



# BULLETIN

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We have good news to share with the membership. We have received a grant enabling us to hire a Coordinator/Manager for our "Educational Project" for a year. If we do a creditable job the first year, we shall also have the opportunity for a second and third year funding. That means we can make a beginning in detailed educational planning. If you know of a potential Coordinator/Manager would you please contact Sister Marianne Postiglione, RSM). Our new phone number, as listed below, is (314)-633-4626.

This gives us the opportunity to begin at the beginning -- with pre-schoolers to grade 4. If we can get children interested in God's beauty and in his concern for them and *all* of creation, we should have "captured" them for life. We can teach them about the interrelatedness of all things -- from the immensity of space to the delicate intimacy of DNA. That religious theme carries us back to the first chapters of Genesis. As early as 1 Corinthians St. Paul taught that interconnectedness and interdependence was paramount. We should be teaching it to our children as soon as possible.

We are related to each other and the creation in the sacraments. We are being built into the Kingdom of God, first on earth in sign and then in the eschaton in glory. Christian children must be told of the love of God for them and the myriad gifts of God to us in creation. They need to realize that we are not freelancers in the faith, that the church is their home. But it is a home always needing repairs and additional rooms. They are to be brought to a "zeal for their Father's house that will consume them." If we can capture their hearts and their imaginations when they are young we have a much better chance to help in the redemption of the world.

What a joy to raise up a generation of children dedicated to the love of God through love and service of creation and of the neighbor! In its own way that would fulfill scripture: "you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Then the bitter conflict between faith and reason, faith and science, would be muted. Pray that that day come soon. May God bless you all.

*Robert Brungs, S.J.*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. **REJOICE WITH US!** We received the good news on August 22 from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute that our grant request on educational modules in faith/science, *Exploring the World, Discovering God*, would be funded for one year with an option for further funding in the second and third years. Earlier this year we also received a grant from the Sisters of Mercy, Providence, RI for the same project. This project, a long-time dream of the ITEST staff (see *Fall Bulletin*, 2004, Volume 35, Number 4 for Fr. Brungs' detailed description), focuses initially on children from K-4 — this will be our pilot study. In Fr. Brungs' article he notes,

Both science and theology are noble tasks and the information each gathers is relevant to the other. Both are wonderful vocations and both ought to work together to advance the faith....

.... the Project we are proposing (with its educational component) is designed to promote both faith and science and the true relationship between them."

As reported in the last issue of the *Bulletin*, with this initial funding we will be able to start in earnest to organize the various components or pieces of the program, for example, the project coordinator, the teachers, the program content, methods and materials, among others. Do you have any suggestions for a good coordinator who can work essentially on a "stipend-like" fee? If you have such a person in mind, please get in touch with the staff as soon as possible. Because the ITEST Board sees this project as perhaps one of the most important concerns ITEST has addressed in the faith/science ministry, they have agreed to devote the October 20-22, 2006 workshop to the faith/science theme: *Education for the Faith/Science Ministry*. More information will be forthcoming on this workshop in future issues of the *ITEST Bulletin*.

2. **ALERT!** As of September 1, 2005 ITEST phone numbers have *finally* been changed from (314)-977-2703 to (314)-633-4626. Please note that change in your records. Check the front page of the *Bulletin* for updated phone numbers, e-mail addresses and so on.

3. As we reported in the last issue of the *Bulletin*, we have moved the ITEST web site to a new hosting location. We now reside on lunarpages.com with a URL of <http://www.faithscience.org>. We tried to keep the name "ITEST," but a search revealed that someone in Arizona already owns that name but is willing to sell it for 10,000 Euros, or more. As much as we love the name, we felt that we could spend that much money (if indeed

we had it) in a much more responsible way than buying a name. Upon further reflection we realized that with the new name more people might reach our web site as they were searching for articles on faith and science. We've already had a good number of hits since we went "live" in the middle of July. Although we are retaining our old e-mail addresses (brungsr@slu.edu or postigm@slu.edu) for the time being, you may reach us at: brungsr@faithscience.org and postigm@faithscience.org.

4. Special thanks to a young ITEST member, Jeff Geerling, a seminarian at Kenrick and a Junior at St. Louis University, who re-designed the web site. He has successfully brought us into the 21st century with a site that is well crafted, easy to navigate and appealing to the eye. (See <http://www.faithscience.org>.) We are keeping our original web site, <http://ITEST.slu.edu> until the new one is completed. Jeff is still working on sections of the publications not yet converted from the old site. We will keep you updated on the progress and eventually eliminate the old web site completely.

5. News from the ITEST student chapter at St. Gregory's University, Shawnee, Oklahoma. Sister Marcianne Kappes, CST, Faculty Moderator of the chapter, and the students meet every Friday for luncheon discussions with guest speakers or to view a film on topics relating to faith/science and science, technology and theology. If you are interested in starting a chapter at your college or university, contact us at the ITEST offices and we will put you in touch with Sister Marcianne. Her students have attended a number of the ITEST workshops over the years and have brought fresh insights into the deliberations.

6. Our latest publication: *Computers, Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality* has been sent to all dues-paid members. If you have renewed for calendar year, 2004 and 2005, you should have received a book. Those who are on the mailing list but have not yet renewed may purchase the book for \$19.95. ITEST members may purchase additional copies at \$15.95. You may view the cover, table of contents and foreword to this book on the new web site under *Current News*: Then click on the link which takes you to the description.

7. The European Society for the Study of Science and Theology (ESSSAT) invites you to the Eleventh European Conference on Science and Theology from April 5-10, 2006 in Iasi, Romania. The Topic: "Sustaining Diversity: Science, Theology and the Futures of Creation." For information: <http://www.ESSSAT.org>. If you have a paper that you would like to present, contact [t.a.smedes@let.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:t.a.smedes@let.leidenuniv.nl).



## ETHICS BEHIND STEM CELL BILL EXPLAINED

With due respect for the  
President's Council on Bioethics and the National Academies  
Dr. Paul D. Doolan, *Times Record* Contributor  
Phippsburg, Maine

On May 24 there was an up or down vote in the U.S. House of Representatives on using federal funds to conduct research on newly derived lines of human embryonic stem cells (HR 810). It was a time of high drama. Those in favor had been in an agitated resentment since Aug. 9, 2002, when President Bush denied federal funding for new lines while continuing it for those existing, following the President's Council on Bioethics' split decision in favor of a four-year moratorium on cloning for medical research.

To the session, supporters brought patient lobbyists, scientists, university federal relations people and a hotline available to answer any doubts or questions that might arise. Those opposed brought 21 "snowflake" babies, now toddlers, products of surplus embryos obtained in the fertility clinics. They served as reminders of having been five-day-old blastocysts and reinforced opposition to using federal funds to destroy human life.

The supporters won 238-194, and it is now to be voted on in the Senate (S 471), where they also will win. Then it is a question of whether there is enough support in the House to overcome a presidential veto, i.e., 290 votes.

### Special force of bill

The special force of this bill is donation by consenting parents of embryos remaining after the needs for implantation and storage have been satisfied (standard procedure in assisted reproduction when as many as 10 fertilized eggs may be available).

Embryos that are surplus and about to be destroyed, but that were conceived for reproduction, make donation of their cells something more than salvage. Most important, the bill concentrates on these fleeting cells of the inner cell mass -- so focused on the cell, it points to the basic scientists who will reveal their wonders rather than the healer-dealers who will market them. It is not freighted with clones be they disguised as "somatic cell," "nuclear transfer" or advertised as "cloning for biomedical research." It postpones decisions on genetic engineering that society is not yet prepared to make.

The great objection is that nothing justifies the deliberate killing of a human being. Supporters acknowledge that even if this early form of life is "not one of us," it

deserves a special respect that would increase were growth beyond 15 days or a pregnancy allowed. One supporter simply notes, "in removing it through research from the circle of life, we cannot remove it from the circle of human indebtedness."

So confined to 15 days of life, the issue of legal abortion has no conceivable bearing. Indeed it is unseemly, even insulting, to challenge the long-term goal of the relief of suffering. Mention of, let alone thinking of, 2,338-plus legally induced abortions per day [Center for Disease Control, not including California] or the mutilations of partial-birth abortions allowed by the Supreme Court (under the legal coverage of undue burden and a woman's safety within medical circumstances mindful of back alleys and coat hooks) is therefore forbidden.

So outrage on behalf of these donated embryos of limited lifespan is hard to come by and indignation in our moral climate must give way to hope. Let it be added that studying these treasured cells in the naturalistic spirit of discovery rather than that of conquest accords basic scientists respect bordering on reverence.

The shift to support for the bill has been facilitated by the most important scholarly and fair-minded group urging caution and restraint in human embryonic stem cell research -- the President's Council on Bioethics. In studies of alternative sources of human pluripotent stem cells ([www.bioethics.gov](http://www.bioethics.gov)) it concluded that the Landry Zucher proposal for deriving cells from organismically dead (ceasing to grow) embryos is ethically acceptable. The hope is that the contained stem cells are revivable, and this questionable death certificate places them among the thousands of cadaver-donor organ transplants being done every year.

Needless to say, the organismically dead embryo of the President's Council and the about-to-be discarded embryo of the bill in Congress, both donated and probably with the same parents, don't seem that far apart. Indeed they are ethical equivalents, acceptable in that ethics is the science of the good and has always been more than a concern about human perfection.

### Much remains to be done

Assuming both the House and Senate bills win and the



president approves the bill with some amendments or that his veto is overridden, much remains to be done. As mentioned before, the bone marrow stem cells have been known for almost 50 years, used clinically for 25, and we still cannot culture and expand them. The complexities of the molecular mechanism might prove less troublesome, however, than the supervision.

A special committee of the National Academy of Science and National Academy of Engineering was to provide guidelines for human embryonic stem cell research, which would assure the highest scientific standards, safety and care for all involved and thoughtful ethical surveillance. The 130-page report begins with a preface both haughty and stunningly naive that alerts one. With 23 recommendations riddled with subparts and contingencies, everything is covered to the point of suffocation and compliance is raised to near Orwellian heights.

All cell lines will be registered and carefully documented as to provenance while individual scientists will be treated the same, registered and work detailed. Authority is intended to devolve to megacenters where a new

overview committee reigns and documents clearances by the ton. Two pages of the report are given to abbreviations and acronyms should one lose his way among the paper trails. Finally, yet another committee acting independently out of Washington or Bethesda will evaluate how all the programs work.

At best, these guidelines will hamper and slow the work; at least, they contain vulnerabilities that could, ironically, result in an unintended yet self-inflicted moratorium. At worst, opponents might seize upon policy differences, jurisdictional distinctions, funding distributions, indirect cost allowances and auditing procedures to torment the National Institutes of Health and paralyze the participating centers.

We are on the verge of an historic discussion on a complicated matter of public policy and the trajectory of human development. Those worried that man is being drained of all meaning and those urging his affirmation have learned from one another and Reps. Mike Castle, R-Del., and Diana DeGette, D-Colo., have crafted a bill that captures that and is timely and deserves support.

## "AND GOD GOT LONESOME": OUR RESPONSE TO GOD IN FAITH

Robert Brungs, S.J.  
Director: ITEST

### Introduction

There are few certitudes in the faith/science apostolate. One thing is clear, however: we are living in an age that demands as much of us as the then-present culture demanded of the Church Fathers. In the early centuries of the Church they were the "theologians" -- as we must be in ours. The Church Fathers were mainly Bishops who had to educate their flocks both to the learning of their day -- the first five centuries of our era -- and to the developing sense of belonging to what was considered an international, globalized Church. Augustine, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil the Great and many others dealt with both an emerging culture and an emerging Church. Our task is to treat the growing awareness of creation along with the expanding knowledge of our union with God. Our education in these realms must occur in our minds and in our hearts.

Scientific knowledge is growing at an accelerating rate. We hear: "There are probably more scientists alive in the world now than there were in all history." I don't know any way to estimate how many scientists there

were in the past or who was considered a scientist. But I assume that the statement is fairly accurate. It is certainly true that our appreciation of the complexity of the cosmos is growing. From the immensity of space to the intimacy of the DNA molecule we see the vast complexity and the extreme delicacy of nature. We proclaim the interrelatedness of all creation. It would be good if we could grow as rapidly in understanding the interrelatedness of faith and science. But in the minds of many they are separate -- even incompatible -- though they are intimately connected. Both sides of this intellectual debate seem closed to the reality of the situation.

I don't believe that things in the cosmos "just happened." They are too complex to have occurred merely by chance. I find it difficult to imagine that anyone could maintain that, while all things are intimately interrelated, they occurred completely at random. Perhaps something may have occurred in a way that is still beyond our knowledge. We can't say why or how everything is the way it is. But explaining why the eye is the way it is and works the way it works is orders of magnitude less than explaining the fact that everything



is part of a whole. "Chance" may be nothing more than our inability to explain what truly happens.

There is one reality in the world. The universe as we know it was created once and only once. Humankind is related to animals, plants, stars and even black holes. It does not exist apart from them. The earth has an effect, however small, on each star and planet in the universe and they have an effect on it. Our weather on earth is related to heat from the sun and other heavenly bodies as well as on each living thing and the earth's terrain -- or should we say terrains? Do we consider this interrelatedness in our science? Hardly! It is too complex to write the requisite equations. Yet this interrelatedness exists whether we can cope with it or not.

According to the most accepted physical theory, the cosmos is interrelated in its particulars simply because it is interrelated in its beginnings. According to the Big Bang theory everything began at the same time from the same "singularity." That is the first and last time in the history of the universe that this "singularity" occurred. We simply do not know what was "before", nor will we ever know. In the sense of that one singularity, everything in the universe is "in common." What happens to one piece, no matter how tiny, happens to all pieces. Our science should begin to think at least somewhat in these terms. Otherwise, science will be inadequate to explain any part of creation, much less the whole.

In some respects, this is the direction science is now taking -- at least implicitly. Today we hear directly from science that the human race and animals are more alike than we ever thought. We are finding connections with the animal world in our advances in neuroscience and in genetics. We are told that we share about 98% of our genes with chimpanzees -- but look what two percent of the genes has accomplished. We are beginning to realize that the sun may be affecting temperatures on earth. We are working scientifically toward a more interrelated universe. We are much better off doing so.

This process has happened in theology over the centuries. It happened slowly, of course. Part of the problem in theology can be called the "vicissitudes of the times." Basil the Great corrected some of Aristotle's cosmic "guesses" and made statements about the biota in the Black Sea that could be interpreted as anticipating "evolution." Then came the invasions of the "barbarian" tribes and the Dark Ages. Unfortunately, the works of the Greek Fathers were lost in western Europe until the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance. By then the first stirrings of the Reformation were being felt and there was little time to glean the "Wisdom of the Fathers." During the Enlightenment a new set of questions arose and there was little enthusiasm for the

thoughts of the patristic era. Only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did scholars become more consciously aware of the importance of the Fathers for our times.

But the interesting thing, both for science and theology, is the *recognition* of the interrelatedness of all things. Both science and theology admit the truth of interrelatedness but it seems that neither has thought out its implications, even though the notion pervades the writings of St. Paul. Saying that all things are related doesn't seem to mean in science more than a cursory study of the influence on a particle of "nearest neighbors, next nearest neighbors, etc." In theology we have not yet approached a systematic idea of why everything is related to everything else. But we know two things: God has made the universe this way and God doesn't do things "off the top of his head." This is what God wanted creation to be -- interrelated in absolutely every way.

In science we must begin to factor other related items into our equations and perhaps revise in appropriate ways our assumptions on the origins and developments of things, ourselves included. In theology we should re-think our theology of creation -- reshape it, not do it over. There are many things in theology that are essential to the faith. God's purpose in creation reveals such a splendor that it will more consciously occupy our thoughts and our prayers. What was God's purpose "in the beginning"? Did he create the universe with us and our happiness especially in mind? Why are there so many "creatures" in space? What do they have to do with our blessedness in his Kingdom? Why did he create so many creatures on earth? Was it to provide food for other creatures? What will our advances in genetics do to the variety of plants and animals? This is a quick listing of some of the apparent questions we can ask of our theology. No doubt they will form the basis of questions to be considered theologically in the near future.

If we come to a theological conclusion about one or other of these questions, what will this do to our knowledge of God and his purposes? We shall still be thinking, acting, loving and praying in faith. In this life we can approach God only in faith. We can live only in faith. We can only say in faith what we consider to be true. Science too is unable to say anything except in terms of human faith. Even in its most "scientific" terms, science can say nothing about the world without faith in its assumptions. No set of assumptions about anything can be proved. They can be accepted; they can be said to be most probably true. Absolute truth is beyond us in this present stage of our lives.

#### Theological Concerns

There is either a God or there is not. There is no other



option. I believe that God exists and I hope to believe that until I die. But it is not enough to say that I believe in God. There is a lifetime more to be said. Let's take the first sentence of the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." In one sense the concept of Creator in the Creed is as important as the word God. Why? Because we cannot believe in God except through his activity in creation. We do not know an idle God; we know only God active in creation.

The notion that God created us and then "walked away" is not possible. We can speak as if it were true, but it is always contrary to fact. There is no way -- at least no way I know -- that God can contact us except through his creative action. Why? Because we are his *created* children. We might think "ward" or "orphan" a better word, but he calls us "children." Without creation, we would not exist. God does not *need* us. Rather, we are here because of God's *love*. We are called children because that is what we are -- we exist because he is "in love" with us. In that love God may actually "need" us.

God seems to have been lonely, longing for the return in love of all that he has created. Let's look at what he has created. He created atoms which had the ability to join with other atoms to make molecules. The molecules in turn could unite with other molecules to build upon still more complex molecules and finally to come then to things like stars, planets, comets and the rest. All this seems to have happened too quickly to be explained by random activity. For this unity to have come about by random activity would have taken a long, long time -- if it could have occurred at all. Then came probably one of the most unlikely things of all -- the event we call life. How can something that was not alive come alive? A thing that was not alive lived. How? Either the inert came to life or a new thing, one that could not be imagined by one looking on, came into being. It pulsed with life, but would in time die.

Could any of us have conceived of something living when all we had experienced was something inanimate. There may have been rocks and dirt and stars and planets but everything was lifeless. Kurt Vonnegut, an author whose acid dissection of our society is incomparable, wrote ironically about some primitives on an unnamed island. Fr. Bert Akers quoted Vonnegut at the ITEST workshop on *Some Christian and Jewish Perspectives on the Creation*:

"Gott mare mutt," crooned Dr. von Koenigswald.  
 "Dyot meet mat," echoed "Papa" Monzano.  
 "God made mud," was what they said, each in his own dialect. I will abandon the dialects of the litany.

"God got lonesome," said von Koenigswald.  
 "God got lonesome."  
 "So God said to some of the mud, 'Sit up.'"  
 "So God said to some of the mud, 'Sit up.'"  
 "'See all that I have made,' said God, 'the hills, the sea, the sky, and the stars.'"  
 "'See all that I have made,' said God, 'the hills, the sea, the sky, and the stars.'"  
 "And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around."  
 "And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around."  
 "Lucky me, lucky mud."  
 "Lucky me, lucky mud." Tears were streaming down "Papa's" cheeks.  
 "I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God had done."  
 "I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God had done."  
 "Nice going, God!"....

How did the transition from non-life to life occur. Did it just happen by random mutation as Darwin might claim? It is difficult for me to believe that at one moment nothing was alive and the next moment a living being was there. How did such a momentous change take place? The whole history of the cosmos changes and we're content to call it a random mutation and think we've solved the problem? I can't buy an explanation of that kind. This transition is surely at least as important as the rise of sexuality and the rise of human consciousness and of fully human beings. I don't recall that Darwin dealt adequately with these either. Along with creation itself, the Incarnation and Pentecost miracles are the "highlights" of life on earth so far. None, however, matches the mystery of divinization of the Last Day. They do not surpass in importance our being taken, fully human, into the life and love of God. More on these mysteries later on.

### The interdependent creation

Let's for a moment ponder the indispensable, growing interdependency of *all* things. Paul writes in Romans 12:

Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it *we belong to each other* (italics mine).

Clearly, the notion of interdependence, interrelatedness, was not foreign to St. Paul and to the other disciples. Everything is dependent on everything else. The stars and planets are related to the earth and everything in it and on it. The proteins in the body are related to the enzymes as well as to the stars and planets; the heart



has dependence on the kidneys and vice versa. Nothing in the universe is unrelated to everything else. In our present state of knowledge this interdependence may seem very tenuous; it may even be so tenuous that we tend to forget about it completely. Can we afford to do so? "No man is an island," it has been said. No person is alone in the cosmos. Everyone is related to everyone else. Everyone is related to everything. This is merely a statement of fact, not an over-delicate concern for plants and animals. They, and we, have to live.

Still, that interdependence gives us no real understanding of how inanimate creation brought forth life. For all our sophistication we don't know what life is. We talk about a life-force. At least a "life-force" has the advantage of suggesting a kind of dynamism, but what kind of dynamism? That force has been called an "*elan vital*" or other such appellations but we don't know what that is beyond giving it a name. Could it be that the answer eludes us precisely because we are alive amidst a world of other living things. We can compare inanimate things to animate things; we can say what each can or cannot do. But that doesn't display to us the nature of the inanimate or of living things. Yet we and they are made of the same basic atoms and molecules. The briefest answer is that we simply don't know, although we say we do. We try to control things by naming them, but we "control" very little, if anything.

The questions of life/non-life, of asexuality/sexuality do not seem amenable to Darwin's notion of *random mutation*. Usually we don't dig deeply into these questions. We assume that Darwin's theory takes care of such questions and we don't have to probe into the deep problems that exist if we deny the action of God in creating and sustaining creation. We can even go back a few steps in time to the "creation" and ask how nothing became something. We can't do better with such questions than Kurt Vonnegut in the quotation above. Unless philosophers admit to insoluble mystery, there is no reason to believe them. Reason, unaided by faith, has not given us answers. We can't give only rational answers to these mysteries any more than we can give only rational answers to God's actions in the universe.

Let's leave these questions behind and probe as best we can into the mysteries of God's loving care for us and for *all* things. Why should God even give us a nod, much less life, beauty, honor and love? The words of Psalm 8 tumble through my mind: "What is man that you should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him?" Even after 3000 years this sends a clear message to those who would believe. God loves us and desires that in freedom we lose our lives to love him in return. Our life is all we have; it is a *gift* from God but we must surrender it.

Everything in the heavens and everything on earth is a gift from God. The planets, the stars, the nebula, quasars, pulsars and the other elements in the heavenly "bestiary" are gifts from God. We have the mysterious words from Romans 8 hanging over us about their freedom being like ours. The operative word is *gift*. There is not a single thing in the universe that isn't a gift of God -- even mosquitoes and creepy, crawly things.

The act of creating the universe and all that it holds is a gift. God did not have to create anything to be perfectly "content" in himself. Creation did not "add" one iota to God. He didn't create for self-aggrandizement. He did it for us. He endowed each creature with an ability to serve him and be blessed doing it. We read in Romans 8: "The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons.... but creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God." One can spend a lifetime trying to appreciate this scriptural passage. The vistas it opens before our eyes are simply astounding. We can't comprehend them. But we can get a hint of the world to come. This future we see in faith and hope that leads to the love of God. We understand immediately that this destiny is pure gift to us and to the entire creation.

In an age of "Scientism," we have almost totally lost our awe of creation. Creation is not seen as the gift of a creator; creation has no meaning and no destiny. It is just there -- part of the furniture -- and that is the end of the story. It rarely affects us with awe at its immensity and its ultimate intimacy. We do not understand its role in our future. By wanting it to be orderly enough to have a place in our scientific view we contradict the notion that creation is just there. But we don't seem to ask if creation has a destiny? Is it moving toward some future? Do we ever ask if things fit any pattern?

I know of nothing that God has done that does not rebound to human good. I firmly believe, though I do not know what or how, that even the far reaches of the universe will play a role in human happiness. That is part of heaven I eagerly anticipate. Do I fully understand what I just said? No! But it is part of my belief in the goodness of God. Do I understand St. Paul's statement about creation retaining the hope of being set free from decadence? No! Do I have an understanding of what he meant when he said that all creation will enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God? No! I can't understand a conscious creation -- as Paul implies. But I accept that notion and it colors my perspective.

#### God's purposes

Isaac Asimov once wrote ("The Threat of Creationism,"



*New York Times Magazine*, 14 June, 1981, p. 98) that "The vistas it (mathematical language of science) presents are scary -- an enormous universe ruled by chance and impersonal rules, empty and uncaring, ungraspable and vertiginous." I suppose that the universe may well look that way to a non-believer like Asimov. He didn't admit to an "intelligent designer" of whom I am aware, so that the cosmos had to be "ruled by chance and impersonal rules." There was no other avenue open to him except the "ungraspable and vertiginous."

It strikes me, however, that in the final analysis Asimov unwittingly described God. God's purposes, to one like Asimov, would seem to be capricious, "ungraspable and vertiginous." God is not to be grasped by humans (or angels). Yet he has made himself totally vulnerable to those who want to love him: "I tell you most solemnly, anything you ask for from my Father he will grant in my name.... Ask and you will receive and so your joy will be complete." (John 16: 23-24) One who loves God has only to ask and it will be granted to him. These are not my words. They are the words of the Son of God.

God is personal, the very meaning of what we call "person." To the best of our knowledge God does not act capriciously nor has God turned over the rule of the universe to a god or goddess named Chance. There are things in reality which (or who) act in accordance with some truth beyond our capacity to discern. Some realities are simply beyond our power to conceive, much less dissect, with our limited intellectual resources. We think we are powerful intellectually, so we deny the notion that some creature or creatures may be more powerful.

With our limited intellects we do not *know* of any higher creatures. But we can know of other much greater creatures, like angels, through faith. We can imagine such creatures as angels though we try to domesticate them to our will. The notion that it is the task of angels to keep us from falling from cliffs demeans their power. Moving the course of stars and planets is more in consonance with their authority than keeping me from stumbling and falling, though they may do that too out of kindness. I would not be surprised to discover that we exist in some intimate relationship with such creatures; our only problem may be that we do not (cannot) know about it now.

I cannot *prove* anything I have said. I cannot *prove* any statement about God. I can say it only in faith. Having faith, I have the hope that it will come true. Atheists, famous philosophers and thinkers cannot prove the opposite either. To them God does not exist and they can have faith in nothing and hope in nothing beyond the grave. All I can do for them is pray that eventually they will see at least a glimmer of the Light. That may

be enough for God to welcome them into heaven where, with the saved, they will find everything that can delight the person. In other words, perhaps they will find the love of God. They will never find in science delight beyond the grave. Moreover, they'll never get closer to the "secrets of the universe."

God who created the universe and everything in it will not be served with the kind of love described by the current term "LUV." Our love for God must be unconditional. God knows no conditions and the only conditions on our love for him are those he may have imposed on us. Placing limitations on God is beyond our power. Nor can we place constraints on him to create only things we want. God does what he wants with whatever means suit him. If he wants to create mosquitoes or tse-tse flies he does. If St. Paul is correct -- I am willing to bet that he is -- creation, even flies, fleas and subtler animals like viruses will enjoy the freedom we will enjoy in heaven.

### The daunting task

These statements get us at least this far: we cannot describe God fully no matter who we are or how hard we try. We seem to want to cast God in our own image and likeness. We are guilty of trying to domesticate God, of getting him to the point where we can live comfortably with him in a human way. Are we meant to live comfortably with God?

Our relationship with God an ever-teasing, ever-growing, never-complete love affair. Is one ever comfortable and complacent in such a relationship? Is there always an edge in a love affair with God? Does courtship ever find itself with that old-shoe, comfortable feeling? Our relationship to God is like a beguiling courtship. There is tension in the divine/human give and take. God is always and in every way making overtures to us. Our love for God can never be complacent. It can be exciting, even ecstatic and delirious; it can never be comfortable. There is (and always will be) more.

That is our future in this beautiful, tumultuous, wild universe. That is the one reason why I do not fret about living in this universe as turbulent as this seems to be. One thing is true: I shall always be at home in a universe my Love has made. I am not and never will be an alien with no hope. Our hope is the Lord Creator of the cosmos and we will grow in the love of God who made it. It is his and we are his, born in conformity with his will. We will never be alien in the universe. No matter how "vertiginous," it will always and in every way be home.

None of the above does justice to God and to his love



for us. Why he should love us so much is hidden. We know in faith that he does love us even though we can give no reason for it. It is part of the mystery of God-with-us. That he loves us is clear to those who believe in him; it is not clear to those who would rather not commit themselves to his love. As I said before, that love may be too wild, too "vertiginous" for them to cope with. Some of us may have driven away the more naturally adventurous of the "non-believers" by seeming to believe in a placid, down-home, stodgy God. God is not stodgy nor is he comfortable. He is comforting but not comfortable. The revelation to those who truly love him is not usually easy or pleasant. Elijah found God in the comforting breeze, not in the wild and spectacular storms which beat upon the mountains, yet God's commands to him were not comforting. God's love is everlasting; it is meant to keep us enthralled forever. There will always be infinitely more to cope with -- forever.

Gregory of Nyssa, in his work *From Glory to Glory*, compares our way to heaven to a spiral ascent. When we die and rise we will get to know God better and thereby love him more. Loving him more we will know him better, and knowing him better we will love him still more. Loving him still more, we will come to know him even more -- for all eternity that progression will continue because we can never know God as he exists in himself. God is "infinite"; we will always be finite. Even in heaven we shall know limits to our knowledge.

### The compatibility aspect

It seems we are in conformity with the universe and the universe with us. It is not accidental that we can formulate laws of behavior for the earth, moon, sun and stars; otherwise the heavenly bodies would behave in a fashion unlike the one we imagine. We can't have it both ways: either the cosmos is orderly or it is completely incomprehensible. The fact -- it seems like a fact -- that we can formulate laws which cover celestial activity speaks to an orderly universe. Isaac Newton formulated "laws" that showed the unity between terrestrial and celestial activity. Newton's laws showed that, at least on one level, earthly and heavenly motion followed the same equations. That may not be true, however, at all levels. Maybe angels keep the planets in their orbital movement. (Wouldn't that be ironic?) But that would be something completely beyond the scientific method and scientific "fact." We can never know in this life the truth of such an assertion.

The heart of any good science is a systematic and coherent order to things. Our conception of such a system provides the only reason for doing science. It seems wondrous to me that our minds are conformed to things as they are. That need not be the case. We merely as-

sume that it is so. Schizophrenia might be a situation in which a person does not find any order in things. It could be that things are not conformable to our minds or that we only imagine they are. Could that conformity be a foreshadowing of things to come? When we inherit the Kingdom planned for us from all eternity, it may be a good thing that our mind is conformed to what actually is "out there." The coincidence of our mind to the activities of the cosmos is one of the greatest gifts we've been given. Its exercise is a glorious mandate from God our Creator. How we exercise this gift in this stage of our lives is by developing what we learn partially through science and apply through technology. It is not the only source of information that we have but it is a significant part of our knowledge.

Far from being foreign to God's will (and therefore to theology) science and technology have always been seen as an appropriate part of human endeavor. "Scientist" is a word that dates back only to the mid-nineteenth century. William Whewell (1794-1866) was the first (1833) to use the word "scientist." Before that time the only terms used were "natural philosopher" and "man of science." The use of the word has come to mean those explicitly employing the scientific method. It is not my purpose to explain the scientific method. Before the word "scientist" was invented, scientific work was still being done by "gentlemen of philosophy," craftsmen and observers of the natural world. Even the ancients who thought that the world was flat were the "scientists" of their day, using their powers of thought to explain the cosmos. Their methods of observing the world used the best means they had at their disposal -- their eyes. They could see the horizon and it looked as if the world ended at some certain place or other, but that observation changed as time went on.

In olden times "astrologers" looked at the heavens but their perception was limited to what they saw and what they saw reminded them of the mighty heroes of myth and the ordinary items of their terrestrial experience. We did not truly "see" the wonders of heaven until the invention of the telescope. Only the brighter objects of heaven could be glimpsed by the human eye. The microscope, long before there were "scientists," began to alert us to the universe of other life forms which we came to understand as the basis of our lives. Each new technological achievement has led to further knowledge of how the universe is put together and "how it works", even knowledge that was later modified by more powerful technologies. What will people say of our "advanced science and technology" in a generation or two?

Scientific and technological research is a proper use of our powers of reasoning, a tribute to our minds and our imaginations. It forms part of our praise of the creator



who made our minds to conform to the real world. We serve God and praise his majesty by our science and our technology -- so long as we avoid thinking of "scientific fact" and "scientific method" as the *only* way to truth, so long as our pursuit and application of data is moral and just. That science and "reasoning" embrace all knowledge is a relic of the Enlightenment which we can live without. The divorce of reason and faith has been deleterious and fraudulent. We cannot live without faith in something, as I said before. We cannot prove our assumptions. That is why they are assumptions.

We cannot live without science nor can we live without faith, no matter how hard we try. We assume so many things. We must assume that "gravity" works, whatever gravity is. We assume that "temperature" is a relatively accurate gauge of molecular energy; the more energy a body has, the more heat it has. What if we could not measure heat and were always putting our hands into something extremely cold or extremely hot. We may assume that all will be well if we put our hand in liquid nitrogen, but that is an expression of hope more than experience. If we can't assume that "the trains will run on time," we can't be sure of being somewhere at some reasonably exact time. One late flight may involve a trip of several extra days to get to where we are going. Our lives are a tissue of assumptions, some true, some not.

### Image and Likeness

The Gospel of John opens with the words: "In the beginning was the Word." This is an extension, a re-write if you will, of the beginning of the Book of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...."

In this section I will look at the *meaning* of creation and by extension at the whole course of our salvation and what it means to be human. Let us start "at the beginning." Consider Genesis 1: 26f.

God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth."

God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on earth."

That sums up our human constitution and destiny.

Scripture, tradition, theology and Christian living amplify in theory and in action the divine purpose of creation. They tell the story of God's relation to his people (to all people) and explain their relation to him. They prepare us for the eschaton and our final ecstatic union with God -- collectively and individually. That is the purpose and task of Scripture, tradition, theology and our lives -- extending our understanding of and commitment to the story from "the beginning." They contain all that leads up to eschaton and present a still-growing understanding of God's specific actions with human beings and through them with the cosmos.

Saint Paul writes in Romans: "For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity -- however invisible -- have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made (Rom 1: 20)." The story of salvation is presented in outline in the first chapters of Genesis presaging the growth of Judaism and later Christianity. The conclusion of the story is mentioned there: "That is why a man should leave his mother and father, cling to his wife and the two shall become one flesh." That sums up Revelation with its ceaseless surprises. How does Christ "fit into" such a Revelation?

To treat an always surprising creation let us go back to the councils of God before the beginning of mankind: "Let *us* make man in *our* own image, in the likeness of ourselves...." The beginning of the human story foretells the end. God is God; he does not lord it over his creatures like a tyrant, but cooperates with them who are made in God's image and likeness. Of no other creature was it said "let us make angels or any animal in our image and likeness." It was said only of human beings! In saying "let us make man" the Book of Genesis added "male and female he created them." God had a further purpose in the creation of human beings. Clearly this purpose involved *two* individual human beings but *one* collectivity: male and female make one "complete human being." Can this idea be entertained? It seems to me to make sense, but does it?

The "curse of Genesis" is the tearing apart of the fabric of "two in one flesh." In Genesis, as a punishment for the first sin, the Lord said to the woman: "Your yearning shall be for your husband, yet he will lord it over you." The blessed harmony, the coincidence of desire, the total union of male and female, the "collective human being", was shattered. The intellect was darkened and the will weakened in the "individual" human being. The thrust toward God was fragmented in the individual and in the collectivity. Humankind lay prostrate in the dust. The *promise* of a future wholeness -- "I will make you enemies of each other (the serpent and the wom-



an), your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel" -- was left.

God in himself is unknowable to human beings, even to the wisest and best humans. We cannot know God as he is because we are not and never will be God. We are human and will remain human. We can say that God is simple, that God is one-in-three, or that "God is omnipotent, omniscient, pervasive, and all loving. But we do not know the full meaning of any of those descriptive adjectives nor do we have an idea who God is "in himself." We know God only in his relationship to his creation, and that knowledge must be revealed.

To say that God is omnipotent says that his power knows no limit. But cannot God set limits to his own ability to act? Will he overpower the will of a human being, although he obviously could? How can creatures judge what God can or cannot do? If we think of some contingent reality, we may have assumed some power over it, like Adam naming the animals in the Book of Genesis. Naming something we think gives some control over it. We have no power over God -- none. We can't conclude that God loves us from our thinking. That God is love was revealed to us. Only through faith in God's revelation can we come to a full union with God.

We can know God indirectly in and through his relationship with creation and with us. God can and does reveal himself to his creatures -- otherwise we would not know that there is a God. We believe that God sent his Son to be one of us. Did we arrive at that fact through sheer reasoning? God, in his love, sent Jesus to live and die for us. We know God is love through revelation, through belief in him and in the One he sent to lead us to heaven. Faith is theology's bedrock. Without faith there can be no theology. To gain even a little understanding of God we must be believers: *fides quaerens intellectum* -- a believer seeking understanding.

After this excursion into the "theology of knowing God", let us consider the concepts of icon and artifact -- of the divine and the human. We can learn a bit about Jesus' relation to God and to creation by considering these terms and the concepts which lie behind them. Here, we'll treat the notion of "icon"; in a later article we will discuss that of "artifact." I am using "icon" as shorthand for the "theology of the image of God." We read in the Letter to the Colossians (1: 15-16):

He is the image of the unseen God  
and the first-born of all creation,  
for in him were created  
all things in heaven and on earth:  
everything visible and everything invisible,  
Thrones, Dominations, Sovereignty, Powers --

all things were created through him and for him.

Jesus Christ is *fully* God and *fully* man. We declare our faith in this proposition when we proclaim the Creed. First, it tells us that Jesus Christ is true God. We proclaim that Jesus is God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. From all eternity he is. *Before* the beginning, "he was." Note the clumsiness of the language! What is *before* the beginning? *Only* God existed *before* the beginning. We lack the ability to speak of this. Try to say something meaningful while excluding time! Everything we can say is conditioned by our experience of time. We are temporal creatures. We exist only in time. We can't think atemporally.

Everything we think or say or experience is put into time sequences like before, after, in consequence of, as a condition for and so on. Time is one of our present masters. We live in time; we die in time. Time colors our whole life experience. Under the sun there is a time and a place for everything. In this life we cannot exist without the notion of time and space. The Second Person of the Trinity came into this time and space. Does this mean that God has blessed the concept of time -- that "from the beginning" time would continue without end? We don't know the answer to that question; I would tentatively say yes to that proposal.

Christ already was *in the beginning*. He is the blessed goal for which we strive, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. What we say of the Father we say of Christ. What we say of the Spirit we say of the Son. The Father, Son and Spirit created the universe. The Father, Son and Spirit saved us by Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. All three sanctify us. The "whole" God does all, not just one Person. All are fully involved in each of these activities, not one or the other. The Father "alone" does not create; the Son "alone" does not redeem; the Spirit "alone" does not sanctify.

Christ is the mystery which is God. The hymn in Colossians 1 celebrates His divinity and his humanity: in it is stated the whole course of his life, death and resurrection. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) seven times equates Christ -- as portrayed by this hymn -- with Jesus, Son of Mary. The equivalence is exact; Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary, is the Word of God; he is God. He is man. As God he is fully one with the Father and the Spirit. As human he is fully one with us.

The Council of Chalcedon was called because a bitter conflict was stirring; the followers of Eutyches were preaching that the two natures in Christ were so intimately united that they became physically one nature -- that is to say that Christ's human nature was completely



absorbed by his divine nature. They maintained that after the Incarnation no distinction could be made in Christ between the divine and human nature. Eutyches taught that before the Incarnation there were two natures in Christ; after the Incarnation there was only one nature. The humanity of Christ was not of the same essence as our human nature. This heresy was called the Monophysite heresy. In effect it proposed that Christ had one nature -- his divine nature (μόνο φύσις). Chalcedon condemned a position opposite to Nestorianism, denounced at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431).

In a tract sent to the Council of Chalcedon Pope Leo I said that, after the Incarnation, what was proper to each nature and substance remained intact and both were united in one Person. Each nature acted according to its own specific qualities and characteristics. Pope Leo said: "We teach ... one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." Even in our day these heresies (Monophysitism and Nestorianism) are not completely eradicated. The hidden culprit is the inability of our unaided mind to comprehend the reality of the Incarnation. We cannot comprehend God loving us so much that he sent his Son as one of us to save us.

To some it seems natural and right that the divine Christ should overwhelm the human Christ. To others, the divinity is practically forgotten or, worse, denied. It is simply not a part of the equation. I will deal with each position in turn.

### Christ as only divine

It seems natural and proper that the divine nature of Christ should overwhelm the human nature. This position (if only implicitly) seems to say that "God is infinitely greater than anything human." That statement is unimpeachable, but the problem is what they (modern "Monophysites") do with it. Let me ask the question bluntly: do we imagine that Jesus Christ is a puppet of the Second Person of the Trinity? Doesn't this seem more proper to us? "Christ is God *before* he is human. He is totally a divine being. How can he be human? Isn't the human entirely submerged in the divinity? Should it not be?" Such are the questions we face.

My question: was there ever a *moment* when Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, was not meant to be human, was not ordained to be a human? Thinking of "before and after" in God distorts him. There is no time in God. To think of the Second Person "becoming" human after having always been God is to put time (therefore contingency) into God. God seemingly has changed in that he assumed a fleshly nature in time. But what if

God had so ordained from "before" the beginning, when there was no time. It is amazing that we cannot talk about God without time entering. In our thinking and expressing any idea, we are totally the captives of time; this question is evidence of it.

Why would we diminish Christ's humanity by over-emphasizing his divinity? Part of the problem -- only a part -- is a false humility about who we are and what we are called to be. We can hardly believe that God might think us glorious enough to have Christ "become" fully human. We think so little of ourselves and our destiny that we judge it a supreme act of condescension for Christ to have "become" one of us. In a sense it was an act of humility -- no mistake about it. God "becoming human" is an act of kindness, an act of submission.

In another sense, though, we must remember that we may not be quite so bad as we might think. God found enough dignity in us before the Fall to assume intimacy with our first parents: God loved to walk in the Garden in the cool of the evening and to converse with Adam and Eve. It does not seem to be quite God-like to treat us merely as pets. There is something built into us that appeals to God, that makes Him love us so much as to send His only Son to live and die for us. Even the angels learn of salvation in and through the Church, a human creation as well as "divine." It seems that he sees in us something worth the trouble.

We were corrupted by the Fall. Our minds and hearts were darkened by the sin of Adam and Eve. Our goal of life with God was clouded and we were given over to our depraved selves. That God still loved us and began immediately to lead us back to him speaks eloquently about his love for us. St. Paul writes in Romans 5:

.... perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us. We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men.... Having died to make us righteous, is it likely that he would now fail to save us from God's anger? When we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we were still enemies; now that we have been reconciled, surely we may count on being saved by the life of his Son?

"The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." Do we think the Holy Spirit is wasted on *totally* corrupt people? In our fallen state we are brought by God to the point where grace will reign in our hearts. We are worthy to receive God's love in the redeeming phase of



our lives -- not by anything we have done but because God still loves us. We carry this treasure in earthenware jars, but we carry it in the hope of final glory. In glory, will we be seen as worthy?

In the *Lord of the Rings* Tolkien has the king kneel before the two hobbits who had destroyed the ring of power. Clearly they should have knelt before him but in an act of "humility," gratitude and especially love he knelt before them. Is there some kind of an analogy with our arrival in the final Kingdom? Could the King kneel before us in welcome? That seems like something Christ might do -- kneel to us in heaven to thank us for wanting to be in love with Him. It's an awe-inspiring thought -- an "Oh my God" moment.

In our sinful situation, we can in our hearts say with the centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy..." But, if we are attempting to the best of our abilities to strive to be like Christ, we are becoming "more worthy" of him. There is little in us now that can be called worthy; but certainly our desire to be united with Christ is one part of us that deserves the title "worthy."

In Proverbs 8: 30-31 we read:

.... I was by his side, a master craftsman,  
delighting him day after day,  
ever at play in his presence,  
at play everywhere in his world,  
delighting to be with the sons of men.

So sings created Wisdom. Would Wisdom delight "to be with the sons of men" if they were totally corrupt? We are destined to life everlasting. At least in terms of our destiny we are "worth" the Christ; God has declared that by his coming to us to make us copies of Christ's glorious body.

Did God send his Son *merely* to save us from our sins? It may not seem likely to us that the Christ would have become man even if we had not sinned in Adam, but many great theologians -- Duns Scotus, for one -- have thought that he would have come even if we had not sinned. The coming of Jesus Christ in the Incarnation was a wondrous gift, original sin being the "happy fault" of the Easter liturgy. Could it be possible that Christ wanted to come, truly wanted to be one with us so that we could become one with him as completely as possible? Is it conceivable that even *before* God created the universe Christ wanted to be one with us? As unworthy as we are, in God's eyes we deserve the chance to be united to him forever. He sees far more in us than we do. He sees the glory and honor that will be ours if we are conformed to his will and act in accordance with that will. God understands much better than we do the

dignity that will be ours in the next life, in the full expression of our humanity.

We need humility, but that humility should not obscure what Christ is telling us by becoming one of us and remaining one with us after his Ascension. He could have reverted to "being just God" after His Ascension, but he didn't. He kept his body as the model for our resurrected bodies. He is telling us, among other things, that *despite* all our faults and failings, starting with Adam and Eve and continuing to the end of time, we are being made worthy of him. How much he must love us! We know in our hearts that we aren't much, but how great we must be in God's eyes if we fulfill our final promise!

We may not be worthy of the honor, but the Son of God truly became one of us, sprung from Abraham. Our "humility" obscures what happened. We are worthy now and in the eschaton, in God's sight, to have the Son of God become a "son of Man." This should increase our appreciation of and love for each other. Our appetites, desires, needs are pleasing to God if they are consciously referred to God and not directed exclusively to ourselves or to each other. God did not become an angel -- exceedingly great and powerful though the angels may be. Jesus Christ became one like us. What is the humanity that awaits us in eschatological glory?

We are contingent beings, in no sense necessary to the creation. God would not be diminished in his being if we did not exist. But the reality of God's love has raised us above the angels. We are heirs of the Kingdom, not they. We are explicitly called to union with God in and through Christ, not they. God, having given us life and breath, has given us something more. He has bestowed on us the title of children of God and heirs to His Kingdom. Paul (Romans 8) expresses it best:

Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory.

We are the children of God and heirs of the Kingdom, but we (I) don't often give it the weight it demands. How can I be "greater" than the angels who are so far superior to me? By nature they far surpass any pretense I might have. But *by gift* -- that is another story entirely! Does this show us the magnitude of God's generous gift? We could -- we should -- sing rhapsodically about the gift of Christ becoming one of us, of Christ himself



being our union with God. It was a "happy fault" indeed that helped lead to the Incarnation. We can't imagine what the next life will bring to us in our love for God and for each other. St. Paul says in Ephesians (4: 25): "You must speak the truth to one another, since we are all parts of one another." That is how close we are to each other -- parts of each other in Christ.

Why would Christ raise us by God's grace -- seemingly to be closer to him than the angels are? After all, angels -- expect for the demons -- never offended him. They have always sung the symphony of creation in harmony with him. They have always done God's will. Why should sinful men and women become heirs of God's Kingdom? Romano Guardini in *The Lord* pondered this mystery and came up with a faltering answer: "love does that sort of thing." Intellectually that may be no answer but affectively it is the only response needed. God's love is the answer; God's gift is the answer. It is the only answer. All this in our bodied state!

How wondrous our bodies are and will be in heaven! How marvelous is our being human. How precious the ways of the redeemed flesh bringing us to him! Though our bodies may seem weak, they will be glorified. Though they can tempt us to follow our "basest wishes", they can also bring us into closer union with Christ. We do nothing "outside" the body. What sins we commit we commit "in the body"; what good and meritorious things we do, we do "in the body." In a sense, we are our bodies. Our life in no way demands liberation *from* our bodies. We are not called to be set free from our bodies. Our bodies "are to be set free." They are essential components of our adoption as children of God and heirs to his Kingdom.

Our "humble arrogance" is only part of the problem. We have an intellectual inability to understand and recognize the union of divinity and humanity that is Jesus Christ. It seems that the divinity must lurk in the background of everything he did -- and does. We fully expect the divinity to be more active, powerful and present than the humanity. In other words, for those holding this position, the divinity is the real core of Jesus of Nazareth -- the humanity is only an appendage.

### Jesus as Merely Man

In addition to his divinity, there is another aspect to Christ. There are those who, for whatever reason, look on Jesus as merely a human being. This is an old position, most likely held first by the Ebionites, a group of Jewish ascetics in the first to third centuries. "Messiah he might be; totally and only human he was." Nowadays, there are those who say he was only an itinerant Jewish preacher, a moralist, a revolutionary -- anything that

one's preoccupations might make him. Jesus of Nazareth could not have been divine. By definition, such a person (both divine and human) cannot exist. There are many reasons why our contemporaries wish to deny the divinity of Christ.

One reason might be that they do not wish to live by his moral dictates or those of his church. The culture seems to hold a sense of freedom different from Christian freedom. It seems to prefer a natural "ethic" that in the final analysis allows them to do whatever they want to do. The notions current today about the meaning of liberty -- license to do whatever one wishes so long as it doesn't violate anyone else's "rights" -- is the standard to which they look. This is the privacy so dearly desired -- millions of "tiny nations" bound together by "treaties" we call laws. This says that the individual human defines humanity for himself or herself. Things are what we want them to be; there is no objective reality. The United States Supreme Court essentially said that in the majority opinion in *Planned Parenthood vs Casey*.

If people want to make their own rules, whether they apply to the totality of humans or not, they will have to deny the divinity of Christ -- at least implicitly. Belief in Christ demands that we conform ourselves body and soul to him, neither fleeing the world nor totally embracing it. Asceticism demands that we stretch the envelope, that we acknowledge what we are "giving up" is good. There is no real ascetic value in giving up what is evil or what really does not matter to us. That is presupposed in asceticism. Penance, however it is finally defined, concerns giving up things which in themselves are good, even very good. A consecrated celibate gives up marriage, not because it is second best or not so good, but in order to serve God in another way. Life is neither giving things up or embracing them. Life is finally God's will for us individually and collectively.

### The Christian View

Christ is *fully* divine; Christ is *fully* human. We believe this but we can't *prove* it. It is the basic stance of any Christian. How shall we talk about any of the actions (or events) in Christ's life? How much of this action or that event is divine or how much is human? In St. Paul (Col 2: 9) we read: "In his body lives the fullness of divinity...." This seems to say that every action of Christ involves both his divinity and his humanity. The only adequate answer to questions about which aspect is responsible for what result is that Christ is all divine and all human -- simultaneously. Remember that the divine and human natures in Christ are "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." Each nature "acts according to its own specific qualities and characteristics."



It seems to us that the divinity lives and moves at least in the "background" of everything Christ did. The divinity must be present in everything Christ did. Sometimes in Scripture it may seem that the divinity may move into the "foreground" as when, on the mountain, Jesus was seen in close conversation with Moses and Elijah. But could not Moses and Elijah be speaking with the "human" Christ? (*I use quotation marks here because the human and the divine in Christ cannot be separated -- even conceptually.*) Moses and Elijah are both fully human. There is nothing divine in their nature, beyond their destiny in God. Is it out of the question that this was more than a human meeting of the three of them? Because Moses and Elijah were dead? Does conversing with the dead about Christ's passing to God make this a totally divine event?

I would think not. So far as we know, Moses and Elijah had not yet ascended into heaven but were waiting for the release from Sheol to be won by Christ's death and Resurrection. Could it be that, if we lived every moment of our lives with reference to God and to his will, without original sin, integral, we might be capable of such communication "naturally"? Is this beyond the realm of "human" encounter? We know examples of humans who conversed with others long dead -- for instance Joan of Arc. Some "moderns" may scoff at the notion -- "it's only proof that she was crazy or deluded" -- but let them scoff. The evidence of her life and death confirmed these events -- at least for those with faith.

There are other moments in Christ's life that seem to be wholly or in great part divine. Moments like his walking on the water, driving out demons, raising people from the dead, changing water into wine, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes seem to be flashes of his divinity. They seem to be God-like events and they may be. But is it beyond thinking that these may be moments when the full human nature of Christ is apparent? Remember, since he was totally without sin, creation could be responding to him as completely integral and in complete harmony with it. Could it be that Jesus Christ and the creation are in such consonance that this is the way things were meant to be -- nature rushing in to fulfill human desire? Are these events merely a foretaste of nature responding to saved humans in heaven? I won't say positively that Christ's human nature is responsible for the miracles but I propose meditating on that possibility.

Nature responding fully to Christ's love would in a way be an undoing of the "curse" of Genesis:

Accursed be the soil because of you. With suffering shall you get your food from it every day of your life. It shall yield you brambles and

thistles, and you shall eat wild plants. With sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread, until you return to the soil, as you were taken from it. For dust you are and to dust you shall return." (Gen 3: 17-19)

The response of the creation to Christ would show us, who experience the effects of original sin as a matter of course without pondering them, the consequences of that sin. To Christ's perfect harmony with creation we can contrast our own slow, impatient and incomplete "mastery" of nature. The fact that we speak of technological "mastery" instead of a "cooperative embrace" tells us much. We can get a glimpse (only a glimpse) of this from time to time in the lives of the saints. The "worldly", of course, will look on all this as so much "lying like a second nocturne," but who can prove us wrong? This contrast, beyond what might be Christ's human activity, shows us the immense loss for humanity and the creation caused by original sin. We labor over time to bring about results that Christ could do instantaneously. The path of scientific research is slow and uneven. Despite enormous advances in the last 50 years, things are as mysterious as ever -- in some cases more mysterious.

I like to think of "miracles" as the Kingdom, already begun in the lives of the blessed, suddenly breaking into our times (and understanding). Think of events and places like Lourdes! What seems to be "divine intervention" may be mostly or even entirely "human" (possibly, because this is speculation). It would be "human" only if the human were in close contact with God. Only those on the way to salvation have the opportunity to perform what we would call miracles.

We often think and speak as if this were an either/or world. Either an event is "human" or "divine"; something is "material" or it is "spiritual"; events and things in Christ's life are either "human" or "divine." But this is very much a both/and world. Take the multiplication of the loaves and fishes as an example. Is this "human" or "divine"? What is "divine action" and what is "human action"? I believe that in Christ's life we have a complete blending of those two aspects. I don't think that we can take any event in Christ's life and say that this is purely human or that is purely divine. It is always both/and -- he is one person. There are two natures in Christ, without doubt; there is only one Person. Pope Leo added an interesting statement: "each nature acted according to its own specific qualities and characteristics." What are the "specific qualities and characteristics" of Christ's human nature? Are they those of an unfallen nature? Perhaps these "miracles" are quite natural to an unfallen nature.

In the hymn in Philippians 2, St. Paul says: "His state



was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are..." Paul tells us that the full divinity of Christ was veiled when he walked on earth. We see the full humanity of Christ who "emptied" himself of divinity. The divine nature was cloaked, but Christ did not cast off His divinity even if He could have done so. Essentially, the divinity retired into the "background" in his earthly life. The divinity shines through the Annunciation/Incarnation and the Resurrection/Ascension events. In the other situations it retired into the shadows. I will not go into the theological struggles wrapped up in the notion of "kenosis." These controversies tell us either that the divinity was in charge or the humanity was in charge. Neither was the case. In Christ's life and his church's life, both/and is to be chosen over either/or.

### Our Destiny As 'Divinized' Humans

The destiny to which we are called is the strongest argument in favor of saying that Christ would have come even if we had not sinned. We are called to life in God, to share in the divine nature:

In making these gifts (all the things we need for life and true devotion) he (God) has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through them you will be able to share the divine nature and to escape corruption in a world that is sunk in vice" (2 Peter 1:4).

St. Athanasius said: "God became human that we might become God." (*On the Incarnation*, I:108) Or as St. Bernard of Clairvaux asks: "Why should we not become 'gods' for Him who for love of us became man?" (*The Kolbe Reader*, ed. Anselm W. Romb, Libertyville, IL: Marytown, 1987, 81n.)

Our divinization is linked with the Incarnation of Christ. The Incarnation is the cause and model of our divinization. As Jesus assumed our human nature and remained fully God, so we come to partake of his divine nature while remaining fully human. St. Athanasius says:

The Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, and that we, partaking of His Spirit might be deified... But as we by receiving the Spirit, do not lose our own proper substance, so the Lord, when made man for us, and bearing a body, was no less God; for He was not lessened by the envelopment of the body, but rather deified it and rendered it immortal. (T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church (New Edition)*, New York: Pelican, 1993, p. 236.)

We are called to be partakers in the divine nature. We will be sharers in God -- remaining human. Just as in the Incarnation the Word "remains" fully God when he assumes human nature, so we always remain human. Jesus Christ is a divine Person "becoming" human while remaining God; we are humans "becoming" gods while staying human. We are not divine; to hold that is a form of Pantheism. We are completely creatures. We will remain creatures forever in heaven. We are not to be identified with God. We cannot be transformed into God, but we can be made sharers in his divinity. "For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the savior we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body." (Philippians 3: 20-21.) To this we are called "upward" to heaven.

We have no idea what it will be like to be definitively saved. We can't begin to understand the glory of our resurrected bodies. But our resurrected bodies will carry our memories. The church teaches that we will rise physically and tangibly, recognizably ourselves. I am a male, an offspring of people living in the 20th century United States. I would not recognize myself were I resurrected, for example, as a second century Asian woman. Her memories would not be my memories. My resurrected glory -- God grant -- will be related to my present body. It will have the dignity and power of a true human -- as Adam and Eve *could* have been. It has not yet been revealed what we shall be: "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to Him because we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2). Such is our glorious destiny.

What does the full humanity of Christ tell us about ourselves? For Christ, to be fully human also means to be fully God. All his desires, appetites, thoughts, needs, loves are most good. So are ours, if and when they are conformed to him. More often than not we see our emotions and passions as something retarding our search for God; or we see them as the be-all and end-all of our existence. The former is a form of Gnosticism which affects us more deeply than we know. Platonism and Gnosticism, like all heresies, have had an influence on Christian teaching and on our attitudes towards ourselves. Human passion and emotion have been declared good by their assumption into the being of Christ -- who is fully God. Think of the liberation this implies! Think of the wondrous opportunities it opens to us who have the same desires and needs! Think of being a full human with these emotions under control. They are not to be stifled. They are to be accepted and brought into line with God's will. That can be accomplished in the body and blood of Christ. It is a difficult path but it can be walked with the help of grace.



It is not wise to say what God can or cannot do. God is sovereignly powerful and totally free. He can do whatever he wants to do. Would it have been appropriate for God to have become a dog or a cat? They have neither a human intellect nor a human will. God did not become an angel -- an angel does not have a body. We are neither animals nor angels although we share attributes of each. We are not angels but we have an intellect and a will. We are not animals but we have bodies, emotions and appetites. Christ become one of us; he did not become an animal nor an angel. We are "at the bottom" of the angelic ladder and the "top" of the animal ladder.

God did not desire to be identified with the angels nor animals. There must be significance in our being the bridge between the animal world and the angelic world. God can be in contact with all of creation by becoming human. Our aspirations to be truly God-like leaves us vulnerable to assault from both sides. God may have become one of us because we are pivotal in his plan for creation. He wants us to be neither animals or angels. He wants us to be fully ourselves.

We see some of the results of original sin as it affects us. By darkening our intellect original sin makes it difficult for us to see the dignity that we still have. It reduces us in stature, especially in our own eyes. It renders complicated what was meant to be clear, namely, that we have a profound importance in ourselves -- important enough to have God become one of us. I can "rejoice in my humility"; it is only too easy to revel not being too much after all. We call it "humility"; it is really surrendering. "If I am so unimportant, weak and sinful, I can't be expected to aspire to very much." I can't presume to be as "perfect as the Father is perfect." Yet that is exactly what God demands of each of us.

We are not meant to grovel before God. We are called to love both God and creatures. It is well always to recall that we are sinners and invariably fall below what we are meant to be. But beauty, say of a mountain vista or of a person, never reduces us to "crawling on our bellies"; rather it ennobles us. Idols may fill us with fear but God does not operate through fear. Fear is an ignoble emotion when confronting God. The author of the Book of Revelation often mentions fear and yet is almost immediately lifted up to gaze on the beauty and splendor of God. Beauty does not generate a crushing weight on the human spirit; it calls for a raising up of the human to an enraptured love for the glory of God. Natural beauty suffuses the spirit and calls forth wonder, not fear. We are called to "share in the divine nature and to escape corruption in a world sunk in vice" (2 Peter 1, 4). This "sharing in the divine nature" is not a consequence of fear. It is a result of love.

Laziness and cowardice lead us to assume that failure to serve God is our "natural state." It is foolish to consider ourselves to be totally corrupt and saved *only* by God's action. God's action is absolutely necessary -- immeasurably so. So too, however, is our effort and realization of the dignity that God finds in us. We are beautiful to God and we are called to develop that beauty and make ourselves more pleasing to God. That may entail suffering; but suffering may be God's will for us.

Our wills are weakened by original sin. Like St. Paul, we fail to carry out the things we want to do and find ourselves doing things we hate. We may deem ourselves to be like the angels -- "all mind", never mucking around in the "dirty details" of nature. Or we consider ourselves to be animals -- never aspiring to "higher things." All our desires must turn to him. We know that we are not worthy of God; it is easier to think of ourselves as totally unworthy.

We deeply need hope. We have trouble believing Scripture because many passages seem to be too good to be true: "If we keep our expectations modest enough, we won't be too disappointed if and when it doesn't come true." But I may only be projecting my lack of hope. Maybe I don't have enough faith in God's promises to think that these promises will all come true. How many things have I not done because I thought the results would be too good to be true?

During much of its existence the church has tilted toward Gnosticism in its thinking and teaching. There has been a strong tendency to flee the body and all that it represents. A certain "*contemptus mundi*" (contempt of the world) has been present, starting with Tertullian or earlier. The body, according to such teaching, is the problem. "Physical desires are evil", they tell us. "Our bodily appetites are running away with us." But we sin primarily (though not exclusively) with the will. The will is never divorced from the appetites, passions and desires, but the "higher powers" as well are deeply implicated in sin. They are also deeply implicated in doing God's will. We are a unity in progress, a work being accomplished. A certain "monastic one-up-man-ship" may be involved in Gnosticism, an "anything you can do I can do better" spirit. It is easier to deny the appetites than turn them to God. Is that what God desires? Are we not meant to be daring in the service of the Lord?

Although many masters of the spiritual life thought negatively of the body, our bodied humanity is a positive good. Can the two positions be reconciled or are they absolutely dichotomous? (Either/or rather than both/and?) We should be wary of our desires but give them scope to develop in line with Christ's will. For that matter we should be wary of our "higher powers."



That is part of our careful discernment of God's will for us.

Times and problems have changed. We do not see some things as the saints did. There are new ideas in the world, such ideas as genetic change or quantum mechanics for instance. We are not to flee the body but to learn to live "within it." But even that statement can be dualistic. We are not "living within" the body; we are embodied spirits or maybe "enspirited" bodies. We can relish the beauty God has put into the world without being seduced by evil. But we have a malicious adversary who will corrupt whatever he can. There is a saying that *corruptio optimi pessima* (the corruption of the best is the worst). It is our task to see that "the best" is not corrupted. That can be achieved with God's help.

Because the appetites and emotions are good the devil can use them to lead men and women astray. We read in the tenth chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles* that Peter should not call profane what God has made clean. The emotions and appetites are so much a part of us they can become avenues leading to our perdition. But they are equally good ways to lead to life in God. We should begin teaching that the emotions and passions can be spectacular ways of approaching God.

We are not to flee the world so much as to prepare it for Christ's eventual return. In the meantime we are encouraged to look on its beauty as a reflection of Christ and to love it. Reflecting Christ requires us to see past the facade, to see into the unity that is each of us in Christ. To flee from beauty as intrinsically evil represents an act of ingratitude to God who gave us this beauty. It is our fallen fate that we can be tempted by the good as well as succeed in serving God by the good, the true and the beautiful. The corruption of the best is the worst!

Our worthiness comes from creation in Christ and from the Resurrection/Ascension mystery. Wondrous creatures that we are as we come from the hand of God, we are more marvelous in the redemption. We have Christ with us as first-born from the dead. He has come to raise us from sin and death into his glorious Kingdom. He calls us into our rightful destiny as his children. Christ ascended into heaven in a *bodily* way and remains human in heaven. Christ assumed a body forever. We are to give ourselves to others and to the whole creation. Environmentalists notwithstanding, we are to leave footprints through the cosmos saying that we have passed this way. If we die having changed nothing (leaving no footprints) we shall have failed to do our duty to our Creator and Redeemer.

## Living in hope

We are to give everything that we have. That includes intellect and will as well as emotions, appetites and desires. They are all part of us; they must all be given to Christ. While it is true that we must use our intellect and will, we must use them in and through Christ. So, too, we must share our desires and emotions with each other in Christ. We are empty beings if we refuse the latter while giving the former. We are called to be passionate in our service of the Lord.

We are wondrous creatures, called to an even more remarkable final destiny. We are called more and more to consider the cosmos as the place in which God can exhibit his glory for the good of all his creatures. The whole universe has been groaning "from the beginning till now in one great act of giving birth." To what is creation giving birth? It might be well for us to meditate on the passage from Romans 8 quoted earlier.

In faith, hope and love we are attempting to grow to be more like God. We are at best novices when it comes to following Christ, but I suspect that we have power we never use because we don't know of its presence. To some extent we may be able to heal. Can we give ourselves totally? Not yet, but maybe someday! We could help each other more than we do, if we recognized the goodness that resides in each of us.

We should gauge our worth by the creation and the redemption. We were created to be great! Now that we are redeemed, think of our destiny! We are chosen to work for God in unity with others. That is our call; that is our destiny.

This is an *outline* of what we believe in faith. Sometime in the future I will attempt an article or two dealing with science and technology and how they fit within the context of this outline. I don't want to write too much lest you get weary of my thought. If you have any thoughts you'd like to publish along these lines or in science and technology, please send them to the ITEST Bulletin Editor, S. Marianne Postiglione, RSM. The Editorial Board would be delighted to look them over for possible publication. It would be good for each of us to share his or her thoughts with each other. That would "help to make the building grow."

In the meantime I recommend these matters to your prayers. May God help us be better Christians and better educated in science and technology. That is our apostolate, our mission in the church.