

20th July 2020

Stars

“Thence we came forth to see the stars again.”

Dante, Inferno XXXIV

From data gathered from the Plank spacecraft in 2017, we know that the Composition of the Universe is: 4.9% ordinary matter; 25.9% cold dark matter; 69.1% dark energy. I have absolutely no idea what that means!

From the Big Bang to Black Holes, from theoretical cosmologists to astrophysicists, from Galileo to Hubble, from *The Sky at Night* to *The Big Bang Theory*, there's an awful lot of the Universe around at the moment – most of which I have no clue about whatsoever. Even though clever people from Sir Patrick Moore to Brian Cox do their best to explain things in simple ways that people like me can understand, I'm still completely lost ...

A recent report tells us that, because air pollution has dropped in recent weeks, “many of us have taken to star-gazing”. So, maybe we should all gaze in wonder at the stars when we can, and not worry too much whether we comprehend the whys and wherefores of our amazing universe.

One of my favourite hymns contains these lines:

*O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hand has made;
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.*

There are times when I don't understand the God part either, despite more clever people doing their best to explain things in simple ways that people like me can understand. So, I just stand and look “in awesome wonder” at our universe – beauty and colour; vastness and complexity; intricacies and mysteries. I look at the stars, think about my God, and stop worrying about how much I know or understand.

“Thence we came forth to see the stars again”, wrote Dante. So, join me “in awesome wonder” once again. It's amazing what's on display!

A prayer for today

Woods and glades, birds and mountains, brooks and breezes ... What a universe! So sings my soul, and amazement is my adoration and wonder is my worship. Amen

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