consigned to the dustbin of history. Why? Certainly the Roman gods were much more fun than the fierce Jehovah of the Hebrews and Christians. Do people have some deep, psychological need to believe in some omnipotent force beyond their comprehension?

I think that they do. For the history of these religions shows a progression from physical gods, with human or animal bodies, not greatly different from ourselves except for their "magical" powers, towards a more mystical, single god, a synthesis of all the smaller individual deities of earlier beliefs.

The earliest religions of which we have records are those of ancient China and Egypt. The Chinese believed that they came to Earth in fiery-tailed "dragons" - spacecraft - and they called themselves "celestials" - people from Heaven. Their ideographic writing sprang into existence, almost fully-developed, some time prior to 2000 BC. How could such a complex script appear suddenly without any trace of prior development? It could only have come from elsewhere.

I am no expert on ancient China, so must leave further exploration of this theme to others, perhaps

Peter Krassa of Vienna and Dr. Igor Lisevich of Moscow.

As for the Egyptians, their advanced civilization also appeared from nowhere, with a highly-developed technology and script. Their gods came, set up the Egyptian culture, and then left. After their departure, the priests kept their power intact by dressing up children in masks to act the part of gods in temples, where they were shown to the people. When the children grew up, they were killed to preserve the secret of the deception, indicating that the original gods were physically small creatures.

Moving to more recent times, Marc Theobald recently published an interesting article in the German edition of Ancient Skies (No.4, 1991) entitled "Unsere Heimat im ALL: Schoepfungsmymthen Schwarzafrika" (Our Home in the Universe: Creation Myths of Black Africa). In these African myths, the gods came from the skies in "wagons" bringing humans and animals, and introduced them to the Earth, giving them basic instruction in how to survive before leaving. Again, the people were puzzled and disappointed at the gods' departure, attributing it to their own bad behaviour. Maybe this is the origin of the concept of original sin, the fall from grace, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In fact, it was not our ancestors' fault at all - the gods just wanted to get on and seed another planet.

Attempts were made similar to the building of the Tower of Babel to regain a place in "Heaven", but needless to say, these came to naught. The gods' departure provides an explanation for the dissension that arose during the building of the Tower. While they were still with us, their presence unified mankind, much as a colonial power brings together the oppressed inhabitants of a country. But once we were on our own, our society split into factions and disintegrated. We see this happening in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia today.

I need not give further examples - they are too numerous to mention. Almost anywhere in the world, you can find people who believe that they were brought to Earth from Heaven in fiery chariots and that the "gods" taught them to survive and then abandoned them.

But the most interesting legends from our point of view are those of the ancient Hebrews, who have diligently preserved a vast mass of material not only about their gods, angels, demons and so on, but also about their machines.

Josef Blumrich, in his Spaceships of Ezekiel, gives a convincing interpretation of the prophet's visions as eyewitness accounts of a helicopter-spacecraft. And everywhere in Jewish writings we find accounts of cherubim, seraphim and ophanim, devices which are clearly some kind of machine, not living beings at all.

Then in 1978, Rodney Dale and I found a vast amount of material in an obscure book called the Zohar, which quite clearly describes a machine for making manna, the foodstuff eaten by the Children of Israel in their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. Our book, The Manna-Machine, (unfortunately now out of print) describes the manna-machine as the Ancient One, the Ancient of Days. It is mentioned briefly in the Bible in the Book of Daniel, but the Zohar contains a complete physical description from which Dale and I were able to work out how it functioned.

I have found a lot more material in some interesting books which I found in a California bookshop in 1989 which I visited following the Society's World Conference in Chicago. (1)

These books give some interesting sidelights on biblical history, as well as a lot of material to support the paleovisitological hypothesis. For example, the prophet Isaiah went out into the desert and saw visions of the Lord, which he induced by starvation, putting his head between his knees, and

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other hallucinogenic activities. By doing this, he claimed to have seen the Lord, while Moses had said that no man could see him and live. This was blasphemy on Isaiah's part, and he was punished by being sawn in half. (ugh!)

In the book, The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah, we find that the Ancient of Days is being brought into the Christian tradition. Jesus and the twelve apostles are compared to the thirteen parts of the beard of the Ancient One, the manna-machine. The significance of thirteen as a magical number certainly derives from this material, as witness the thirteen members of a witches's coven, the thirteen members of a chapter of Knights Templar, and the choice of a Friday the thirteenth as the date on which King Philip the Fair of France chose to destroy the Order of the Temple.

The book follows a dualistic tradition - that is to say, God and the Devil are regarded as equal and opposite forces. In today's beliefs, the devil plays very little part. In fact, the word "Satan" in Hebrew means simply "the opponent." Satan was a rival to Jehovah, and was finally defeated by him. History being written by the winners, Satan naturally received a bad press after the final battle.

One of the Hebrew words for "hell" - "sheol" - simply means "hollow place." This is Satan's residence, and probably refers to the interior of a spacecraft. The book gives descriptions of various "heavens" similar to those in the Book of Enoch, evidently referring to different compartments within the spacecraft. In some of these "heavens", the angels are fighting. Obviously, this is an Irishman's heaven!

The word "glory" is used everywhere to refer to a type of vehicle, as "The Lord will come...from the seventh Heaven...in the glory of the seventh Heaven." This reminds us of Ezekiel, who saw the Lord on several occasions, arriving in a different "glory" each time.

In another book, The Life of Adam and Eve, we find more about the devil. After Adam and Eve have been driven from Paradise and deprived of the "food of angels" - manna - they are starving. Thinking that this is because of something they have done wrong, they vow to stand up to their necks in the river Tigris for forty days as a penance. But after only eighteen days, Satan appears and tempts them out of the water with the holy food, not with an apple, forcing them to break their oath. The Devil speaks to them, and says that it was because of Adam that he had been deprived of his glory that he had in the heavens. This was evidently because when Adam was first created, the archangel Michael had made him (the Devil) worship him (Adam) as being made in the Lord's image. So the Lord had expelled the Devil from his "glory", and sent him down to Earth, where he had taken his revenge by having Adam and Eve expelled too.

What we must ask is: why should people make up stories like this, stories of super-beings in their "Heavens" fighting and squabbling over mere mortals? What has this got to do with the religions of today?

Another interesting book in the collection is The History of the Rechabites. This includes an account of a family who were taken up into Heaven where they spent some time living with the angels. They were taken up to "the air that is above the land" - the word "air", "Avira" in Hebrew, can also mean "ether" or "empty space." Whether this family, or their experiences, are real or not, does not really matter. What does matter is their account of what life is like in Heaven, and how closely this account corresponds to what we now know life would be like in a spaceship.

For a start, they do not have to work to live. Imagine that! There are no vineyards, grain, husbandry, wood, iron, houses or buildings, no gold or silver - money - no stormy weather, or rain.

They said: "And the sun does not shine upon us, because the cloud which encircles us like a bulwark, restrains it. And we possess a shining appearance, and dwell in light." In other words, Heaven is a closed, controlled environment, with its own lighting system, in which peoples' basic needs are taken care of without the need for any effort. The account continues:

"And there are among us men who take wives and once only the man has intercourse with his wife. And then they are set apart from each other and they remain in purity for the remainder of their lives...but the wife conceives and bears two children." Obviously a reference to sperm banks, population control - perhaps even genetic manipulation - applied to these other men, the regular crew of the heavenly spacecraft.

Further, they are covered "with a covering of glory" - spacesuits - and they eat "the fruits of the trees" - these must be food-dispensing trees, perhaps an echo of the Tree of Knowledge from which Eve ate the apple - and they drink "from the water...which comes from the roots of the trees."

The most interesting detail, though, is this: Afterwards, "the water returns and is gathered together in its original place" - recycling of waste, which is an essential process in the closed environment of a space vehicle. As regards solid waste, according to the Zohar, the manna - the food of angels - is completely absorbed in the body - there is no waste from it.

Why, I ask, should such details of what life might be like in a starship be known to the ancient Hebrews? Did they invent all these details? Or did they have real knowledge of life aboard a spacecraft?

But what did the angels do in Heaven? Life must have been rather dull for them - no wine, sex only once in a lifetime, and with a test-tube at that! "They monitor the doings of earthlings and intercede with God on their behalf. Their lives are long. No one among us computes months and years. There is no sickness, pain or fatigue." When someone dies, they are not buried, but the angels make a "sepulchre" for the body, which departs in a "glorious light". Again, we have a recycling plant at work - the elements of the corpses are returned to the spacecraft's system.

These are just a few examples of the early Jewish legends, all of which indicate that our religions originate from visits in ancient times by superior beings. I ask again: why would anybody want to invent such stuff, when a simple faith in the forces of nature would satisfy our spiritual needs? And again, why do these legends, over the centuries, become transformed into sets of mystical beliefs? Why do we turn our spacemen into Gods?

(1) Charlesworth, James H. (Ed.) Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Doubleday, New York 1985 (2 vols.)

Layton, Bentley (Trans), Gnostic Scriptures, Doubleday, New York 1987

MEMBER EXPEDITION TO MEXICO, MAY 6 - 17, 1992

Arrangements are completed for our Member trip to Mexico, to visit Merida, the ruins of Uxmal, Kabah and Edzna in the Yucatan; then the always mysterious and fascinating Palenque; Villahermosa with its Museum of Archaeology and La Venta Outdoor Museum; on to Oaxaca and the ruins of Monte Alban and Mitla; with a final two day rest on the Pacific Coast at Puerto Escondido. The price is US\$1,284 per person, double occupancy, plus air fare. Members may join in Chicago or Mexico City.

ERICH VON DANIKEN's newest book, Die Steinzeit War Ganz Anders, is now available in German from C. Bertelsmann, Munich, Germany.

MORE ON THE MYSTERY OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

BY KALEVI MIKKONEN*

A Finnish biblical scholar, Dr. Valter H. Juvelius and a Swedish engineer, Johan Millen, who tried to find the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem from 1909 to 1911 (see Ancient Skies 18:3), had lots of interesting information in their books and papers about their expedition. For example, Millen, in his book "On Right Tracks"(1), described the excavations inside the Temple Mount, and wrote that Ezekiel's vision of the "Glory of the Lord" was in fact a description of a modern airplane! According to Millen, this demonstration was a sign from God that the Bible was true. Millen's book was published in 1917, so he was probably the first person to link together the vision of Ezekiel and modern aeronautical technology.

The ultimate target of the Jerusalem expedition was to find the Ark of the Covenant, which Millen believed would be the sign of the Millennium, mentioned in the Book of Revelation. His belief was later shared by the German Nazis, who also tried to find the Ark and use it for their own purposes. The theme was a commercial success in the movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

The excavation crew found a system of tunnels, labyrinths and secret passages inside the Temple Mount. According to Millen and Juvelius(2), the openings to these subterranean passageways were so well sealed that without the help of the cipher, or secret code, contained in the Book of Ezekiel, which Juvelius had deciphered, they would have been impossible to find, since the artificial walls looked exactly like the natural rock. They found poisonous gas in the tunnels, although I believe that this was natural gas, such as is found in mineshafts. They encountered many traps which had been placed in the passageways to protect the hidden treasure. Also, the crew found vases, urns, lamps and other artifacts which were affixed with the royal seal of Solomon.

There are many inexplicable, powerful, mysterious qualities connected with the Ark of the Covenant. Millen and Juvelius believed that Moses knew about the radium, or other radioactive substance, that was used in the Ark. The cipher that Juvelius had solved confirmed this belief. The Levites, who were charged with caring for the Ark, had to safeguard themselves with special coveralls when they were near the sacred chest. In the Old Testament, there are many stories about the danger connected with the Ark. On one occasion, the Philistines, who defeated the Israelites in a battle, captured the Ark and carried it from Eben-ezer to Ashdod, and then "the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof." Then the Philistines carried the Ark of God to Gath and the same thing happened.

After keeping the Ark for seven months, the Philistines became weary of its devastating effects on their people and sent it back to the Israelites and "the Levites took down the Ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone." But in spite of their efforts, the Ark contaminated the area of Beth-shemesh, and the Lord "smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord, even He smote the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men; and the people lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter." According to Millen, the excavation crew experienced radiation effects under the Temple Mount, but unfortunately Millen did not explain them in his book.

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Another interesting matter in the Old Testament is the capture by the Israelites of the ancient Palestinian city of Jericho, where by use of the Ark and trumpets, the "walls came tumbling down!" Joshua, the leader of the Israelites, gives us an important detail in his biblical account: "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." What was the function of the Ark in this context? Was there some kind of deadly radiation, or perhaps some chemical substance, that contaminated the remains of Jericho's wall? In any event, Joshua warned his people not to touch them.

Millen also suggested that besides the radiation there was also an electric current in the Ark. An example of possible electric power is the following statement in the second Book of Samuel in the Bible: "Uzzah put forth his hand to the Ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the Ark of God."

If there is an opportunity for future excavations in the Temple Mount of Jerusalem, it is unlikely that they will be conducted according to the scheme of Juvelius, because all his original maps and directions have disappeared. Dr. Juvelius stated that they were stolen from him and that there was a spy among the members of his expedition who informed an outside person or organization of the expedition's activities. A high-ranking local official warned the expedition leader that some outsiders had incited the local populace to riot, which in fact occurred, causing the expedition to quit Jerusalem.

When Johan Millen wrote his book "On Right Tracks" he had been pressured to leave out some significant details. He supposedly placed his personal papers in a safe deposit box and bequeathed them to a Swedish theosophical society. When Millen died everybody expected that those papers would reveal many secrets concerning the Temple Mount expedition, but when the safe deposit box was opened, it was totally empty! The members of the theosophical society attempted to investigate the matter, but to no avail.

Obviously some international organization or secret society used every possible means to prevent the Ark of the Covenant from being discovered, and so far has succeeded. We can only guess as to what the organization is. Dr. Valter Juvelius sincerely believed that an enormous amount of relics and valuable historical exhibits thousands of years old is hidden under the holy city of Jerusalem and that such items, if discovered, would be crucial for the understanding of our civilization and for science.

References:

- (1) Johan Millen, On Right Tracks (in Swedish only), Stockholm, 1917.
- (2) Heikki Kentta (pseudonym of Valter Juvelius), A White Camel (in Finnish), Helsinki, 1916.

SOLAR CALCULATOR MEMBERSHIP CARD now available for a contribution to the Society of US\$15. This offer is valid only so long as our supply lasts. Credit card size, the calculator is equipped with 4 Panasonic solar cells - needs no batteries. Eight digit LCD display with full memory calculation; adds, subtracts, multiplies and divides, plus percent keys and square root. Instructions in English and German.

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