

Life on Other Planets

Gary Moore

"In the Beginning, God created the Heaven and the Earth . . ."

—GENESIS.

A GLOWING, bulbous sphere hurtles through timeless darkness. On the surface of this globe, seas of molten rock bubble forth incandescent gases and sulphurous fumes. A planet, which will one day be called Earth, is being born.

Time passes. Earth cools. The crust of the Earth is now solid and barren. Steam hisses out of the rock crevices to join the thick layers of heavy black clouds overhead. The groan of the cooling rock is matched by the rolling thunder from above. Nervous lightning flickers about the sky. The tension is broken by a single raindrop as it spatters onto the hot rock surface. The first drop is followed by countless others as the sky pours down a great cooling deluge. The water smooths the jagged rocks, carrying away precious elements to form warm salty seas. And here, in these warm seas, the greatest miracle of Creation is about to take place. Life is about to begin its wonderful cycle on Earth. . . .

Why should such a great and overpowering miracle be confined to our dust-mote of a world? Is the egotism of Mankind so great as to deny the possibility of life on other planets? In earlier times, when Earth was believed to be the center of the Universe, with all the other heavenly bodies circling around it, the peculiarity of life to Earth seemed reasonable. Today, however, Earth is known to be the third of nine planets circling a yellow star on the rim of a great wheel-shaped galaxy which is only one of many star systems in the unfathomable Universe. Earth is by no means the center of the cosmos. Yet there are many people who maintain that Earth is the only planet capable of supporting life. A few of them will grudgingly admit the possibility of simple plant life on Mars, but they insist that no higher forms could exist anywhere except on Earth. The skeptics argue that Mercury is too hot, Venus has formaldehyde in the upper atmosphere, Mars has too little oxygen, and all the planets beyond have crushing gravities, poisonous atmospheres, and fantastically low temperatures.

I can see no reason why life should be confined to a restricted set of conditions. Even on our own planet, there are organisms which survive in so-called "hostile" environments. Microscopic yeast plants, for example, are able to carry on growth, reproduction, and all the other life processes, *without oxygen!* The giant squid, the angler fish, and other deep-sea animals live at pressures which would crush a human being. These organisms are living proof of the adaptability of life.

No one can say with certainty that it is impossible for life to adopt the form of a methane-breathing organism, capable of living

in the crushing gravity of Jupiter. Life on another world might even have a silicon body-chemistry rather than the familiar organic hydrocarbons of Earthly species.

Those who argue against the possibility usually overlook a very pertinent fact. Ours is not the only solar system in the Universe. If we overlook the possibility of the development of life in the alien environments of our own solar system, there is still an excellent chance for the existence of life on other worlds. The number of stars in our own galaxy (the "Milky Way") is beyond conception. The number of stars in all the galaxies of the Universe is truly infinite. Each of these stars is a sun. Some are red giants, some are unbelievably dense white dwarfs, some are like our own sun. Of all the suns which are similar to ours, there must be some with planets. Surely, some of these planets must, according to the law of averages, have environmental conditions favorable to the development of life.

Where life exists, progress exists. The horse has developed from a small fox-like beast to a swift and powerful animal. Man has developed from a dim-witted Hominid to a creature capable of questioning the order of the Universe. If our God is a logical God, why should He reserve this miracle of evolution for a tiny planet in the backwoods of the galaxy? Just as God is Universal, His miracles must also be Universal. Surely, then, life must exist elsewhere in that star-filled infinity. Perhaps, somewhere, other minds are wondering about the possibility of life on other planets.

The Room

Linda Ballard

"AND THIS is a typical room on the second floor." The guide opened the door for the visitors touring the women's dormitory. Immediately she wished she hadn't. But it was too late. The door was open. In marched the five women who, though of various shapes and sizes, gave a general appearance of matronly uniformity, each equipped with a large, economy-size handbag and a hat whose designer had either been intoxicated or in the throes of some strange seizure of madness when he created it. The guide flinched at the expression on their faces as they first confronted the room.

"Two Jordan students live here," she apologetically explained, "Jordan College of MUSIC."

The women looked at the room with an interest colored with horror and distaste. A short woman in a light blue sailboat-shaped hat let out an exclamation.

"Oh! My Heavens!"

The other women turned to look at the thing that had excited this outburst. They followed her fixed gaze to a corner in which, entwined