

Ad Veritatem

Volume 8 Issue 2

St. Thomas More Society of Orange County

FEBRUARY 2003

St. Thomas More never
confused learning and
intellectual agility with
virtue and character.

Thomas More:
Portrait of Courage
By Gerard Wegemer

FEBRUARY MEETING:

NOON WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2003

FATHER RAYMOND SKONEZNY

"PRIVATE REVELATION IN THE CHURCH"

DETAILS ON PAGE 3



WHO WE ARE

In 1966, the movie *A Man For All Seasons* inspired the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to recognize this film as the Picture of the Year. This was one of the few occasions in the history of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences where the life of a religious figure won the hearts of the motion picture industry's elite. The central figure portrayed in *Man For All Seasons* was, of course, St. Thomas More, the great lawyer, statesman, apologist, husband, father and faithful Catholic. In 2000, St. Thomas was honored as the Lawyer of the Millennium by a secular panel of historians for the British Commonwealth. Shortly thereafter, John Paul II declared St. Thomas as the Patron Saint of Statesmen.

Inspired by a homily given by Bishop Norman McFarland at the 1995 Red Mass of Orange County, 5 "fearless" members of the Orange County bar met shortly thereafter at the law offices of Rutan and Tucker in Costa Mesa. These lawyers all shared the realization that the legal practice takes a severe toll on the personal and spiritual lives of those involved in it and that many in the legal profession had become too focused on the material life with the natural consequence being the de-emphasis on their spiritual life. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the formation of a new organization for lawyers and judges in the County of Orange with its mission being to publicly support and encourage the spiritual development of its members in their Catholic faith. The group chose as its patron St. Thomas More, the greatest lawyer of his time, who was a dedicated husband and father with a deep and profound commitment to his Catholic faith, his profession and his fellow man. Thus the St. Thomas More Society of Orange County was born.

Attendance at the monthly meetings in the early years was sporadic. Our spiritual director, Fr Hugh Barbour, wisely advised us not to worry about numbers because it was more important "to be than to do or say." He encouraged the virtues of patience and perseverance. His sage advice, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and St. Thomas More, has led us to our current level of a fourteen member Board of Directors of lawyers and judges and a mailing list for the monthly newsletter of over 940.

The goal of the Society is to inspire and lift up the minds and hearts of the legal community of Orange County to follow the example of St. Thomas More by integrating God in every aspect of their professional and personal lives. The Society seeks to accomplish this goal through inspirational speakers at monthly meetings, this newsletter, the Red Mass, a website, an annual spiritual retreat and other events. The St. Thomas More Society also seeks to provide a haven where those who are committed to their Catholic faith as well as those who are seeking to learn more about the Church, can find fellowship and encouragement in the face of overwhelming media and cultural forces working against that pursuit.

St. Thomas More, please pray for us. ✠

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

David Belz at (949) 347-0447 or email to dbelz@kuhnbelz.com, or
Anne Lanphar at (714) 800-3225 or email to alanphar@firstam.com.
VISIT OUR WEBSITE at www.stthomasmore.net

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St. Michael's Abbey

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FEBRUARY **MEETING**

FR. RAY SKONEZKY

“PRIVATE REVELATION IN THE CHURCH”

WHEN: Noon
Wed. Feb. 19th

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Father Ray entered the Navy as a teenager. After being discharged, he entered the Trappist Monastery in Ogden, Utah where he lived under a vow of silence for 14 years. In 1981, Fr. Ray became the Director of Orange County Cursillo. Fr. Ray is also currently serving as the associate pastor at St. John Neumann parish in Irvine.

Father's address entitled "Private Revelation in the Church" will concern the appropriate response to private revelation for those who submit to the judgment of the Church.

For more information, please contact either David Belz at (949) 347-0447 or email to dbelz@kuhnbelz.com, or Anne Lanphar at (714) 800-3225 or alanphar@firstam.com.
EVERYONE IS WELCOME! ☩

MARYWOOD CONFERENCE
ON BUSINESS ETHICS & MORALITY
Wednesday, May 14 at 8am—2pm
FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 18

CALL TO FAITHFULNESS!
Friday Feb 28 & Saturday Mar 1
FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 11

DANIEL'S INN
8TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SATURDAY MARCH 1 8:30 AM - NOON
FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 17

FIRST THURSDAY MASS
FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 15

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COULD WE MARRY EXTRATERRESTRIALS?

FR. HUGH BARBOUR, O. PRAEM, PH.D.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAPLAIN



BACCHUS & CERES
WITH
NYMPHS & SATYRS
Sebastien Bourdon
(1640)

QUESTION: I'm a sci-fi buff. In a conversation with some friends who share my interest, a strange theoretical moral problem came up. If intelligent life were ever found on another planet, would humans from earth be morally able to marry them? What would the Church say about this?

ANSWER: Well, this is sure one they didn't cover when I was studying for the priesthood, but I think that a few simple principles could provide a kind of general answer.

First, this answer does not at all imply that I think intelligent life will in fact ever be found in the universe outside of our planet. Nor does the answer deal with the question of the possibility of extra-terrestrial life from the viewpoint of biblical and traditional revelation. This answer gives only a theoretical answer to an admittedly interesting, or at least amusing, question.

Man is an intelligent being that also possesses a bodily nature, or in more precise terms, man is a rational animal. This is the classical definition of Aristotle, accepted by the Church's tradition, and in line with the description of human nature given in the Scriptures. If there were other rational animals on other planets, then they would be of the same species as we are from a philosophical and theological point of view.

The only moral question would then be whether rational animals from earth were physically or genetically capable of procreating with rational animals from another planet. If they were, then marriage would be possible morally. If procreative activity were impossible, then marriage would not be possible, though we would still be obliged to treat them with the respect due human persons. †

SIMPLE TRUTHS



Fulton J. Sheen

The real test of a Christian is not how
much he loves his friends,
but how much he loves his enemies. †

ARGUING THE EXISTENCE OF THE IMMORTAL SOUL

MICHEAL SHONAFELT, ESQ.

Part I WHY IMMATERIALITY REALLY MATTERS

The cover of the March 25, 1997 issue of *Time* magazine featured the head of a woman, beautiful, but droid-like, fixing a knowing gaze on the reader and crowned with a halo of gears. The caption of that week's *Time* was "*Can Machines Think? They already do, say scientists. So what (if anything) is special about the human mind?*"

What is so special about the human mind? Is it a matter of degree or complexity? Is it like that of a monkey, but with more neurons? If so, then there is nothing to prevent us from replicating it in the form of a computer motherboard. If so, then we are nothing but machines ourselves.

In describing the unsettling reality that machines are getting better than human beings at math, secretarial work, and even chess, the *Time* article goes on to say "[t]he better these seemingly soulless machines get at doing the things people do, the more plausible it seems that we could be soulless machines too."

The article provides another example of how modern society has eroded the boundaries between man and machine. It is both a moral phenomenon (we don't want eternal responsibility for our actions) and a philosophical phenomenon (we are materialists and no longer hold to the existence of an immaterial soul).

But current philosophies that reduce the human mind to a machine fail to account for what *Time* magazine calls the mind's "mysterious" qualities such as consciousness. And try as they might, the materialists will never be able to explain how the mind moves in immaterial realms and builds complex systems of thought with nothing but abstract ideas that transcend matter.

Is an idea or a concept such as "justice" or — less lofty — the Pythagorean Theorem, for instance, reducible to material components? If a materialist says "yes", then he is compelled to explain how ideas can be reduced to atoms. If he says "no", he is compelled to deny their existence.

But their existence is beyond the denial of reasonable human beings. We build cities based on our grasp of Euclidean geometry—a system of concepts abstracted from our perceptions of raw matter. But we can never take these ideas and examine them under a microscope. They have no matter. They are "immaterial".

The following "thought experience" (to use Peter Kreeft's terminology) demonstrates the immateriality of thought.

Conjure the image of a car. What does your imaginary car look like? In your imagination, change your car's color, shape, style. Your image changes, but



THE TRIUMPH OF
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Benozzo Gozzoli
(1471)

(Continued from page 5) *Arguing the Existence of the Soul*

something remains constant which allows you to draw an association between the two. That which remains constant is the concept of “the car” which is quite distinct from the pictures in your imagination. Whether your imagination presents a picture of a Volkswagen Bug or a Cadillac Seville, the universal idea of “the car” is common to each and therefore transcends any and all particular concrete example of cars we see either on the road or in our imagination.

This thought experiment demonstrates the universality of our ideas. It shows that ideas are completely distinct from the images in our imagination and that they transcend the material representations or examples of the ideas that we encounter. It also shows that ideas transcend matter. For, if ideas were material, they could not be universal.

This truth is profound. It is the grist for Saint Thomas Aquinas’ proof for the immortality of the soul. For, if ideas transcend matter, so does the mind that produces these ideas, since “*action follows being*” to quote Saint Thomas. And, if the mind transcends matter, it cannot be reduced to parts, and cannot therefore be destroyed. This ultimately means that the mind (read “soul”) persists beyond the destruction of the body at death.

To argue immateriality is to argue immortality and, ultimately, an eternal destiny for all human beings. The argument is a priceless tool for apologetics.

The positive, albeit ironic, outcome of the advancement of technology into the realm of “artificial intelligence” is a renewed debate on the nature of the human mind. Twentieth Century thought has hitherto dismissed the notion of immateriality out of hand as something too chimerical for reasonable discussion.

But now the technological gurus and modern philosophers are taking notice of the mystery of the mind. As scientists provide more and more of the technology that has its counterpart in the gray matter of the brain, they will take note that one major ingredient is missing: the soul.

For now, scientists and modern philosophers only skirt about the periphery of the great truth of the mind’s immateriality, but the more thoughtful of them have realized that something profound is missing in their calculus. *Time* calls them the “*Mysterians*” and one of them has said that there is something “*over and above the physical*” that separates artificial intelligence from human intelligence.

Though we may take some comfort in the idea that modern thought is finally coming around to questions answered centuries ago with such blinding clarity by Aristotle and Saint Thomas, we could also offer the “Mysterians” a helpful bit of advice—read the Summa and then get down on your knees.

Part II

THE HAUNTING OF THE CONSCIENCE

This is the Age of the Victim. We have honed to an exacting science the art of pointing the finger at someone else, or something else, at diluting our guilt by expanding it to societal proportions, at distancing ourselves, at all costs, from the moral consequences of our own sins. It is in the genes. We are nothing but animals ourselves. We are determined by the events of our upbringing. We have been mistreated by someone else. It’s all their fault.

The litany of victimization goes on and on. Alcoholism and drug abuse have become “diseases”—just like polio or typhoid fever. Sexual promiscuity is nothing more than a natural consequence of

Arguing the Existence of the Soul (Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6) Arguing the Existence of the Soul

our participation in the animal kingdom. Murder is the unfortunate, though sometimes understandable, result of a troubled childhood. We do not have free will--freedom means responsibility--yet we readily accept praise for our good actions. For our sins, however, the fault lies at someone else's doorstep.

The cult of victimization has had its share of philosophical luminaries whose descriptions of human nature back up the moral paradigm of victimization. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is one of them. Hobbes attempted to describe humanity in terms of a machine. He would not admit of anything immaterial or spiritual concerning human nature. For Hobbes, human beings were nothing more than bodies subject to the laws of physics. The same law that governs rocks governs human beings--and human behavior is as determined as the moon held in its inexorable orbit around the earth.

What connection does Thomas Hobbes have with today's proponents of victimization? Both advance a theory of *determinism*. If human beings are nothing but complex machines, then they are ordered by nothing else but the laws of physics. To admit of any other law is to admit of an entirely different order than the order of bodies. Human beings are determined by the laws of physics--*period*--a convenient world view for those who wish to hide from the responsibility for their actions.

Hobbes's thesis was reechoed in the Twentieth Century by the Behaviorists. The most famous champions of this school of thought, J.B. Watson and B.F. Skinner, were strict empiricists. For Watson and Skinner, human behavior is observable, and therefore the proper subject for empirical study. The premise may be valid, but Skinner went one step further. He made, according to Mortimer Adler, "*the classic non-sequitur of materialism*". Because the mind cannot be observed in the same way bodies can be observed, Skinner negated the existence of the mind. In so doing, Skinner placed the Behaviorists in the same camp with Hobbes, the camp of the Reductive Materialists.

Reductive materialism provides the perfect backdrop for the moral work view of the cult of victimization. For, if we are made of nothing but matter, we are subject to the same laws as any other material thing. To say we are personally responsible for our moral blunders is as ridiculous as blaming a meteorite for flattening trees in Siberia or Mt. St. Helens for laying waste to tens of thousands of acres of wilderness. As Allan Bloom puts it, "*man can be seen to behave as all other bodies behave, and the imaginary constraints on his following his powerful inclinations--constraints which would cause him to behave differently from natural bodies--vanish. Irrational passions and rational science cooperate in a new way ...*"

In our era of permissiveness and moral depravity, reductive materialism is fast becoming the philosophy of choice. It can be seen in the rapidly expanding array of defenses available to criminal defendants who seek to dodge the *mens rea* element of their crimes by pointing to some mitigating circumstance that eliminated freedom from their actions.

But why is victimization so popular today? If our consciences weren't continually nagging us about our actions, the expansion of victimization would be a moot endeavor. Animals are not running from their consciences, only human beings are. To quote Shakespeare, "*conscience makes cowards of us all.*"

The very trend of victimization in our modern world belies a much more profound reality concerning humanity. We have consciences. Even the most jaded of atheists has a conscience. To run too far from this reality leads to the malignant abscesses within our souls that have their psychiatric counterparts in obsessive compulsion, neuroses and psychoses. Animals do not encounter these problems.

The fact of the conscience means that there is something more going on with human beings. Yes,

Arguing the Existence of the Soul (Continued on page 8)



FETUS IN WOMB

Leonardo Da Vinci
(No date)

(Continued from page 7) **Arguing the Existence of the Soul**

our bodies are subject to the laws of physics, but there is another law. The conscience is the barometer of that law and that law is the law that governs the free agents of the universe, namely, the angels and us.

Conscience is the evidence of free will. With freedom comes responsibility. With responsibility come the moral laws. With the moral laws comes conscience.

The fact that the world is overrun with people who are haunted by their conscience is also great evidence of the spirituality of man. It is evidence that we are ordered by a different law than that which orders bodies. The conscience gives evidence of our responsibility for our actions. And, if we are responsible, we are therefore free, since responsibility cannot be imputed where our acts are beyond our control. With freedom also comes commandments, prohibitions, honors, praise, blame, and punishment--all essential hallmarks of our humanity. Hallmarks which cannot be denied by reasonable people.

Conscience also gives testimony of our creation in the likeness of God, the ultimate Sovereign. In our conscience, we find His law and finally, Him. In the words of the encyclical *Gaudium et Spes*,

"Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment....For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God....His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths." †

PRAYER PETITIONS



*Heavenly Father,
I offer you this day
all that I shall think
or do or say,
uniting it with
what was done
by Jesus Christ,
your only Son. Amen*

We all need prayers—at some times more than others. If you have a special need for prayer, please let us know so we can join in prayer for each other. Leave a message on Anne Lanphar's voicemail (714) 800-3225, or email

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- ✠ Lieutenant Seth Wolcott & his family.
- ✠ All members of the US Armed Forces and their families.
- ✠ Fr. Matt Munoz (special intention).
- ✠ Ryan McEachon (special intention).
- ✠ Mary Erickson (personal intention).
- ✠ For employment for John Thompson.
- ✠ Selma Mann's family (2 medical conditions).
- ✠ Patricia Knefel (Deborah's sister) who is recovering from a very serious illness.
- ✠ Cindie Burnes, a young mother recovering from chemotherapy.
- ✠ Michael Shonafelt (special intention).
- ✠ John Flynn & his wife (serious illness).
- ✠ Ron Gable (special intention).
- ✠ Father of Paul Hammann (serious illness) †

POPE JOHN PAUL II A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Karol Józef Wojtyła, known as John Paul II since his October 1978 election to the papacy, was born in Wadowice, a small city 50 kilometres from Cracow, on May 18, 1920. He was the second of two sons born to Karol Wojtyła and Emilia Kaczorowska. His mother died in 1929. His eldest brother Edmund, a doctor, died in 1932 and his father, a non-commissioned army officer died in 1941.

He made his First Holy Communion at age 9 and was confirmed at 18. Upon graduation from *Marcin Wadowita* high school in Wadowice, he enrolled in Cracow's Jagiellonian University in 1938 and in a school for drama.

The Nazi occupation forces closed the university in 1939 and young Karol had to work in a quarry (1940-1944) and then in the *Solvay* chemical factory to earn his living and to avoid being deported to Germany.

In 1942, aware of his call to the priesthood, he began courses in the clandestine seminary of Cracow, run by Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha, archbishop of Cracow. At the same time, Karol Wojtyła was one of the pioneers of the "Rhapsodic Theatre," also clandestine.

After the Second World War, he continued his studies in the major seminary of Cracow, once it had re-opened, and in the faculty of theology of the Jagiellonian University, until his priestly ordination in Cracow on November 1, 1946.

Soon after, Cardinal Sapieha sent him to Rome where he worked under the guidance of the French Dominican, Garrigou-Lagrange. He finished his doctorate in theology in 1948 with a thesis on the topic of faith in the works of St. John of the Cross. At that time, during his vacations, he exercised his pastoral ministry among the Polish immigrants of France, Belgium and Holland.

In 1948 he returned to Poland and was vicar of various parishes in Cracow as well as chaplain for the university students until 1951, when he took up again his studies on philosophy and theology. In 1953 he defended a thesis on "evaluation of the possibility of founding a Catholic ethic on the ethical system of Max Scheler" at Lublin Catholic University. Later he became professor of moral theology and social ethics in the major seminary of Cracow and in the Faculty of Theology of Lublin.

On July 4, 1958, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Cracow by Pope Pius XII, and was consecrated September 28, 1958, in Wawel Cathedral, Cracow, by Archbishop Baziak.

On January 13, 1964, he was nominated Archbishop of Cracow by Pope Paul VI, who made him a cardinal June 26, 1967.



**FROM
PETER'S
SUCCESSOR,
POPE
JOHN
PAUL
II**



Issued by the
Holy See Press Office
www.vatican.va

(Continued from page 9) **Biography**

Besides taking part in Vatican Council II with an important contribution to the elaboration of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, Cardinal Wojtyla participated in all the assemblies of the Synod of Bishops.

Since the start of his Pontificate on October 16, 1978, Pope John Paul II has completed 95 pastoral visits outside of Italy and 141 within Italy. As Bishop of Rome he has visited 301 of the 334 parishes.

His principal documents include 13 encyclicals, 13 apostolic exhortations, 11 apostolic constitutions and 41 apostolic letters. The Pope has also published two books: "Crossing the Threshold of Hope" (October 1994) and "Gift and Mystery: On the 50th Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination" (November 1996).

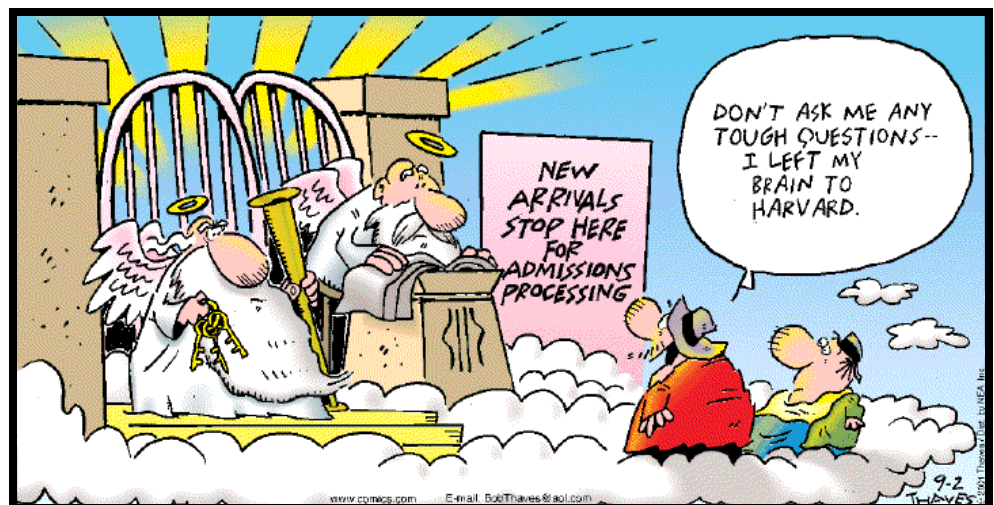
John Paul II has presided at 131 beatification ceremonies (1,282 Blessed proclaimed) and 43 canonization ceremonies (456 Saints) during his pontificate. He has held 8 consistories in which he created 201 cardinals. He has also convened six plenary meetings of the College of Cardinals .

From 1978 to today the Holy Father has presided at 15 Synods of Bishops : six ordinary (1980, 1983, 1987, 1990, 1994, 2001), one extraordinary (1985) and eight special (1980, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998[2] and 1999).

No other Pope has encountered so many individuals like John Paul II: to date, more than 16 million pilgrims have participated in the General Audiences held on Wednesdays (more than 1,000). Such figure is without counting all other special audiences and religious ceremonies held [more than 8 million pilgrims during the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 alone] and the millions of faithful met during pastoral visits made in Italy and throughout the world. It must also be remembered the numerous government personalities encountered during 38 official visits and in the 650 audiences and meetings held with Heads of State , and even the 212 audiences and meetings with Prime Ministers. ☩



**POPE JOHN PAUL II
BLESSES INDIAN
CHILD IN MEXICO
(2002)**



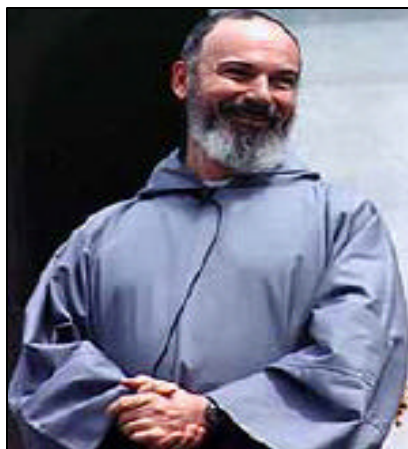
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PEOPLE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE



Take this quiz:

- Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
- Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
- Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
- Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer prize.
- Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
- Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

How did you do?

**THOUGHT
FOR
THE
DAY**

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

- ◆ List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
- ◆ Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
- ◆ Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
- ◆ Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
- ◆ Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.
- ◆ Name half a dozen heroes whose stories have inspired you.

Easier?

The lesson: The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones who care.

—Charles Schultz †

Ad Risum Vertere Veritatem* *Latin for "To turn truth into laughter"



DON'T ARGUE WITH CHILDREN

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales.

The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, "When I get to heaven, I will ask Jonah".

The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?"

The little girl replied, "Then you ask him." †



EXTRATERRESTRIALS

MICHAEL SHONAFELT, ESQ.

As the title to this month's Truth or Myth feature suggests, the topic of this article is whether the Church allows for the possibility of the existence of extraterrestrial intelligences, colloquially known as "aliens" or "ETs." While this article sets its sights beyond earth, it must, for context, start with something more earth-bound and familiar: man.

While we are, in a sense, earth-bound, we are, in another sense, "extraterrestrial" ourselves. In a wonderful, beautiful way, our species stands at the outer limits of the material world and peers into the realm of pure spirit. We possess all of the qualities of the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms, and lift them to the level of the divine. In this, we sum up the entire created order, spanning the gap in the cosmic continuum between matter and spirit. The angels, whose nature is restricted to the immaterial, cannot lay claim to such a place in God's order.

It is precisely this mixture of matter and spirit in man that allows us to move in both realms, without being tied to the mute dominion of material objects. In a beautiful little work, *My Way of Life*, the Dominican Walter Farrell puts it this way:

The fact is that we do things beyond the physical: we by-pass time to plan for the future and to recall the past, we bind men together by bonds that are purely political, we discover the living beauty of divinity in the dead things of the world and imprison it in poetry, we trace relationships that leave no physical trails, and uncover universal truths in a world of singular things.

This independence from the material world establishes that our souls are not identified with our bodies. They transcend corporeality, and, consequently, subsist independent of our bodies. They are, in short, as immortal as the angels.

But the splendor of human beings does not end here. In the most spectacular and mysterious act of Divine condescension, God became a man. The incarnation has resulted in a union of human nature with the Divine, and, consequently, has lifted us, in the order of grace, to a level far transcending angelic life.

This sums up our place in the cosmos. It also prompts an interesting question. Can such an order admit another species of intelligent life, existing in another solar system? The question takes on a level of urgency as our knowledge of the universe expands. It is now a foregone conclusion that the virtually limitless expanses of the universe contain numerous other solar systems like our own. If, on some future day of days, conclusive evidence confirms the reality of extraterrestrials to the world, how will the Catholic Church respond?

As discussed below, the answer to this question depends on what we encounter in such a hypothetical event. In the meantime, the Church has not formulated any official pronouncement on this subject. Nevertheless, in the academic exercise of

TRUTH OR MYTH?



GOD THE CREATOR
(SISTINE CHAPEL)

Michelangelo
(1508)

(Continued from page 13) *Extraterrestrials*

pondering this intriguing idea, it appears reasonable to posit at least three possible conclusions with respect to extraterrestrials.

Extraterrestrials Do Not Exist

No persuasive evidence of the existence of extraterrestrials appears to exist. If such evidence does exist, the public is not privy to it. Departing from the consideration of fanciful accounts of UFOs and alien abductions, the most sober basis for seriously pondering this issue is the discovery of planets like our own in other solar systems. Scientists and philosophers have noted the incomprehensible expanses of space, seen the clusters of galaxies, and the observed planets like earth in more nearby planetary systems. The sheer breadth of the universe and the multiplicity of possibilities out there make it reasonable to conclude that intelligent life exists on not just one, but on many different planets throughout the vast starry spread of the universe.

This theory is identical to that which governs the game of craps -- if one rolls the dice enough times, the same numbers are bound to be repeated. While reasonable, it is inimical to the story of salvation, because it is bound up with a random perspective of the universe. God does not throw dice. The creation story and the intervention of God in human affairs are necessarily purposeful, not random. While the scientist may legitimately ponder the hidden logic of a probable outcome, we as Catholics, pondering this theme with the eyes of faith, should summarily dismiss this argument for the existence of extraterrestrials.



ALLEGORY OF THE
CREATION

Jacopo Zucchi
(1585)

Extraterrestrials Exist as a Fallen Species in Need of Redemption.

Of course, if the epiphanic day of days referenced above occurs, and the world is brought to the great realization that we are not alone in the universe, humanity will have to take inventory, and engage in a paradigm shift unparalleled in history. Additionally, the Church will have to supply a theological explanation that complies with the salvation story. That explanation depends on what we encounter.

The kind of "classic" extraterrestrial assumed in this article would necessarily be composed of matter and spirit, just like man (otherwise, we would be talking about angels). So composed, such aliens would fall into the broad Thomistic definition of "man" as a "rational animal." They would therefore be "men" in the philosophical sense. If the evidence reveals that the extraterrestrial visitors are mortal, or are otherwise subject to illness and injury, we would be able to place them in the category of the fallen, just like us, their terrestrial counterparts. Consequently, they would qualify as fellow beneficiaries of Christ's redemption on the Cross, and require His grace for their salvation.

Extraterrestrials Exist as Unfallen Species

Another possibility exists: that the other-worldly visitors are unfallen. Such a picture presents the most fascinating -- though perhaps least likely -- of all the ponderable outcomes of an extraterrestrial visit. Under such a scenario, the extraterrestrial beings would have escaped what all humans, and even many of the an-

Extraterrestrials (Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14) Extraterrestrials

gels, could not avoid: a fall.

While the appearance of such beings would probably constitute a beatific occasion for us mortals, one could argue that unfallen beings would not be induced to venture beyond their own realm, since the unfallen state would be accompanied by perfect happiness, and, presumably, devoid of cosmic wanderlust. The only basis for such a visit would be pristine altruism. Additionally, the appearance of unfallen beings would suggest that the fall of man was not necessarily an event of cosmic proportion. This may be problematic, given St. Paul's assertion that Christ's redemption extended to the entire universe. Nevertheless, some in the Church have voiced opinions in favor of the theory of unfallen, intelligent life forms in the universe. Interestingly, an account exists (perhaps apocryphal) of St. Padre Pio asserting as truth the existence of unfallen extraterrestrial beings: *'The Lord certainly didn't restrict his glory to this little planet. On other planets, there will be beings without sin.'*

Conclusion: The Primacy of Christ in Any Case

Speculation about extraterrestrials, while fascinating, has no bearing on our place in the story of Christ's redemption. God has revealed all the truths necessary for us to work out our salvation. Finally, and most importantly, whether or not extraterrestrials exist, and whatever their nature may be, Christ is supreme in the cosmos as the head of *all* creation. There exists no world that is not subject to Him. As St. Paul unequivocally declares:

He is the image of the invisible God; his is the primacy over all created things. In him everything in Heaven and on earth was created, not only things visible but also the invisible orders of thrones, sovereignties, authorities, and powers: the whole universe has been created through him and for him. And he exists before everything, and all things are held together in him ... For in him the complete being of God, by God's own choice, came to dwell. Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself, making peace through the shedding of his blood upon the cross – to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, through him alone. (Col. 1, 16-20) †



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HEAVENS
(SISTINE CHAPEL)**

**Michelangelo
(1508)**

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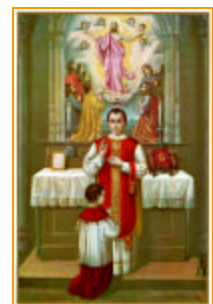
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THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS MORE



One telling example of how to deal with an enemy, he said, is the way Jesus treats Judas at the moment of betrayal. Here Christ gives a remarkable example of prudence and patience. In all that he does, Christ wants to teach us “to bear patiently and gently all injuries and snares treacherously set for us; not to smolder with anger, not to seek revenge, not to give vent to our feeling by hurling back insults, not to find any empty pleasure in tripping up an enemy through some clever trick, but rather to set ourselves against deceitful injury with genuine courage, to conquer evil with good—[..], to make every effort by words both gentle and harsh, to insist both in season and out of season, that the wicked may change their ways to good, so that if anyone should be suffering from a disease that does not respond to treatment, he may not blame the failure on our negligence but rather attribute it to the virulence of his own disease.

Throughout his dealings with Judas, Christ acts “as a most conscientious physician” who tries two different “ways of effecting a cure.” First he uses a gentle approach; he asks, “Friend, why have you come?” This kind appeal to Judas’s conscience is of no avail. But Christ, as soon as he sees that Judas is not responding, tries again. He “immediately adds in a grave tone, ‘Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?’” Unfortunately, Judas uses his free will to reject what could have healed that conscience of his, so “full of guilty sores.”

Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage Gerald B. Wegemer Scepter Publishers (p. 208) †

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“Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me.”
Matthew 25:40

St. Thomas More was a scholar not only of English law but also the law of God. Although he was Chancellor of England and one of the most successful lawyers in England, More realized that the description of the last judgment set forth in Matthew 25: 31-46 would apply to him too. He took the admonitions of Christ seriously practicing humility and providing generously for the poor. During the famine of 1528, More fed over 100 people a day at his own home in Chelsea.

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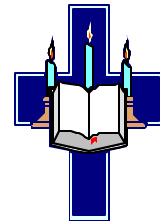
LUKE 6: 27-28

*²⁷But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.*

Comment from the Navarre Bible:*

²⁷"In loving our enemies there shines forth in us some likeness to God our Father, who, by the death of his Son, ransomed from everlasting perdition and reconciled to himself the human race, which previously was most unfriendly and hostile to him" (St Pius V Catechism, IV, 14, 19). Following the example of God our Father, we must desire for everyone (even those who say they are our enemies) eternal life, in the first place; additionally, a Christian has a duty to respect and understand everyone without exception, because of his or her intrinsic dignity as a human person, made in the image and likeness of the Creator.

²⁸Jesus Christ teaches us by example that this is a real precept and not just a pious recommendation; even when nailed to the cross he prayed to his Father for those who had brought him to such a pass: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). In imitation of the Master, St Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, when he was being stoned, prayed to our Lord not to hold the sin against his persecutors (cf. Acts 7:60). In the liturgy of Good Friday the Church offers prayers and suffrages to God on behalf of those outside the Church, asking him to give them the grace of faith; to release from their ignorance those who do not know him; to give Jews the light of the truth; to bring non-Catholic Christians, linked by true charity, into full communion with our Mother the Church. ✠



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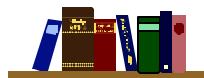
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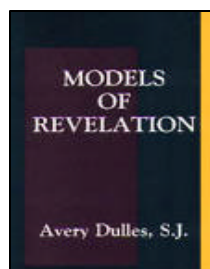
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Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J. is a distinguished scholar in residence at Fordham University, former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the author of many books. He was elevated to the College of Cardinals in 2001 by Pope John Paul II.

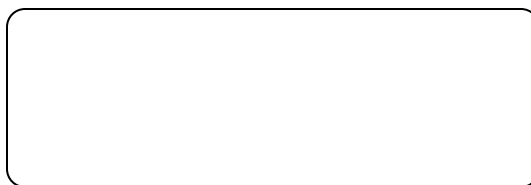
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