

# faith

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**Pro-Life Strategy and Arguments for the Soul**  
Editorial

**Science and Modern Threats to the Human Person**  
Dylan James

**Science, Magisterium and the Advent of Man**  
Roger Peck

**The Christian Doctrine of Creation and  
the Debate over Darwinism**  
an interview with Michael Hanby

## **OTHER ANGLES**

Philippe Jobert on the soul at conception  
Anthony Ozimic on a pro-life victory over the UN & EU

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<b>Pro-Life Strategy and Arguments for the Soul</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Editorial</i>	
<b>Science and Modern Threats to the Human Person</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Dylan James</i>	
<b>Science, Magisterium and the Advent of Man</b>	<b>18</b>
<i>Roger Peck</i>	
<b>The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Debate Over Darwinism</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>An Interview with Michael Hanby</i>	
<b>The Truth Will Set You Free</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>"Preaching on Abortion" – Timothy Finigan</i>	
<b>A Mother's Diary</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Fiorella Nash</i>	
<b>Letters</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>To the Editor</i>	
<b>Comment on the Comments</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>William Oddie</i>	
<b>Sunday by Sunday</b>	<b>39</b>
<i>Our regular guide to the Word of God in the Sunday Liturgy</i>	
<b>Book Reviews</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>Cyprian Blamires on a challenge to the long term legacy of some major 20th century Catholic thinkers; Philip Miller on the importance of recognising the harmony between faith and science; Ryan Day digs out some gems in a dense work on the reasonableness of religion.</i>	
<b>Notes From Across The Atlantic</b>	<b>45</b>
<i>A survey of religious and public life in America by Richard Neuhaus</i>	
<b>Cutting Edge</b>	<b>47</b>
<i>The American Debate</i>	
<b>Faith Online</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Highlighting Catholic resources on the World Wide Web</i>	

Plus **OTHER ANGLES** from Anthony Ozimic p.22 and Philippe Jobert p.28

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# PRO-LIFE STRATEGY AND ARGUMENTS FOR THE SOUL

*"What is Man that you should keep him in mind; mortal man that you should visit him?" (Psalm 8)*

*"Only an anthropology which makes a clear distinction between men and animals can be the foundation of a coherent pro-life vision. It is this apologetic that has been missing during the rise of anti-life culture.."*

## Abortion Strikes at the Root of Human Identity

One dimension of the anti-life culture to which Church documents and pro-life movements in general have, as yet, paid little attention is the denial of the spiritual soul in each human person. Much pro-life argument focuses on the contradiction inherent in the liberal secular fight for the 'human rights' of various adult minority groups whilst simultaneously denying the most basic right to life to the unborn. Such pro-life argument typically points out that to justify this pro-abortion position by claiming that the unborn child is not human is at best biologically incoherent and at worst dangerously self-defeating philosophical myopia.

This approach to pro-life propaganda characteristically goes on to affirm that in addition to killing an innocent person, abortion undermines the inalienable dignity of every human being, adults as well as the unborn. As the very notion of the definitive value of the human person is eroded, the concept of absolute right and wrong is lost from legal principle and social practice. And it is undoubtedly true that maintaining concepts of absolute moral value, of objective right and wrong is the only intelligible basis upon which you can protect and promote the flourishing of every member of the human community. To exclude one person is to undermine all.

Yet such pro-life polemic still does not deal with what is a major contributory factor of the modern anti-life mentality. Agnosticism about human dignity and objective morality in various forms plays a significant role in the justification and promotion of 'abortion rights' around the world. The ever widening range of so called 'rights' and correspondingly diminishing range of duties is a sign that the whole concept has lost its moorings in our society.

As Fr Dylan James brings out later in this issue, the justification of 'human rights' today is less and less grounded on the objective nature of Man and more and more on the shifting sands of utilitarianism. And Jeremy Bentham, the founder of British utilitarianism, famously said that "human rights is nonsense - on stilts!" In such a confused milieu, merely pointing out that abortion undermines human dignity fails to press the right intellectual buttons.

## Doubts about the Difference between Humans and Animals.

Unless this fundamental agnosticism about human nature is effectively challenged, the momentum of the anti-life movement would appear unstoppable. Many pro-life advocates and resources can unwittingly allow this flawed anthropology to prosper because they do not offer any proof or argument for the existence of the spiritual soul, which is the only rational ground for a uniquely human 'personhood'.

Some might argue that it is not the place of pro-life movements to engage with such philosophical, even, theological issues, and to do so risks alienating pro-life materialists, even that it might appear to denigrate the human body. Yet as we approach the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary later this year of the British abortion act it is a good time to reassess our approach.

For most people in modern Britain, the basic definition of what is human is increasingly confused and conflictual. The boundary between animal and human dignity is increasingly blurred. The public consensus veers between sympathy for animal rights – although it is only some animals that are included, you do not hear much about the ‘rights’ of insects and spiders, for example – and uncertainty about the moral boundaries surrounding human life and death – although, of course, outright murder is still regarded as a crime. Yet most pro-life teaching and debating strategy seems to *assume* the transcendent value of human life and identity. When addressing the average secular British citizen, we simply cannot make that assumption, because the modern anti-life ethic has been forged in a culture that is increasingly materialistic and relativistic at its core.

In traditional Catholic thought, it is precisely the spiritual soul that makes us qualitatively different from animals, grounding our eternal destiny in the Life of God and giving a communal and vocational value to our life on earth. In order to challenge the agnosticism which fosters the ‘pro-choice’ mentality, we urgently need a reasoned and reasonable defence of the inalienable value of the human person based on sound, contemporary arguments for the spiritual soul.

#### Recent Pro-life Polemics

Last summer this writer attended a European pro-life seminar. Excellent cultural analyses were followed by a question time. At this point the largely Catholic panel was asked to explain the basis of the unique dignity of the human species in a way that was accessible to non-Christians. They attempted some tentative answers, one even suggesting that ‘Process Theology’ might help, but they were clearly unprepared for the task.

In 2006 the inspiring American group “Catholics and Evangelicals Together” published an agreed statement entitled *That They May Have Life*. It is a noble document, making numerous excellent points based on both reason and revelation, acknowledging that pro-life politics is “supported by reasons that are accessible to all and should be convincing to all”. However, it sets out only to answer the question: “which human beings ... possess rights that we are bound to respect?”, without addressing whether and why any beings at all should have such rights.

Many of the objections put forward by pro-life agencies in Britain against recent euthanasia Bills gave precedence to the ‘thin end of the wedge’ type of argument, often pointing to Holland as a worst case example. Against the *Mental Capacity Bill*, for example, a powerful case was put forward arguing that respect for the will of the

patient was being legally and morally undermined - but not why the individual’s will is relevant, let alone why it should be inviolable. Pro-lifers protest rightly that the social value of the individual enshrined in our centuries old legal tradition is being eroded by various anti-life measures, but unfortunately less importance has been placed on defending the value of human nature *per se* by arguments from natural reason.

#### Secular Human Rights: Standing on Shaky Ground

Ignatius Press’s *Catholic World Report* carries an insightful “Last Word” penned by one ‘Diogenes’. In the January 2006 edition he examines a piece written by Ann Furedi, the director of the UK’s principle abortion provider the, partly Government funded, BPAS (British Pregnancy Advisory Service). He discerns a Lady Macbeth-like “moral desperation” and psychological denial in her pushing of the “abortion *rights*” agenda so strongly as to be blatantly self-contradictory by then denying any rights to the unborn.

A lengthy quotation from Ms Furedi begins: “For those of us who emerged from a progressive humanist tradition, ‘rights’ designates the requirements for participation in bourgeois, democratic society.” As Hamlet put it: *Ay, there’s the rub!* Her apparently firm affirmation of certain rights is a self-conscious social construct, culturally specific and thoroughly post-modern. On this humanistic and historically contingent basis there is actually a certain logic in applying ‘rights’ only to some human beings.

Of course from an objective standpoint we know that the whole mentality is warped. The humanist concept of ‘rights’ is indeed ultimately no more than a temporarily agreed consensus. It may well be true that self-consciousness about standing on such shaky ground is the reason why the talk of a woman’s ‘right’ to abortion services has become an uncritical mantra, rising to a aggressive assertion when challenged, for this kind of feminist. But we need to be able to demonstrate the flaws in the logic and to make a case for the objectivity that is missing. It is not enough just to point out the “desperation” and denial evidenced in the likes of Ms Furedi’s shrill campaigning.

Ms Furedi and those who think like her will always find a degree of justification for their position until they are shown that the idea of human rights is not a mere social contract based on the will of a politically and historically transient majority. Only then will they see the need to extend the most basic right of all to every human being, from conception to natural death.

#### The Retreat of American Catholicism

In the Summer/Fall 2006 edition of the *Human Life Review* there is a typically thought-provoking article, which has received plaudits from the incisive pen of Richard John Neuhaus in the January issue of *First Things*. George McKenna's "*Crisis Cross: Democrats, Republicans and Abortion*" charts the tragic loss to American Pro-Life activism of a generation of Catholic Democrats who came of age during the 60's Civil Rights movement and the 70's rise of the feminist movement.

Their loyalty to the Democratic party was rooted in the party's commitment to social justice. McKenna links their preparedness to accept the Democratic Party's adoption of an unambiguous pro-abortion policy in 1980 to four further causes: (i) an inferiority complex towards their "secular humanist" "soul mates (in) the civil rights movement" who "dismissed (Catholic) concerns about killing unborn children."; (ii) their partial assimilation of Teilhard de Chardin's view of the inevitable progress of history; (iii) the historical tension between Catholicism and the traditionally Protestant and economically exploitative Republican party which, under Reagan, became the pro-life party; and (iv) the fairly sudden capitulation of Archbishop, then Cardinal, Bernadin supported by most Bishops.

#### Crisis and Betrayal Inside the Camp

In the mid-1970's Bernadin stated that "the obligation to safeguard human life arises not from religious or sectarian doctrine, but from universal moral imperatives concerning human dignity ...", and trumpeted the right to life as the most fundamental of all rights. However, by the early 80's he was downplaying the abortion issue as the key 'life' issue. Prescience about the Cardinal's capitulation may, it seems, have emboldened the Democratic Party to take such a clear-cut pro-abortion stance.

McKenna uses the group behaviour theory of sociologists Erikson and Durkheim to explain how this led "Catholic liberals in the Democratic party uncomplainingly (to) accept the party's pro-abortion plank ... (and) to explain why the Bishops ... shut their mouths ...". But this diagnosis makes the Bishops and liberal Catholics look too easy a push-over. How was it that the Bishops could so quickly downplay the traditional view that the pro-life position arose from "universal moral imperatives concerning human dignity"? How was it that politically aware Catholics, even if increasingly lapsed, found the secular humanist's pro-abortion position so hard to argue against?

Surely the intellectual influence of Catholic thinkers who tended to confuse matter and spirit, such as Teilhard and Rahner, is of greater relevance than McKenna acknowledges. The universal moral imperatives of scholastic thought,

which were inferred from the uniquely spiritual nature of man, were attacked as unreasonable by materialistic humanism, and modern Catholic thought was no longer sure of its own philosophical ground. The pen is mightier than group dynamics. Only an anthropology which makes a clear-cut distinction between men and animals can be the foundation of a coherent pro-life vision. It is this apologetic that has been missing during the rise of anti-life culture.

#### Catholic Tradition and the Soul

Our civilization's moral code was founded on Judaeo-Christian revelation, which in turn gave rise to a rational conviction that every human person is made in the image of God. Not that man was regarded as aloof from and alien to the rest of Nature. The human vocation to glorify God by sharing in the very Life of the Trinity places Man at the peak of creation, summing up and fulfilling the dignity and purpose of every creature under heaven. The dignity of man - and therefore the wrongness of killing innocent human beings - stands at the heart of natural law in the Christian dispensation, in contrast with the ancient pagan world. This *necessarily* entailed a radical distinction between human and animal life which could be clearly articulated. It was on this basis and this heritage that the second millennium concept of "human rights" was originally developed.

Jesus spoke about death of the soul as more to be feared than death of the body. From the fifth century onwards, Western Catholic thinkers have believed that each individual soul is immediately created by God. It does not emerge from bodily or genetic inheritance. Thomas Aquinas and the scholastic tradition further clarified that the soul is non-material and metaphysically distinct from the body. The soul is spiritual, that is it exists in the same personal order of being as God himself, albeit in a participated and contingent manner. It entails the power to love freely, to enter into communion and to form community. It is this capacity to build human communion in this life and for eternity which is the very purpose of creation. From this flows the fundamental value of each human person.

Scholasticism argued that this truth about the soul could be rationally inferred from the characteristic activity of 'abstract thought'. Thinking involved grasping universal 'forms', which were non-material, whereas physical sensation - the animal mode of 'knowing' - could only grasp local 'materiality', instinctively interacting individual to individual. So we could infer that thinking must be a non-physical action. Purely physical things, such as animals, are not made in the direct image of God, so they do not individually survive death, they do not have a personal destiny in God. Hence, while cruelty to animals

is an offence against Man's duty of care, we are permitted to eat them, for example.

### The Challenge from Modern Science

The rise of modern science put pressure on this traditional defence of the soul. As materialists dismissed the soul altogether, Christian thinkers felt the idea more and more to be an intellectual embarrassment, associating it with denigration of the body and a superstitious view of creation.

Influential theologians, from Teilhard through Karl Rahner to Herbert McCabe have cast doubt upon the metaphysical distinction of matter and spirit in Man. Teilhard depicted the ascent of evolution, including Man, as the complexification and intensification of a single twin faceted energy which simply emerges into a new and more spiritual (or "radial" as opposed to "tangential") dimension with the emergence of Man.

Rahner developed a related and similarly monist pattern of thought in which subjective Spirit is seen as 'going out' of Itself in the act of questioning so as to become objectified in the material realm. He actually called matter "frozen spirit". Matter then gradually "transcends itself" to become liberated once more as Spirit in the act of recognition and ultimate Self-acceptance. For Rahner, this dialectic not only encompasses but actually flows from God's own Being. "When God becomes Not-God, Man happens" he wrote. So, Man is God going out of Himself into the materiality of non-Being, and Jesus Christ is Man re-entering Divinity in the final synthesis of the Cosmic Dialectic. It is clever, but in the last analysis it is not Catholicism.

It is no surprise that Rahner struggled to give any unequivocal affirmation of the soul's individual survival after bodily death. Whilst philosophically more traditional, the Dominican McCabe shared the fashionable desire to let the distinction between body and soul in man slip out of usage. His prominent 1985 simple question and answer *New Catechism of Christian Doctrine* completely left out any mention of the human soul, in significant contrast with the old "Penny Catechism" of very similar name and format.

In our November/December 2006 issue we published a mainly positive review by Edmund Nash of the important *The Soul of the Embryo: An enquiry into the status of the human embryo in the Christian Tradition* by David Albert Jones. Nash carefully argued that Jones had, unfortunately, not faced the question: "Can natural reason convince a modern man that we are qualitatively different from animals?". It is significant that this lacuna has not been an issue for most other reviewers.

### Catholic Teaching Today

Later in this issue Pere Jobert quotes this important statement from a 1998 talk by the Servant of God Pope John Paul II:

"Anthropological reflection, in fact, leads to the recognition that, by virtue of the substantial unity of body and spirit, the human genome not only has a biological significance, but also possesses anthropological dignity, which has its basis in the spiritual soul that pervades it and gives it life."

The 1985 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Instruction on Respect for Human Life* states,

"By virtue of its substantial union with a spiritual soul, the human body cannot be ... evaluated in the same way as the body of animals ... The natural moral law expresses and lays down the purposes, rights and duties which are based upon the bodily and spiritual nature of the human person." (Introduction, section 3).

### The Teaching of John Paul II

Pope John Paul II quotes this document in his 1995 Encyclical letter *Evangelium Vitae*. Of course these statements express Catholic truth and they are welcome interventions in our cultural crisis, but, sadly, neither document grounds these points explicitly in reason. Neither does the 2004 International Theological Commission's *Human Persons Created in the Image of God*. Except for tentatively touching on the implications of modern science in paragraph 30, it spends more time sympathising with "present-day theology (which) is striving to overcome the influence of dualistic anthropologies that locate the *imago Dei* exclusively with reference to the spiritual aspect of human nature." (para. 27)

Pope John Paul II strikes a good balance in his "Discourse to the Working Group (concerning Brain Death)" in December 1985 when he says that the value of human life "springs from what is spiritual in man ... (the body) receives from a spiritual principle - which inhabits it and makes it what it is - a supreme dignity." (para. 14).

*Evangelium Vitae* states that "God's own image and likeness is transmitted thanks to the creation of the immortal soul." (para. 43). The Catechism of the Catholic Church confirms the Penny Catechism's emphasis that we are primarily ("most especially" CCC 363) in the image of God in our spiritual soul. The "human body (is such) precisely because it is animated by the spiritual soul." (364). It talks of the "profound" personal "unity of body and soul" and adds that "it is because of the spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living human body; spirit and matter in man ... (form) a single nature

... The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God." (365-6)

**Loss of Coherent Apologetics**

There has been a long tradition within Catholic catechesis of making a rational case for the immortal nature of man. Yet it is virtually nowhere to be found in popular post-Vatican II catechetical schemes. Belief in the spiritual soul is no longer prominent in the Catholic consciousness. This state of affairs not only fails to engage with the core issue at the heart of the culture of death, it also tacitly encourages agnosticism about life after death, human freedom, the ultimate nature of evil and the human need for prayer and religious practice.

The Catholic Church is the standard bearer of the fundamental dignity and right to life of every member of our species based on an objective and universal morality. She needs to make a renewed case for her teaching concerning the human soul. In this regard we do need to return to the essential outlines of the Thomistic tradition while developing its specific arguments and detailed categories in the light of modern science.

A significant reason for the catastrophic collapse of the old anthropology and its associated catechesis was this unrealised need for the perennial philosophy to be updated. We are convinced the decline of Catholic cultural influence cannot be ascribed to external pressures alone. We should at least consider the possibility of a fault line, not within Catholic doctrine itself, but in the way we present it.

**A New Vision**

We cannot repeat again the details of our modern argument for the human soul here. The September-October 2006 editorial of *Faith* and the Faith pamphlet *What Makes Man Unique?* rehearse the argument that modern science helps us to defend the distinction and

complementarity of physical body and spiritual soul in Man. These issues are not merely of academic interest. Inalienable human dignity can no longer be taken for granted in public discourse in the twenty-first century. We desperately need a coherent and fully elaborated vision which reaffirms the reality of the spiritual in Man, of the spiritual realm as a whole, and its relationship with a fully intelligible and Divinely constituted material realm.

Pope Benedict's New Year's Day 2007 Message for the World Day of Peace states that today peace

"is threatened by indifference as to what constitutes man's true nature. Many of our contemporaries actually deny the existence of a specific human nature and thus open the door to the most extravagant interpretations of what essentially constitutes a human being. Here too clarity is necessary ..."

And in his Angelus address for 28<sup>th</sup> January 2007 Pope Benedict talked of the existence of a

"limitation (of) human reason (which) produces a terrible schizophrenia, evident to all, because of which rationalism and materialism, and hypertechnology and unbridled instincts, coexist. It is urgent, therefore, to rediscover in a new way human rationality open to the light of the divine 'Logos' and to its perfect revelation that is Jesus Christ, Son of God made man. ... reason, illuminated by faith, finds the strength to rise to knowledge of God and of spiritual realities."

If we could only be open to such a grace, we might find ourselves better equipped to turn the tide of rapid moral decline in our civilization and fight back more effectively against the demonic onslaught upon human life and happiness which we rightly name the culture of death.

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# Science and Modern Threats to the Human Person

*Dylan James*

*Fr Dylan James discerns and rebuts the modern anti-life misuses of science, particularly concerning the beginning and end of human life. He discusses human hybrids, embryos, and brain death, highlighting the vital relevance of belief in the human soul.*

*Fr James recently completed a doctorate at the Alphonsianum in Rome, on the topic of personhood in bioethics, critiquing the views of Mary Warnock and John Harris. He is presently returning to a parish assignment in his diocese of Plymouth.*

*"There is sound scientific data to indicate that a person is instantiated at the first moment of fertilisation.... Personhood (also) continues even after the capacity for self-consciousness is lost. "*

## What is a Person?

Jesus was once asked, "Who is my neighbour?" (Lk 10:29). Modern versions of this same question arise today in bioethics. If we create a human-animal hybrid, will it be an animal we can experiment on, or, will it be 'my neighbour'? How might we know? Similarly, what about a comatose patient, or the collection of cells that makes up the early embryo? This article will summarise contemporary scientific data about the beginning and end of life and indicate what it shows about personhood, then it will comment on the personhood of hybrids. It will first outline some erroneous secular models of personhood, indicating why many secular bioethicists not only support abortion but also allow for infanticide.

The question of personhood is vital to contemporary ethical debates because 'persons' are those entities that bear 'rights', most specifically, the right to life. This said, the concept of personhood and rights has become fraught with confusion.

The United Nations' 1948 Declaration of Human Rights spoke of the "inherent dignity... rights... and worth of the human person". Similarly, the Catholic Church repeatedly extols the "rights inherent in every person".<sup>1</sup> To say that dignity and rights are 'inherent' is to say that they belong to someone in virtue of what he is: they are not something granted to him by others.

The above notion of 'inherent' personal dignity is something that used to be accepted throughout the modern world; however, many today question it. Mary Warnock, often referred to in the media as Britain's "philosopher queen", says that there are no 'natural rights'; rather, all rights are granted by the state or by someone. Thus, she says, there is no natural right to not be a slave. "It is essentially for society to *decide* who is a bearer of rights"<sup>2</sup> and the question of who is to be counted as a person is similarly "a decision that society has to make". It was such a notion that enabled the Nazis to decide that Jews, Gypsies and other non-Aryans were non-persons. If rights are granted by the state, then there is no court of appeal.

## Arbitrary Definitions

Another means of denying the personhood of many humans consists in choosing a particular facet of human existence that is said to be necessarily present for a human to be a person. The most popular facet appealed to by contemporary ethicists is the "self-consciousness requirement".<sup>3</sup> John Harris, for example, argues that if you cannot be self-conscious then you cannot value your life and cannot mind if your life is taken away from you.<sup>4</sup> Thus Harris and Michael Tooley are among the many who justify not only abortion but infanticide. Infants have no self-conscious desire to live and so do not have this desire 'thwarted' by being killed. There are two methodological problems with defining a person this way. First, the facet chosen to define personhood ends up being arbitrary. Different writers define personhood by different facets: self-consciousness, rationality, and neocortical function being but a few of the debated options. This thus reduces personhood to a matter of

decision (as Warnock's approach does). Second, and more fundamentally, such an approach to personhood only values healthy people, and excludes the weak, sick, and vulnerable. It is only healthy people who are defined as persons. Such an approach lends itself to creating an aristocracy of those considered to be healthy, attractive, and desirable. Such an approach values someone for what he *has* (health, beauty, intelligence, rationality) not for what he *is* (a human with inherent dignity).

The Catholic approach to personhood is rooted in a belief that dignity and rights are inherent in someone *naturally*. Contrary to Warnock, your rights should be *recognised* by other people, but you possess these rights whether or not someone else recognises them. People have a sense of a 'natural justice' that exists whether or not the law protects it, and such a sense is well-founded. A point even more fundamental to the Catholic position is the following: contrary to Harris, a person is defined by his 'type', not just by whether he is a healthily functioning specimen of his type. Philosophically, this means that a person is defined by his 'nature'. The standard Catholic definition of the person was offered by Boethius in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century: "A person is an individual substance of a rational nature".

### The Value of Persons

This definition raises a question: *Why* do beings with 'a rational nature' deserve respect? What about them implies dignity? A few brief comments in answer to this question follow.

From a Christian perspective, the answer to the above question relates to the image of God in the human being. According to the Genesis account, of all creation it was only man and woman that were made "to his image" (Gen 1:26). Thomas Aquinas notes that this image is not something merely extrinsic to man, it is not something imprinted *onto* him, rather, it is something that holds from the very *type* of being that he is: he is 'of a rational nature'. God, who is intellect, is also of a rational nature. Christian Faith teaches us about two types of beings made to God's image: angels and humans. Both are of a rational nature and are thus inherently "an image of the same species"<sup>5</sup> as God. Such 'persons' thus hold a dignity that separates them from the rest of creation. The *purpose* which Thomas sees in the image of God in man is to make him *capable* of turning to God. It is only in virtue of having an intellectual nature that man has "a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this consists in the very nature of mind, which is common to all men".<sup>6</sup>

If the above has briefly indicated why *Christians* should respect persons, what reasons might a non-Christian

accept? It can be conceded that Catholic apologetics has not yet focused enough on the answer to this question.

### Arguments for God and the Soul

For nearly two centuries Kant's notion of personal rights and inherent dignity has largely held sway in the western world, and christian thought has been able to enjoy the fact that secular thinkers promoted the notion of human dignity (even if they did so in a confused manner and for mistaken reasons). Today, however, Kant's notion of personal rights seems to have been largely superseded by Mill's utilitarianism. There seems to be no common ground in either metaphysical terminology or in moral principles. Nonetheless, there are solid reasons for a non-Christian to hold that 'persons' possess inherent dignity. We *can* argue against Warnock, Harris, *et al* without referring to Christian revelation.

First, in keeping with Aquinas, the logic of the *Faith* synthesis proposed by this magazine argues that even non-Christians can recognise the dignity of persons once they recognise the existence of God (even without yet recognising Christ). The existence of God is capable of rational demonstration. Such a God can be rationally demonstrated because He is Himself rational and has structured His creation rationally. The non-Christian rational believer in a rational God can recognise that both man and God are capable of a non-material activity, namely, reasoning. This is only possible because both are of a non-material i.e. spiritual nature, and the existence of the spiritual soul in man is a truth (we argue) that can be deduced from reason. Thus, even without the added clarity that faith in Christ (the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15)) brings, the dignity that Christians accord to all humans (because all humans are made to God's image) can be recognised by a logic available to non-Christians. The *Faith* vision uses modern knowledge of matter and the human body to attempt an update the specific Thomistic arguments for God and the soul.

### A Phenomenology of Absolute Value

A second reason available to non-Christians can be founded in the 'phenomenological' reasoning of Pope John Paul II. Kant's moral analysis started with the supposition that there exists something "whose existence has in itself an absolute worth, something which as an end in itself could be the ground of determinate laws".<sup>7</sup> He concludes that rational beings are such ends. John Paul II through a phenomenological analysis of behaviour purifies this insight to reveal the existence of something that deserves nothing less than *love*: "The person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love... the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end."<sup>8</sup>

The remainder of this article will use contemporary science to apply Boethius' definition to the start and end of life, and then to hybrids. If the Boethian definition is used to analyse scientific data about *human* biology, it can easily be reduced to two issues. First, a person must be an individual ('an individual substance'); second, he must be properly human (and thus 'of a rational nature'). While neither of these are scientific questions *per se*, nonetheless, science can give useful indications of what the answers might be.

### The Embryo

**B**efore commenting on the embryo, it will be useful to summarise a few basic points about its early development. After the sperm penetrates the egg membrane the single-cell product is referred to as the zygote. It is only after the cell divides and becomes a two-cell embryo that the DNA is established in each cell. The cells then divide repeatedly resulting in a 2, 4, 8 *etc* cell cluster. At this early stage each cell is called 'totipotent' because, if it is separated from the cluster, each cell is capable of developing into a whole new individual.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the cell cluster can divide in two and form identical twins. By 14 days the cells have visibly specialised, the primitive streak (the precursor of the backbone) forms, and implantation in the lining of the womb occurs. After this stage the various organs form.

### Wastage?

**B**efore answering the question of when a person first comes into existence, it is necessary to respond to a common objection. It is often noted that a large number of zygotes fail to implant in the womb, and thus die. This figure is sometimes speculated as being more than 30%. It is said that surely these cannot all have been persons. How could God allow such a large percentage of persons to die? Thus, zygotes cannot be persons. Two points can be noted in response to this. First, for much of human history, and even today in many parts of the world, infant mortality has been much higher than 30%. But this is no reason to argue that infants are not persons (rather, it is reason to seek to promote the health of infants). Second, the 30% statistic fails to observe *why* the early embryos do not implant.

Many fail to implant because some defect has occurred in the process of fertilisation. Often the products of fertilisation are not true embryos but are what would be more "properly called pseudo-embryos".<sup>10</sup> Fertilisation often fails to produce the cell-to-organism transition, and thus a 'fertilised egg' is not necessarily an embryo. The loss of these pseudo-embryos is not the loss of human beings. While it seems impossible to know the exact percentages, it seems reasonable to suggest that these make up a significant part of the '30%' that fail to

implant. The high rate of non-implantation is thus no reason to suggest that a *successfully* fertilised egg, i.e. the single-cell zygote, is not a person.

### Is it an Individual?

**A**s has been noted, in order for the embryo to satisfy the Catholic definition of personhood it must be an *individual*; however, this is precisely what many ethicists dispute. Because the single-cell zygote lacks established DNA it is said that it cannot be an individual. It is further claimed that even after this stage the early embryo is not an individual but is merely a loosely-related collection of cells. These cells develop and eventually some of them become an individual, but (it is alleged) "purposeful development [from the single-cell zygote to the later embryo] occurs *between* cells, but not *within* an ongoing multicellular ontological individual from the two-cell stage".<sup>11</sup> There are a number of reasons given to support this interpretation of the data. It is said that the cells behave independently of one another: some become part of the 'embryo proper', while some become part of other things like the placenta. Further, the 'independent' nature of these cells is indicated by the fact that they are 'totipotent'. According to this interpretation, the collection of cells does not become an individual until each cell is *determined* in its eventual function in the final embryo. This is said to occur at the 14-day stage when the 'primitive streak' (the beginnings of the backbone) forms and the cells coalesce into "*one whole multicellular individual living human being, possessing for the first time a body axis and bilateral symmetry*".<sup>12</sup> It is only at this stage that one can speak of an individual, and thus, possibly, a person.

The above interpretation of the development of the embryo was held by many in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and was used in 1984 by the Warnock Report to justify experimentation on human embryos before the 14-day stage. However, recent embryology does not support the above interpretation. In order to refute it, each aspect of it must be examined.

### Yes, an individual

**I**t is said that the single-cell zygote cannot be an individual because it does not yet have established DNA. DNA, however, does not constitute individuality. Individuals can exist with different DNA in different parts of their bodies. Experiments on black and white mice have combined black mice embryos with white mice embryos, to form a single 8-cell embryo out of two 4-cell embryos. This embryo then develops as a whole, and results in an adult mouse with different DNA in different parts of its body, and a resulting mixture of coloured fur. Adult humans have also been found who possess different DNA in different parts of their body

(such humans presumably formed by two non-identical embryos combining in the womb). Conversely, identical twins share the same DNA, and yet are two individuals. DNA does not constitute individuality.

What then can be said about the collection of cells that makes up the early embryo? And, what is known about their development? Although much of the scientific establishment recently thought that the young embryo was simply a uniform mass of totipotent cells this “view is now undergoing something of a revolution”.<sup>13</sup> It has long been known that the type of development witnessed in a particular embryonic cell is somehow dependent on its position in the embryo, i.e. its position relative to the other cells of the cluster.<sup>14</sup> It is now known that the two-cell embryo is *already* determined as to what the two different cells will develop into.<sup>15</sup> The progeny of one cell will form the extra-embryonic material like the placenta while the progeny of the other cell will form the ‘embryo proper’. These cells develop according to their position, and so, even though the cells appear to be the same and appear to be simply a uniform mass of totipotent cells, they are actually cells operating according to their programming. *The cell-cluster develops as an integrated whole.* In the service of the whole, some of these cells purposefully form tissues like the placenta that will ultimately be shed (just as children shed milk teeth as they become adults). Other cells develop into the body organs.

#### Unity, Control and Direction From the Very Beginning

The above has indicated that the cells of the cluster behave according to their positional information; however, it might be asked where the positioning information originates. The answer to this question returns the analysis to the first moment of the zygote’s existence. The positioning information that determines the embryo’s development is established by the positioning that first established the embryo, namely, the position where the sperm first penetrated the egg membrane. The position of the entry point of the sperm into the ovum “patterns the zygote so that it divides in a specific way... and the embryo is never an unorganised mass of cells”.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the position of the sperm entry point determines not only the position of the first cell cleavage but also the position of the subsequent primitive streak at the 14-day stage and the position of the backbone after that. It follows that individuality is established not by the formation of the primitive streak but by the sperm’s penetration of the ovum. This can also be seen by the fact that “some one to three *minutes* after sperm and egg unite”<sup>17</sup> there is an explosive increase in calcium levels, coinciding with the membrane hardening to resist penetration by any other sperm. The fertilised egg is thus a closed system and develops as an individual, even before the DNA is

established. Far from individuality being established at 14 days, it is established at the moment of fertilisation.

It can be noted that the ‘determining’ of the cells at the early stage is still very elastic, i.e. they can be re-determined or re-programmed if their position changes. This is what happens when a cell is removed from the cluster. Its positioning relative to the other cells of its former cluster is lost, and so (it seems) it re-determines itself to develop into a new individual. Far from this indicating that there was not an individual existing previously, this capacity of the cells to be re-determined simply indicates the extent to which the cells are already part of a proper individual: that they can be *re-programmed* indicates that they are *already* programmed. To make a comparison, an adult’s liver can be transplanted to another adult without this suggesting that he is not a person. Similarly, embryonic cells (which are admittedly much more flexible than adult liver cells) can be transferred to another cell-cluster or even isolated to form a new individual. This does not imply that the embryo the cell was taken from was not already a true individual.

#### Twinning

The developmental elasticity of the cells, as noted above, is witnessed in nature by the phenomenon of monozygotic twinning: the cell-cluster divides in two and two identical twins form. This division can only happen during the first 14 days of the embryo’s development, i.e. while the cells of the embryo retain the above mentioned ability to be re-determined. After 14 days the primitive streak forms and the embryo implants (it is not known precisely which of these two factors makes twinning no longer possible).

Little is known about why spontaneous twinning happens, however, there are strong reasons to think that it is caused by a defect in the programme of development in the embryo. It can be speculated that the programme of development normally leads to a single foetus. A minor defect in the development causes the cell-cluster to divide in two, and two individuals form. Such a scenario would suggest that twinning would be accompanied by other defects; this is exactly what repeated studies have shown. While the overall frequencies remain low, “in comparison with singleton births, twins have significantly higher reported frequencies of”<sup>18</sup> a diverse range of defects, ranging from Downs Syndrome to indeterminate sex to branchial cleft.

#### How Does One Person Become Two?

The above has argued that a person exists before twinning would occur. It might then be asked, what happens to the original person if his cells are split in

two in the formation of twins? There are three basic possibilities that have been suggested to describe what happens to the 'person' in the event of twinning.<sup>19</sup> First, there might be two souls present at fertilisation, so that what was thought to be one zygote after fertilisation was actually two, somehow destined to result in twinning. In this case the original zygote has an active potential to twin and needs no additional stimuli. Second, there might be only one soul, one person, in the original zygote. The zygote would then have a passive potential to twin which would be triggered by some outside stimuli. When the twinning occurs there is then one new individual and one continuing individual.

This would be similar to the creation of a new individual in cloning in that this process does not destroy the pre-existing individual. Finally, as a variation on the second case, when twinning occurs the existing individual is destroyed and two new individuals come into existence. This last interpretation might accord with the higher frequency of defects, defects which might be seen as an indication that the programme of development has been radically disrupted. Also, this last interpretation seems to most closely describe the Aristotelian account of what happens to a living individual when it is divided.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, any of these descriptions might explain what happens in twinning in a way that does not call the personhood of the original zygote into question.

#### 'Of a rational nature'

The above, very briefly, has outlined some recent scientific data that indicates that the embryo is established as an individual the instant the sperm penetrates the ovum. This, however, does not conclude that this individual is a person. The second half of Boethius's definition maintains that the individual must be 'of a rational nature'. Is this true of the embryo? How could this be established? The answer to this question lies in a simple philosophical principle: a thing is known by its behaviour. What can be said of the behaviour of the embryo? To answer this, its *potential* must be considered.

The argument from 'potential' says that the 'nature' or 'kind' of a thing is indicated not merely by how it acts today but by how it is capable of acting in the future. In particular, by what it has the *potential* to do. An infant is not presently rational; however, it has the potential to develop rationality. It is thus reasonable to describe the 'nature' of an infant by referring to what it has the potential to do, not just what it can presently do. A dog does not have the potential to develop rationality, no matter how much time it is given and how many aids it is given. Rationality is simply not part of its nature. A dog is therefore not 'of a rational nature'.

#### Potential

To indicate the potential of a thing, there is an additional factor that needs to be considered: is its development that of an individual, or, does it change from one individual to another individual? For example, those who misunderstand the argument from potential say: a sperm has the potential to develop into an adult person.<sup>21</sup> This, however, fails to observe that the sperm is not the same individual that the later embryo is. The combination of the egg and the sperm replaces the two individual substances that were the egg and the sperm. A new individual is instantiated.

There is thus a profound difference between the sperm's *passive* potential to be changed into something with a rational potential and the zygote's *active* potential to *develop itself* into an adult with functioning rationality. The difference is the difference between the development *into* an individual (sperm and egg into the zygote) and the development *of* an individual (the zygote through its many stages of human maturation). Once the zygote has formed it develops through many stages, but none of these stages can be claimed to indicate the change from one individual to a different individual. It thus follows that the rational adult is the same individual as the fertilised zygote. The activity of the rational adult thus tells us the 'kind' of thing that the zygote already is: it is 'of a rational nature'.

#### Change, Substances and Artefacts

The above argument from potential can be clarified by considering the difference between living beings and artefacts, and the different ways in which they each change. An artefact like a car can gradually have its various parts replaced and changed. By doing this what started as a car can end up becoming an airplane. This is because an artefact is brought about, is "caused by external forces".<sup>22</sup> There "is no internal, ordering principle to ground its unity, nor to ground ordered change or guide the movement... toward an ordered telos". As a result there is no limit to the way in which it can change. In contrast, living things are very limited in the way they can change. A puppy can grow and change but it cannot grow and change into an oak tree, only acorns can become oak trees. This is because living things possess "an internal nature" such that this "nature directs the developmental process of the individual substance and establishes limits on the variations each substance may undergo and still exist".

One significant aspect of the above noted distinction concerns the way in which things can be *defined*. Artefacts can be defined by their function. The mind of the artificer gives an external causation and meaning to the collection of parts that makes up the artefact

that performs the function he desires. Planes fly. Cars motor. If a plane ceases to be able to fly it ceases to be a plane. An artefact is defined by what it *does*; lacking an inherent unifying principle there is no other means of defining what it *is*. This does not hold for substances like living beings: "Essence precedes function"<sup>23</sup> and a substance is defined by "what it *is*, not what it *does*".

The *nature* of a species can be defined by what a *species* does, but the individual of the species is defined by what it *is*. 'Human nature' can be defined using "the ordinary practice of defining things from their highest activity, e.g. plants from vegetative life or animals from sensation".<sup>24</sup> Human nature can thus be defined as rational. But this does not need to imply that every human person is functionally rational. Unlike an artefact, a living being is not defined by its functions or its functioning. A person "*possesses* [his] properties and parts" he is not defined by his possessions; rather, he is defined by his nature, his kind.

A further consequence of this relates back to the question of potential. The above noted difference between a living being and an artefact is relevant because it sheds further light on the way in which change occurs in an individual. An artefact can be changed because its individuality is not internal to it; there is a sense in which it is not truly an individual. In contrast, the limited manner in which a living individual can change helps indicate that it is the same individual that is changing. A thin man might become a fat man, but he will not become a cat or a car. He might change so that he is no longer a human, but only by killing him. This final manner of change, namely death, will be relevant in a latter part of this article.

### PVS

This article has already considered the beginning of life and personhood. What of personhood at the end of life? Two categories will be noted in this article: PVS and brain death.

PVS, Persistent or Permanent Vegetative State, is a condition that has often been highlighted in the media. Many cases have been reported of people waking up from what is supposedly a 'permanent' state. Dr. Alan Shewmon is among the many who question the whole validity of the term and concept of PVS and say that "'Post-coma unresponsiveness' would have been an intellectually more honest and accurate term".<sup>25</sup>

It can be noted that many secular approaches to personhood claim that PVS patients are not persons. If they cannot be self-conscious then they cannot be persons, argues Harris. Their body organs should thus be made available to others.

In contrast with this, the Catholic Church holds that a person continues to be a person even though he is unhealthy and has lost the use of a highly important function, namely, consciousness. A person is valuable for what he is, not just when he is fully functioning. Thus the Church says of such patients that 'persons in the vegetative state deserve proper care'<sup>26</sup> and that such care includes the basic provision of food and water, even when these need to be artificially administered by intubation. To deny this is to be guilty of a type of dualism, saying that a man is *only* his mind, and that a living body is not still a living person.

### Brain Death

The Bishops of England and Wales recently rejected a 1998 proposal by the UK Department of Health to define death as "the irreversible loss of the capacity for consciousness, combined with the irreversible loss of the capacity to breathe". This somewhat *ad hoc* definition combines two unrelated criteria: breathing and consciousness. Why should these two be said to define human life? For example, why not include heart beat? Warning against the dualism that similarly belittles PVS patients, the bishops said, "If the body retains its capacity to function as a living whole then it is alive, even if the capacity for consciousness is lost".<sup>27</sup> The question then becomes: 'When does the body cease to be a living whole?' The brain's role (or not) in answering this question is what turns this article to the question of brain death.

Catholic thought defines death as the separation of the soul from the body. The soul integrates the person's functions, and so its departure results in the loss of integration of the bodily functions.<sup>28</sup> Thus, though some body parts might continue some isolated activity (e.g. the stomach might continue digesting for a while) there is none of the integrated activity that defines a *whole*. This emphasis on integration and wholeness is another manner of expressing the concern identified in the embryo: only an 'integrated whole' can be an 'individual'. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in keeping with this notion of death, death was *medically* identified by the cardio-respiratory criteria, i.e. the cessation of spontaneous breathing and pulse.

### The Problem of Artificial Life Support

These criteria, however, came to be questioned with the development of artificial ventilators and artificial nutrition and hydration. With this treatment in place, the lungs can still perform respiration and the heart keeps beating, even in the unconscious state now called 'brain death'. Nonetheless, it was said that once the brain had died there would be "inevitable asystole [cardiac arrest]" in a relatively short span of days (or possibly weeks).

This 'inevitable' cardiac arrest was taken to be a sign that the body had lost its capacity to integrate itself. From a Catholic perspective this would seem to imply that the soul had already departed, i.e. that the patient had died. As a result, statements from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences assume this 'inevitable asystole'<sup>29</sup> and approve the use of brain death criteria, as has (an albeit highly nuanced) statement from Pope John Paul II.<sup>30</sup> Research published in the late 1990s, particularly by Shewmon, has questioned the accuracy of this medical data. This research has yet, it seems, to have been digested by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Academy's documents maintain its approval of brain death criteria. Nonetheless, the Academy recently hosted a conference refuting the appropriateness of brain death criteria.<sup>31</sup>

To many it would seem self-evident that a person without a functioning brain is dead; however, this assumption is typically founded on either a dualistic<sup>32</sup> notion of man or a mistaken view of the brain's relationship to the body. To respond to the second notion it will be useful to indicate the manner in which the body can continue to function as an integrated whole even when there is *complete* brain death.

#### Are We More Than Just Our Brains?

When someone is dead we might well expect the body to disintegrate and decompose. This does *not* happen in a brain dead patient. The patient is permanently unconscious and thus cannot feed himself and so needs to be fed and hydrated by tubes. Further, the part of breathing that involves the muscles moving air in and out of the lungs does not occur, and thus an artificial ventilator is needed to move air in and out of the lungs. "However, if 'breathing' is understood as a somatically mediative function, it is better understood as 'respiration' in the technical sense of exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide"<sup>33</sup> which continues in the brain dead patient. In addition to respiration, the heart continues to function (beating spontaneously), as do the other body organs. Moreover, if the patient is a child, the body will continue to grow and will develop through puberty.

Among the 175 cases that Shewmon has documented, the most spectacular concerns an individual identified simply as 'TK' who has been brain dead for over 19 years.<sup>34</sup> He has been brain dead since the age of four, and yet, far from his body slowly decaying, his body has grown, developed through puberty, overcome infections, and healed wounds, all things that would seem to be clear signs of somatic integration. Lest it be thought that this is due to his not being truly brain dead, Shewmon notes that MRI scans indicate that his "entire brain, including the brain stem, had been replaced by ghost-like tissues and disorganized proteinaceous fluids".<sup>35</sup> His body

needs to be kept on a ventilator, he is fed by a tube to his stomach (and he urinates spontaneously), but he needs little more than nursing care, all of which he receives at home. There are few cases that have been documented as long as TK because in most Western countries the brain dead patient soon has his ventilator switched off, and the body subsequently dies; the patients thus cannot be observed over a prolonged period of time.

What can be said of the above? Shewmon summarises his analysis by concluding that 'integration does not require an integrator':<sup>36</sup> the body does not need the brain in order to keep functioning. Embryos, plants, and many lower animals are integrated wholes with no co-ordinating centre. Similarly, brain dead patients (if they survive the trauma to the body that was the cause of the brain death) can maintain somatic integration with less nursing care than many ICU patients receive. Such a brain dead patient would seem to clearly satisfy the criteria for personhood given by the Bishops of England and Wales. (Though the question of the treatment suitable to be given him is a further issue.<sup>37</sup>) The only possible reason to declare such a patient to be dead comes from a dualist notion of man that denies that permanently unconscious patients are still persons.

#### Loss of Functionality Is Not Loss of Personhood

A further comment on the personhood of the brain dead patient can be made by returning to the previously discussed analysis of change. With respect to the embryo, it was noted previously that there is a difference between the change *of* an individual and the change *into* an individual. If change is the type of continuous developmental change characteristic of living beings (as opposed to artefacts), then the individual remains the same individual. If this is applied to the brain dead patient it can be noted that there is a difference between the change *of* an individual and the change *from* an individual into a decaying corpse.

The latter change involves the destruction of the previous substance. Such a destruction is not witnessed in the change from a sick patient to a brain death patient: all that is witnessed is a loss of functionality. There is therefore no reason to assume that there has been a change from one type of individual to another type of individual. It is reasonable to assume that the brain dead patient remains the same individual he always has been, i.e. he remains 'of a rational nature', i.e. he is a person.

#### Animal-Human Hybrids and Chimeras

On a more speculative note, in the light of earlier comments, it will now be possible to return to the question of a human-animal hybrid, as was mentioned at the start of this article. A distinction must first be made

between hybrids and chimeras. In Greek mythology the *chimera* had a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail. A chimera combines cells of each species in such a way that different parts of the creature have cells of a different genetic make-up. For example, the combined black and white mouse embryos referred to earlier in this article were chimeric. In contrast, a *hybrid* possesses the same DNA in each cell. It combines two (or more) species by combining their DNA. This can happen in nature, for example, a mule is the genetic cross of a horse and donkey.

### The Moral Status of a Mixed Species Entity

How might the creation of animal-human chimeras and hybrids be analysed morally? The limited use of *some* animal tissues in human medical treatment is not morally problematic: for example, a monkey's heart can be transplanted into a human just as a mechanical heart can be. The Pontifical Academy for Life has suggested that a moral limit for such transplants would concern those organs that affect an individual's *identity*, namely, such transplants must exclude "the encephalon [brain] and the gonads [ovaries or testes], [which are] indissolubly linked with the personal identity of the subject because of their specific function".<sup>38</sup>

This said, some proposals to combine human and animal embryos seem to move a step beyond the morally permissible. The attempt to make such chimeras or hybrids has been condemned by many Catholic moralists because to "mix the *imago Dei* with the non-*imago Dei* seems a violation".<sup>39</sup> Further, at the very least, the process is immoral for the same reasons that IVF is contrary to the natural law: it would procreate separated from a loving marital act. The individual created would have been made as an object for the curiosity of the scientist. He would not have been created for his own benefit. Nonetheless, what might be said about the personhood of such a hybrid or chimera? After a scientist has made him, how should others treat him? This is the topic more proper to this article.

Before directly answering the above question it should be noted that Catholics already believe that there are non-human persons: angels are persons. In addition, while we have no particular reasons for thinking they exist, intelligent aliens on other planets would also be persons. They would be 'individual substances of a rational nature', i.e. persons. We would therefore be morally required to treat them as persons. This need not imply, however, that we have the same obligations to Martians that we have to humans. Catholic thought holds that members of a family have a *particular* duty to *each other*. Similarly, as part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment, a citizen has a particular duty to members of his own country in patriotism.<sup>40</sup> By extension it could be suggested that

every human has a duty to other members of his species simply because they are members of *his* species. Thus a human should treat members of his own species with a familial love that would be beyond what he would extend to rational Martians. Nonetheless, this would be a very limited degree of prejudice in favour of your own species: a human's actions should never neglect (let alone violate) the personal dignity of a Martian. The very *limited* form of prejudice in favour of members of your own family might be taken as a guide in this regard.

### Embodied Rationality Should Be Treated as Human

While the above might seem fanciful, it offers a useful point of comparison for how we should treat any animal-human chimeras, and, how we should treat any new hybrid *species* that might be created. Such a new species might be comparable to a race of Martians. If they were formed in such a manner that they were capable of abstract rational thought processes then we would *know* that they are 'of a rational nature' and thus are persons. Given that they were formed, in part, from human tissue, it would seem appropriate to give them a broad degree of 'the benefit of the doubt' in manifesting rational nature. Thus, if they are persons they must be treated as such. If the judgment that they are persons is 'probable',<sup>41</sup> then, again, they should be treated as persons.

The above paragraph suggested reasons for a limit to the moral preference they should be given: if they are sufficiently different to us to no longer be 'human', then, they would not be our brothers in the sense that 'all men are brothers'. However, it could well be argued that there is a different reason to treat them well: we should have *compassion* on them as violated persons, violated with a violation that cannot be removed as long as they live. Humans' care for such creatures could thus be reparation for the indignity perpetrated against them. (It might well be hoped that God has structured human nature in such a way that any attempt to create a human-animal hybrid would be so defective that it would not live, or that it would not be apt matter for a rational soul –but there is no way of knowing whether this is the case.) A further point of comparison might be made: A child that is the fruit of the violation of rape is worthy of the same respect as any other child. Similarly, a rational chimera that is the fruit of a scientist's immoral experiments is also worthy of being respected as a person.

### Conclusion

To return to the central argument: This article has noted and rejected notions of personhood that deny that personal dignity is *inherent* to a person. It has further rejected notions that define persons by self-consciousness, excluding many sick and wounded humans from the class of persons. This article has instead sought to defend the Catholic notion of personhood, a notion that defines

persons by what a being *is* not by what he *possesses*. Persons are persons even when they are in bad health and even when they fail to possess the attributes of rationality and consciousness. As this article has noted, there is sound scientific data to indicate that a person is instantiated at the first moment of fertilisation: the moment the sperm penetrates the egg membrane a closed system is created, an individual exists, an individual that will take a long time to develop the many features we associate with mature persons, but the immature person is a person nonetheless.

This article has also noted that personhood continues even after the capacity for self-consciousness is lost. In addition to PVS patients, there are strong reasons to argue that brain dead patients also continue to be persons and thus deserve the respect appropriate to persons. Finally, while this article has been wary of the morality of creating animal-human chimeras and hybrids, it has suggested that if they are found to be 'of a rational nature' they should be treated with full personal dignity.

- 1 John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), 18.
- 2 Mary Warnock, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Ethics* (London: Duckworth, 1998), 85; 70. Warnock similarly dismisses the notion of a 'right to life' as "a pretty vague sort of right" (p.101). She concedes that the language of 'natural rights' may have some rhetorical value, but nothing more (p.109).
- 3 Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide", in *Bioethics: An Anthology*, ed. Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 24.
- 4 John Harris, *The Value of Life: An Introduction to Medical Ethics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 17.
- 5 [i] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q.93, a.2.
- 6 [ii] *Ibid.*, Ia, q.93, a.4.; c.f. a.8.
- 7 [iii] Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns*, trans. James W. Ellington, 3rd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), n.428.
- 8 [iv] Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II), *Love and Responsibility* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), 40-41.
- 9 However, these cells are now thought not to be as totipotent as they were once thought to be.
- 10 Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., "On Static Eggs and Dynamic Embryos: A Systems Perspective", *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 3.4 (Winter 2002): 670. Hydatidiform moles and mutations preventing embryogenesis are two possible examples of pseudo-embryos. Germain Grisez similarly notes "many natural pregnancy losses are due to such severe chromosomal defects... these are not losses of human beings" (Germain Grisez, *Living a Christian Life, The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 2 (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 1993), 497).
- 11 Norman Ford, *The Prenatal Person Ethics from Conception to Birth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 66.
- 12 Ford, *When Did I Begin? Conception of the human individual in history, philosophy and science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, reprint 1991), 171-2.
- 13 Embryologist Richard Gardner of the University of Oxford, cited in Helen Pearson, "First division seals embryo fate", *Nature* [online edition] (2 October 2001).
- 14 As is typical in such studies, the research has been done on mouse (or sheep) embryos, with it being thought that similar patterns of activity occur in human embryos.
- 15 Karolina Piotrowska, Florence Wianny, Roger A. Pedersen and Magdalena Zernicka-Goetz, "Blastomeres arising from the first cleavage division have distinguishable fates in normal mouse development", *Development* 128.19 (October 2001): 3739. C.f. Berenika Plusa, Karolina Piotrowska, and Magdalena Zernicka-Goetz, "Sperm Entry Position Provides a Surface Marker for the First Cleavage Plane of the Mouse Zygote", *Genesis* 32.3 (March 2002): 193-8; Pontifical Academy for Life, "Final Communiqué of the 12th General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life and Congress on 'The Human Embryo in the Pre-implantation Phase: Scientific Aspects and Bioethical Considerations' " (23 March 2006).
- 16 Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., "The Pre-Implantation Embryo

- Revisited: A Two-Celled Individual or Two Individual Cells", *Linacre Quarterly* 70.2 (2003): 122.
- 17 Austriaco, "On Static Eggs and Dynamic Embryos", 666, 673.
- 18 P.E. Doyle, V. Beral, B. Botting and C.J. Wale, "Congenital malformations in twins in England and Wales", *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 45 (1991): 43-48.
- 19 Michael R. Panicola, "Three Views on the Preimplantation Embryo", *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 2.1 (Spring 2002), p.80; Agneta Sutton, "Arguments for Abortion of Abnormal Fetuses and The Moral Status of the Developing Embryo", *Ethics and Medicine* 6.1 (1990), pp.6-7; Helen Watt, "The Origin of Persons", in *Identity and Statute of Human Embryo, Proceedings of the Third Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life* (Vatican City, 14-16 February 1997), ed. Juan de Dios Vial Correa and Elio Sgreccia (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), pp.356-7.
- 20 Aristotle offers a detailed analysis of how certain living creatures are structured in such a way that they can divide and produce two or more new individuals. Earthworms do this when they are cut in two. Plants often do this when producing off-shoots known as 'runners'. C.f. Kevin L. Flannery, S.J. "Applying Aristotle in Contemporary Embryology", *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 249-78.
- 21 Harris, 10-12.
- 22 James P. Moreland and John Mitchell. "Is the Human Person a Substance or a Property-thing?", *Ethics and Medicine* 11.3 (Fall 1995): 50-51.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 54-5.
- 24 John P. Doyle, "Reflections on Persons in Petri Dishes", *Linacre Quarterly* 64.4 (November 1997): 66.
- 25 D. Alan Shewmon, "The ABC of PVS", in *Brain Death and Disorders of Consciousness [Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Coma and Death]*, ed. Calixto Machado and D. Alan Shewmon (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004), 226.
- 26 C.f. John Paul II, "Persons in 'Vegetative State' Deserve Proper Care" (Address to members of the Congress on 'Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State' (20 March 2004)), *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 13 (31 March 2004), 5.
- 27 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *Cherishing Life* (2004), 64.
- 28 "Death can mean decomposition, disintegration, a separation. It occurs when the spiritual principle which ensures the unity of the individual can no longer exercise its functions in and upon the organism, whose elements, left to themselves, disintegrate" (John Paul II, "Determining the Moment When Death Occurs" (Discourse of John Paul II to the Participants of the Working Group on the Determination of Brain Death and Its Relationship to Human Death (14 December 1989)), *Origins* 19.32 (11 January 1990), n.4).
- 29 In 1989 the Academy spoke of brain death marking the stage when integration of "functions is definitively abolished, even if some bodily functions like heart activity and respiration can be maintained artificially for a brief period of time" [emphasis added]. How the writers of this document would respond to later studies that show that a person can live many years (i.e. much more than 'a brief period of time') is unclear. It would seem that this would wholly contradict the scientific basis of the rationale they offered for accepting brain death criteria. (Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Working Group, "Final Considerations Formulated by the Scientific Participants", in *Working Group on the Determination of Brain Death and Its Relationship to Human Death* (Dec 10-14, 1989), ed. R.J. White, H. Angstwurm, and I. Carrasco de Paula (Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 1992), 81).
- 30 Pius XII noted that while the philosophical and theological definition of death can be defined by the Church, and the general criteria (i.e. dis-integration of functions) that is implied can be indicated by the Church, to the question of which specific biological signs indicate death, "the answer cannot be deduced from any religious and moral principle and, under this aspect, does not fall within the competence of the Church". Similarly, John Paul II said that "the Church does not make technical decisions". Nonetheless, John Paul II noted that many in the medical profession held that brain death was a biological sign satisfying the definition of death offered by the Church, if so, they can use brain death criteria with 'moral certitude'. However, many scientists question the scientific veracity of the claim that the scientific data correspond to the philosophical definition of death held by the Church. (Pius XII, Pope. "The Prolongation of Life. An Address of Pope Pius XII to an International Congress of Anaesthesiologists" (24 November 1957), *The Pope Speaks* 4.4 (Spring 1958): 393-98; Pope John Paul II, "Cloning, involving the use and destruction of human embryos, is morally unacceptable" (Address to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society (29 August 2000)), *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 35 (30 August 2000): 1-2).
- 31 The full papers of this conference have not been published. A summary of them has been published as: Paul A. Byrne, Cicero G. Coimbra, Robert Spaemann, and Mercedes Arzú Wilson, "'Brain Death' is Not Death!" (Essay), *The Catholic World Report* (March 2005): 54-8.
- 32 Such a dualistic notion of man might claim that a person is his brain, or that the soul is the form of the brain not the form of the whole body, or that a body without a brain cannot be apt matter for a rational soul. These are not notions readily compatible with

- orthodox Catholic thought, and are minority rationales for brain death. C.f. Descartes held that the soul was united to the body through the pineal gland of the brain. In contrast, Thomas Aquinas taught that soul is "in the whole body, and in each part thereof" and "is entire in each part thereof", i.e. it is not located simply in the brain or a part of the brain or a gland of the brain. Thomas explicitly rejects the notion that the soul is "only in the one part through which it would move the others" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q.76, a.8). C.f. The Church's teaching that the soul is the form of the body (Council of Vienna (1311-12), D481; 5th Lateran Council (1513), D738. C.f. D1655, D1914).
- 33 Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., "Is the Brain-Dead Patient Really Dead?", *Studia Moralia* 41.2 (2003): 293.
- 34 TK was still alive in 2003 at the age of 19 (*Ibid.*, 292).
- 35 D. Alan Shewmon, "Is It Reasonable to Use the UK Protocol for the Clinical Diagnosis of 'Brain Stem Death' as a Basis for Diagnosing Death?", in *Issues for a Catholic Bioethic*, ed. Luke Gormally (London: Linacre Centre, 1999), 323.
- 36 D. Alan Shewmon, "The Brain and Somatic Integration: Insights into the Standard Biological Rationale for Equating 'Brain Death' With Death", *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 26.5 (2001): 473.
- 37 It is possible to argue that the ventilator constitutes extraordinary care for a brain dead patient. Although the patient is truly a living person, the ventilator's permanent use is a treatment disproportionate to the gain that the patient achieves. Thus the ventilator may be removed. So argue William May, David Jones, and Shewmon. Dr. Paul Byrne is among those who disagree and argue that in the contemporary context a ventilator is no longer an extraordinary treatment. C.f. Shewmon, "Recovery from 'Brain Death': A Neurologist's Apologia", *The Linacre Quarterly* (February 1997): 83; William E. May, *Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of*

- Human Life* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2000), 297; David Jones, "Nagging Doubts about Brain Death", *Catholic Medical Quarterly* 47.3 (1995), 7; Paul A. Byrne and Walt F. Weaver. "'Brain Death' is Not Death", in *Brain Death and Disorders of Consciousness* [op. cit], 48.
- 38 Pontifical Academy for Life, "Prospects for Xenotransplantation: Scientific Aspects and Ethical Considerations" (2001), n.11.
- 39 Tara L. Seyfer, "An Overview of Chimeras and Hybrids", *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 6.1 (Spring 2006), p.49.
- 40 Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn.2251-2. c.f. nn.2212, 2239.
- 41 Cf. The teaching of the SCDF that to prohibit the abortion of the early embryo "it suffices that this presence of the soul be probable (and one can never prove the contrary)". SCDF *Let Me Live: Declaration on Procured Abortion* (1974), footnote 19.



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## The Rhythms of Nature and The Fullness of Time

Two different evaluations of the dimension of time thus contrast each other, one qualitative and one quantitative. On the one hand, there is the solar cycle with its rhythms; on the other, that which St. Paul calls the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), namely, the culminating moment of the history of the universe and of the human race, when the Son of God was born into the world. The time of promises was fulfilled and, when the pregnancy of Mary had reached its end, "the earth has yielded its increase" (Ps 66 [67]:7) as a psalm says. The coming of the Messiah, foretold by the Prophets, is qualitatively the most important event in all of history, to which it confers its own final and ultimate meaning. Historical-political coordinates do not condition God's choices, but, on the contrary, it is the event of the Incarnation that "fills up" the worth and meaning of history.



**Pope Benedict's address during the New Year's Eve Vespers and Benediction with singing of the Te Deum.**

# Science, Magisterium and the Advent of Man

Roger Peck

*Roger Peck - a software engineer from Milton Keynes - focusses on the relationship between revelation and scientific discovery through the lens of the unique character of the human species. He shows the encounter filled with promise for all rather a cause for fear or suspicion*

*"It may be legitimate to reflect on the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter so long as it is acknowledged that souls are immediately created by God. This framework is one that the Faith Magazine has often commented upon."*

## The Genesis of Man

The opening sequence of Stanley Kubrick's *Space Odyssey 2001* presents a vision of the Fall of Man that features an ancestral form that clearly predates modern man. How close was Kubrick to the truth? What did our first parents look like? Where on the human phylogenetic tree do Adam and Eve occur?

Was Adam *Homo Sapiens* or was he plain *Homo*? Was he *Homo Sapiens* or was he a more primitive species of the genus? Was he *Homo Habilis* (or did he even pre-date *Homo Habilis*?) – or was he the beginning of some species in-between? It's a question not unpopular with the media when human-like skeletons from aeons ago are discovered.

Pope Pius XII in *Humani Generis* stated that "the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God". To answer the question "which subspecies was Adam and Eve?", we need to sift through the palaeontological evidence for the spiritual. Burial of the dead, wall paintings, artistic stonework, jewellery; all such point to a spiritual dimension of a human person. We will also need to take into account implications from modern knowledge of the genome concerning the human tree of life.

It is an interesting area for the interaction of science and religion. Both disciplines (rightly) feel that they have something to say on the matter. This article reflects upon some rules of engagement required for making such a conversation fruitful.

As people of faith we turn to the Bible to discover the person of Jesus Christ and to learn therein truths for our salvation. When we read the creation narratives of Genesis we learn truths about ourselves, about the world and about God. When we turn the pages of sacred scripture we enter into a narrative; the beginning of a story. Not so much history as His Story – God's story. "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27) When we open up the Bible on page one we open up a window onto the very dawn of man. But the book of Genesis is not the only window overlooking the scene. God has written two books - the book of sacred scripture and the book of creation, the book of his word and the book of his world - and whilst theologians gaze through the window of sacred scripture scientists gaze on the same scene through a different window. In terms of the advent of Man this latter window includes the fields of palaeontology and genetics.

## The Need for Harmony

The book of Genesis, inspired by the Holy Spirit, communicates certain truths in story form. A story does not have to be literally true to contain truth. Jesus taught using stories – parables. In the same way, in the Old Testament God teaches us by using stories. The truths that God teaches us are truths for our salvation. According to Catholic tradition Genesis 1-3 teaches us that God created the universe out of nothing. He created us in His image and likeness – male and female

he created them. It teaches us about the Fall of Man and tells us that “Eve was the mother of all”. The specific measurement of “seven days” in the creation story seems to be the seed of a fundamental truth for our salvation – namely that the seventh day is holy because God rested on that day. A saving truth which the Church has discerned from the seven-day timetable is that we should all go to Mass on Sunday.

### Where Science and Religion Meet

**T**his, then, is some of what religion has to say on the matter; but what of science? Whilst the “three-legged stool” of Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium interprets and communicates truths about creation and original sin, the scientific community sifts through the fossil and genetic evidence available to piece together the evolution of the *homo* genus. Whilst religion tells us of the nature and fall of man, science paints a picture of the natural ascent to Man. They are complementary, with a certain overlap.

The role of the Magisterium is sometimes presented as a restriction on science and scientific objectivity. Although many have shown that historically this accusation is unjust the popular perception nevertheless remains and needs to be challenged. As long as each discipline respects the boundaries of its own competence and respects the other’s authority and autonomy then a true integration may be achieved that will ultimately benefit both. Where they overlap let us expect and work to find harmony. What is the nature of these boundaries and of the search for harmony?

It is often said that science and religion seek to answer different questions; that science is interested in answering the “what” or the “how” questions whereas religion seeks to understand the “why”. Whilst there may be some truth in this, when it comes to the dawn of Man even these lines become blurred because the story of Adam and Eve, albeit couched in myth, does seek to provide “what” and “how” answers. Whereas the ‘seven days’ of creation communicates to us a particular truth about correct religious observance, rather as the Greek myth of Narcissus warns against the vice of vanity, Genesis 1-3 does deal with actual, primordial events.

### A Textual Example

**I**n the first chapter of Genesis there are two Hebrew words used to describe God’s creation: *bara* and *asah*. *Bara* carries a sense of “creation out of nothing” whereas *asah* has a sense of moulding out of pre-existing matter. The *bara* and *asah* distinction is generally preserved in the English with the words create (*bara*) and make (*asah*). In the creation narrative of Genesis 1 the word *bara* is used only 3 times: the creation of heaven and earth (Gen

1:1), the creation of the first animals (sea monsters) (Gen 1:21) and the creation of man (Gen 1:27). It is a not too unreasonable leap of the imagination to marry the three occurrences of *bara* with the three yet to be explained scientific mysteries of the big bang (who lit the fuse?), the genesis of life, and the phenomenon of human consciousness. Perhaps these three supernatural “*bara*” interventions of Genesis 1 correspond to the creation of the universe, the creation of life and the creation of the human rational soul. As noted above, “*asah*” is usually translated into the English as “make”; the implication here is that it might also be translated as “form” or “evolve”.

### The Church’s Primary Concern Is With Salvific Truth

**A**s interesting or as convincing as the above may (or may not) be, it is unlikely that it would ever be embraced as a dogmatic teaching of the Church. The task, for example, of grafting the history of salvation onto to the phylogenetic tree of human evolution does not belong to the teaching office of the Church. The Church may set certain boundaries – may declare as *anathema* certain theories about the dawn and evolution of man – but she can only do so where such theories directly contradict a doctrine of faith. We will see below an example of such a boundary arising out of the Church’s doctrine of original sin. Beyond such considerations, however, the task of marrying the Church’s teaching regarding the creation of man with the field of palaeontology falls to philosophers to contemplate, theologians to speculate on and scientists to observe and theorise about. For the Magisterium to issue a dogmatic declaration regarding the “three *baras*” of Genesis 1 would be an example of the Church exceeding the boundaries of its own competence. Not because the Bible is not the revealed word of God and not because the magisterium lacks the authority to teach the truth, but because the “truth” that the magisterium has the authority to teach is “truth for our salvation”; and although the above interpretation of the *bara* / *asah* distinction may conceivably be true, it is difficult to see how it can be a requirement for our salvation.

It is important to know for our salvation that God created us. It is important to know about The Fall and its effect on the human condition that we have inherited from Adam. It is even important to know that God rested on the seventh day and that we should all go to Mass on Sunday! It is, however, difficult to see how the exact nature of God’s interaction with the universe – the Creator’s interaction with His creation – could fall into this category. It may be a requirement for effective evangelization, apologetics and catechesis, but it is difficult to see how it could itself be a salvific truth.

Another thing to note about the *bara* / *asah* interpretation of Genesis 1 is that for all its merits it does invoke a “God

of the Gaps". Just because science hasn't explained the genesis of life, or the phenomenon of human consciousness, or even how the big bang banged – it doesn't mean that it will never do so in the future. Having said that, among those who acknowledge the existence of the spiritual dimension of the human person, a mind which controls the matter of the body, the latter two phenomena are not really gaps.

### Example of a Specific Teaching

**H***umani Generis*, the Church document that most recently and directly deals with the issue of the dawn of man, has the following to say on the matter.

"...[T]he Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that... research and discussions, on the part of men experienced in both [sacred theology and the human sciences] take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter - for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God. However, this must be done in such a way that the reasons for both opinions, that is, those favourable and those unfavourable to evolution, be weighed and judged with the necessary seriousness, moderation and measure, and provided that all are prepared to submit to the judgment of the Church, to whom Christ has given the mission of interpreting authentically the Sacred Scriptures and of defending the dogmas of faith. Some however, rashly transgress this liberty of discussion, when they act as if the origin of the human body from pre-existing and living matter were already completely certain and proved by the facts which have been discovered up to now and by reasoning on those facts, and as if there were nothing in the sources of divine revelation which demands the greatest moderation and caution in this question.

"When, however, there is question of another conjectural opinion, namely polygenism, the children of the Church by no means enjoy such liberty. For the faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains that either after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all, or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents.

Now it is no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Teaching Authority of the Church propose with regard to original sin, which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation, is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own."<sup>1</sup>

### A Carefully Worded Statement

**I**n the first paragraph, then, we have a clear call for balance, moderation and an open mind. When discussing and reflecting on the theory of evolution we must sail between the *Scylla* of *Fideism* and the *Charibdis* of *Deism*. It does, however, suggest a possible paradigm in which both evolution and creation can cohere. It may be legitimate to reflect on the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter so long as it is acknowledged that souls are immediately created by God. This framework is one that *Faith Magazine* has often commented upon.

As for the anathema-like declaration of the second paragraph, the language used is worthy of note. "Now it is no way apparent how" lacks (perhaps) the force of a definitive statement to be held for all time. But that aside, what *Humani Generis* does is to look at the "scientific" question of the dawn of man, albeit in the context of the Church's teaching on original sin. Adam and Eve must alone have been our first parents because original sin is transmitted "by propagation, not by imitation"<sup>2</sup>. Out of the Church's doctrine of original sin arises a boundary. Wherever or whenever we place Adam and Eve any such speculation must remain free from the error of polygenism.

### Be Careful of "Mitochondrial Eve"

**H**ere it is worth dispelling a possible misconception. Recent studies of the mitochondrial DNA of people alive today have pointed to a "most recent" common maternal ancestor who existed 150,000 years ago in Africa – dubbed "mitochondrial Eve". It is tempting for us (the new "people of the book") to claim here that we knew this all along and to ask the question; "don't these scientists read their Bible?" But to do so would be a mistake. Mitochondrial Eve need not be the Eve of Genesis 1-3. Mitochondrial Eve is simply the single trunk at the bottom of the existing human family tree that traces the maternal lineage. If you draw the human family tree of all people alive today and trace the lineage of each person back through their mother, their mother's mother, their mother's mother's mother, and so on – then these lines being traced back through time will eventually converge to a point – and that point is mitochondrial Eve.

Going in the opposite direction on the other hand – starting from the time of mitochondrial Eve one will actually discover that she was not necessarily the "mother of all" – but was in all likelihood simply one of many contemporaries. The only thing that makes her special is not that she was the only one of her generation to have children but that - going forward in time following all the lineages of all the other women contemporary with her -

hers is the only one not to terminate at women who either died childless or only had male heirs. The significance of this result is therefore far from clear. It might, for example, have more to tell us about the migratory history of our species than about our evolution. With *Humani Generis'* anathema of polygenism ringing in our ears we should be wary of making any rash identification. To identify mitochondrial Eve with the Eve of Genesis 1-3 would be another example of religion failing to respect the boundaries of its own competence.

### Understanding Death

One possible bone of contention between evolution and Genesis 1-3 is the fundamental "truth for our salvation" that through sin death entered the world ("for, the day you eat of that you are doomed to die" (Gen 2:19)). This truth is rooted in Sacred Scripture. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23) for "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things that they might exist, and the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them; and the dominion of Hades is not on earth" (Wis 1:13,14 - NIV).

Through sin death came into the world. "Looking forward" this "truth for our salvation" helps explain a lot. Death is not God's fault – but Adam's! God did not say that he will punish Adam with death but that Adam would be "doomed to die". Death, then, is not an arbitrary divine punishment but a natural consequence of sin.

Looking at the world, we see that the magisterial truths of Genesis concerning the event of the Fall fit well with the world as we experience it today. The Fall of Man and the fundamental truth for our salvation that death is a consequence of sin constitutes a powerful tool in the theodicy debate. If God is good and God is all powerful why do bad things happen? "Through sin death" certainly has an important role to play in answering this question. "Looking forwards" from the fall, then, the truth that death is a consequence of sin makes quite a lot of sense. "Looking backwards" at the world before the fall of Man, however, this fundamental truth for our salvation seems to raise more questions than it answers.

### A World Without Death?

Living in a world affected by the first sin of Adam it is difficult for us to conceive of a world free from its effects. But if death is a consequence of sin, then the implication has to be that before the first sin of Adam there would have been no death. With death being such an over arching aspect of our existence and our experience, trying to imagine a world free from death takes some doing. How on earth would such a world work? What about volcanoes? What about earthquakes?

Were Adam and Eve, in their state of original innocence, so in tune with the world around them that they would have had premonitions of all such impending disasters and – much like the reported animal behaviour prior to the impact of the Tsunami – simply run to the hills? Maybe, at the moment the meteor strikes, those in its path would have simply been assumed directly into heaven. Mary is, after all, the only example we have of a human person free from sin.

In the face of such a leap of the imagination one might be tempted to revisit and reinterpret the message of Genesis and ask the question; to what does the "death" of Genesis 2:19 refer? Does it really refer to a physical death or might it simply be referring to a spiritual death of some kind ("hell", for instance)? This interpretation may seem tempting as a possible resolution between the two world views: the world view of original innocence and the view of the world as we see it today – stained as it is by original sin. Confining the "death" of Gen 2:19 to the realm of the spiritual avoids a possible conflict with evolution; namely that if the "death" of Genesis 2:19 is a physical death how did we ever evolve in the first place? *What about the dinosaurs?*

They walked the earth before the first sin of Adam and yet they certainly died. "No breed has he created on earth but for its thriving; none carries in itself the seeds of its own destruction" (Wis 1:14 – Knox). Perhaps the "death" of the dinosaurs was caused not by the sin of Adam but by the sin of Lucifer. Alternatively – the Church is familiar with the concept of "retroactive grace" (e.g. the Immaculate Conception effected by the once for all time eternal sacrifice of Calvary) – perhaps the death of the dinosaurs was "similarly" caused by the cosmic primordial event of The Fall rippling out through time and space. Another possibility might be that "through sin death" refers specifically to (physical *and* spiritual) human death.

### Echoes of Immortality

The last suggestion seems to be the one most "in tune" with the history of salvation and the theory of evolution. Hints and indications of the truth of this option can perhaps be seen in the doctrine of the Ascension and Assumption as well as in the phenomenon that the bodies of saints often remain incorrupt. Although the saints were not free from sin, they were, or at least became, freer than most! We were made in God's image and likeness, the pinnacle of God's creation. God did not create us in seven literal days but, through a process of material evolution, a species emerged with the intelligence and capabilities required to break free from its environment. It was precisely at this moment when man broke free from the shackles of his natural environment that God shackled

him with a conscience. It was precisely at this moment that God created *ex nihilo* the human soul.

### The Soul, The Key to Human Nature

Whether the body was that of a *homo sapiens* or a *homo habilis* or somewhere in-between, the soul was that of a human. In their state of original innocence Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening; but through disobedience sin entered the world, and through sin death. The death that entered the world was not just a spiritual death but was also a physical death. Adam and Eve, created as they were in a state of original innocence, were not “doomed to die”.

And as for the “what?” and the “when?” of it; if I were to reach back in time to grasp the hand of the “first parent”, regardless of whether the hand that I clasped was that of a fellow *homo sapiens* or that of an earlier form of the homo genus I would be able to shake the hand and greet its owner as a fellow man.

1 *Humani Generis* art. 36-37

2 Council of Trent, Decree on Original Sin, no. 3

#### OTHER ANGLES

## REASON, TRADITION AND THE ADVENT OF THE SOUL

Anthony Ozimic

Late last year the Central American state of Nicaragua passed a law banning all abortions. Following a huge pro-life march and rally on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2006 – reportedly the largest march of any kind ever in Nicaragua’s history – the Nicaraguan National Assembly on 26<sup>th</sup> October voted (52 in favour, 0 opposed and 9 abstentions) to close a legal loophole which allowed thousands of abortions every year. The loophole allowed so-called ‘therapeutic’ abortion in a completely undefined way. Popular support for a ban on abortion was shown when an estimated 200,000 people marched in the country’s capital, Managua, to demand that unborn children be fully protected. 300,000 Nicaraguans also signed a pro-life petition.

Even members of the Marxist Sandinista party voted for the ban, including Daniel Ortega, Nicaragua’s incoming president. No Sandinista voted against the ban, and observers believe that the measure would not have passed without significant Sandinista support. On 17<sup>th</sup> November, Enrique Bolanos, Nicaragua’s outgoing president, signed the ban in the presence of several Catholic and Evangelical clergy, a doctor and others. In a statement, the president said he was closing the legal loophole because it had “allowed the daily execution of innocent children in their mother’s womb, in open violation of the Constitution which protect[s] the unborn child”.

A threatening letter was sent to the President of the National Assembly by diplomatic envoys of the

United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and several nation-states, suggesting that overseas aid would be denied if abortion was not allowed. The EU’s role in pressuring Nicaragua to retain abortion is unsurprising: late last year the European Parliament voted for the controversial terms ‘reproductive health’ and ‘reproductive rights’ in a new legal instrument to regulate EU aid to developing countries – terms which are also often falsely interpreted to include abortion, even a universal human right to abortion on demand.

Euro-parliamentarians voted to retain these terms, despite the fact that the vote may mean that abortions will be promoted and performed using taxpayers’ money from Ireland, Malta, Poland and Portugal, the EU member-states where abortion is illegal, unconstitutional or heavily restricted. The letter, signed *inter alia* by the EU ambassador, Francesca Mosca, cited various international human rights instruments to claim that abortion was a “fundamental human right”. Jose Miguel Vivanco of Human Rights Watch said: “The new penal code [banning abortion] doesn’t just go against basic human rights: It goes against fundamental principles of humanity”.

In fact, the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), which Nicaragua has ratified, states: “Every person has the right to have his life respected. This right shall be protected by law and, in general, *from the moment of conception*. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life”. Chile and El Salvador also ban all

abortions, and abortion is restricted in most other Latin American countries.

Prohibitions on abortion by sovereign states are not only compatible with the requirements of international human rights instruments but are in fact the most probable interpretation of those requirements. There are some rights which the state has authority to confer (such as citizenship) but there are also fundamental rights of human beings. Fundamental rights, including the right to life, are inherent to, and derive from, the dignity of the human person. These rights are not bestowed by governments but must be recognised by them and protected in law. The right to life and equality is enshrined in a number of international human rights instruments. The centrepiece of the UN Nations Charter is the connection between the recognition of the inherent dignity of all members of the human family (and of the inviolable and inalienable human rights which derive from that recognition) on the one hand, and peace and justice within and among nation states on the other. Unless the State can guarantee the right to life then there are no meaningful rights to freedom or to security of person.

**Aspects of the Nicaraguan pro-life argument:**

In response to the letter sent by the U.N. CEDAW committee (the treaty body for the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*) Wendy Wright, President of Concerned Women for America, Nicaragua's largest public policy women's organization, stated:

"Nicaraguans held a massive rally – 200,000 strong, led and filled by women – in support of an abortion ban. Yet radical feminists and U.N. officials tried to bully Nicaraguan leaders into cancelling the vote.... Clearly U.N. agents are abusing their position to force their ideology on democratic societies, even when the women of those societies vehemently oppose it. (This is) U.N. interference in this free vote of a sovereign nation .... The U.N. committee's bullying of Nicaragua proves why the U.S. should not ratify CEDAW and subject Americans to these abusive feminist ideologies ..."

Archbishop Leopoldo Brenes of Managua said: "We support life, and we think that children should be given in adoption rather than having their lives taken... There have been cases in which the unwanted child, when he is an adult, is the one to take care of the grandmother and provide for the mother...Nicaragua faces the challenge of working for a culture of life, in

which people are taught the value of being parents and the true meaning of sexuality."

Toni Solo of Scoop Independent News has commented: "One of the defining characteristics of contemporary Nicaraguan society is a widespread turning to religion or spirituality for affirmation in the face of the ruthless application of savage 'free market' capitalism."

A BBC report contained this snippet:

Maria Mora is an ordinary Nicaraguan woman. She has four children. "Do you agree with abortion," I ask. "No," says Maria. "Why?" I say. "How could I abort my child?" Maria replies. "But what if your life was in danger?" I continue. "I would rather die myself than live without my child," she says, with a conviction that does not entertain ambiguity.

Orlando Tardencilla, one of the members of the sub-committee which proposed the bill, said: "Unless abortion is made a crime, then people can simply come out and say: 'I have the right to an abortion, this is my body and I can decide.' That's like saying: 'I'm allowed to commit murder because these hands are mine, this gun is mine.'"

Father Ronaldo Alvarez, church spokesman, said: "Abortion is the murder of an unborn child. Just because you can't see the baby, doesn't mean it has no rights...[Rape] is not the fault of the baby. It is the rapist, not the child, who should be punished... We don't want to harm women, but there must be no intervention through choice to kill the baby...We accept there can be natural abortions, but that is the biological will of the body, not the chosen will of the human mind".

Rafael Cabrera, an obstetrician and leader of the *Yes to Life* Movement, said: "We don't believe a child should be destroyed under the pretext that a woman might die."

**Anthony Ozimic is Political Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC)**



# The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Debate over Darwinism

*An interview with Michael Hanby by Nandagopal R. Menon*

Prof. R. Michael Hanby is Assistant Professor of Theology, Honors College, Baylor University, Texas, United States. The author of a critically-acclaimed volume, *Augustine and Modernity* (Routledge, 2003), Prof. Hanby is currently working on a book that proposes an "alternative both to contemporary creationist and compatibilist responses to Darwinian evolution" and "develop[s] a philosophical and theologically rigorous account of the doctrine of creation in critical engagement with ... the dominant Anglo-American tradition of evolutionary biology". Nandagopal R. Menon is doing a masters course in Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam on a European Commission scholarship. Until recently he was with *Frontline Magazine*, Chennai, India.

"For the same reasons that the doctrine of creation is not a theory of how the world came to be, it is an account of what the world is: namely, the sheer gift of divine gratuity and the 'pointless' reflection of the infinity of divine beauty."

***What do you understand by the terms "Darwinism" or the "Darwinian worldview"? Why is a Christian "theological critique" of it essential at all?***

There is of course no single 'Darwinism,' but many, often competing Darwinisms. Since the advent of modern genetics and the Neo-Darwinian synthesis, most of these now only bear superficial resemblance to Darwin's own thought. This raises a couple of interesting questions: whether the definition of 'Darwinism' has been stretched beyond the point of meaningfulness and why Darwinian apologists – who often neither emerge from nor confine their commentary to biology proper – so persist in identifying themselves as Darwinian. I suspect it is because 'Darwinism' is cultural shorthand for the sort of 19<sup>th</sup> century hubris that continues to mark the central conceit of many of these theories: the pretense to account for all of biological and even cultural and social life as the outworking of a single mechanism or process.

Admittedly, this is a controversial description of natural selection, and there are now ways of defining it perhaps that escape this diagnosis, though arguably at the cost of reducing the concept to a truism or tautology. Yet to the extent that this mechanism or process *can* be abstracted from the otherwise contingent instances it purports to explain, it becomes 'transcendental'. In this way, but not *only* in this way, Darwinism is not simply anti-religious, theological, or metaphysical, but perversely theological and metaphysical. Ironically, this is truer of those such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett who wield Darwinism as an anti-religious weapon and who would be horrified to learn that they aren't really very good atheists, than of those like Gould who are ostensibly more friendly to religion but metaphysically more nihilistic.

At the risk of vast oversimplification, if I were to identify a 'core' of Darwinian thought it would consist of a) the transmutation of species, which is not an exclusively Darwinian insight and b) the primacy accorded to natural selection in the evolutionary process. There has long been a tension over which of these constitutes the conceptual centre of Darwinism, and how one answers this question seems to go a long way toward how one even imagines the practice of theorizing in a Darwinian mode. I have grave doubts that the latter emphasis in particular succeeds on its own terms in fulfilling its explanatory ambitions, and I would attribute these failings to the debilitating deficiencies in Darwinian metaphysics, but I should stress that my chief complaint is *not* with a specific tenet of Darwinian theory, as if it were the job of theology to provide an alternative biological explanation.

To my mind, theology is indifferent to certain Darwinian claims. It should have no stake in (affirming or) denying the transmutation of species or even that there are episodes in nature conforming to Darwinism's Malthusian diagnoses. Darwinism may be false, but it need not be *simply* false. And a theological critique that straightforwardly declared it so would be no clearer about its own nature as theory than the Darwinism

which thinks it comprehensively explains biology. No, a theological critique of Darwinism is a good bit more complicated than that. It could never be a simple rejection of Darwinism because it could never straightforwardly debate biology on the terms set by Darwinism. This would assume that the doctrine of creation aspires to be the same kind of theory that Darwinism is, which only shows how little both the doctrine of creation and Darwinian theory are understood, as theory, by those who profess them. Confusion reigns on all sides here and is promoted by some.

What makes a theological critique of Darwinism essential, first, is its metaphysical non-neutrality. And a theological critique of Darwinism must be precisely that, a critique of the metaphysics upon which Darwinism is premised and the theology or anti-theology Darwinism invariably tends to become. There are profound implications for biology in such criticisms, but they are not biological criticisms. And I would not confine criticism to the 'transcendental' character of natural selection, but include within its scope Darwinism's endemic nominalism, atomism, and extrinsicism, each of which are integral to a conception of nature that is the starting point—not the conclusion—of the Darwinian enterprise. I would further extend this criticism to what I take to be the defective understanding of its own theorizing that results from Darwinism's metaphysical deficiencies. Hence the different senses in which Darwinism might be true and false.

To accept these Darwinian premises, or even to engage Darwinism on its own terms, is to accept profound distortions to the doctrine of God from the very outset. The point is not just academic. When God becomes unintelligible, so too do human beings and everything else. Thus in a world whose imaginable parameters are set by Darwinian theory, either a putative 'explanation' of how a thing came to be is taken to suffice for an explanation of what a thing *is*—which is quintessential reductionism—or the question of a thing's being and essence is dismissed as unscientific and unintelligible.

To admit either the limits of Darwinian explanation or a possible true answer to a question of natural 'fact' beyond Darwinian competence in the other, would be to deprive Darwinism of its animating conceit. Hence along with the capitalist economics from which it emerged, Darwinism indeed acts as 'universal acid' (Dennett's phrase) that dissolves persons and things of any and all intrinsic meaning and, carried to its conclusions, even dissolves the apparent world into unreality. Theology must regard this as false and dangerous. And Darwinian biology's long complicity in the eugenics movement, and now the eugenics renaissance, attests to this. This is the second reason a theological critique of Darwinism is essential.

**What is the "Christian doctrine of creation"? How does it differ from "intelligent design" and "creationism"?**

According to the traditional, orthodox doctrine of creation, all created being is freely generated by God *ex nihilo* and therefore depends for its existence on its *intrinsic* relation to and participation in the act of being which is God. Just as important, however, are the correlative points that have always been included within this claim: that created being is no 'part' of God, has no claim on God, adds to or subtracts nothing from God, and thus neither causes any compulsion in God nor completes any end or purpose which God was otherwise lacking. The doctrine of creation, in other words, is logically a consequence of the doctrine of God, and one of its principal functions is to insist upon the absolute difference between God and the world, and thus to secure for thought God's transcendence and otherness with respect to the world. Because this difference by definition lies beyond our capacity to survey it, and because the act of creation, strictly speaking, is not an event *in* the world but rather the event *of* the world, it is just as important to stress what the doctrine of creation is *not*.

The doctrine of creation is not a theoretical alternative to Neo-Darwinian evolution or even big bang cosmology for the origins of life and the world precisely because the unique nature of the act in question prevents its ever coming to view. (Hence my qualified indifference to Darwinism's central claims.) There can be no 'mechanism' for the passage from nothing to something for the simple reason that prior to the passage, there is nothing upon which the mechanism might act. Of course this reflects the more fundamental point that God is not one 'thing' and the world another, and not simply hypothetically 'beyond' or 'outside' the finite world, a point that is frequently occluded in the misleading characterization of divine action as 'intervention.' So while we may think of the *act* of creation as the principle of causality as such insofar as the novelty characteristic of creation is integral to the generation of real difference necessary for causation, the act of creation properly speaking is not a cause among causes, and the *doctrine* of creation is less a theory of causes than the insistence that no such comprehensive 'theory of everything' is either possible or desirable.

The positive aspects of the doctrine of creation flow logically from the negative. For the same reasons that it is not a theory of *how* the world came to be, the doctrine of creation *is* an account of what the world *is*: namely, the sheer gift of divine gratuity and the 'pointless' reflection of the infinity of divine beauty. It follows then that the doctrine of creation is also an *aesthetic* doctrine in both the objective and subjective sense, implying that

transcendence is inherent in immanence and that every intelligible whole, as such, is more than the aggregate of its component parts, since each created thing, being intrinsically related to the source of its being, must therefore be more than itself. Subjectively, the doctrine of creation then implies a hierarchical order of knowledge, which is comprehensive but *not* reductive, for the dual reason that the defining principle of the world is other to it and that the highest form of knowledge of such a world is properly aesthetic and dis-possessive.

All of this is miles from either Intelligent Design or creationism. Briefly, ID is a programme purporting to comport with scientific canons, and thus to distinguish itself from creationism. It accepts evolution in principle, but rejects Darwinian evolution, contending that systems such as the eye, in which the status of parts as parts are dependent upon the wholes of which they are parts, are for this reason too irreducibly complex to be accounted for by Darwinian mechanisms acting on a long history of individual accretions and isolated phenotypic variations. ID thus follows the 18<sup>th</sup> century natural theology of William Paley in inferring from such 'contrivances' that 'some sort' of designer best accounts for this complexity. There are numerous variations of creationism, but in its crudest and most vilified form creationism simply rejects evolution *tout court* and seeks to employ 'scientific' means to justify a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2.

Much as Dawkins and Dennett are bad atheists, preserving in their own thought the metaphysics they reject, so creationists and ID proponents are bad theists, preserving in their thought the scientific naturalism *they* reject. Neither ascends to a metaphysically adequate understanding of either the act of creation or the world as the fruit of this act, and so each threatens to compromise the doctrine of God in a fashion quite similar to the scientific naturalism by reducing God to a not-genuinely-transcendent 'object' extrinsic to creation. Each joins natural science in reducing 'creation' to 'causation,' and thus confines the meaning of creation to the uninteresting question of whether God stands at the first of a long line of efficient causes of effects that remain extrinsically related to God and one another. Ironically, because each concedes too much to scientific naturalism, each is less capable than the orthodox doctrine of creation of either criticizing that conception *or* assuming within its ambit the conclusions of science operating independently of theology. Conversely, because the orthodox doctrine of creation is less accommodating to the metaphysical first principles of modern science, it is more capable in principle of mediating the conclusions of science.

***Does not a "theological critique" of Darwinism run the risk of reviving the stereotype of a science-religion conflict?***

***Moreover, does it not confuse their distinct roles in understanding and explaining reality?***

This conclusion is probably inevitable, since Darwinians typically are not long on metaphysical subtlety and often have a stake in invoking 'creationism' as a foil to underwrite their own cultural authority. Whatever the risk, I am sure that it is considerably less than the risk of accepting the sort of *concordat* proposed by Stephen Jay Gould in his *No Overlapping of Magisteria of Science and Religion* (NOMA) principle. Theologians should indeed be wary of biologists bearing such gifts! This sort of proposal simply serves to underwrite the secular order and its construction of reality. It misconstrues the nature of scientific autonomy and enforces Christianity's confinement to the private realm of leisure pursuits or to impotent commentary on moral problems thought to be beyond the reach of reason.

But Christian faith does claim that the inter-Trinitarian *kenosis* manifest in the Incarnation reveals and consummates the meaning of existence as such; though this claim is often misconstrued as being fundamentally juridical and extrinsic in character – something 'tacked on' to the primary meaning of space, time, matter and persons – rather than intrinsic and original to their meaning as creatures. To relinquish theology's rights to speak truth about the same world biologists study is to relinquish this claim and thus to abandon the Christian faith in the guise of protecting it. This is to the detriment not only of Christians, but the world. In a moment when our incomprehension of the meaning of being (human and otherwise) is matched only by our technological capacity to manipulate, dominate and destroy it, the failure by Christian theology to articulate the implications of the faith in its fullness is tantamount to a profound abdication of responsibility for the care of the world.

For my part, though, I have no stake in promoting some timeless conflict between science and religion, which is both historically and theoretically false. To the contrary, I would contend that their interrelation must be harmonious in principle since all truth is God's. Yet, contingently, their harmony depends on this relationship being in good order, and good order depends not just upon religious authority recognizing a certain autonomy to scientific inquiry, or even upon science conceding its incompetence in the realm of 'values,' but upon science recognizing the true nature of its autonomy.

There are moral and political questions here, but they are of a secondary nature. 'Scientific autonomy' should mean the irreducibility of scientific inquiry to religion or theology and consequently, a significant measure of liberty for science to operate according to its own lights without interference

from religious authorities. This is why a theological critique of Darwinism is not a biological critique, though if heeded, such a critique would not be without effect in biological theorizing. However, 'scientific autonomy' does not mean that scientific rationality is sufficient to sustain itself apart from metaphysics and ultimately theology. I take Darwinism's reliance upon nominalism and atomism, its transcendental tendencies, and its frequent incursions into theology proper as evidence of the fact that there can be no question in practice of science dispensing with metaphysics, only a question of whether science is sufficiently honest or self-aware in acknowledging this fact. So the real question is not whether metaphysics and theology, but which, and whether the metaphysics assumed by science can actually sustain the scientific enterprise.

In fact, I have contended elsewhere that the metaphysics of Darwinism tends to vitiate its capacity to account, not only for the biological world, but for Darwinism. Given its voluntarism and atomism, for instance, why should we regard the analogical imposition of 'natural selection' to a range of discrete historical episodes to be anything other than an arbitrary convenience? And why, therefore, should we credit this convenience with any explanatory power? In other words, it is unclear how Darwinians consistently holding a Darwinian view of the world could ever expect their theory to capture the truth of that world, since the same theory would require us to regard the phenomenal manifestation of the world at the root of our scientific engagement with it as epiphenomenal. But then again, it is impossible in practice to hold consistently to a Darwinian view of the world.

So while I do indeed think that religion and science are harmonious in principle (though I am uncomfortable with the dichotomy), this harmony is not a simple concordism that would baptize the existing order of scientific knowledge or the current relationship between theology and science. And I would contend finally that such harmony can only be maintained *within* a theological framework, and more fundamentally still, that science ultimately needs theology to secure its own status *as science*. There are objective and subjective dimensions to this claim.

Objectively, I would contend that only a theological framework which requires science to refer things to their infinite sources and thus to acknowledge within immanence a transcendence for which science cannot account, can 'save the phenomena' for science. On the subjective side, I would maintain that such an acknowledgement of transcendence should lead science to acknowledge its limited place within a 'hierarchy' of knowledge. Only this acknowledgment, only the confession that the 'highest' science is beyond our reach in the logos of God himself

and yet articulated through the mirror of faith, can prevent science from *becoming* theology and from falsifying both itself and its objects by making the world less than the theophany that it is.

***What are your views on Christoph Cardinal Schönborn's New York Times article on the Catholic Church's understanding of Darwinian evolution and the controversy generated by it? Do you think the Cardinal's article makes theological sense?***

I think Cardinal Schönborn's was a brave attempt to articulate a couple of important truths, namely, that Christian faith does indeed make truth claims about nature and that these claims are at odds with the reductive boast of Neo-Darwinian orthodoxy to account for the biological world in its totality. He was also attempting to correct what he judged to be a distortion of the Church's teaching in this area. I am sympathetic to the Cardinal's aims, though I would not have chosen to contest Neo-Darwinism on grounds of design. Most of what I've said so far suggests why. I would only add that this approach risks confusing teleology with the 'functionalism' characteristic of 18<sup>th</sup> century natural theology, and it has the potential – inadvertently, I'm sure – to promote the confusion that the viability of the doctrine of creation is bound up with the success of ID.

I am unsurprised by the controversy, which, sadly, was easily predictable. The boundaries of Darwinian orthodoxy in the U.S. – not to mention religious belief – are rigorously policed. And the *New York Times*, after all, is home to Thomas Friedman and Maureen Dowd. It is hardly a venue for serious reflection, much less philosophical or theological reflection. I trust the Cardinal knew what he was getting into.

***Pope John Paul II's views on the theory of evolution ("something more than a hypothesis"), science-religion compatibility ("truth cannot contradict truth"), and efforts to undo the damage done by the Church's criticism of Galileo are widely seen as having contributed towards promoting the science-religion dialogue. What is your assessment?***

I remain suspicious of the so-called science-religion dialogue as currently composed for reasons that are probably clear – religion seems only to be granted partnership in this dialogue to the extent that it accepts in advance the marginal place allocated to it by secular, liberal society. Still, the historiography produced by this dialogue has helped to clear up some of the misconceptions that have been employed in the last century or so to represent religious belief as outdated, superstitious, and irrational. This is good, of course.

I concur with the Pope's statements. Yet as my own position on these questions probably illustrates, the statements are of such general nature that they are susceptible to contradicting interpretations unless supplemented by other, more definitive statements. This, in fact, is what Cardinal Schonborn was attempting in the *Times* piece. Whenever *that* happens, the Pope's remarks are not usually so widely embraced.

I remain ambivalent about Galileo. Jean Borella sums up my feelings about this better than I can. "Still today the Catholic Church is mocked for condemning Galileo in the

name of a retrograde world view, whereas those who do so are themselves prisoners of an obsolete cosmology. One is ridiculed and blamed for belonging to such a Church, and made ashamed of a past judged disgraceful on grounds that have proven invalid." A person should confess his sins. So too, perhaps, should the Church. But scrupulosity is a sin as well.

OTHER ANGLES

## PRO-LIFE ARGUMENT WINS IN NICARAGUA

*Philippe Jobert*

### Development of Doctrine and Understanding Concerning the Soul of the Early Embryo.

On several occasions John Paul II affirmed that the human embryo receives an immortal soul at the very moment of conception, thus making it a developing human being, and as such, it enjoys all the rights of an individual, and in the first place, the right to life. There is no lack of persons who approve of abortion and its legislation, and to relieve their conscience pretend that the human embryo has no soul, is not a person, and therefore can be dispensed with like an animal. Even within the Catholic Church there are persons who hold this view. Indeed, they make use of the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who in this matter wrongly adhered to the view held by Aristotle, who was a zoologist as well as a philosopher. Aristotle, noting that the human embryo in its earliest form did not have a human form, head, body and limbs, imagined that it had an animal soul which was replaced by a spiritual soul as soon as the human form definitely became apparent. This opinion can not be held with regard to Christ: it would be inappropriate for the Son of God to subsist in an animal nature. The Apollinaris heresy, which held that Christ did not have a spiritual soul was condemned in the Fourth Century. Now, according to the Holy Bible Christ resembled men in all things except sin (cf. Rom 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15). In attributing to Christ a spiritual soul from the moment of conception, Saint Thomas was obliged to make the case of Christ an

exception thus contradicting Sacred Scripture. Since then the definition of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady as preserved from original sin from the first moment of her conception would require another exception to be made in the case of Our Lady. Today, we know by experience (DNA technology) that all the human organisms are present in rudimentary form in the human embryo, and that there is no essential change from conception to adulthood. The whole development of the embryo is effected immutably and continuously, according to the programme determined at the moment of conception, through the spiritual soul. It is the soul which progressively perfects the primitive organs, and in particular the brain, so that little by little, they adapt to become the instruments of the mind. In the same way, it is the soul alone, which being spiritual, is able to give the embryo its definitive spirituality.

This is why John Paul II, declared on 24 February 1998, during a talk addressed to all the members of the pontifical Academy for Life that:-

*"The genome appears as the organising, structural element of the body in both its individual and hereditary traits: it indicates and conditions membership in the human species, the hereditary link and the biological and somatic marks of individuality. It has a determining influence on the structure of physical existence from the dawn of conception until natural death. It is on the basis of this inner truth of the genome, already present*

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*at the moment of procreation when the genetic inheritance of the father and the mother are united, that the Church has taken upon herself the task of defending the human dignity of every individual from the very start of his existence. Anthropological reflection, in fact, leads to the recognition that, by virtue of the substantial unity of body and spirit, the human genome not only has a biological significance, but also possesses anthropological dignity, which has its basis in the spiritual soul that pervades it and gives it life. Therefore, it is unlawful to carry out any intervention on the human genome unless it is aimed at the good of the person, understood as a unity of body and spirit, nor is it lawful to discriminate between human subjects on the basis of possible genetic defects discovered before or after birth.*

*"The Catholic Church, which considers man redeemed by Christ as her way" (cf. Encyclical 'Letter Redemptor hominis, n. 14), insists that the recognition of the dignity of the human being as a person from the moment of conception also be guaranteed by law."*

A little further on, the Holy Father added:

*"It is necessary to denounce the rise and spread of a new selective eugenics, which leads to the suppression of embryos and fetuses suffering from any disease. Sometimes baseless theories about the anthropological and ethical difference of the various developments of the prenatal life are employed: the so-called 'progressive humanisation of the foetus'.*

One is struck in this speech by the total rejection

of the theory of Aristotle taken up by Thomas Aquinas. It is clear that the rejection is based on the anthropological argument, that is to say philosophical, because the speech is addressed to scientists. This reasoning arrived at by induction is rooted in the experience of the unity and continuity in time of the human genome from conception until the age of reason. The person revealed as such by the rationality of its operations, of which the spiritual soul is the moving principal, is one and the same with the embryo just conceived and which therefore has a spiritual soul. It is primarily by means of the spiritual soul that God has a relationship with the human person since God is Spirit (Jn 4:24, 6:63). This relationship, a relationship of Love is the cause of bringing the person into being and sustaining their life.

This philosophical argument is of great importance because it determines the ethics to be adopted by legislators whose norm is the natural law as arrived at by reason. Those who go against this argument or even reject its possibility, unconsciously become accomplices of abortionists and of the legislation of abortion, by rejecting in the realm of Faith the certitude of the spiritual animation of the embryo from the moment of conception, even though it is a fact of applied science at the disposal of every man.

**This is a translated extract from *Les Saints Innocents de Nos Jours* originally published in the French language review *Lettre aux Amis de Solesmes***

**Pere Philippe Jobert is Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Abbey of St. Pierre de Solesmes**

# THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

## Preaching on Abortion

by Timothy Finigan

*Fr Timothy Finigan, Parish Priest of Blackfen, author of the popular internet blog, The Hermeneutic of Continuity.*

In any kind of preaching, we should be aware of the values and attitudes of those who are listening. In the case of abortion, many people are in a state of internal conflict. They know that abortion is the killing of an innocent, unborn human being, a child who is recognisably such. At the same time, they may have been a part of the “condoning generation.” Since 1967, many people who have not had an abortion themselves, have participated by counsel, consent, encouragement, silence, or defence of the ill done.

The discomfort of this conflict leads to silence, denial, and anger when it is confronted. Psychologically, a tried and tested way to overcome such negative feelings is to acknowledge them accurately and sympathetically and then to remove the obstacles to a resolution. In the case of abortion, the obstacles will often be overcome by factual information about the peaceful, compassionate work of pro-life groups, the damage done to women by abortion, the increasing information on the life of the child in the womb.

The resolution hoped for will be a repentance for past collusion or inaction, acknowledgement of the truth of the Gospel of Life, and a new openness to get involved in active pro-life work. This approach also helps to shift the discussion from unfairly focussing exclusively on women. How many men have in some way co-operated in an abortion because the pregnancy would be a crisis for them too? How many parents have given in to the pressure of health professionals in the mistaken belief that an abortion would help their pregnant daughter?

The overall theme here is one of honesty, of facing up to the truth. We need to break the conspiracy of silence that surrounds the issue of abortion. As one pro-lifer put it to me: if a law were passed allowing one Catholic priest per month to be summarily executed, we would probably preach on it quite often. Our abortion law is responsible for the killing of 500 babies each day in the UK. It would be well to remind ourselves and our people that there will come a day – perhaps in the not too distant future – when future generations will look with horror at this episode in

our history and ask “What did you do?”

Some priests are unsure about preaching on abortion at all. They may think that we should not talk about abortion in a homily because there will be women in the congregation who have had an abortion. This is to give in to the pro-abortion propaganda which presents abortion as a solution to problems faced by women, and which presents the pro-life position as one which is condemnatory of women, hard hearted and potentially violent.

In fact, Pro-life workers who offer post-abortion counselling will affirm the obvious: abortion traumatises and harms women – physically and psychologically. Through his Church, Christ offers forgiveness and healing. If we fail to preach the Gospel of Life, we will fail many women and leave them with the “default” impression that the Church condemns them as people. The presence of women who have had an abortion is one of the most important reasons why we *should* preach on abortion as a matter of pastoral compassion.

A good place to start is *Evangelium Vitae* n.99 where Pope John Paul offered “a special word to women who have had an abortion.” We need to get the message across that “pro-life” is also “pro-women”. We would do well to highlight the temptingly easy availability of abortion. It is often presented as the first option to solve the problem of a crisis pregnancy. We can also point to the work of the Sisters of the Gospel of Life, the Good Counsel Network and LIFE who offer positive, practical help to women so that they do not have to feel that abortion is the only way out of their problems.

We need to invite people to receive the forgiveness and peace offered by Our Lord in the sacrament of penance. If we are able to mention in general terms (with due caution regarding the seal) that many women have been greatly helped by the sacrament of penance, that can in itself remove a barrier for some women who perhaps thought they would be rejected if they were to come to confession. We can also affirm that mothers who repented of an abortion in the past may become great pro-life workers.

They can make a positive step forward in their own lives and recover a sense of self-worth. They will be highly motivated and compassionate in helping others to avoid the heartache they have suffered.

Can this pro-life message be properly part of the liturgical homily related to the readings of the day? The homily should relate the Word of God to daily life. We live in a country that has killed over five million of its own inhabitants by abortion. We cannot ignore the application of biblical themes to what *Gaudium et Spes* (51) called an “unspeakable crime” taking place daily in our midst. Justice, God’s gift of life, the command of love, the prophetic call to care for the poor and outcast, Christ’s victory over sin and death... it would be hard to imagine a biblical theme that would not simply and straightforwardly apply to the imperative of pro-life work and witness. Indeed, the warnings given by God to the prophets should make us fearful if we fail to preach on this theme.

*I have gathered many very helpful ideas for this brief introduction from the website of the US “Priests for Life” ([www.priestsforlife.org](http://www.priestsforlife.org) – see “Homilies”) and I recommend it to priests for further reflection on this vital aspect of our priestly ministry.*



## Truth and compassion do not contradict

“I would now like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone’s right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.”

*Evangelium Vitae n.99*

# A MOTHER'S DIARY

FIGURE NASH

I can't decide whether motherhood has turned me into a wimp or a homicidal maniac. It all started, not long after Hugh Ambrose was born, when E thought it would be a nice idea to watch a film and we settled down to a DVD about the life of John Paul II called *Karol* that we had been given as a present. I suppose I should have known what I was letting myself in for, but after about an hour's worth of extremely harrowing film depicting life in Nazi-occupied Poland, I finally cracked at the sight of a soldier pushing an empty pram [and at least it was empty] over the side of a railway platform. The symbolism was stark to say the least and I burst into tears, shouting "switch it off! I really can't take much more of this!"

"Oh dear, I could always fast forward it to after the war," E volunteered, and if he was mildly taken aback at the sight of his wife sobbing hysterically into the sofa cushions he did not show it.

"Wonderful, I bet the Communist era will be a tea party." In the end, he had to put on the only completely cruelty-free film he could find, a comedy about the Jamaican Olympic bobsled team, but I still managed to cry when they crossed the finishing line and wondered whether this transformation into a pathetic weepy female was permanent.

Then just in case I was not having enough of an identity crisis, I was walking across a park pushing the pram when a drunkard lurched towards me making vaguely threatening gestures. My hands tightened around the handlebar and I thought, 'if he tries to hurt my baby I'll kill him.' I have been asked many times during debates about warfare whether I would use violence to defend myself and could never answer with any certainty that I would, but I knew without a shadow of a doubt that if he made any attempt to harm my son he would find himself on the receiving end of the Greater Clawed Maltese Falcon.

"I wouldn't worry about it," reassured my mother when I made the predicted panicked phone call, "lots of new mothers get feelings like that."

I shall have to remember that if said confrontation should ever occur. "And how does the prisoner plead?"

"Guilty, m'lud, of maternal insanity."

Christmas ushered me relatively painlessly into the world of children's entertainment and not before time either.

Now that little Hugh has squirmed out of the cycle of eating, sleeping and crying his eyes out, he is demanding to be amused and what better way to start than with a pile of parcels wrapped in shiny paper. I thoroughly enjoyed opening them all for him [he would have eaten every Santa-covered scrap of it given half the chance, along with most of the Christmas decorations hanging invitingly on the tree] and he is now the proud owner of a small regiment of adorable teddy bears and building bricks. The only mild surprise was a smiling snowman innocently donated by Hugh's great-granny that gave a cackling laugh worthy of a Tim Burton film every time it was prodded.

I believed once, in my naivety, that children's entertainment was, well, intended for the entertainment of children. I am beginning to discover, however, that it is all an ingenious conspiracy on the part of adults to amuse themselves and still give the impression of being grown-ups. For example, when someone gave me a DVD of *Dogtanian and the Three Muskahounds* [humour me on this one, I was a child of the eighties], I could put it on and almost convince myself that my little boy was old enough to enjoy the gripping storyline, the intrigue, the witty one-liners that make up the best cartoon series ever made. Come on now, can anyone think of another children's animation that contains such immortal lines as 'on guard, you cur! You insult the name of the king!' and 'I would rather die for love than see a lady dishonoured!' All right, so the bad guy is a Cardinal who mutters conspiratorially in dark corners but that somehow passed me by at the time and I haven't grown up to be a rabid anti-clerical – yet.

The only entertainment mistake I have made so far was an all-singing, all-dancing 'activity centre'. It contains everything a growing baby could wish for: flashing lights, brightly-coloured buttons to press, things to rattle, twist, turn; music and a little plastic dog that starts talking every time he is disturbed. *Puppy says clap your hands... puppy says nod your head...puppy says stomp your feet... puppy says, please remove my batteries before mummy takes a sledgehammer to me...*

Of course, the one lesson I should have remembered from the days when my younger sister was racing about getting her hand stuck in video recorders, was that no toy provides enough of a distraction from the really exciting objects around the room such as the knobs on the hi-fi or the big white radiator. I know exactly what he is thinking: *oh look, there's something hot, there's something sharp. I think I'll go and touch it!*

# THE CROSS-TREE OF LIFE

This Tree is my eternal salvation. It is my nourishment and my banquet. Amidst its roots I thrust my own roots deep; beneath its boughs I grow and expand, revelling in its sighs as in the wind itself. Flying from the burning heat, I have pitched my tent in its shadow, and have found a resting place of dewy freshness.

I flower with its flowers; its fruits bring perfect joy - fruits which have been preserved for me since time's beginning, and which freely now I eat. This Tree is food, sweet food for my hunger, and a fountain for my thirst; it is clothing for my nakedness; its leaves are the breath of life. Away with the fig tree from this time on !

If I fear God this is my protection; if I stumble this is my support; it is the prize for which I fight and the reward of my victory. This is my straightened path, my narrow way; this is the stairway of Jacob, where angels pass up and down, and where the Lord in very truth stands at the head.

This Tree, vast as heaven itself, rises from earth to the skies, an immortal plant, set firm in the midst of heaven and earth, base of all that is, foundation of the universe, support of this world of men, binding force

of all creation, holding within itself the mysterious essence of man.

Secured with the unseen clamps of the spirit, so that, adjusted to the Divine, it may never bend or warp, with foot resting firm on earth it towers to the topmost skies and spans with its embracing arms the boundless gulf of space between.

...

And lo, even while all things shuddered and heaved in earthquake, reeling for fear, his divine Soul ascended, giving life and strength to all; and again creation was still, as if the divine Crucifixion and Extension had everywhere unfolded and spread, penetrating all things, through all and in all.

O Thou who art Alone among the alone, and All in all, let the heavens hold thy Godhead, paradise thy soul and earth thy blood. For the Indivisible has become divided so that all might be saved and the world below might not remain ignorant of the coming of God.

**Pseudo-Chrysostom**

**Sermon VI for Holy Week (PG lix 743 - 6)**

**letters to**   
**the editor**

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**ISLAM**

*Dear Fr Editor*

Congratulations on another year's publication of excellent and informative editions of Faith Magazine. In the latest edition, Jan/Feb 2007, you have included articles which describe several important aspects of Islam and Muslim practices, including the very moving story of a conversion to Christianity. What was so good in that article was the description of the spiritual life of a Muslim which, unfortunately, is so little known. The article "Dying for Inter-faith Dialogue" may make some of your readers wonder why we read or hear that Muslim terrorists have cut off their prisoner's heads; such action does seem unnecessarily barbaric. Unfortunately, in the Koran in Sura 47 verse 4 one reads the 'command': "Therefore when ye meet unbelievers smite at their necks" (1934 translation by Yusuf Ali) In some English translations this is rendered "cut off their heads". I have come across about 50 verses in the Koran, out of more than 6000+, which can be used to justify such barbarities. I think everyone knows that there are other verses in the Koran which contradict the use of violence. Such contradictions emphasise the complications which can arise from the use of every word of sacred scripture as literal 'tablets of stone'.

*Yours Faithfully*

*Philip Audley-Charles*

*York Way  
London*

**AIDS AND CONDOMS**

*Dear Fr Editor*

Luke Gormally's article in your July/August issue 2006 was superb. In November in the United States Requiem Press published a short book of mine called "Standing with Peter: Reflections of a Lay Theologian on God's Loving Providence." On pp. 97ff I reproduced in essence this splendid essay, ignorant that Luke had published it in your magazine. I appended a note in which I said, "The argument given here was developed through emails with Luke Gormally and John Finnis who are its primary creators." I now realize that I should have credited Luke Gormally as the sole author. Prof Finnis made some good suggestions to him; I had only minor suggestions to offer. I apologize for this and will have a correction made in the next printing of the book. Please however publish this letter.

*Yours Faithfully  
(Prof.) William E, May  
John Paul II Institute for Studies  
on Marriage and Family at  
the Catholic University of America  
Washington*

**MATTER**

*Dear Fr Editor*

I would like to thank you for your reply to my letter which was published in the last edition of Faith under the title *The Nature of Matter*. I had feared a bristling answer, but the one you gave was gracious and not at all defensive. As I re-read the letter and the response, however, I was struck by a mistake in my own argument. Forms don't exist in the Mind of God from

all eternity; having denounced Aristotle's essentialism, I fell into it myself, albeit inadvertently. Indeed, if form and matter, as I contended, do not pre-exist actual things, the contradiction is clear. But essences (quiddity) do exist in the Mind of God- that was what I intended to say. This is an example, perhaps, of how intricate the details of Thomistic metaphysics are, and how easy it is to misunderstand the exact meanings of its technical terms and their interrelationships. I believe that this philosophical complexity and the subsequent misconceptions it can generate has led many people to reject the whole system. But a more nuanced understanding could perhaps solve this problem.

*Yours faithfully*

*John Deighan  
Pontificio Collegio Scozzese  
Rome*

**EDUCATION**

*Dear Fr Editor*

Congratulations on your excellent Editorial "Catholic Schools Revisited: What Future Now?" together with Eric Hester's definitive "The Decline of Catholic Education: An Appraisal and a Recommendation". In secondary schools immeasurable damage has been caused to the Church, families and students by the manner in which our Faith is "debated", wastage rates of over ninety per cent of pupils leaving school are quoted. Over the years complaints to the Hierarchy by parents have been ignored, and if our schools are to survive as Catholic rather than secular the Bishops have to act now as Mr Hester recommends.

*Yours Faithfully*

*P.J. Melling  
Orchard Avenue  
Hove  
East Sussex*

**BODY AND MIND BALANCE**

Dear Fr Editor

A century ago it was not obesity which aroused concern; on the contrary it was the stunted growth and poor physique of many of the "working class" recruits during the Boer War (1899-1902). As a consequence school meals were introduced in 1906, but it was some twenty years before vitamins were known about and the relative nourishment value of various foods could be assessed. Only then could steps be taken to promote a healthy diet to add to the programmes of slum clearance and smoke abatement which were already under way.

As well as learning from the past about the importance of a healthy diet, we might also reflect upon a point made by one of the contributors to "Sunlight" (a journal of the 1920-30s concerned with promoting healthy living): that we have minds as well as bodies, and behaviour depends upon "whether one's mind is fed on treasure or on trash".

Yours Faithfully

Moira Lenartowicz  
Wordsworth Drive  
Kendal  
Cumbria

**INTELLIGENT DESIGN**

Dear Fr Editor,

In your magazine's persistent attacks on Intelligent Design (ID) it seems the latest negative buzzword is "God of the Gaps". Surely what you should be attacking is "Neo-Darwinism of the Gaps" as the idea of gaps was dreamt up by the latter to cover up one of the many flaws in their theory, namely lack of fossil evidence. All the fossil record tells us is that some species have died

out, some are still around; and at best we are descended from some primate similar to ourselves. Michael S. Behe *Darwin's Black Box* is the only relevant book I have come across which backs up its arguments with well thought out logic and is the only one to tackle the question of our fiendishly complicated body chemistry. By sound inductive method he has devised a short cut to design.

How is it when attacking I.D. its main argument, namely inferring upon 'irreducible complexity', is ignored? This argument claims, for example, that the bacterial flagellum cannot evolve from lower parts. It has a motor which rotates a propeller and when the motor and other parts are developing it could surely not survive 'natural selection'. This brings up the problem as to the survival probabilities of intermediate forms before they are fully functional.

Then we have the problem of the 28 processes involved in blood clotting. If it takes millions of years for the clotting process to evolve then surely all complex species would not survive since they would have all bled to death.

What is the policy of this magazine towards Evolution? It seems to be a closet, neo-Darwinism with a pinch of God thrown in. It seems to be forgotten that neo-Darwinism is being championed by a dwindling number of atheists on both sides of the Atlantic, though they still control most of TV and the scientific media. However, slowly but surely, letters of dissent from reputable scientists are starting to appear in the letter columns of papers such as the *Times* and the *Telegraph*. It seems that yet again parts of the Catholic Church are hitching up to a fading bandwagon.

Yours Faithfully

Bill Fielding

Greenford Close  
Onell  
Wigan

**EDITORIAL COMMENT**

In answering Mr Fielding we refer again to the editorial comment following the lead letter in our September/October 06 issue. Of course we fully concur that the universe contains evidence of Intelligence and Design. We also acknowledge the relevance of the intended perception behind "irreducible complexity". Although we would rather talk of *the coherent unity of the causal complex*, because, even when the development of a complex entity *can* be traced through contributory causes, the interlocking patterning of those causes through time and space and the higher meaningful unit of organisation which they produce still reveals order and purpose in the system which points to Transcendent Mind as First and Final creative cause. Our criticism of ID is that it restricts the evidence for Intelligence to only a certain class of cases *for which no natural explanation is said to be discernable*; in other words where there appear to be *gaps* in the fabric of natural causality. Such arguments are always hostage to future scientific discovery. It also leaves the majority of Nature *needing no transcendent explanation*. This is why we think that, without intending it, ID proponents actually concede ground to the materialistic neo-Darwinists. We say that the whole of science points to God, not because of what we *can't* explain but because of what we *can*. The very coherence of the universal laws of matter point to God as the abiding and active centre of Creative Intelligence. So we challenge the Darwinists and materialists by occupying the *whole* of their ground with theistic argument, not just by pointing to a few test cases and, by default, leaving the rest of Nature to secularist interpretation.

## THE VITAL ADVENTURE OF PRAYER

**P**rayer brings with it, as food does, a new sense of power and health. We are driven to it by hunger, and, having eaten, we are refreshed and strengthened for the battle which even our physical life involves. For heart and flesh cry out for the living God. God's gift is free; it is, therefore, a gift to our freedom, i.e. renewal to our moral strength, to what makes men of us. Without this gift always renewed, our very freedom can enslave us. The life of every organism is but the constant victory of a higher energy, constantly fed, over lower and more elementary forces. Prayer is the assimilation of a holy God's moral strength.

**W**e must work for this living. To feed the soul we must toil at prayer. And what a labour it is! "He prayed in an agony." We must pray even to tears if need be. Our cooperation with God is our receptivity; but it is an active, a laborious receptivity, an importunity that drains our strength away if it do not tap the sources of the Strength Eternal. We work, we slave, at receiving. To him that hath this laborious expectancy it shall be given. Prayer is the powerful appropriation of power, of divine power. It is therefore creative.

**P**rayer is not mere wishing. It is asking—with a will. Our will goes into it. It is energy. We turn to an active Giver; therefore we go into action. For we could not pray without knowing and meeting Him in kind. If God has a controversy with Israel, Israel must wrestle with God. Moreover, He is the Giver not only of the answer, but first of the prayer itself. His gift provokes ours. He beseeches us, which makes us beseech Him. And what we ask for chiefly is the power to ask more and to ask better. We pray for more prayer. The true "gift of prayer" is God's grace before it is our facility.

**T**hus prayer is, for us, paradoxically, both a gift and a conquest, a grace and a duty. But does that not mean, is it not a special case of the truth, that all duty is a gift, every call on us a blessing, and that the task we often find a burden is really a boon? When we look up from under it it is a load, but those who look down to it from God's side see it as a blessing. It is like great wings—they increase the weight but also the flight. If we have no duty to do God has shut Himself from us. To be denied duty is to be

denied God. No cross no Christ. "When pain ends gain ends too."

**W**e are so egoistically engrossed about God's giving of the answer that we forget His gift of the prayer itself. But it is not a question simply of willing to pray, but of accepting and using as God's will the gift and the power to pray. In every act of prayer we have already begun to do God's will, for which above all things we pray. The prayer within all prayer is "Thy will be done." And has that petition not a special significance here? "My prayer is Thy Will. Thou didst create it in me. It is Thine more than mine. Perfect Thine own will"—all that is the paraphrase, from this viewpoint, of "Hear my prayer." "The will to pray," we say, "is Thy will. Let that be done both in my petition and in Thy perfecting of it." The petition is half God's will. It is God's will inchoate. "Thy will" (in my prayer) "be done (in Thy answer). It is Thine both to will and to do. Thy will be done in heaven—in the answer, as it is done upon earth—in the asking."

**P**rayer has its great end when it lifts us to be more conscious and more sure of the gift than the need, of the grace than the sin. As petition rises out of need or sin, in our first prayer it comes first; but it may fall into a subordinate place when, at the end and height of our worship, we are filled with the fullness of God. "In that day ye shall ask Me nothing." Inward sorrow is fulfilled in the prayer of petition; inward joy in the prayer of thanksgiving. And this thought helps to deal with the question as to the hearing of prayer, and especially its answer. Or rather as to the place and kind of answer. We shall come one day to a heaven where we shall gratefully know that God's great refusals were sometimes the true answers to our truest prayer. Our soul is fulfilled if our petition is not.

**From The Soul of Prayer by Peter Taylor Forsyth  
First published in 1916**

## comment

ON THE  
c o m m e n t s

by William Oddie

## THIS PASSING WORLD

As the outside world no longer has any excuse for ignoring, the Polish Church – the Church of heroic resistance to Communist tyranny, the Church of Wysinzki and Wojtyla – has another and a darker side to its history, which will now forever be exemplified by the tragic figure of Stanislaw Wielgus, who resigned as Archbishop of Warsaw after less than three days in office. As the *Telegraph* reported on January 9, in what could hardly have been more of a *coup de theatre*, ‘The Archbishop of Warsaw resigned yesterday minutes before he was due to celebrate his inaugural Mass, after admitting that he had been an informant for Poland’s communist-era secret police....’ ‘Stay with us,’ shouted several worshippers, despite repeated calls for quiet. Outside, many... supporters of Mgr Wielgus jostled and exchanged insults with a handful of demonstrators opposing the archbishop’s appointment.’

The archbishop insisted that he never told the SB – Communist Poland’s secret police – anything that could have harmed anyone. But, as *The Catholic Herald* commented, ‘he is surely in no position to judge this.’ Certainly, it is probably the case that he never *intended* any harm. Robert T. Miller of *First Things* commented that ‘Wielgus, long ago, did some seriously wrong things, but they were the kinds of bad things that generally good people might do—low-level collaboration, which he probably perceived to be harmless, in exchange for things that in any decent society would have been his by right, such as the ability to travel to pursue his studies. He was undoubtedly far in the

wrong to lie about the collaboration in recent days, but we are all tempted to lie to cover up things we’re ashamed of. I don’t think that Wielgus could function as Archbishop-Metropolitan of Warsaw, but I give him great credit for doing the right thing—albeit belatedly—in resigning. This is to accept a real penance for real sins. Wielgus is doing what he ought to do to save his soul.’ To this it might be added, to put his transgressions into context, that they must surely be nothing compared with those of the Patriarch of Moscow who turned out to have been a full colonel in the KGB, and who nevertheless survived without any uncomfortable questions asked into the post-communist era.

Nevertheless, Archbishop Wielgus did represent tendencies in the twentieth century Polish Church which we need to understand, for they have surely existed, and still exist, in the Church everywhere, and at the highest level. The primary division in the Polish Church, in the words of *The Catholic Herald’s* editor, Luke Coppen (who has strong Polish connections), ‘is between those, led by the heroic Cardinals Stefan Wysinski and Karol Wojtyla, who saw the Communists as an implacable enemy, and others who believed that the Church had to cooperate with the regime if it wished to ensure its survival’. Precisely. And the simple fact is that in an era when nearly everyone assumed that Communism had come to stay, it was not simply a few isolated Polish Catholic priests like Wielgus who believed that there had to be some degree of cooperation with the institutional manifestations of Communism; it was the Church at the very highest level of all, in Rome itself: for the assumption that Communism was a permanent reality and therefore had to be dealt with was the very foundation of Paul VI’s Ostpolitik, the most famous and the most ignoble manifestation of which was Pope Paul’s betrayal (there is no other word) of the Hungarian Cardinal Mindszenty, who was stripped of

all his offices and replaced by a Hungarian Primate whose remit (faithfully accomplished) was to establish cordial relations with the Communist regime of the deeply unsavoury Janos Kadar. In an era when such messages were being sent out from Rome itself the astonishing thing is not the number of Catholic clergy in Communist countries who collaborated (often in minor ways) but the continuing and overwhelming majority who did not.

We will need to return to the wider implications of all this, not merely for our understanding of the Church under communism, but for our understanding, too, of the Church’s relationship with all dominant secular political cultures. First, however, there are things to be said about the repercussions of the Wielgus affair for the fledgling pontificate of Benedict XVI. Those inclined to be critical of the Pope have seized their opportunity, among them Ruth Gledhill who wrote in *The Times* that ‘The Pope, perhaps resenting a political attempt to interfere with Church policy, ignored [pleas to take the accusations against Wielgus seriously] and nominated the Archbishop on December 6. Soon afterwards, secret police documents were leaked to the press. As a result, one of the most religiously motivated Governments in Europe finds itself in an icy relationship with the Vatican. And the Poles, who enthusiastically accepted Joseph Ratzinger as successor to Pope John Paul II, are beginning to wonder about his judgment.’

Fr. Adam Boniecki, editor of *Tygodnik*, the Krakow weekly paper for which Karol Wojtyla once wrote, a personal friend of the late pope and editor of the Polish edition of *L’Osservatore Romano*, told the Italian paper *La Repubblica* ‘I don’t know who, but someone has misled Pope Joseph Ratzinger. This is a serious matter, and someone must pay for it, in Poland or in the Vatican’. These words, reported Sandro Magister

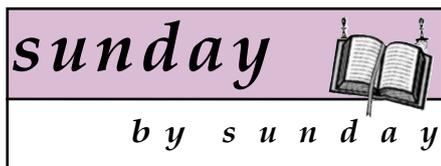
of *L'Espresso*, 'were reprinted with great emphasis in *L'Avvenire*, the newspaper of the Italian Bishops' Conference, which has a direct link to the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone: this is a sign of strong displeasure and irritation on the part of the Church leadership over how this matter came to a conclusion.'

'In effect', commented Magister, 'the final curtain of this drama – the resignation of Wielgus just 40 hours after he had formally taken his post as Archbishop of Warsaw – can be explained only by an authoritative decision by Benedict XVI himself. If by ordering his resignation the Pope finally decided to reverse his position of constant support for Wielgus ... it must be because he was convinced by very serious facts.' This must mean that the Pope was not at first told everything: that a story was cooked up for him which was designed to explain why Wielgus's Polish critics were not happy with the appointment but which did not disclose enough to convince the Pope that Wielgus really could not function as head of the Polish church. As late as December 21, the Pope again personally reconfirmed his 'complete trust' in Wielgus after having examined 'all the circumstances of his life,' and also, as it later emerged, after having spoken with him again. It appears, in other words, that Wielgus himself deceived the Pope, and that those charged with investigating the affair did not discover the full extent of the allegations against him until the very last minute: the story is a chapter of dishonesty and incompetence, both in Poland and in the Vatican, for which Pope Benedict can hardly be blamed, but from which he will undoubtedly draw lessons for the future.

All this, it seems, is a million miles away from the home life of our own dear part of the Church Universal. But is it, really? One of the predetermining factors in the witness of John Paul II against the secular materialism of the Western world was

his personal experience of resistance to another kind of materialism, and to the political culture that came with it, in what was then called Eastern Europe – now a thing of the past. But appeasement in much of the Western world was at the very heart of the liberal mentality, both inside and outside the Church. When President Reagan denounced the Evil Empire, he was himself widely denounced for undermining something called *detente*: but not by the Pope. And in almost exactly the same way, when the Pope condemned both materialism in the political culture of the West and secularism within the Catholic Church in Western Europe and North America, he was condemned by liberals within the Church as someone who lacked the sophistication to understand the complexities of life in the West. Within a few years of his election, Peter Hebblethwaite was writing, *de haut en bas*, that he 'would like to think that John Paul continues to learn from his stay in the West... and that he might spend as much time trying to understand the rest of us as we have spent trying to understand him'. The myth that the Pope was determined to undo the brave new world of Vatican II (which, having been trapped behind the iron curtain he could not possibly have understood) was sedulously spread abroad. All that, today, seems very distant: it is now Pope John Paul who is seen as the Council's most definitive interpreter and advocate. But the theology of compromise once known as 'the spirit of Vatican II' (as opposed to its reality), though not much talked about these days, is still as powerful as ever it was. To those who have been formed by it, the late Pope's call to all Catholics to become 'Signs of Contradiction' is anathema. There can, they profoundly believe, be no survival without collaboration: and the idea that if we are to thrive in a predominantly secular culture we should informally come to a kind of concordat with it, rather on the model

of the Anglican Establishment, has become very powerful in the English Catholic Church. Much as most English Catholics love Her Majesty the Queen, many of us felt a little uneasy when she referred to the late Cardinal Hume as 'my Cardinal', and not entirely enthused by television images of Her Majesty attending Vespers at Westminster Cathedral, for all the world as if it was Choral Evensong at Westminster Abbey. Not that such ecumenical gestures are in themselves a bad thing, but this one seemed all too likely to be have been a reward to the English Church for no longer making so much of a nuisance of itself, as it could have done, for instance, by criticising the supposedly Catholic-minded Tony Blair for his wholehearted support for abortion - including abortion up to term - a stance which had led the late Cardinal Winning, north of the border in Scotland, to utter a series of blistering denunciations of the Prime Minister even during New Labour's honeymoon years. Readers of this magazine will not need me to give further examples of issues on which the English Catholic hierarchy has failed to speak, even to its own people. The fact is that painful though current events are for the Polish Church, collaboration with a profoundly anti-Catholic materialist culture has gone further and deeper in our own Church and has had an infinitely more debilitating effect on English Catholic spirituality. If you doubt that, search out one of the churches in England which has been given new life by Polish immigrants. Go to Mass there (I once went to an electrifying Mass in Polish in Moscow during the final months of the Soviet Union). It may be comforting to think that others have their problems too, but the crisis for Polish Catholicism is as nothing compared with the crisis we face here as we sleep-walk peacefully towards that gentle extinction which is reserved for those who have forgotten what it is they have to say to those who need to



**Second Sunday of Lent C**  
*4 March Lk 9.28-36*

1. We notice that Christ goes up the mountain to pray and it is then that He is transfigured. It is while in union with the Father in prayer that He is seen for who He is. The brilliant whiteness of His clothes and face are His 'true colours'. The more we enter into communion with our Father in prayer the more our true colours shine through. At first this brings the injunction to conversion as we see our faults. In time we are moulded or 'coloured' by God's grace to be what He wishes us to be. Our 'true colours' will also be a sharing in the brilliant white of Christ if we allow God to work in us.

2. Moses and Elijah sum up the Old Testament as representatives of the Law and the Prophets. Furthermore, these two men were always journeying, led by God towards greater things. Peter, by contrast, wants to pitch camp and stay where he is. This is not God's way. Our true home is not to be found on this earth. Even the events in Jerusalem are described as a 'passing'. Christ's journey, like that of all His disciples, is a journey towards the cross. But it is at the cross that true glory is found. The Transfiguration gives us a glimpse of the future; not just Christ's future but the future of all of us.

3. The cloud, the shadow, the fear of the people and the voice are all classic Old Testament indications of the presence of God. There is no question about what is happening here. This man, Jesus, is revealed as the Son of God by the Father Himself in the most solemn terms. Furthermore, the Father instructs us to listen to Him. We owe obedience to Jesus because He speaks with the authority of God. No longer do

we hear through intermediaries like Moses and Elijah. The Law maker Himself and the Word of the prophets speaks to us Himself

**Third Sunday of Lent C**  
*11 March Lk 13.1-9*

1. During Pilate's brutal governorship of Judaea he took some of the Temple funds to finance aqueducts for Jerusalem. It could be that the Galileans were killed during the resulting riots. It seems that Jesus is told about the Galileans among the many dead because He is a Galilean Himself. The insinuation is that because they died so violently they must have been sinners. Jesus insists that the manner of death tells nothing of the guilt of a person, but in this case it can point to a more important lesson. Death does await the hardened sinner. God is life itself and to reject God is to reject life. The resulting death is far worse than any brutal earthly governor could inflict.

2. The Jews considered untimely death to be a punishment for sin. This understanding is prevalent in various forms even today. It betrays a completely wrong impression of God. God is seen as one who has the power to judge and to take life. This is true, but it is one aspect of His being, blown out of proportion. In the parable He is represented by the man who plants a vineyard. Such a figure shows our God as a life-giver and cultivator. He only wishes to be rid of the fig tree because it is taking room where fruitful life could grow. Our God is a God of life. Only that which brings death is excluded from Him. It is sin which bears death as its fruit and must be pruned away from any tree in the vineyard of life.

3. A fruit tree is planted for a reason. If it does not bear fruit it is more than useless because it takes up precious ground. We are created for a reason: to know, love and serve God and to be happy with Him forever in heaven. We are given all the time and graces we need to bear this fruit. Lent is a time to take stock of the kind of fruit we

bear. It is an opportunity to examine the reasons for living which guide our choices and lifestyle. The results of our examination may show that we need the manure of repentance and conversion. If it means we bear fruit the hard work will be well worth while.

**Fourth Sunday of Lent C**  
*18 March, Lk 15.1-3, 11-32*

1. The younger son asks for the inheritance before his father has even died. In a sense he is anticipating his father's death. In a strange sense he could be said to be wanting his father's death. When we sin we do not think of it in terms of wishing God dead but in reality we want neither God's will nor His presence. If we do not want Him present to us at that moment to where do we hope to banish Him? We are not far from the youngest son's disposition in wanting his inheritance before his father has died.

2. The youngest son hits rock bottom. It is not only that he must feed the swine which were considered unclean. He knows that the swine are of more value than he is. They at least are being fattened for the market. He returns to his father having pronounced sentence on himself: "Treat me as one of your paid servants." The father, however, does not allow the son to pass such a sentence. The boy will always be a son to his father. We are sometimes frightened of going to confession or even admitting our guilt because in our minds the sentence we would pass is severe. Our Father is never so severe and will never allow us to cease to be His children. The confessional should faithfully reflect such mercy.

3. The eldest son feels no such mercy for the youngest son and subtly disowns him: "This son of yours." The father reminds him that all the father possesses is his; he should not be jealous. He also reminds him that while he shares in all the material riches, he also shares in the relationship with his brother

and should share in the father's joy now that he is back. It is perhaps a proof of our union with God, beyond our righteous actions, that we share in such joy celebrated in heaven. Any feelings of resentment or jealousy among the 'good' people should be warning signs that their own relationship to the Father is not as close as it could be.

**Fifth Sunday of Lent C**  
*25 March Jn 8.1-11*

1. The woman was caught in the "very act" of committing adultery. The passage seems to suggest that she was placed semi-naked in full view of the people. Certainly, as regards them knowing her sins she was completely exposed. Christ too would be stripped and paraded before the people as a sinner. Though innocent, His solidarity with sinners is unbounded. So too is His power to forgive. In private, when all the others have left, Christ judges without condemnation and exhorts the sinner without discouraging. In the Sacrament of Confession we are all given the same liberating opportunity.

2. We hear that Jesus is sitting in the Temple area teaching. This was the recognised posture and place for the great teachers among the Rabbis. Perhaps the Scribes and Pharisees recognised this and wished to confront Him with their greatest teacher, Moses. In the prologue to John's Gospel we read, "The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (Jn 1.17) Here we have a practical example of what this verse means. This woman is given the possibility of living according to the law because of the freedom she receives in forgiveness. Christ upholds the Law and completes it by the gift of His grace, without which the Law is impossible for us.

3. Through Moses God wrote in stone. But the teaching of Moses, so steadfastly carved, was not fully grasped by those who wanted to take

up stones. He who could have thrown the stone contented Himself with dust. But He succeeded in writing His teaching more surely in their hearts than Moses ever did. The eldest and wisest saw it first. How long will it take us to drop the stone and grasp the more steadfast teaching which comes from Him who scribbled in the dust?

**Palm Sunday Mass**  
*1 April Lk 22.14-23,56*

1. Jesus is arrested and dragged from Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives along the same route where his path was cheered just a few days earlier. The whole passage tells of such turnarounds. A kiss is used to betray the Christ. A strong fisherman is frightened by a servant-girl. Jesus is accused of inciting a revolt. Herod clothes Him in a rich cloak. Pilate and Herod forge a friendship. A rioter and murderer is exchanged for the One who said, "Blessed are the meek." The greatest turn-around of all is only hinted at in this passage. A condemned criminal saw through the contradictions and gazed upon the reality of His God hanging on the cross next to Him. From that day he becomes known as 'the good thief'. The complete turnaround will happen three days later. The dead man rises from the tomb.

2. Only Luke in his description of the Passion tells how the Lord turns to look at Simon immediately the cock crows. Did Simon feel that look as a dagger piercing him to the heart and the crowing of the cock as an accusing cry of condemnation? Perhaps not. Condemnations like daggers bring only death. The cock heralds the dawn and Christ's glance, while bringing a sorrow unbearable in its pain, was an invitation already to turn back. When Simon was able to open his eyes and wipe away the tears that clouded his sight the sun was already rising. On that day the Lord would die for Simon and Peter would begin again to live for the Lord.

**Easter Sunday**  
*8 April Jn 20.1-9*

1. John uses three different verbs in this passage to describe what, (or rather 'how'), Mary of Magdala and the two disciples 'see' at the tomb. Mary 'notices' that the stone is rolled away and 'the other disciple' 'notices' the linen cloths. Peter goes into the tomb and 'looks attentively' (a different verb is used) at the cloths. Finally 'the other disciple' goes in; he sees (yet another verb is used) and he believes. In this way John uses the story of the discovery of the empty tomb to show how the Easter faith of the disciples develops. It is not enough only to behold the sign. Complete sight is the vision of faith. We, whose eyes are fully open celebrate that vision today.

2. It is part of the irony common in John that he emphasises the darkness when Mary arrives at the tomb. Furthermore, the central object of attention is a tomb which is empty. In such circumstances it would seem there is nothing to see. Indeed, all that is seen is a rock and some linen cloths. But such darkness and emptiness proclaim the greatest of messages. The resting place and the garments of the dead are forever discarded. He is risen and has left them behind. From today, for those who believe, they will be only a temporary abode and apparel.

3. Until this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture. The scriptures, so familiar to the disciples, take on a fuller meaning when seen in the new light of Easter morning. It is not only the scriptures which are different in this light. Without the resurrection our world is like a tomb because there is nothing beyond it but dust and ashes. This familiar world takes on a new aspect in the Easter light. As believers we see it as it really is. This must give us different priorities and different commitments to those who do not believe. Christians are different because they live in the light of Easter.

**Second Sunday of Easter C**

*15 April Jn 20.19-31*

1. Jesus, risen from the dead, still bears the marks of His earthly life. His thirty three years have not been wiped away or discarded. His wounds have not been removed. The whole of His life on earth has been taken up and transformed. Jesus in turn breathes on the apostles just as God breathed life into the man He had formed from the dust of earth (Gen 2.7) He received new existence and became a living being. So also their lives are taken up and transformed and given a new existence, they become spiritual beings.

2. This passage illustrates how the Easter event is brought into the lives of all mankind. The apostles see the Lord. They are rooted in the historical reality. However, as we saw last week, theirs was not simply observation but a 'vision of faith'. It is now their task to be witnesses of this event and instruments to bring that 'vision of faith' to all people. Thomas is not rebuked for seeing. As an apostle it is part of his role to see. But he refused to believe on the basis of their testimony and so he rejected their witness. We who believe accept the witness of those who saw with their own eyes. We are in the line of faith with those who were part of the historical realities. We are blessed because we have not seen but we have received the same 'vision of faith.'

3. The reason John has written his book (Jn 20.30-31) is so that he can be one of God's instruments to bring the 'vision of faith' to all his readers. For those who receive the 'vision of faith' the gifts are the same as those recounted at the beginning of this passage. The community of believers receives the Spirit and is made a new creation which we describe as the Church. Through the wounds of Christ in His hands and side we receive forgiveness and are given the same authority to forgive and retain as was given to the apostles. Christ's words of peace are spoken to the

Church in every age as surely as they were spoken on that first day of the week. All this John sums up as "life in His name.

**Third Sunday of Easter C**

*22 April Jn 21.1-19*

In the absence of Jesus Peter decides to go fishing. It seems to be a decision to revert to that old way of life before Jesus came on the scene. As soon as Peter realises Jesus is on the shore he leaves everything again. This time it is for good. The boat is left on the water and the fish in the net. Peter knows Jesus will never leave them again. He is soon to find out that it is Peter himself who receives the mission to feed and tend the sheep. Christ the Good Shepherd remains present to His flock in Peter and his successors until the end of time.

2. The bread and fish on the shore of Galilee remind us of the meal for the 5000. Again there is overabundance, 153 big fish, and Jesus distributes the food. This time, however, it is breakfast. The disciples do not ask, "Who are you?" because they know full well who is on the shore just as those on the Emmaus road knew who broke the bread. Neither do we ask who is on our altars, who is in our tabernacles, because we know full well "it is the Lord." Christ continues His presence among us in the Eucharist. It is a presence which points to God's superabundant generosity and a breakfast banquet which marks the beginning of a never-ending day.

3. Peter is told that he will stretch out his hands and be taken where he would rather not go. This will be a far cry from the young man who denied Jesus, frightened by a maid in Caiphas' house. As an old man his death will give glory to God. In John's Gospel it is the cross which most reveals God's glory. Peter will share in this. Christ continues to be present in all those who, like Peter, stretch out their hands and are led where they would rather not go that their lives may give glory to God.

**Fourth Sunday of Easter C**

*29 April Jn 10.27-30*

1. This passage comes in the middle of a dispute with those Jews who refuse to believe in Jesus. What sets Christ's sheep aside from others is that they listen to His voice. This is not a popular disposition. A sign of the true Christian is that humility which gives a person an open ear to the voice of Christ. They are willing to be guided and taught and they submit their own will to the will of the Shepherd who leads them. This is the obedience of the true followers of Christ.

2. The shepherd cares for the sheep and knows what is best for them. In Palestine the shepherd eats, sleeps and lives among his sheep. This is the best way to provide protection and lead them to good pastures. Christ our Good Shepherd came to eat, sleep and live among us and thus knows our needs better than we do ourselves. He knows that the pasture every human being, without exception, craves for and seeks is eternal life and this is where He wishes to lead us. This pasture can only be found by those sheep that listen to the Shepherd and follow Him.

3. Christ's authority to be such a shepherd is based on His union with the Father. When he pronounced the words, "The Father and I are one", the Jews were ready to stone Him (Jn 10.31) They perceived the full force of this phrase and understood it to be blasphemy. The man from Nazareth claimed to be God. This is the foundation for our disposition to accept Him as our Shepherd since the words He speaks and the path He offers are not based on human authority but God's. We who believe He is God and obey His voice "will never be lost"

**book**  
r e v i e w s

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COUNTER-FAITH. A STUDY OF THE ROOTS OF MODERN SECULARISM, RELATIVISM, AND DE-CHRISTIANISATION  
by Philip Trower, Family Publications, 327pp, £12.50

BOOK REVIEWS

I recently came across the story of Plinio Correa de Oliveira (1908-1995), a courageous and determined Brazilian Catholic layman who devoted his life to the defence of the Catholic Church and the Catholic faith against communism. He founded an international organisation called 'Tradition, Family, Property' as a vehicle for this purpose and was the author of *Revolution and Counter-revolution*. There are interesting parallels between Plinio Correa de Oliveira's crusade against 'revolution' and Philip Trower's crusade against 'the counter-faith'. Although the enemy identified by the Brazilian was undoubtedly a noxious and dangerous threat not merely to the Church but to civilisation as such, I cannot help thinking that the target identified by Trower has proved in the long term to be much more insidious and destructive in the West. Where Plinio Correa de Oliveira focussed on an enemy which put itself forward in open hostility towards the Church and civilisation as traditionally understood, Trower takes aim at a vague, ill-defined and chameleon-like philosophy which is hard even to identify clearly, a philosophy which does not really have a name, a philosophy which is frequently embraced by Catholics and other Christians all unawares that it is not compatible with their faith. 'Secularism', 'relativism', 'liberalism', are all terms that have been applied to this kind of thinking, but none of them really suffices as a label. Trower links it to the Enlightenment, but this is to open a can of worms

since a number of the thinkers he discusses – particularly the likes of Freud, Jung, Heidegger and Barth – would generally be seen as part of a counter-Enlightenment reaction in modern thought. And yet, as a historian of ideas myself, I think it could be argued that for all their own distaste for the Enlightenment mindset, these thinkers do actually remain imprisoned within that mindset in certain important respects - and particularly with regard to religion. Trower's previous book, *Turmoil and Truth*, was devoted to a shrewd analysis of the difference between the healthy spirit of reform in the Church and the damaging spirit of revolution. In this new book he offers a snapshot of the penetration of what might be called 'alien' thinking (though this is not a term Trower himself uses) into twentieth-century Catholic intellectual life, singling out in particular two writers accorded iconic status over the years, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner. His thesis is that in basing their theologies on philosophies fundamentally alien to Catholicism – Teilhard on 'evolutionism' (the idea of evolution raised to the status of a cult) and Rahner on Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger – both these 'Catholic' thinkers allowed themselves to be led away from the faith.

The underlying difficulty here which Trower does not tackle is the difficult relationship between philosophy and theology. After all, St Thomas himself 'baptised' Aristotle: can we not speak of Teilhard 'baptising' Darwin and of Rahner doing the same to Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger? Is it not the greatest achievement of these two sages to have shown us how the best of contemporary thinking can be incorporated into the Catholic synthesis? Alongside this question lurks another: is it even possible for us to escape from 'the spirit of the age'? Many have denied this, leading us to the conclusion that all the Catholic can do is to express the faith in terms of the predominant ways of thinking of the day. This seems over

pessimistic in the light of so many biblical assertions that we are to look at life *sub specie aeternitatis*. Surely it is of the essence of our faith that it enables us to transcend the spirit of our time – not perfectly but at least in some significant measure?

Returning to the question of Catholic thinkers 'baptising' 'alien' philosophies, it does seem to me that questions are raised by the difference in historical context between St Thomas's day and our own. What Thomas 'baptised' was a – or the – pagan pre-Christian 'natural' philosophy. What the likes of Teilhard and Rahner attempted to 'baptise' were philosophies which constituted at least in part a conscious attempt to provide an alternative to existing Catholic teaching. Although evolution as a biological theory may not be in conflict with Catholicism, evolutionism as an ideology – and especially raised to a cult as in Teilhard – seems a great deal more problematic. On the other hand, even if we were to accept that evolutionism – like Kantism, Hegelianism, and Heideggerianism – are philosophies fundamentally hostile to Catholic belief, it might be argued that they can still be plundered for the good things they contain. The celebrated Catholic prophet of counter-revolution, Joseph de Maistre, was very fond of the tag 'salus ex inimicis' – 'salvation out of one's enemies' – the idea that the most skilful debater draws on statements made by his opponents to fuel his own fire. Maistre loved to find quotations in the likes of his arch-enemy Voltaire which supported his own arguments in defence of the faith. The advantage of this method is that the 'alien' way of thinking is made to subserve the good of the Church. Trower however – rightly in my view – scents in Teilhard and Rahner that the supposed 'synthesis' actually masks some kind of absorption of the faith into 'secularist' thinking.

There is much more to this book however – including very perceptive vignettes of non-Catholic thinkers

like Freud, Jung, and Karl Barth who have exercised a baneful influence on some currents in modern Catholicism. Trower comes out of a background in journalism and his writing is refreshingly free of the trammels of academicism. He also manages to be trenchant without being aggressive, and that is not the least attractive feature of this impressive and important work.

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#### SCIENCE AND BELIEF IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

*by Dr Peter E Hodgson, Ave Maria  
Press (available from 1331 Red Cedar  
Circle, Fort Collins, CO 80524, USA),  
355pp, £18.95*

Dr Peter Hodgson, formerly head of the Nuclear Physics theoretical division at the University of Oxford, has long been involved in the science–faith debate and has contributed widely to the Catholic Church’s appreciation of modern physics, especially as a consultant to the Pontifical Council of Culture. As well as his many works on physics, he has also written extensively on the synthesis of faith and science. His other recent work, *Theology and Modern Physics*, was reviewed recently in this magazine.

*Science and Belief in the Nuclear Age* is a collection of twenty-six papers, articles and lectures written over the past decade or so. He is always keen to present the truth about the Catholic Church’s promotion of science, and so the first chapters of his new book are dedicated to that issue, starting with an analysis of the positive attitude to science taken by Pope John Paul II, who held as a guiding principle “the harmony existing between scientific truth and revealed truth.” His second chapter sets out clearly how the Church’s theology has always led to the promotion of good science. From the Middle Ages onwards, it was precisely in Christendom that the attitude to the natural world was the

fertile ground in which the beginnings of modern science and technology would arise. This flies in the face of the modern myth that the Church has always suppressed science or been frightened of it. Hodgson argues that it is precisely the Christian concept of the material world that made sense of the science endeavour. “Matter is ordered and rational because it was created by a rational God.” Hodgson points to a number of key philosophers of the Middle Ages who helped to break the hold Aristotelian physics had over physical science, and he emphasizes the interesting work of the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Parisian, John Buridan. Hodgson concludes: “We thus find that during the critical centuries before the birth of science, the collective mind of Europe was inspired by a system of beliefs that included just those special elements that are necessary for the development of science. It is thus very plausible to say that there is a living, organic continuity between Christian revelation and modern science. Christianity provided just those beliefs that made possible the birth of modern science, and the moral climate that encouraged its growth.” His two, short chapters on ‘belief’ are also very incisive, demonstrating how: “the grounds for belief in religion and science are remarkably similar. In both, individual beliefs are sustained not by a single chain of reasoning but by their integral connection with a whole complex of tightly interlocking beliefs.” Some argue that science is objective and religious understanding subjective. Hodgson explains with clarity why this is not so. Then his provocatively titled chapter “Is Physics Catholic” presents a host of Christian believers across the centuries who have contributed to modern science, and some amongst Hodgson’s own science students and acquaintances. (Your humble reviewer was taken aback to find anonymous mention of himself in this chapter.)

The second part of the book consists of a series of short pithy chapters and

book reviews on topics such as ‘time,’ ‘chance’ and ‘the mind of the universe’ which expand the same theme.

In the third section of more detailed chapters he tackles the central questions of modern physics: the interpretation of the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics. His chapter on ‘Relativity and Religion’ shows how Einstein’s theories of relativity have often been abused by extending ‘relativity’ to theological and moral values. Einstein’s seeming overthrow of absolute space and time is often taken as justifying ‘relativism,’ the idea that nothing is absolute. Hodgson argues that nothing could be further from Einstein’s mind. The longest chapter in the book is a thorough and much-needed discussion of the different interpretations of quantum mechanics adopted by Neils Bohr and Albert Einstein. In essence is is a question of acceptance or refusal to accept that quantum mechanics is a complete description of atomic reality. Einstein always held that the statistical nature of Bohr et al.’s ‘Copenhagen interpretation’ was an insufficient answer, and there must be a deeper and deterministic explanation of reality which will explain the behaviour of individual particles, and not just the stochastic ensemble. Hodgson has much sympathy for this position and argues for a new realism in physics, and is firmly against speculations drawn from a sub-realist interpretation of quantum mechanics (eg. ‘chance is the basis of reality’). Further chapters discuss whether we can locate divine action in the sub-atomic ‘gaps’ of quantum indeterminacy (Hodgson argues that we cannot), and how far Einstein may be considered religious.

The penultimate section of the book consist of a series of chapters on the scientific and ethical considerations surrounding the provision and extension of nuclear power, of which Hodgson is a keen advocate, and concerning which he has long been an expert. He has often been a

vociferous promoter of science in the Church, calling for good Catholic scientists and indeed priest-scientists to counter the false assumption that science is a realm of atheism. "The greater part of our task," he writes, "is to convey our understanding of the relation between theology and science to all members of the Church ... Catholic teachers at all levels need to be well informed on the relation between science and their faith, and they can be helped in this respect by suitable publications." I pray that *Faith Magazine* contributes precisely to the great evangelizing task to which Hodgson has so eagerly and tirelessly committed himself.

Rev Dr Philip Miller  
London

BEING REASONABLE ABOUT  
RELIGION

by William Charlton, Ashgate, 178pp,  
£45

William Charlton appears to have a modest aim in writing this book, which is simply to be 'reasonable' about religion. However as soon as the reader opens up the front cover he is confronted with chapter headings that cover almost every area of Christian concern, from gods, the spread of Christianity, science and creation, to explaining mind, the Trinity, salvation, Baptism and the Eucharist. So Charlton has our interest, especially as he attempts to cover all this in a mere 161 pages. My own high hopes were only partially met. This is perhaps in part due to the nature of what Charlton is attempting with this work: being 'reasonable' in attempting to appear unbiased. In the early part of the book especially, Charlton has a tendency to wander off on what appear to be tangential discussions that serve to illustrate his impressively wide range of reading but left this reader without a sense of clear structure and form. This is combined with an alarming tendency to make sweeping

statements such as; "New Testament scholars sometimes say that the Gospel accounts of the appearances of the risen Christ are false and his followers did not intentionally claim to be eye-witnesses to his resurrection", without references to back it up. He also makes controversial comments such as: 'The fact that accepting this miracle [the resurrection] could involve you in a painful death does not make such an evolution [of Christianity] improbable, *since some people are extremely obstinate and like being martyrs.*' (my emphasis). However Charlton is primarily a philosopher and it shows. On page 47 the reader finds an impressively clear and concise few chapters inviting them to think vigorously in defence of the position that 'science cannot explain the origin of the physical universe, its continued existence, or mind.' Suddenly the frustratingly 'reasonable' and uncertain style is driven to conclusions by a commanding philosophical intellect exploring topics as complex as the nature of causation. These middle chapters stimulate and entertain.

Charlton places Christian philosophical foundations largely outside the realm of science: 'that science has not proved that God or an after life exists is not bad news but good.' Similarly 'ceasing to exist' cannot be a defiance of any kind of law. A natural law tells us how things must behave as a matter of physical necessity *if they exist*; no law can tell us that a thing will exist or that there will always be behaviour for it to apply to.' Working with Colin McGinn's ideas on consciousness Charlton illustrates the inconsistencies of philosophers who view mind as explainable by science, while suggesting himself that 'the presence of mind in nature is not something invisible and hidden except to introspection, but the most palpable thing there is. Purposive human action is human thought (and if religious believers are right, the

continuation of physical processes generally is a kind of divine thought).' Refreshingly Charlton sees purpose in physical reality: 'I am suggesting that teleological explainability is the norm, that we may expect there to be some reason for what happens unless we have some ground for thinking it happens for no reason.'

However in the concluding chapter there seems to be a lack of appreciation of the Catholic theological understanding of how the Church arrives at infallible statements. He concludes that "Infallibility is a Victorian extra, an additional protection with which one could dispense, like galoshes." He suggests that Church teaching is unnecessarily morally objective, that Catholic claims to truth are like the Stalinist propaganda machine, and: "A particular action is right or wrong only in relation to the circumstances in which it is performed." For Charlton "being reasonable" about Catholic doctrine involves leaving aside its proper context (that of faith). He can claim a fairly rigorous analytical approach but fails to 'get inside' Catholic theological concepts.

*Being Reasonable About Religion* is a rollercoaster ride of exploration that will interest many because of the diversity of topics covered, but is a work of varying usefulness. The extremely competent and concise middle section on philosophy sits in between sections that this reviewer found unstructured, unconvincing and which could frankly mislead the novice as to the nature of Catholic theology. It is also hard to see a target audience for the work. The seasoned philosopher and theologian might prefer more in depth writings on the topics covered, and the newly curious may find it difficult and unclear. This is a shame, as many might miss the thought provoking and well written philosophy buried within.

Ryan Day,  
Cambridge

notes from across the

Atlantic

by Richard John Neuhaus

**WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE?**

So passionate do some people become about politics. Here is the often thoughtful Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* on the eve of last November's elections: "Let Karl [Rove] know that you think this is a critical election, because you know as a citizen that if the Bush team can behave with the level of deadly incompetence it has exhibited in Iraq—and then get away with it by holding on to the House and the Senate—it means our country has become a banana republic. It means our democracy is in tatters because it is so gerrymandered, so polluted by money and so divided by professional political hacks that we can no longer hold the ruling party to account. It means we're as stupid as Karl thinks we are." Whew, by the skin of our teeth—by one seat in the Senate—America avoided the fate of becoming a banana republic. It was a close call. And do Democratic victories mean that our democracy is not in tatters, is not so gerrymandered, is not so polluted by money, etc.? I'm not in the business of political analysis, but I really don't think the choice was between being a banana republic and a constitutional democracy. As an outcome of the elections, it seems likely that pro-life measures will have a more difficult time, good judicial appointments may be stymied and the Bush doctrine of promoting democracy in the Middle East may be abandoned. I am sympathetic to the argument that it was the right doctrine but was dismally executed. In key races, more-conservative Democrats were elected, giving formal congressional control to much-more-liberal Democrats but quite possibly moving the centre of balance in a conservative direction. But, as I say,

I am not in the business of political analysis. My pastoral counsel is that none of us should think that the outcome of an election is the end of the world or even the end of American democracy.

**SEARCHING FOR THE ADVENTURE OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Maybe you, too, have noticed it. I refer to the use of religiosity when people mean religious commitment. *Webster's Third* says what every educated person should know: Religiosity is "intense, excessive, or affected religiousness". This comes to mind upon reading about a conference on young Catholics held at Fordham University, led by Christian Smith and James Davidson, sociologists at Notre Dame and Purdue, respectively. They had some important things to say, but both repeatedly talked about "religiosity" when they meant religious knowledge, commitment and practice. The basic message of their studies is that most young Catholics are uncatechised and disengaged from the Church. Their recommendation is that parents train their children in the faith and set an example of Catholic devotion. No doubt a very good idea, if only the parents were not uncatechised as well. We are now into the third generation of Catholics who were never introduced to the basics of the faith. Colouring in butterflies in religion classes and encouraging inflated self-esteem are no substitute for dogma and doctrine. Also speaking at the conference was the director of ministry at an elite Catholic high school in Manhattan. Although she would not put it that way, she is determined that there will be a fourth generation of the uncatechised. "In my experience," she said, "we risk alienating [young people] when we are motivated by a desire to preserve the Church as we know it. I think the Church is changing. I think our attempts to save the Church from these changes will only fail. I think we have to let go of our attachment to the Church as we

know it and trust that the outcome won't be the Church's death."

I think, I think, I think. We live in exciting times. "I think the Church is changing." Forty years after the Second Vatican Council, some people, now hoary-headed and broad of beam, are still excited that the Church is changing. Young people, they touchingly believe, are eager to share their excitement about being liberated from the "pre-Vatican II Church", that is, the olden days of which young people have heard their grandparents speak. A wise observer has said that young people will give their lives for an exclamation point, but they will not give their lives for a question mark. He was speaking about priestly vocations, but the truth has wider application. "The Church is changing." Oh, goody. What was it before it decided to major in changing? For three generations, the Church became a question mark.

For decades it has been the pattern that priests and religious who are in adolescent rebellion against Catholic faith and life have been put in charge of youth ministries, including those on college campuses. Their cutting-edge views might upset parishes but will be welcomed by the young, or so it was thought. After all these years, the cutting edge is very rusty and a total bore. Some young people enjoy being pandered to. They thrill to being confirmed in the conceit that they are the brightest and best that ever was. In my experience (as the sister might say), most want to be challenged to the high adventure of Christian discipleship. Consider the electric rapport between young people and John Paul the Great at, for instance, the World Youth Days. He found a thousand ways to say, "Settle for nothing less than moral and spiritual greatness!" The lady at Fordham thinks the Church must change in order to attract today's young people, while young people yearn for an invitation to play their part in the high adventure that is the long and turbulent history of Christ

and his Church. The world of youth is filled with novelties gone stale, while the really new thing is the call to radical fidelity.

**WHEN HUMAN RIGHTS OPPOSE THE RIGHT TO LIFE**

There are former priests, such as Dan Maguire of Marquette University, who, presenting themselves as Catholic theologians, have laboured mightily in the pro-abortion cause. But there is no priest who has had an influence comparable to that of Fr. Robert Drinan, S.J., in providing a moral rationalisation for Catholic politicians' support of what Pope John Paul II taught the Church and the world to recognise as "the culture of death". Fr. Drinan served five terms (1971–1981) as a US representative from Massachusetts, until the Pope declared that priests should not hold elective office. Among the pro-abortion politicians who have expressed their indebtedness to Fr. Drinan are Senator Edward Kennedy and former governor Mario Cuomo. I confess to a small measure of culpability. In 1970, I ran for Congress in what was then the fourteenth congressional district in Brooklyn. Fr. Drinan told me he had been asked by people in Massachusetts to run for Congress and he wanted my counsel. I encouraged him to run. By the grace of God, I lost, and, by the support of pro-abortionists in Massachusetts, Fr. Drinan won. Now the Georgetown University Law Centre has established a Robert F. Drinan, S.J., Chair in Human Rights. John Paul II wrote in the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*: "The common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture—is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition of all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination." With maximum determination, Fr. Drinan worked

to defy, and encourage others to defy, that elementary truth of moral reason. Georgetown University is an institution "in the Jesuit tradition".

**US BISHOPS SPEAK ABOUT THE SITUATION IN IRAQ**

Although formally a statement of the president of the conference, the bishops at their November meeting also approved a statement on Iraq. "We call upon all Catholics to pray daily for the safety of those who honourably serve our nation and for their families. We especially offer our support and solidarity to those who have lost loved ones in Iraq. Our prayers and solidarity must also include the Iraqi people, who have suffered so greatly under a brutal dictator and now face continuing violence, instability and deprivation." Particular concern is expressed for Christians in Iraq, and the bishops are to be commended for drawing attention to this problem which is neglected by almost everybody else. "As bishops and defenders of the human rights and religious freedom of all, we are alarmed by the deteriorating situation of Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq... Christians in particular are caught in the middle of civil strife between Sunnis and Shiites... We are deeply impressed by the courage of many Christians who remain in the land of their birth."

As for US policy, the bishops deplore the "shrill and shallow" rhetoric that has marked debate over Iraq. Their recommendation: "Our nation's military forces should remain in Iraq only as long as their presence contributes to a responsible transition. Our nation should look for effective ways to end their deployment at the earliest opportunity consistent with this goal." Of course, one can argue about what is included in a "responsible transition", but that strikes me as a wisely restrained statement well within the competence of the Church's bishops.

**ORTHODOX AND PASTORAL**

If ten years ago, or even five years ago, you had been told that the Catholic bishops were going to issue three major statements on the much controverted questions of artificial contraception, homosexuality and the disposition required to receive Holy Communion, and that all three would be vibrantly orthodox, persuasively pastoral and unequivocally clear, you would have been permitted a measure of scepticism. But that is precisely what the bishops did at their meeting last November. Of course, there were disagreements, but the statements, adopted overwhelmingly, are: "Married Life and the Gift of Love", "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination" and "Happy Are Those Who Are Called to His Supper". All are available from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

**DECENCY BACK ON THE STREETS**

"Comedy Comes Clean" was a story in the *Wall Street Journal* a while back. It seems comedians are discovering that young people respond positively to non-scatological shticks. It's so avant-garde. Overhearing conversations, while walking the streets of New York, it struck me a few years ago that I couldn't get to the office or back without hearing, usually several times, the F-word used as noun, adjective, adverb, and ways grammatically unspecifiable. And then suddenly last spring, as I remember, it stopped. I'm still eavesdropping, but I don't think I've heard it in the last several months. Something important is happening, maybe. Columnist Daniel Henninger read the same story about clean comedy but is not convinced. Apparently, he watches HBO and other cable channels. That is a mistake. Reality is on the streets of New York. Possibly it applies to decency too. If it can make it in New York, it can make it anywhere. It's a happy thought.

## cutting/edge

A special feature keeping us up to date with issues of science and religion

**THEISTS VS MATERIALISTS**

The faith–science debate has really taken off in the media, particularly in the U.S., and this is in no small measure due to the swarm of new books on religion and science that were all published in 2006. An internet search, for example, jointly made on the names of Francis Collins and Richard Dawkins along with the titles of their two books, *The Language of God* and *The God Delusion*, results in nigh-on 20,000 ‘hits.’ As well as these books, whose ideas were considered in this *Cutting Edge* column (Sept/Oct and Nov/Dec issues of the *Faith Magazine*), at least four other books about faith and science were published by distinguished scientists: *God’s Universe*, by Harvard astronomer Owen Gingerich; *Evolution and Christian Faith: Reflections of an Evolutionary Biologist*, by Stanford biologist Joan Roughgarden; *The Varieties of Scientific Experience: a Personal View of the Search for God* by the late Carl Sagan; and *The Creation: a Meeting of Science and Religion*, by the Harvard entomologist, E. O. Wilson. These important scientists straddle the divide of religious belief: Dawkins and Sagan are non-believers (materialists); Collins, Gingerich, Roughgarden are believers (theists); and Wilson, whilst being a secular humanist, sees a pressing need for a unity between religion and science. It is very encouraging to see this debate about the understanding of science within a faith perspective becoming so public.

In September, Time magazine organized a debate between Collins and Dawkins which touched on all the crucial issues: the false idea that science and faith should be held as not overlapping; the place of Darwinian evolution in the plan of

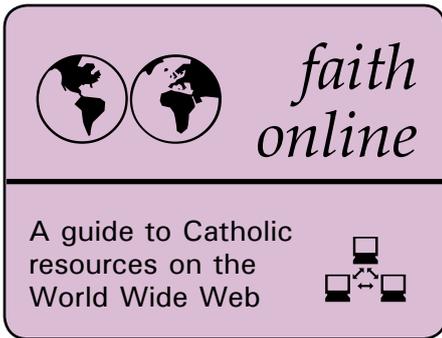
God; the fine-tuning of the physical constants of nature; the literal interpretation of Genesis; the place of miracles including the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus; and the origin of the moral law within the human heart. Excerpts of their informative exchange can be viewed in an article at [www.time.com](http://www.time.com) under the 13th November issue. In the 17th July edition, too, there was an analysis of Francis Collins’ book. “To some,” it said, “the mere fact that he is effectively outing himself to the secular world as a man of faith warrants celebration.” It quotes Collins as saying, “I don’t think God intended Genesis to teach science,” that “the evidence in favour of evolution is utterly compelling” and that “I.D. portrays the Almighty as a clumsy Creator, having to intervene at regular intervals to fix the inadequacies of His own initial plan ... [which] is a very unsatisfactory image.”

Proponents of ID, such as members of the Discovery Institute in Seattle, however, have criticized Collins’s stance on ID, because whilst he happily sees evolution, not ID, at work in the biological field, he goes on to see plenty of design in cosmology, viz. in the fine-tuning of the physical constants. (See Logan Paul Gage’s review in October’s *American Spectator*.) We would defend Collins on this, since the identification of design in cosmology is not about finding flaws in the functioning of the universe’s physics, but about the way the physical laws are established in the first place.

The book by Richard Dawkins comes in for a whole raft of criticism. Here, for example, is what the Philadelphia Enquirer made of the recent books: “There is a distinct difference in tone ... Neither Collins nor Gingerich is out to convert anybody. Both simply want to explain why they believe as they do. Their aims are modest and their tone restrained. Not so Dawkins, who sounds downright evangelical.... Dawkins’ tone ranges

from strident to snide.” And, again: “The difference in tone extends to the manner of presentation. Collins’ and Gingerich’s books are both straightforward and closely ... argued. Dawkins, by contrast, is all over the place.” Dawkins has also come in for criticism from his secular materialist colleagues: the *New York Times* (21st November) reports the anthropologist Melvin Konner as having described Dawkins’s approach as “simplistic and uninformed,” adding that “you generate more fear and hatred of science... I worry that your methods ... how articulately barbed you can be, end up simply being ineffective.” The *Boston Globe* (19th November) agrees: “Dawkins fails to reach for a reader’s sense of amazement and wonder... Ultimately, a reader can get worn out by 400-odd pages of indignation.”

Meanwhile, the *Scientific American* (October edition) defends him: “Dawkins is frequently dismissed as a bully, but he is only putting theological doctrines to the same kind of scrutiny that any scientific theory must withstand.” However, that same reviewer considers as a premise: “The assumption of materialism is fundamental to science” — a philosophical position rather close to Dawkins’s own. The *Times* (20th December) gets to the nub of the issue: “one thing that [Dawkins] and his Intelligent Design antagonists agree about is that God’s existence or non-existence is, in Dawkins’s phrase, “a scientific fact about the universe.” Most theologians would want to reject Intelligent Design, along with the theology of *The God Delusion*, for exactly that reason. ... God is not part of the natural order and should not be expected... to feature as another entity in scientific accounts of life or the cosmos.”



The links to all the websites mentioned in Faith Online are included in the Faith Website at [www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)

**MARY MEETS DOLLY**

This gets full marks for an original title; the Mary is Our Lady, Mother Of Life, representing the Church and her teaching. Dolly the sheep represents the science of cloning. This site aims to shine a Catholic light on contemporary happenings in genetics and biotechnology. By now, many of the glossary link terms have been explained in so many articles, yet the 'quick facts' section is helpful in making the basic science accessible.

[www.marymeetsdolly.com](http://www.marymeetsdolly.com)

**COMMUNITY OF THE BEATITUDES**

Br Ephraim (Gerard Croissant) was born in 1949. He met his wife in a L'Arche community and began as a Protestant preacher. Through Charismatic Renewal he discovered Our Lady and the Holy Eucharist, leading him into the Catholic Church and ordination as a permanent deacon. The Community of the Beatitudes was founded on May 25th 1973 in Montpelier. It is a new form of consecrated life gathering all - single (including the widowed and divorced) and families, sick and healthy.

The vocation is described as eschatological; withdrawing from the world to prepare for Christ. Its prayer life is inspired by the Carmelite tradition with consecration to Our Lady. The rule is flexible but includes a 10% tithe, religious clothing and periods of formation. There are around 1500 members in 86 houses on 5 continents: 250 couples, 400 consecrated brothers and sisters, 75 priests and 100 seminarians. The American site seems more up-to-date than the French one.

[www.beatitudes.us](http://www.beatitudes.us)  
[www.the-beatitudes.org/-English-](http://www.the-beatitudes.org/-English-)

**CARTHUSIANS IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Phillip Gröning's new film "Into Great Silence" about the Grande Chartreux has attracted impressive reviews. However, the official Carthusian online presence could not be more self-effacing in its welcome: "Little or nothing fashionable in this site, not even originality..." ! Nevertheless you can discover some interesting facts about these inspiring followers of St Bruno. Our own Parkminster in the U.K. (reviewed in Faith some years ago) has also updated its site.

[www.chartreux.org](http://www.chartreux.org)  
[www.parkminster.org.uk](http://www.parkminster.org.uk)

**THE PRO-LIFE CENTRE ON CAPITOL HILL**

Twin brothers Rob and Paul Schenck relocated their pro-life work to Washington D.C. so that they could lobby politicians face-to-face. After five years they secured their first house across from the Supreme Court. It has since become a hive of activity, prayer and outreach. There are some excellent articles here by 'the team', which includes Fr Frank Pavone and Dr William May.

[www.nplac.org](http://www.nplac.org)

**TRADITIONAL APOLOGETICS**

There are almost 600 articles and 7000 ready replies for common questions. The section on Jehovah's Witnesses should more than satisfy.

This is polemical stuff and not recent; you are likely to be directed to the 1913 Catholic Encyclopaedia.

[www.catholicapologetics.net](http://www.catholicapologetics.net)

**RONALD KNOX SOCIETY**

You knew about his sermons, his detective novels - but his pogo stick?!

[www.ronaldknoxsociety.com](http://www.ronaldknoxsociety.com)

**ALL ABOUT ANGELS**

Can angels work miracles? Or be in more than one place at once? Here's the truth from all the authentic sources, from Scripture and the Fathers to St Thomas and the Magisterium. There are also some good prayers.

[www.raphael.net](http://www.raphael.net)