

## 5. So What was Before the Big Bang? A Genesis One Overhaul

In the beginning X “made” the invisible and the visible, void, darkness, wind, waters, light, day, night, sky, land, plants, sun, moon, sea creatures, birds, land animals, humans – male and female X “created” them. And X saw that it was good.

It is curious that so many people have been seduced into taking the opening chapter of the Bible literally or scientifically. Yes, science is there, the science of about 26 centuries ago. What is also there is poetry, metaphor, imagination, and a great trust that every “thing” has ONE Source, not two or three. Furthermore, every “thing” that comes from that ONE Source is “good.” That is what the poem says.

The Bible begins with this surprisingly radical statement – that existing and goodness are joined. Humanity has departed from that vision and continues to invent fresh ways of departing from that vision on a daily basis. Some operate on the notion that male humans are good, but female humans are bad. Some operate on the notion that female humans are good, but male humans are bad. Some operate on the notion that playful kittens are good, but hungry tigers are bad. Some operate on the notion that gentle breezes are good, but hurricanes are bad. Some operate on the notion that birth and mother-nurture are good, but violence and death are bad. But Genesis One provides a challenge to all human-desire-based evaluation. What happened, what is happening, what will happen is good, trustworthy, high quality, our one-and-only life and death.

Yes, the opening chapters of the Bible are myths, but these myths are dealing with a vision of living that no mere science can handle. Science and scientific knowledge is good like everything else, but science cannot probe deeply enough to find an answer to these questions: (1) Does everything have ONE Source? And (2) is everything emerging from that ONE Source good?

If we do not feel the challenge of that basic mode of response to all of nature, to pain, to pleasure, to life, to death, we are out of touch with each and every verse that comes after these first verses of the Biblical literature. In the second story of creation, the more ancient one that follows the opening story, X is pictured “forming” man out of the dust and breathing into this form the breath of life. X plants a garden and places humans there to till it. X instructs them to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In other words, it is appropriate for humanity to remain ignorant of what value life has or what value death has or what value pain has or what value pleasure has. All is good from the perspective of X. The human perspective is to be kept subservient to the grander perspective of X. But as we have all experienced, it takes we humans less than an afternoon to make our own human perspectives primary and to judge X, other humans, and ourselves by these “renegade” perspectives. We have all eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in our soul-connection to X we have died a terrible death. We are on our way to the hell of having our renegade perspective judged by X. But X, so the story goes, has taken mercy on these renegades, sustained them, supported them in becoming plentiful, fed them, clothed them, and from time to time restored them to their beginnings – to an appropriate ignorance before the invisible, unknowable perspective of X.

Why should we take Biblical scriptures seriously, even if we can translate them, as I have just done, into the metaphorical language of our era? In fact, why should we take seriously any talk about X, where X means the Final Mysterious Void out of which all things come and into which all things return? Why reflect on any topic so huge and so demanding as all that? Indeed, why can't we just be content with what we can know through contemporary science, or what we think we know through contemporary science?

First of all, it is helpful to notice that the Mysteriousness of our existence is not avoided by studying science. As a matter of fact, a scientist, who is also awake to the humanity of his work as a scientist, can notice layers of Mystery that others of us miss. As many scientists have admitted, "The more we know about nature, the more we know that we don't know." Einsteinian physics shocked Newtonian sensibilities, and quantum mechanics shocked even Einstein. The oddities of quantum mechanics may be made less odd, some physicists hope, when physics can move another layer deeper. But other physicists warn that when that deeper level comes into view, we may prefer to return to the more "rational" world of quantum mechanics. My view of all this is that the human mind evolved on Earth to deal with those mid-range matters that affect our survival, and as we humans explore the far reaches of the microcosm or the macrocosm we discover a very strange "nature" that is beyond the capacities of the human mind to fathom. Our mathematics, powerful though it is to reveal the order of many things, is simply moving out of its depth. The objective actuality in which we dwell is mysterious to a degree that our modern knowledge, vast as it is when compared to the ancients, is still as nothing at all before the fullness of Reality with that capital "R."

So we quite appropriately use mythic or metaphorical language to express our sensibilities about the final Mysteriousness in which we dwell. For example, even a precocious child, when learning about the Big-Bang dawning of the cosmos, might ask, "So what was before the Big Bang?" We might try to explain that this question cannot be answered, because before time began there was no "before." Or we might try to be helpful by launching into this amusing mythology, "Before the Big Bang, there was just the Infinite Silence."

That might not fully satisfy the child in us all. We might hear this follow-up question arise, "So where is the Infinite Silence Now?" A creative myth-maker can easily give answer that, "The Infinite Silence is everywhere. It is the background in which all bangs, big and little, sound. Every tiny or huge vibration is sounding within this overarching Infinite Silence."

"So can we hear the Infinite Silence?" "Yes, but we have to get very quiet. We have to close our eyes and let our mind's activities be ignored until our awareness just notices our awareness being aware, then we can sense the Infinite Silence."

Indeed, we can also be aware of the Infinite Stillness in which all movements move. We can be aware of the Infinite Every-Thing-Ness in which all discernible things cohere. In our deep absolutely mysterious awareness, we can be aware of our participation in this objective Mysteriousness. As some ancient Hindu mystics put it, there is a subjective "Atman" Mysteriousness and goes along with an objective "Brahman" Mysteriousness. Furthermore, this objective Brahman and our subjective Atman are one Mysteriousness. "THAT I AM." THAT (Brahman) and I (Atman) are inseparably joined. I have diverted our attention to this Hindu inquiry in order to further convince the reader that, with their primal myths the Biblical authors were expressing universal sensibilities that are not limited to Arabian culture or to any religious community. We are exploring something we might call the "essence" of being human, a mysterious essence that precedes thinking about it.

Perhaps we need to express these profound awarenesses in more simple terms. Maybe you have been in a redwood forest of giant trees. Standing within this cathedral of giant living beings, the Presence of this Mysterious Every-Thing-Ness can be felt as an uneasiness and fascination down deep in one's solar plexus. Or perhaps you have been in the room when a new human being was born. There were just three people in the room, and then there were four. You might find something about this experience more amazing than the simple biological facts of birth. Or perhaps you have been at the death bed of another human being and have had the opportunity to notice that a

person was there, and then he or she was not there. Indeed, experiences of the Presence of this Infinite Mysteriousness can be even more ordinary. In the movie *American Beauty* a young man who was a home movie hobbyist filmed a brick wall in front of which a single piece of paper was tossing randomly in the wind and this paper continued to do so for the longest time. The young photographer and the girl to whom he was showing this film were both fascinated by this rather simple yet strange going-on-ness. The young couple in this film, along with those of us watching the film, find ourselves to be aware creatures who are watching the unlikely proceedings of Being. We find that we can watch ourselves as watchers who watch ourselves and others watching.

When we dare to peer into this Mysterious Presence, we can begin to grasp the relevance of the Biblical poetry about God, about a Oneness that cannot be escaped or defeated. We can notice that this intense noticing brings forth something worth noticing about our own being. Each of us is a Mystery noticer. Each of us has this enigmatic connection with the Infinite. We can say that we are sons and daughters of the Infinite. When we are aware of the enigmatic Every-Thing-Ness, we are not looking at a mere creation of our own puny minds. We are (mythologically speaking) communing with our "Maker," who, even as we watch, is creating us.

Yes, "Maker and made" is a myth. This cannot be literal science. We are using a human metaphor. We are using our own down-to-Earth experience of being a "maker of made things" to tell about a beyond-human-reason experience that blows our puny minds. With this experience, we can begin to have insight into the paradox of being both biologically human and something strangely divine. We may recall that Jesus was said to be both fully human and fully divine. We may have forgotten that it was also said that Jesus was first among many brothers and sisters. Fully human and fully divine was also the state of the followers of Jesus who embody his life quality. Even people who lived before Jesus were said to be "in Him." Yes, many who never heard of Jesus have been said to be "like Him," sons and daughters of the Infinite. Jesus was a living biological person just like us, but he is also, like Buddha, like Mohammed, like Moses, like others, a symbol of that profound humanity for which all of us were made, and are being made anew in this moment.

Genesis One is not simply about the beginning of the cosmos, it is about an intuition of the ongoing making that generates our lives. Genesis One is a big poem about the Enigmatic Source of all that we see going on. The authors of Genesis One use ancient science to construct their poem. We can rewrite their poem using our own contemporary science. And as we try that, we can notice that the old poem really had only two things to say: (1) All things are coming into being from ONE sheer Mystery and (2) those things are good. So, here is my poem:

### **A Genesis One Overhaul**

The Infinite Silence spoke  
"Let there be light."  
and the Black Abyss gleamed  
with a single spot  
of trillion degree illumination.

Curving where-when expanded and  
swirled into being a hundred billion  
galaxies of fiery suns.

Then super suns exploded  
into super novas of mega-brilliance,  
assembling the elemental parts  
of future planets.

And to the expanded consciousness

of future beings,  
the Infinite Silence spoke again,  
"All this is good;  
it is very, very, very good."

Cascading rocks and ices  
sphered themselves into a molten  
plasma with gassy skin.  
Cooling vapors rained down  
oceans upon the rocks and sands  
below the bluing skies.

And the Infinite Silence spoke yet again,  
"All this is good;  
it is very, very, very good."

Along the beaches of massive oceans,  
swamps of thickening chemical soup  
assembled the larger molecules  
of self-responding beings.

Spheres and oblongs of living substance  
exploded into billions of life experiments  
along the warmer shores of the waters  
that surfaced this sphere of  
gas-enveloped  
metallic-cored rock.

And the Infinite Silence spoke yet again,  
"All this is good;  
it is very, very, very good."

Life had learned first to fire itself  
with decaying complexity,  
but soon expanded its grasp to basking in sun rays  
and later to breathing in the oxygen-enriched air  
which life itself had established.

Multicellular stems and trees of living growths  
sprouted up in seas and spread to dry lands.  
And as life learned to swim and crawl and fly,  
water, land, and air were filled  
with interacting forms of living action.

And the Infinite Silence spoke yet again,  
"All this is good;  
it is very, very, very good."

Deep, deep into the calendar of time,  
life became aware of being alive,  
aware of the destiny of all living beings,  
the destiny to soon become unalive,  
and to return again  
to the gassy, watery dust.

Self-aware life gazed into the Infinite Silence  
into the Dark Abyss,  
into the Blazing Fullness of vast and busy interaction.  
And self-aware life, filled with dread and fascination,  
embraced the courage to hear the Infinite Silence  
say once again,

"All this is good;  
it is very, very, very good."