# Bishop Sheen Questions Why God Chose to Visit Earth

#### (Second in Series)

Courier Journal - Friday, Jan. 10, 1969

## Why This Tiny Earth?

Newton knocked the boundaries out of space, and Darwin knocked the edges off of time. We once thought the earth was the center of this cosmos with the sun revolving around it. Aristarchus, three centuries before Christ, doubted this, but no one picked up the idea until Copernicus 2000 years later. Now we know that our system, with the sun as the center, is insignificant compared \* with the gigantic galaxies and other planetary systems in space.

If the sun were as large as a pumpkin, the earth would be large as a pea circling the pumpkin at a distance of 233 feet. In order to get some idea of the expanse of the universe we must forget miles and talk of light years. Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. It takes a little more than a second for light to reach the moon; light can travel around the earth 71/2 times in a second. But it would take 11 years for a beam of light to reach a constellation known as 61 CYGNI. It is 11 light years away.

A light year is the distance light travels in a year at a speed of 186,000 miles a second. Multiply this for yourself, through seconds, minutes, hours and days, and you will find that one light year is nearly 6 million million miles. The vastness of the cosmos is beyond human imagination, for the nearest galactic system to our own is 1,500,000 light years away. Astronomers surmise that 2,500,000,000 years ago a number of primordial planets broke up, and one of the bits of debris became the earth, and another became the moon.

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Since we Americans are tremendously impressed both with speed and size, the problem of why the earth was chosen for the only human life we know, and as the cave for a cradle of the God-man and the pivot for His Cross, is difficult to understand

Why should God have bothered with the Benjamin of planets, the "least of the brethren" as the stage whereon to reenact the choice: "Which-shall I release to you?" Why was that little patch of land along the Mediterranean selected, which is as transient in the geological story of the earth as the flicker of a candle? Anyone who knows the expanse of space may well wonder why the earth was chosen for the Creator of Space to become confined in swaddling bands.

Actually, astronomy only underlines our wonder. As the Psalmist of old cried out:

"I look up at Your heavens, made by

Aubrey-de Vere asks earth:---"Too small for Love?" Was earth too small to be of God created? Why then too small to be redeemed?'

Alice Meynell rather takes pride in the election of earth: 🥜

'Of His earth-visiting Feet None knows the secret, cherished, perilous The terrible, shamefaced, freightened,

whispered, sweet, Heart-shattering secret of His way with

No planet knows than this. Our wayside planet, carrying land and

wave Love and life multiplied, and pain and • bliss.

Bears, as chief treasure, one forsaken grave.

O, be prepared my soul To read the inconceivable, to scan

The million forms of God those stars unroll

When in our turn, we show to them a Man.

Everyone knows the charming simple poem of Francis Thompson in which these lines are asked of the Babe in the Crib:

"How did it feel like to be. Out of heaven and just like me? I should think that I would cry For my house all made of skies."

Mary Dixon Thayer pictures Divine Love rising from the Throne of God, trodding the starry spaces to come to earth-

"Did-not the stars-grow-faint, O-Love, As Thou didst pass them by? Along the streaming Milky Way Did not the spheres cry out, 'O stay' . . . Yet in the corridors of space Love did not hesitate, On starry breasts He did not rest, But hastened on upon Love's quest.

And comets - meeting Him - were late At their appointed place. The Love unto our earth drew near -Our tiny little earth that lies So tangled in the thread of years, So stained with human blood and tears,

And to the wonder of the skies-Love said, I shall pause here."

But poetry only increases our wonder but answers not why "love should pause here". There is no-answer because we are dealing with Divine mysteries. But some reflections will help:

## **1.—God Humbles the Great**

God has chosen what the world calls foolish to shame the wise; He Has chosen what the world calls weak to shame the strong; He Has chosen things of little-strength and small repute, yes, and even things which have no real existence, to explode the pretensions of things that are - that no man may boast in His presence." (1 Cor: 1/27-29; James 2/5)

## 2.-Why Was Israel Chosen?

We find this principle worked out in another area. As we ask why, of all the planets, the earth was chosen, we might also inquire: why, of all the peoples on earth were the Jews chosen to be the vehicle of Revelation and the coming of the Son of God? Egypt, Persia, Greece, Syria and Rome were all successively their masters; yet of Israel alone was it said: "The Lord, your God, has chosen you to be a people for His possession, and of all the peoples on the face of the earth." The election was out of pure love.

He even chose the "worm-Jacob" (Isaiah 4/14) as the symbol of Israel and the giver of the Promise. He chose a woman's foot to crush the dragon. Why did He give importance to the remnant of Israel, to the few faithful? Why did God make us from the rubbish of His working day and permit even His most devoted to be treated as the "scum of the earth, the dregs of humanity"? (1 Cor. 4/13) Why did God also choose "the least of the cities of Israel" in which to be born?

## 3.—Why Were We Chosen?

After inquiring why Israel should be chosen, there is still a greater mystery. Why was I chosen? Why were you chosen? Each of us may ask: Am I the best and the holiest of persons in the world? Are there not many more men and women far more deserving of Holy Communion than I?- There are millions with cleaner garments than I who could worthily stand at Your Eucharistic table, 0 Lord.

There are souls in India, China and Africa who would have responded far better to the Light. Others remain in the outer orbits of Grace, like far off planets; others are in closer orbits, like our solar system. But who am I to be a cell in the Body-of-Christ-under-the-guidance-of-His-visible head and breathing with the soul of His Spirit?

## Are Other Planets Inhabited?

'At present there is no scientific evidence that" other planets are inhabited: C. S. Lewis, on this possibility, writes: "I have no pleasure in looking forward to a meeting between humanity and any alien, rational species. I. observe how the white man has hitherto threatened the black, and, Lord, even among civilized men, the stronger have misweaker. If we encounter, in the depth of space, a race, however innocent and amiable, which is technologically weaker than ourselves, I do not doubt that the same revolting story will be repeated. We shall enslave, deceive, exploit or exterminate; at the very least we shall corrupt it with our vices and infect it with our diseases

have filles our own with massacre, torture, syphiilis, famine, dust bowls and all that is hideous to eye and ear. Must we go on to infect new realms?"

If there are other realms which we do not reach. but which are innocent, they would not need Re demption. They would be sheep without a Shep. herd; disciples without a Judas; healthy who need no physician. If we discovered them they could teach us if we were humble.

But the fact remains that this is the only planet. on which man is and on which the Cross was set up to make him whole again. Love is more important than space, for to paraphrase the famous Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: "If I should have the thrust to project a rocket to the moon if I should have the power to tell the secret of the stars and to land on a floating cinder in space; if I should give my body to be burned in a space ship, and have not love, I achieve precisely nothing. Love is the one thing that stands when all else has fallen."

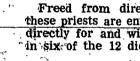
## The More Mysterious Flight

Maybe, when all space flights are completed and we have set our flag and foot on other stars, we will have missed, in our pride, that the greatest flight of all is our flight from God. We are not in search of Him; He is in search of us. We are not the pursuers; we are the refugees. The first question in Scripture Is: "Man, where are you?" The second is: "Where is your brother?" Our space ship is named Superbia or Pride; its fuel is the Ego; its launching pad is MY WILL; its dizzyorbit is Self.-

No one can answer why, out of all the innum. erable hosts of stars, Divinity should have taken flight to earth; but neither can we answer why we fly from Faith, from Love and from Pardon.

Is not this the Mysterious Flight so well described by Thompson:

- "I fled Him, down the nights and down the days; I fled Him down the arches of the years. I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears I hid from Him, and under running -laughter, Up vistaed hopes I sped; And shot, precipitated,
- Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears, From those strong Feet, that followed, followed after .
- . : . A voice comes yet more fleet
- 'Lo! naught contents thee who content'st
  - not Me'—"



Father O'Brien.

St. Michael's Rect



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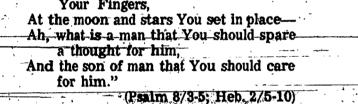
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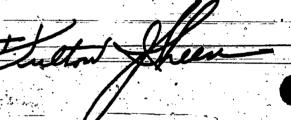
Sheen.



The poets, too, labored with this question.

God seems to act foolishly in the face of the pride of man. His values are so different from ours. St. Paul reminded the first members of the Church of Corinth that they were not the smartest people in Corinth: "You Christians do not-see among you many of the wise (according to the world's judgment) nor many of the ruling class, nor many from the noblest families . . . But

"We are not fit yet to visit other worlds. We



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Father O'Brien, Mrs. Thomas M. ( brook Dr., Irondeq June 6, 1964.

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Astronauts



By FATHER E. C

"The brightness made itself manife our mind by the m made flesh." (Th face)

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## **CHURCH HUMOR**



c-A third cause of my personal apathy is embaranment that in so many parishes music is so low-grade. unprepared and badly executed.

The Church officially believes that singing is an important step toward

illes involved were most appreciative. They had no Catholic background The gifts made their Christmas somewhat happier.

Carmen J. Viglucci

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Thanks again for thinking of the Secular Mission but above all for realizing that the rural areas have

