



This issue of the Bulletin may seem on first glance to be a hodge-podge of articles taken from the archives as well as an article published for the first time. Actually there is a common theme: the threat of the loss of freedom lurking in contemporary proposals for "improving the state of things environmentally and biologically."

In his paper Fr. James Schall remarked: "This refusal (a refusal to accept the kind of being the human is created to be) is working itself out in our time in political councils, biological laboratories, ecological schemes, and technological structures all aimed in one way or another at eliminating the results of original sin by a method that bypasses freedom and reduces man's beatitude to this-worldly dimensions." That, in its own way, is as good a summary as I have seen.

We will be saved from ourselves, despite ourselves, if only we give control to this or that elite. Even if we do not give up our freedom that freedom can be taken away from us — a little bit here and a little bit there. "Just give us a tiny bit of your freedom," we are told, "and all these wonderful benefits will be yours." So we give up a bit of our freedom, only to find we've given up more than we believed. If there were truth in advertising we might have *some* protection, even if it is not enough. As Fr. Schall intimates, we may end up supporting vice if only to protect the freedom we have. At least we should be willing to protect the possibility of vice in order to preserve our freedom. A managed society is not a free society.

There are aspects of this loss of human freedom in some environmental proposals, some aspects of sociobiology and in the promises of biotechnology. It is pertinent to our desire (and necessity?) to remain free to come to see what each of these proposals or promises will cost in terms of that freedom. It would be well to examine them "coldly" in this light before we buy into any of them. The enthusiasms of our time would deprive us of our freedom — if we let them.

In the meantime, have a good summer. May the Lord bless and keep you.

Page 1	DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE
Page 2	ANNOUNCEMENTS
Page 2	THEOLOGIAN'S VISIT THE ENVIRONMENT John E. Kinney
Page 7	SOCIOBIOLOGY: THE NEW RELIGION Dr. Richard Blackwell
Page 11	ON THE ELIMINATION OF HUMAN FREEDOM James Schall, S.J.
Page 18	IN MEMORIAM

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. We are fully subscribed for the October 17-19, 1997 workshop, *Evolution AND Creation*; however, if you would like to attend you could add your name to the waiting list, but we can't promise that we will have cancellations. In any case, all dues-paid members will receive a copy of the edited proceedings within six months or so of the workshop's conclusion.

2. The sub-committee planning the big ITEST "Celebration '99" (the 31st anniversary of ITEST) continues its work. We are looking at a few locations, mostly in the Mid-west with the activities scheduled during the first or second week of August, 1999. Keep tuned in for more information. Naturally, we are looking to keep the cost manageable for the attendees. You could consider bringing your spouse, friend or the whole family for a vacation/celebration experience.

3. Just a reminder that we have more funds available for student memberships. If you know and can recommend a serious student for a one year gift membership, simply contact us with the necessary information. Thus far, we have a good number of students who have been added to the membership list as a result of this special renewable grant from a generous donor.

4. We are looking for articles for the Bulletin — preferably that you have written yourself. If you have anything ready on faith or science, send it in to us. It will be given every consideration. Unless you deem the article of great importance; don't send us copyrighted articles from magazines or journals; we just don't have the time or staff to secure permission to reprint.

5. Father Neil Vaney, SM, Theology lecturer at Mt St Mary's College in Auckland, New Zealand, currently teaches a course entitled, War and Peace in the New Zealand Theological Tradition. Designed for students interested in the Aotearoa/New Zealand history and theology, this course examines the Church's reaction to relevant issues in New Zealand history and to contemporary debates on war and peace. Fr. Vaney responded to our request for information on courses being taught with an interdisciplinary emphasis. We invite you to share your ideas with the membership if you are teaching a course involving theology/science, theology/history or any innovative mix of disciplines pertinent to the goals of ITEST.

THEOLOGIAN'S VISIT THE ENVIRONMENT

John E. Kinney, P.E. DEE

[John Kinney is a registered professional engineer with experience on four continents and the South Pacific Islands. He has served on advisory committees including the US Geological Survey and the Natural Resources and Environment Committees of the US Chamber of Commerce, among others. The Editor invites responses on this topic. They will be published as space permits.]

An amazing number of so-called authorities are making unsubstantiated statements about the degradation of the environment and proposing "cures." Included among them are religious organizations, teachers, promoters, unions, politicians and corporations. Equally amazing is their agreement that the situation is critical. It takes little effort to determine each has a self interest (e.g. power [even destructive], influence, money, employment, publicity) to perpetuate public belief the situation is deteriorating.

Three publications each professing to be a Catholic perspective on environment (ecology is the word of emphasis) and offering what is reported as theological

opinion are:

Renewing the Face of the Earth, (1994) a US Catholic Conference (USCC)¹ report largely dominated by the philosophy of the Union of Concerned Scientists, a group of environmental ideologues.

Embracing Earth: Catholic Approaches to Ecology,² (1994) a collection of unrelated essays purportedly "responding to the planetary crises."

"Christian Ecology,"³ (1996) a quite even handed assessment of differences in the "political ideologies of environmentalism and the Christian tradition of

stewardship and respect for the created world" with selected pronouncements of Pope John Paul II.

"Christian Ecology" includes the box *Some Facts and Figures* as basic justification for the crisis the author attributes to "the impact of human technology and lifestyle on our environment." The difficulty is the *figures* are not *facts*. However, they do set the tone for the reader, who can be expected to pay less than adequate attention to the admonition: "Each of us has a responsibility to decide for himself whether there is a crisis, how serious it is and how we should respond to it. We should try to be aware of the dangers of wishful thinking and ideology." The selected *facts and figures* promote such crisis ideology. So does the opinion we plunder the planet because we suffer the "Original Sin of industrialization."

In these three documents the physical aspect of the environment commands attention. Human welfare is of limited concern; restricting use of natural resources and controlling population are the objectives. In effect, improving the dignity of the human and the reality of science required for any expected achievements are not emphasized. One wonders if the authors adequately understand the meaning of ecology. Do they associate ecology with economy, the other essential aspect of environment?

Embracing Earth has many meanings for "ecology": "this sacred communion, this being-sharing of all the systems of which the cosmos is composed, is what we mean by ecology...." "The cosmos itself is the embodied word of God....eco-spirituality.... creation spirituality (as opposed to "arrogant institutional religion") all creation is an extension of the neighbor whom we are asked to love as ourselves"... in the "eucharistic vision we have the theological basis for a viable and effective Christian ecology...." "The Ecology is the Theotokos...." "Nature-mysticism is a very precious form of spirituality; eco-spirituality is actually a more contemporary type of nature-mysticism. Nature-mysticism is essentially panentheistic — it presupposes a sacramental understanding of the earth, the natural world and the universe..." "Gimmick ecology will save no one.... healing earth must be tied to deep spiritual awakening."

And there is panic: "It used to take 20,000 years for a single species to go into extinction. Now a species goes into extinction every twenty five minutes" (no examples are given to support this claim).... "larger scale environmental destruction being wreaked on nature in the form of loss of biodiversity, ozone destruction and industrial-scale deforestation...." "over consumption and idolatrous greed — ecologically ruinous

practices driven by industrial capitalism..."

"Verbal Pollution," by William McNamara, O.C.D., one chapter in *Embracing Earth*, is exceptional. "The most corrupting influence in the world today — and the most tolerated — is verbal pollution." Father McNamara recalls that "In the *Humiliation of the Word* French theologian Jacques Ellul goes so far as to distinguish between the truth and reality. This 'everyday reality' for which we stand, he calls a lie. "We substitute facile beliefs for a vital faith. We join the wrong movements. Most movements today, some flourishing in the Catholic church, are spurious. They come and go, their banality inevitably short lived. Their words, clichés, slogans, and disguised idolatries sputter and spit, generating hot air and ashes instead of salutary action. Such power-fired self righteous eruptions are as nugatory as they are trendy and tawdry."

"By your words you will be justified, and by your words condemned" (Mt 12:37). "This reminds us of the ultimate seriousness of words. Words involve commitment and reflect authenticity. We will answer for every unfounded word." (Mt 12:36) The book's summary ignores the emphasis on truth as requisite for effective communication and achievement.

"What is called scientific theology is normally conveyed in a language devoid of a sense of awareness." Following this Dorothy Soelle quote, Father McNamara continues "(I)t has no interest and no appeal. It has a dull flatness because it leaves no room for doubt." As one who labored through this volume, I concur with Father McNamara who comments, "Theologians must speak beyond the academy. Any theology that wants to communicate with real people must use a language that shows awareness, brings people and their problems into the dialogue and is forceful." He recalls Evagrius of Pontus: "The theologian is one whose prayer is true." Theologians must become better acquainted with science if their pronouncements are to reflect science and be true.

Theologians are apparently discovering the "environment" as a new field of endeavor. Whether the "environment staff" of the US Catholic Conference (USCC) is theologically qualified is a question I pose to the reader. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), it seems, allowed the staff autonomy, thus trivializing the teaching role of the hierarchy.

The three documents being reviewed have deficiencies in common:

1. No recognition of nor recommendation for

improving the dignity of the human as an essential component in the environmental equation. The essential role of wealth in achieving the dignity of the person is neither defined, nor recognized. In fact, personal wealth is impugned as the primary cause of the degradation of the world.

2. No recognition that improving the environment requires engineering, scientific and economic competence and involvement. It promotes the idea that a return to sustenance, communal living is a corrective measure. Not recognized is that improvement in the natural environment, improved food production and improved quality of life for humans occur only where there is capitalism and the use of synthetic chemicals. In the USA forests have increased by 140 million acres of forests since 1920 — with accompanying increases in bird and animal life, and a decrease in soil erosion. They do not recognize that Third World nations destroy forests only because they lack alternative fuel sources.

3. An apparent presumption that religious platitudes and biblical quotations are adequate substitutes for economics, that social justice (renamed "eco-justice" by the USCC) in the form of government grants and punitive and restrictive regulations constitute sound economics and adequate guidance.

4. "Destruction of the planet," "rape of the land," "gross pollution of air, water, land" is a standard description used by several of the authors — unsupported by a single factual reference.

Unhappily Father McNamara is guilty of this breach too, even after presenting an excellent case for requiring truth "in a world of acceptable lies" where "we as witnesses of pure veracity, become martyrs." Had theologians and philosophers been as concerned about the environment (ecology) 35 to 50 years ago, they could have viewed real "gross pollution." At that time the first efforts to "clean up the nest" were made. The extent of recovery has been remarkable, but these authors are not aware of this. Nor do they appreciate that many of today's political and emotional remedies do little to improve nature but much to prevent improved human environment, particularly in Third World countries. They are woefully ignorant of the inexhaustible reserve of minerals in the earth's crust; they frequently describe it as being rapidly depleted. Availability depends only on energy and technology, which have already proved most effective in increasing supply as the market dictated.

The words of Richard Rohr, OFM, an author in *Embracing Earth*, are applicable: "People with all kinds of

certitudes, but no wisdom, all kinds of supposed clarity, but no real understanding." Politics, not science, is their base. Undoubtedly these people are sincere. Their remedy, however, depends solely on a hoped-for rapid change in the way of life of all. The total consequences of their proposed changes on either nature or people, particularly on the poor, are not considered. Recall the Peanuts character Charlie Brown's question: "Why can't I win when I am so sincere?" Should not development of the individual's dignity, which means development of capability, be an essential? How is it done without energy or wealth? Does reliance on the dole save the "ecology"?

Since these publications profess to be "Catholic guidance" in achieving an enhanced environment, it may be instructive to recall views of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen on "world ecology." Archbishop Sheen, in an undated taped introduction to a retreat to a group of bishops,⁴ provided historical background on that question. The Archbishop noted that Catholic church history can roughly be divided into four 500 year periods. The first was concerned with the historical Christ and the Christological heresies; the second with the head of the Church, the Pope, witnessed the Muslim invasion and the eastern schism; the third 500 years dealt with the Church and the Reformation. In the current 500 years the great concern is the world around us. Archbishop Sheen noted that great tensions now affecting the Church deal with the world. He called it an "ecological crisis."

"What is to be our attitude toward the world?" Archbishop Sheen asked the bishops. As noted at Vatican II, the Scriptures provide two quite different meanings for "world." The distinction is important. "The first is a theater of redemption: 'God so loved the world...'. The second: 'I pray not for the world. I have taken you out of the world, therefore the world will hate you. If I left you in the world, the world would love you. The world loves its own.' The world in this latter sense is a spirit, a spirit of godlessness, an organization without God."

Many individuals in the church — particularly in the United States — "...began to develop a certain worldliness." "You have got to be with it!" was the announced purpose. Still, as the Archbishop noted, "no one ever defined *it*. But the penalty was terrible for not being with *it*!"

"At a time when the Church was weak — the time of the Reformation — the crucifixion faded out. Now, four centuries later, the effect is accentuated. The crucifixion and resurrection are not the central message from the pulpit. Politics, economics and sociology

have taken over." Archbishop Sheen emphasized the consequence. "We have a Cross without Christ, a Christless Cross, in totalitarian countries; we have a Christ without a Cross, a Crossless Christ, in modern western civilization."

The Archbishop lamented the divorce of Christ and Cross.⁵ Christ without the Cross "...is pointed to as a teacher of humanitarian ethics, the one who blesses big gifts and inspires pious platitudes. But Christ without the Cross is an effeminate 'do-gooder' who speaks only of soft things, can offer no hope to the suffering and never picks up whips to drive buyers and sellers out of the temple."

"The Cross stands for sacrifice, dedication, enthusiasm, fire. Into this group of those who take up the Cross without Christ would fall those who have 'zeal without knowledge' who feel they have a mission, spend themselves and are spent for it."

Apparently, the US Bishops have not recognized that their competency in assessing world problems may be limited when their total involvement is in politics, economics and sociology; there are other aspects requiring assessment for effective solutions of "ecological, world" issues. Without that knowledge the American Bishops have been seriously duped. Biblical quotations to justify positions are not adequate substitutions. They may show responsibility but they do not provide guidance on the assessment of issues.

The USCC was sold a bill of goods by the Union of Concerned Scientists, that promoting the theme of "eco-justice," so-called "social justice" will solve the environmental crises touted as jeopardizing the world. What does "eco-justice" mean? The material in their publications seems to conclude that problems are solved by legislation, regulation and federal subsidy for Church social programs. Without the ability to assess the sales pitch, they were deceived. Without specific objectives oriented toward answering needs of people and nature, there can be no achievement. (This situation is developed in detail in *Saviors of the Earth?* by Coffman, Northfield Publishing, 1994; in the ITEST Workshop *Christianity and the Environmental Ethos*, St. Louis, March 1996 and *Conservative Environmentalism* by Dunn and Kinney, Quorum Books, 1996.)

Pope John Paul II (July 3, 1981) requested the Pontifical Academy of Sciences to lay to rest the mistrust from the debate between theologians and Galileo on whether the earth or the sun is the center of the world. It is ironic that a mirror image of that difference between science and theology is now in the making about "ecology." The Pope in his summary of

lessons from the Galileo review⁶ included these prophetic and pertinent thoughts.

1. "The underlying problems of this case concern both the nature of science and the message of faith. It is therefore not to be excluded that one day we shall find ourselves in a similar situation, one which will require both sides to have an informed awareness of the field and of the limits of their own competencies."
2. "A further work of interpretation is needed. This is precisely the object of philosophy, which is the study of the global meaning of the data of experience and therefore also of the phenomena gathered and analyzed by the sciences."
3. "It is a duty of theologians to keep themselves regularly informed of scientific advances in order to examine, if such be necessary, whether or not there are reasons for taking them into account in their reflection or for introducing changes in their teaching."
4. "The Church has the duty to be attentive to the pastoral consequences of her teaching. Before all else, let it be clear that this teaching must correspond to the truth."
5. "What is important in a scientific or philosophic theory is above all that it should be true or at least seriously and solidly grounded."

The Pope emphasized the essentiality of truth, recognition of limitation of competency, the duty of theologians to be regularly informed of scientific advances, the duty of the Church to heed consequences of her teaching, and the continuing assessment of the global meaning of the data of experience.

Unless there is competent technical involvement to answer the question "Is it true?" about ecological crises, the Bishops will not be aware that they are being used to promote needless fear, to encourage wasting money and committing the poor, particularly those in Third World nations, to perpetual poverty. There has been no evidence of such technical involvement to date by independent authorities.

Answers are needed to the question "Is it true?" about a number of "ecological crises" defined by environmental ideologues and promoted by church and synagogue distribution of material on eco-scares. These "crises" have a single purpose — to excite fear and thus condition the public to accept controls on population and on natural resource development. Population is a most important resource for many Third World nations. Natural resource development, includ-

ing energy, is essential to the production of wealth required for improving the way of life in those nations. The devastating consequences to the world's poor must be understood by the Bishops. So, too, the definition of an effective program to improve both human and natural environments, particularly in Third World nations!

The program promoted by the USCC does not follow the Pope's guidelines. An independent American Commission should be appointed to appraise the situation, providing the Bishops with a basis for assessing the global consequences to the poor. A Vatican-appointed Commission might view the world consequences more effectively.

American Bishops should recognize a responsibility to the poor of the world that goes beyond an annual collection. This responsibility includes questioning the premises and consequences of limiting international development, and America's role in the agencies involved. The American Bishops could form an alliance with the Third World Bishops to familiarize themselves with the environmental conditions and potential remedies in those countries. They could learn about some of the inappropriate demands being placed on those countries seeking US aid. Their joint voice could have tremendous impact. It is a wasted opportunity not to do this while there is a Pope who can see world needs in perspective and who is loved by the people of the world. Such action would be a major extension of the US Bishops' policy statement *Political Responsibility: Proclaiming the Gospel of Life, Protecting the Least Among Us, and Pursuing the Common Good*. Does that statement represent a platitude or a reality, a limited or world application?

This last suggestion is of particular importance now that the UN "Global Governance" proposal is being positioned for adoption. Under that protocol all land and natural resources would belong to the state and their use decided by UN appointed councils. This would include resources of the USA. The US has already given control to the UN of much western park land. Under such an arrangement developed nations will decline; Third World nations will never develop. The representatives of Third World nations to the UN are blinded by promises of wealth from developed nations in exchange for agreeing to UN-proposed policies. But they are not answering their people's needs.

"Africa in Flames" — *The Catholic World Report* (April 1997) — addresses this situation. The poor are pressured by political corruption in Sub-Saharan countries — including destruction of property and loss of life — to support the ruling parties' excesses. These

rulers are indirectly encouraged to prevent democratic representative government by international financial programs which provide benefits to the 10 percent empowered elite. The 90 percent, mostly rural poor, have little or nothing to say about their way of life. Moreover, financial controls prevent development of the resources and energy that would provide income and means for encouragement of individual initiatives.

Lack of development of these resources is encouraged by western propaganda ascribing global warming to the production of carbon dioxide, a by-product of such development. The claim is that CO₂ must be prevented in Third World countries (only reduced in developed countries) to save the world from disaster. But is that complaint true?

Qualified scientists with sound data deny this conclusion. Global satellite data, supported by ground observations, actually show a cooling trend. Competent scientists insist the measure of effect is not the tonnage of carbon dioxide produced but what happens to it. Much of it is absorbed in the oceans; much is food for trees and plants and thereby converted to oxygen. (About 1.1 pounds of oxygen is produced for every pound of carbon dioxide used by the plants). Not considered by the political alarmists are the 140 million acres of trees in the US that were *not* here in 1920 but *are* present now.

The major warming period in the past 100 years occurred from 1880 to 1930. Less than one third of the total carbon dioxide increase occurred during that period. Political propaganda does not acknowledge this fact. From the 1940s to the 1970s, while greenhouse gases continued to build up in the atmosphere, observed temperatures decreased considerably, with significant agricultural impact in Northern Europe. "Politicized scientists" ignore the fact that the major "greenhouse" gas is not carbon dioxide but water vapor. Bureaucratic remedies will not occur until the destruction of Third World economies is shown ineffective in limiting global warming. But the objective would be achieved.

To many the real purpose of this political emphasis on global warming, and on speed in establishing restraints on development, is simply to keep the Third World nations subjugated. This can be attained by their inability to develop energy or natural resources. In similar manner the Ozone Hole hoax was crafted to prevent availability of cheap refrigerant (e.g. Freon after patents expired) which would permit storage of food and medicines. Malnutrition and disease are scourges in Third World countries. Competent scientists have exposed the fraud in this "science," ballyhooed by

press and politicians disinterested in the welfare of the world's poor.

Africa in flames — genocide actual and incipient — can not be blamed simply on tribal differences. The people need the means to develop human dignity. This is of critical importance to developing nations and to people seeking the means to improve quality of life. The American Bishops could, in justice, convene a forum to explore the consequences of alternative decisions affecting human dignity and development. Such a program would benefit from international leadership support. The voice of the Catholic Church could guide (and should guide) this attempt, if it strongly believes in "social justice."

Basic knowledge of the truth, and limits of knowledge in ecological scares, is available. However, it requires a better means of communication so the public can appreciate the consequences of programs. Political spin placed on so much of what purports to be "scientific consensus" destroys the integrity of science. Understanding relative risks would allow us to make more informed decisions on the importance of our concerns and promote a more effective use of limited resources. Assessing the value of human life necessarily requires evaluating political, technical, physical and economic constraints preventing its attainment.

Ecology and economics are attributes of environment. Both words derive from the same Greek root for family or household. Simply, ecology deals with the relationships among the members of the household; economics deals with the efficiency of the household in supplying the needs of its members.

Many people, including some clergy, panic over the announcement of possible "cataclysmic" ecological disaster. Without solid evidence, they consider the best approach is to take no chances. That decision automatically affects others in many ways: encouraging restrictions on way of life of people or on use of

material; interference with legitimate the income of companies and/or individuals; giving priority to commitment of funds which could be more effectively and productively spent on other needs of greater importance. Two other impacts demand attention. Panic promotes fear and undermines education. For many, opinion or "feeling" can be stronger than fact. Such emotions can reflect a lynch mob rationale.

Theological truth is the hallmark of the Catholic Church. This must be matched with ecological and economic truth if the environment is to be protected and enhanced. People must have the opportunity to attain their inherent dignity. How to achieve that goal is a real challenge for theologians. The guidelines enunciated by the Pope deserve adoption by all who are truly concerned about the "ecology."

ENDNOTES:

1. Department of Social Development and World Peace, US Catholic Conference (USCC), 3211 Fourth St. N.E. Washington, D.C. 20017.
2. La Chance, Albert & John E. Carroll, Editors, New York, Maryknoll; 19 essays plus 3 introductory opinions summarized in considerable length by Sr. Worman Carolyn Sur SSND in the *ITEST Bulletin, Winter, 1997*. The collection displays an almost pathological objection to capitalism, industry and urban living and an obsession with equating natural objects (e.g. stones, trees, crops) with humans in the scheme of creation.
3. Caldecott, Stratford, Center for Faith and Culture, Westminster College, Oxford, in *The Catholic World Report*, August/September, 1996, pp 29 - 36.
4. Sheen, Archbishop Fulton J. "Prayer and Meditation," St. Joseph Communications, Covina, CA.
5. Sheen, Fulton J. "On Being Human," Universal Press Syndicate 1982.
6. Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 31, 1992, printed in *Dossier*, July-August 1995 pp 35-39.

SOCIOBIOLOGY: THE NEW RELIGION

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[This paper was presented at the ITEST Conference on *The State of the Art in March, 1980*. Dr. Blackwell is well versed in the philosophy of science and has written many papers on various aspects of that field.]

In 1971 E.O. Wilson, a prominent entomologist at Harvard, published a book entitled *The Insect Societies*. In the last chapter of that book Wilson suggested that it may be fruitful to attempt to extend to the

world of vertebrate animals the set of principles which he had found to be operative in the intricate behaviors of social insects. Following his own advice, he published four years later his enormous study entitled

Sociobiology: The New Synthesis. The twenty-seventh and last chapter of that book recommended the further extension of these same principles to the human species. The result was a third book, *On Human Nature*, which appeared in 1978.

The last two books in this trilogy¹ have caused a storm of controversy of an extent rarely seen in scientific circles. There is a special reason for this, which we wish to explore in this paper. Briefly, in the pursuit of his scientific investigations Wilson gradually came to confront the bedrock questions of what is the meaning of human life and what values should govern it, which, to say the least, are delicate issues. Moreover, Wilson's efforts to answer these questions touched an extremely raw nerve which has been implicit in the fabric of scientific culture since its inception in the Seventeenth Century. In short, Wilson has argued that, if we relentlessly pursue science as the only avenue to the understanding of reality, then man must be reduced in significance to a point far below what most of us, including most scientists, would like to see. To make matters more challenging, Wilson writes with an engaging style and with an over-abundance of fascinating accounts of aspects of animal and human life-styles which seem to make his analysis compelling. How should we evaluate his view of human nature?

The first and most strident wave of criticism came from the academic political left. Wilson was accused of elitism, racism, sexism, anti-feminism, a denigration of the powers of institutional and social change, and in general of being a reactionary advocate of the social and political status quo.² Wilson's reply to these critics is that they have not understood his message, and also that they in turn are wrong in thinking that environmental factors alone, independently of genetics, determine social behavior. There are limitations imposed by our genetic inheritance outside of which manipulation of the social and political environment is really useless as a lasting tool for social betterment. Wilson clearly rejects a purely environmental model of the causes of human behavior, in which category he places his political opposition.

It might be mentioned in passing that this exchange is the most recent instance of a long history of using extra-scientific political, social, or religious norms to judge the correctness of a scientific theory. It also seems from this exchange that the present American academic climate is much more tolerant of external, environmental determinism for man (e.g., Skinner) than of internal, genetic determinism (e.g., Wilson). In neither case is there any genuine human freedom; Wilson is closer to some of his critics on this point

than appears on first sight.

A second, and more technical, criticism of Wilson has come from various scientists and philosophers of science who charge that his argumentation is frequently subject to the fallacy of equivocations.³ The reason for this is that the primary tool of investigation in sociobiology is detailed comparison of social behaviors in a wide range of animal species, including man.

In the process the same term is often used by Wilson to refer to behaviors which are at least as different as they are similar. To mention only the most famous case, altruism or self-sacrifice in the behavior of termites or ants is quite different in basic ways from altruism or self-sacrifice in human relations. Lacking a developed theory of analogous predication, Wilson's version of sociobiology is fatally flawed in its most basic methods of comparison and inference patterns between highly diverse animal species.

Another version of this same objection applies to Wilson's program for the unity of the sciences. The ideal to be approached here is an absorption by biology of the social sciences and eventually the humanities, including religion, as the ultimate goal. The name 'sociobiology' was coined to reflect the first stage of this reduction. During the past generation philosophers of science have shown⁴ rather conclusively that, for one discipline B to be reduced to a more basic discipline A, two requirements are necessary. First the descriptive terms used in the laws and theories of B must be translated without remainder into the descriptive terms used in the laws and theories of A. Secondly the laws and theories of B must be deducible from those of A. Translatability and deducibility, in that order, are the necessary conditions. For sociobiology this would mean the translation of terms referring to social behavior in animals into terms referring to the basic microbiological categories of genes, DNA, proteins, enzymes, etc. It is clear from reading Wilson's books that he is a very long way away from such a translation, and as a result his remarks about the reductive unity of the various sciences and humanities are at present very premature and at best state only an abstract and hoped-for goal.

Considering Wilson's reply, mentioned above, to his critics on the left, should one conclude that he is arguing for the notion that human behavior is determined solely by our genes? Certainly not; although there are some stray passages which give this impression. For example, Wilson states:

The central idea of the philosophy of behaviorism, that behavior and the mind have an *entirely*

materialist basis subject to experimental analysis, is fundamentally sound. . . The learning potential of each species appears to be *fully* programmed by the structure of its brain, the sequence of release of its hormones, and, ultimately, its genes.⁵ (emphasis added)

However the overwhelming majority of comments in Wilson's writings make it quite clear that his view is that human behavior is the joint product of both internal genetic causes and external environmental influences. He offers neither a purely genetic nor a purely environmental model of behavior. Rather he argues quite reasonably that human genetic structure imposes constraints on our behavior. Outside of these constraints we either cannot act at all (e.g., we cannot fly like the birds on our own) or we cannot sustain an action successfully (e.g., a human slavery system modeled after insect societies must ultimately fail of its own weight). Within these constraints our genes determine various genuine capacities or potentialities for behavior, and which of these possibilities become actualized is determined by the added influence of the physical and social environment. Thus the biological evolution of our genetic make-up, which occurs according to Darwinian principles, is complemented by the cultural evolution in our social environment, which is governed by Lamarckian principles. The former is much slower, lasting over millions of years up through the present, while the latter is much faster and has occurred primarily over only the latest phases of the history of the human species. To quote Wilson:

I do not for a moment ascribe the relative performances of modern societies to genetic differences, but the point must be made: there is a limit, perhaps closer to the practices of contemporary societies than we have had the wit to grasp, beyond which biological evolution will begin to pull cultural evolution back to itself.⁶

In short human social behavior is the shared product of both genetic and environmental causes. This seems quite reasonable in itself, and there is an enormous amount of scientific evidence, gathered by Wilson, to support this view. So if we leave aside the political and methodological objections to sociobiology and focus on its conceptual context, why should this view of human nature and human behavior have caused so much controversy? This brings us to the crux of the problem, the raw nerve mentioned earlier.

Sociobiology unequivocally claims to be a *scientific* study of human behavior. As such it is destined to conclude that man is a machine. Rightly or wrongly, when modern science came into existence in the

Seventeenth Century, it consciously adopted the machine model for its fundamental mode of understanding. This has been pursued relentlessly and successfully ever since through a wide range of physical and chemical phenomena. But as time passed, it became more and more feasible to extend the methods of scientific investigation to human behavior, to the social sciences, and ultimately the humanities. Sociobiology is the latest and most sophisticated version of this thrust, which extends back through Comte and the French Encyclopedists to Hobbes and to Cartesian biology. The scientific image of man, to use a helpful phrase from Sellars, is that man is a machine, a physical, chemical, genetic mechanism. If we add the further restriction that only scientific knowledge is genuine knowledge, the claim of scientism, then man is no more than a machine.

This is where the most basic controversy over sociobiology lies. As a machine, man is determined and his behavior is predictable in principle, it making little difference in the last analysis whether the causal determination is all external (environmentalism) or internal (geneticism) or some combination of the two (Wilson's version of sociobiology). In all these cases human freedom and the conscious self are unreal; they are vestigial notions from our pre-scientific days. If Wilson were to pursue the logic of his position to its full limits, he should advocate sociophysics, not sociobiology. For why should we carry the analysis of our behavior only down to the level of human genes when we know that they in turn are complexes of more basic chemical and physical units? To focus so sharply on human genes is to be guilty of anthropocentrism in science, a charge which Wilson frequently brings against the social sciences and the humanities.

Now of course there are images of man other than the machine model. Of primary interest here as an alternative is what we will call the "active agent" model of man. This view agrees with sociobiology that causal influences are exerted on human behavior by both genetic and environmental factors. That point is not in dispute. But the active agent model goes further to add a third irreducible factor in the analysis, namely, an assertive and self-initiating agent acting within the constraints of the genetics and the environment in which it finds itself. This raises the critical question of the status to be assigned to the human mind and the human will. It is worth quoting Wilson on this at length.

The great paradox of determinism and free will which has held the attention of the wisest of philosophers and psychologists for generations, can be phrased in more biological terms as fol-

lows: if our genes are inherited and our environment is a train of physical events set in motion before we were born, how can there be a truly independent agent within the brain? The agent itself is created by the interaction of the genes and the environment. It would appear that our freedom is only a self-delusion. In fact, this may be so.⁷

Of course, if the agent is an effect produced by the interaction of genes and environment, then it has no independent status, and the "active agent" model has been rejected. "The mind will be more precisely explained as an epiphenomenon of the neuronal machinery of the brain," as Wilson says later. In Chapter IV of *On Human Nature* Wilson is noticeably hesitant to affirm the machine model of mind unequivocally. We read such phrases as "this *may* be so," "schemata within the brain *could* serve as the physical basis of will," "the mind *could* be a republic of such schemata," "will *might* be the outcome of the competition, requiring the action of neither a 'little man' nor any other external agent. There is no proof that the mind works in just this way."⁹ (emphases added)

Why this hesitation? The last phrase explains why. "There is no proof." The limits of scientific decidability have been reached. In many places Wilson makes it quite clear that he considers an hypothesis to be scientific only if it has competitors and if each member of the set is verifiable or at least falsifiable by empirical testing.¹⁰ Does the machine model of mind fit these requirements? According to Wilson apparently it does not. If we add to this the doctrine of scientism, i.e., that science is the only genuine mode of knowing, then we have passed beyond knowledge into faith. As a result Wilson's advocacy of and commitment to what he calls the "mythology of scientific materialism" is in the last analysis an act of faith. Why this belief rather than belief in the "active agent" hypothesis which apparently is equally beyond scientific decidability? Of course, no reason can be given to conclusively settle this issue, but the machine model of mind is clearly more congenial to the scientific frame of reference. So at the critical juncture of dealing with the presence of mind and will in human behavior, sociobiology must abandon reason for faith. It has evolved into a belief system, into a form of religion, the religion of scientism, the religion of reductionistic scientific materialism.

Wilson even formulates the credo of the new religion for us as follows:

The core of scientific materialism is the evolutionary epic. Let me repeat its minimum claims:

that the laws of the physical sciences are consistent with those of the biological and social sciences and can be linked in chains of causal explanation; that life and mind have a physical basis; that the world as we know it has evolved from earlier worlds obedient to the same laws: and that the visible universe today is everywhere subject to these materialist explanations. The epic can be indefinitely strengthened up and down the line, but its most sweeping assertions cannot be proved with finality.

What I am suggesting, in the end, is that the evolutionary epic is probably the best myth we will ever have. It can be adjusted until it comes as close to truth as the human mind is constructed to judge the truth.¹¹

The characterization of sociobiology as a form of religion can be made more specific by looking at Wilson's comments about traditional religions.¹² He begins by remarking that religions constitute a critical challenge to sociobiology because human religious behavior has no analogue in the animal kingdom. Nevertheless a biological account of religion is still in order. According to Wilson human beings have a strong susceptibility for indoctrination which has become genetically ingrained in us because of its clear adaptational advantage for both the individual and the group. The reason for this is that stability of social structures is greatly enhanced if individuals are selected who tend to act in traditional, uniform ways. The specification of this tendency for indoctrination takes on a myriad of actual forms as various mythologies are culturally evolved to deal with the fundamental human concerns of the meaning of creation and life, of human suffering, of death, of personal identity and survival. At any rate various religions originate from the interaction of a genetically selected indoctrinability and culturally evolving mythological traditions. For example, the Judeo-Christian tradition shows all the characteristics of its origins in our Ice Age ancestors of the middle East who lived in a hunter-gatherer social structure. Such societies are "highly mobile, tightly organized, and often militant, all features that tip the balance toward male authority."¹³ So God is male, the pastoral imagery of the Bible is derivative from the herding habits of these ancient people, etc.

But what is more important for our concerns is that if Wilson's argument be granted, then the net effect is a naturalistic account of traditional religions, and the consequent installation of sociobiology as a sort of meta-religion since it can explain, and thus explain away, traditional religious behavior. As Wilson puts it:

If this interpretation is correct, the final decisive edge enjoyed by scientific naturalism will come from its capacity to explain traditional religion, its chief competitor, as a wholly material phenomenon. Theology is not likely to survive as an independent intellectual discipline. But religion itself will endure for a long time as a vital force in society.¹⁴

Wilson's concession in this last sentence is significant. It is not based only on the biological claim that the religious tendency is deeply ingrained in our genetic baggage. More importantly he sees traditional religion as more energetic than the belief system of scientific materialism since the latter has nothing to compare to the power of the idea of a creating and caring God and the idea of personal immortality. For the near future at least he sees sociobiology as parasitic on this vitality.

Like other religions sociobiology also has a distinctive moral code. In analogy to traditional natural law ethics, Wilson enunciates three primary moral precepts.¹⁵ The first ethical imperative is "the survival of human genes in the form of a common pool over generations."¹⁶ The second is the maintenance of diversity in the gene pool to ensure adaptability to changes in the environment. The third imperative is universal human rights, not because of its intrinsic worthiness, but because of its long range genetic advantage. All other values are classified as secondary and instrumental to the attainment of these primary moral standards. The ethics of sociobiology, in short, is a utilitarian calculus of genetic advantage. If Wilson follows his recent pattern of writing his next book on themes suggested at the end of the last one, the next topic for research should be the fleshing out of this ethics to prepare man to take over the direction of his own biological evolution through a program of eugenics.¹⁷

In characterizing sociobiology as a form of religion, we in no way mean to belittle its significance. Actually, just the opposite is the case. Religions have always been prominent and powerful elements in human culture. Sociobiology as a religion has many faithful followers and converts; it cannot be ignored. Moreover Wilson has performed an important service in carrying the implications of reductionistic scientific materialism and scientism far beyond the point where many of its adherents are content to leave it. What are the consequences for the meaning of human life if one makes a serious commitment to the belief system of scientific naturalism? Wilson has spelled them out in uncomfortable detail. The individual human person is reduced to, and is not more than, a temporary and ultimately insignificant way station serving merely as a

transitory conduit for a portion of the gene pool. It is a stark picture. The individual human person has only an instrumental value and is ultimately insignificant. Only the genes really count. Sociobiology as a religion involves an enormous act of faith, little room for charity, and no personal hope for survival. It is not accidental that Wilson's major book begins and ends with foreboding quotations from Camus on suicide and human alienation. In the very first paragraph of *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* he states his view of life in quite unequivocally reductionistic terms as follows:

In a Darwinian sense the organism does not live for itself. Its primary function is not even to reproduce other organisms; it reproduces genes, and it serves as their temporary carrier... Samuel Butler's famous aphorism, that the chicken is only an egg's way of making another egg, has been modernized: The organism is only DNA's way of making more DNA.¹⁸

To conclude on a more positive note, we should point out that, whatever the ultimate fate of sociobiology as a science or as a religion, its primary thrust is a re-drawing of the lines between genetics and culture, between emotion and reason, between the various sciences, between science and religion, between man and the other animals. Its constant message is that there is a much larger biological component in these divisions than we have allowed ourselves to admit in the past. And this is probably quite true. It is certainly a point worthy of careful thought and reflection.

ENDNOTES

- 1 All three of these volumes were published by Harvard University Press.
2. For a convenient anthology containing these political objections and Wilson's reply to them, cf. Arthur L. Caplan (ed.), *The Sociobiology Debate* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1978), Part V.
3. For example, cf. Richard Lowentin, "Sociobiology - A Caricature of Darwinism," in P. Asquith and F. Suppe (eds.), *PSA 1976* (East Lansing, Michigan: The Philosophy of Science Association, 1977), Vol. 2, pp. 22-31.
4. For an introduction to this literature, cf. Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), Chapter 11; Robert L. Causey, *Unity of Science* (Dordrecht, Holland Boston, U.S.A.: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1977); David Hull, *Philosophy of Biological Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), Chapter 1. Hull argues that even within biology the attempt to reduce Mendelian genetics to molecular genetics is so massively

complex as to be unworthy of the effort; it is a case of replacement rather than reduction (p. 44).

5. Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 65.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 71; pp. 76-77.

10. For Wilson's most direct statement on this, cf. *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, Mass.:

Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 27-31.

11. *On Human Nature*, p. 201.

12. *Ibid.*, Chapter 8.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

15. *Ibid.*, Chapter 9.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

17. cf. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

18. *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, p. 3.

ON THE ELIMINATION OF HUMAN FREEDOM

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[Father James Schall, S.J.'s educational background includes an MA in Philosophy from Gonzaga University, an MST from the University of Santa Clara and a PhD from Georgetown University. This paper was presented at the October, 1976 ITEST Conference on Fabricated Man V: The Religion of Fabricated Man. The use of "man," "men" was still quite common at that time.]

During the campaign of Cambyses in Egypt, a good many Greeks visited that country for one reason or another: some, as was to be expected, for trade, some to serve in the army, others, no doubt, out of mere curiosity, to see what they could see.

Herodotus, *Histories*, Book III. (Penguin, p. 232)

The future of human freedom has never been particularly bright. Neither was its past, for that matter. "Freedom is a burden," we are told — "only to be surpassed by its absence," others remind us. Not only has a good portion of philosophical speculation, much of it quite contemporary, denied that men were free in the first place, but even with its possibility acknowledged, freedom somehow never seems more than barely problematic. He who stubbornly insisted on freedom in people was also forced logically to accept the real possibility of license. And this latter alternative unfortunately appeared to create problems far more unsettling and enigmatic than mere determinism ever did. Further, the more perceptive seemed to be aware of a reality even beyond moral license.

Did not freedom open up the question of defiance, of the very rejection of our own lot? Who asked us to be what we are? The Prometheus myth was echoed by Aristotle when he remarked that men have a natural propensity to rebel against the limits of their mortality — and in so doing, reject what they are. Men were the microcosmos, the beings that somehow contained all the other grades of being from mineral to spirit. The temptation to rebel against the finite limits of man was a claim to unlimitedness, a claim to be the cause of all being. Yet, many things about men could be changed. Which ultimately were to be those which,

on changing, caused man to be something less noble than that being whose highest wisdom was said to be — "Know thyself"?

Freedom, moreover, has always been looked upon as some correlative of knowledge. Will was the "rational appetite," as the scholastics came to call it. In men, to act or not to act, to act on this rather than that was not coerced. What men wrought, then, was an expression of themselves. They willed what they did, they were responsible for what came about through their agency. Theologians had no difficulty in holding that perfect knowledge meant perfect freedom. Indeed the most religious of the Greek tragedians wrote in *Prometheus Bound*, "All toil alike in sorrow, unless one were lord of heaven; none is truly free, save only Zeus." God's will came to be identified with his very being. In the Old Testament, men did not steal fire from Olympus but were told to increase, multiply, subdue the earth and name all things but themselves. God was free enough to will that there be other creatures than himself. He was free enough to command men to be men.

Moralists ... have had almost a fetish about discovering the degree of "consent" in any human act. To rise above the pale of mere necessity, an act had to flow from precisely what was most human in them. Thus, from the Greek ethicists on, the illumination of the act by intelligence was precisely what ennobled, dignified it, what made it something distinctive in the universe. This human act with knowledge, and will, and passion flowed from man precisely as man, as from an irreversible, original source, something that in itself need not otherwise exist. But disordered passion,

ignorance, ill-health among numerous other impediments seemed to indicate that the really free, conscious human act was a rare enough occurrence, especially if this freedom meant to act precisely as a man ought to act.

Freedom, moreover, beyond its internal religious and psychological reality, has always had economic and political overtones. Economics was originally the area of necessity where what had to be done to keep life itself was performed. Freedom found its proper sphere beyond this necessity in the city where it was associated with law, as it was also in theology and ethics. The free man observed the law because he saw its reasonableness and use for man's living together. Or to state it differently, because he was observant of the law, he was free. Law, Aristotle had said, was reason without passion. Aquinas called it an external guide to right action. We moderns speak constantly of our "civil liberties," that formidable and historically growing list of prohibitions against the arbitrary, unjust actions of government or fellow man the freedom to worship, to speak, to print, to assemble, to petition.

Politics was, indeed, the area of non-necessity wherein personal freedom become manifest in public choices and their results in monuments, works of art, and constitutions. Here men establish who they are before their fellows, before the ages, before the world. History becomes the memory of what men did with their freedom, when and why. Myriads of forms of government might be conceivable according to which men would fashion this freedom to be unique and different, but still men who possessed a common standard of humanness. Even "bad" forms of government were nonetheless governments "of men" though not "of law" because the choice of the less good and of evil were real social choices, ones which betrayed the presence of the human will acting.

The project of assembling not merely to "live" but to "live well" was the task of free men. Politics did not make man to be man, as Aristotle formulated it, but taking man as already man from nature, it formed him by choice and rhetoric and reason to be good "man." To be merely "man" was thus somehow incomplete, something already given over which men have no real control. They are born from nature and from history, from their two parents as already men or women. What they already are is given to them. Though man might be the measure of all things, he himself was already measured; he received his humanity and, in reception, learned who he was. The project of human improvement or "development," as it is now often, perhaps improperly, called, was that of living *well*. This was the task of the free moral person and could only

be accomplished by those powers that distinguished man from all other creatures in the universe. To ambition continuance in physical life to the sacrifice of all value was looked upon more as the life of the "beast" than of the human. This meant that the terms of man's actual improvement must be rooted in his knowledge and his choice, in persuasion and understanding, in creating habits and laws whereby men could easily (willingly) do those things whereby men were "good men" and not merely men. This goodness could not be passed on except spiritually and willingly. There was no guarantee that the virtue of the father would be that of the son. Freedom meant that vice did not necessarily beget vice nor virtue virtue.

And when it came to the elusive notion of happiness — that ultimate reason for which we do all that we do — this came to mean in Aristotle's formulation "the activity of the highest and most unique faculties on the highest object within a complete life." This recalled Solon's famous discussion with Croesus in Herodotus about not being able to call any man truly happy until he was dead, that is, until he had made all of his choices, until his destiny before the ages was sealed. Thus, the significance of human life was a product of its combined choices which illuminated what it was, what it stood for. Plato saw clearly enough at the end of the *Republic* that this full meaning was not able to be decided completely in this life even about this life. Our evil choices remained in the world as did our good ones. Happiness required that these too be fully accounted for even within the Good because they were free. And yet, as Pindar seemed to have felt in his second Olympian poem, there may be a way to live with this reality that is not disaster. He wrote:

Of things come to pass in justice or unjust, not
Time the father of all can make the end unaccomplished. But forgetfulness may still come
with happiness. Grief, breaking again out of
quiet, dies at last, quenched under the waxing
weight of fair things.

(*The Odes of Pindar*, R. Lattimore, Chicago, 1947)

This "waxing weight of fair things" that quenches grief hints that men are not solely caught up in their justice and injustice. To forget needed yet a way to forgive.

The Christian gloss on freedom, as it were, was of great moment. In the Christian outlook, the project of human happiness within freedom was real enough but it was exclusively located in any internally or externally self-sufficient object less than God himself. Classic Christian thought argued that the world did not have to exist. It had an origin, a beginning, and it would have an end. History belonged to its very progression.

The world was once new. Thus, it would somehow always be new, unexpected. This meant that its very existence, along with that of all creatures within it, was not necessary. The necessity that did exist was, therefore, hypothetical, rooted in this prior freedom and unexpectedness of cosmic existence itself. This also meant that the cause of existence had to be located in a divine will that had its own "reasons" for men to be rather than not to be. This also resulted in the free mortal being, created for this divine purpose, such that what men were and were to become was grounded in this ultimate choice about why they were in the first place.

Within this cosmos, man occupied a special position because, unlike other creatures, he was directly created for himself. Not only was his species unique, but each individual of this species was unique and created for itself. Each person had a mark of inexhaustible newness, of an identity, a uniqueness, unrepeated and unrepeatable in the universe. This suggested a sort of double non-necessity. The world did not have to exist, neither did Socrates, the greatest of the ancients, nor even less Jesus, the God-man. The positive side of this conception established that every person had a special, unshared status because of his autonomy, his freedom. God took his creation seriously enough to insist that his personal relationship with the mortal creatures was unabashedly free. The only human destiny in the universe was to be a chosen destiny — from the side of the creature as well as from that of the creator. The world was created, in a sense, that men might achieve their purpose and destiny and do so freely. This meant, of course, that God would have to be in some sense a "hidden" God from the human perspective.

At first sight, the human destiny was seen to be an "inner" worldly one. That is, the conditions of peace, harmony, justice, and order were to be established by men because they chose freely to do so out of their own resources of virtue and knowledge. Nevertheless, there is an aspect of the Christian tradition which opposes the destiny of men to that of the world. "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose the life of his soul?" This suggests that the ultimate cause of the world and the person cannot be found within the world or the person. Since both world and man depended on God's choice which is not "scrutable" by anything in creation itself, since "My ways are not your ways," as Yahweh often admonished in the Old Testament, there was a transcendence in the midst of the human. Human dignity, then, was to be founded upon this transcendental relation or call whereby more than human and cosmic history is involved in the life of each person. It is, furthermore, not surprising that this over-arching relationship has

come more and more to be seen as an alienating factor in human civilization, a reason why it has not solved its own problems.

This transcendence, however, does not and cannot argue to a lack of order or law in the cosmos or even in man and revelation. It argues to the relationship of the cosmos and each man in it to God's own reality is based in choice — in the case of man, in mutual choice. According to Christianity, this drama of mutual choice is, in the end, what the world is about. Within this context, final issues are resolved. This too suggests the limits of the world since happiness, in its Christian context, is not finally to be resolved by or even in the world, even though the redemption of man, as Paul implied, involves the redemption of the cosmos likewise. The meaning, the newness, the drama of human life consists essentially in choosing God rather than something else. And should we inquire what else might be conceived as an object of choice, we end up with ourselves and the welfare of the world as an on-going system as the most likely candidates.

This implies, paradoxically, that a creature exists in the world who has disaster as a constitutive element in his very metaphysical make-up. The refusal to accept such a being, to accept this as an accurate description of man as a unique, new being capable of radical decision — or of such a God as his origin — is, indeed, behind much of the rejection of Christianity, which continues to insist on posing a freedom so full of risk that it threatens to jeopardize what seems most worthy and valuable. But without the possibility and actual existence of such a free creature, the absolute adventure, the seriousness, and unbounded joy that really lies behind creation would not be possible.

I wish to propose here that our problems with the so-called "prefabricated" man stem from this Christian notion that places choice, mutual, free choice at the heart of reality as we know it. Without this radical, risk-filled divine destiny rooted in human freedom which can, in fact, reject God, the world, and even itself, the vitality would disappear from our world. Anything that would jeopardize this, anything that would lessen or eradicate this transcendent relationship would directly attack the kind of beings we are. The question that confronts us, then, is twofold: Is it possible to produce a human-like being that is unconnected with this transcendent destiny given to human personhood, say, by breaking his normal process of begetting? And is it possible to propose the accomplishment of "the human," of "improving" man such that man's goodness no longer be seen as resulting from his own moral choice according to ethical law and religious destiny but be rather programmed in

him through some other means?

Under the rubric of original sin — whose transmission had to do with birth from the race of Adam even though birth itself was the highest of goods — Christianity has felt that there was indeed something wrong with the human condition. And Christianity was not out of sympathy with the words of Zeus at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, "What a lamentable thing it is that men should blame the gods and regard us as the source of their troubles, when it is their own wickedness that brings them sufferings worse than any which Destiny allots them." The correction or redirection of this wrongness and wickedness was so basic, in the Christian view, that it was not within the power of the human species to restore. More, this involved the very initial destiny of man to be associated with the inner life of God as his personal destiny whatever be that of the world. For Christianity, the response to the human condition and its "fall" was redemption, which derived, like creation itself, from unmerited grace on its divine side and from "conversion" on its human side.

Though this satisfyingly unsatisfying doctrine of original sin may not be overly popular any more — even if it seems constantly to reappear in uncritical secular forms such as in Robert Heilbroner's *The Human Prospect* and under marxism disguised as capitalism — still without it or its imitation, we have considerable difficulty in explaining why men with their radical, free intelligence have not actually succeeded in eliminating what they conceive to be their problems. Indeed, it might well be argued that the very project of modernity, which even our most apocalyptic secularists are now finally rejecting, was precisely the desperate effort to eliminate the consequences of original sin. Some three approaches were conceived to accomplish this feat — it is more than coincidence probably to see how these ways are increasingly coming into conflict with each other in our times. These are the socialist, biological, and technological projects to eradicate from man the causes of his evils, those conditions that seem to prevent him from being altogether good by himself.

The consequences of original sin, it will be recalled, concerned birth in pain, labor in sweat, in being turned out of a garden in which nature conformed to man's will. The increasing and the multiplying, the subduing the earth were, evidently, designed to be relatively smooth operations. Why they were not is one of the fundamental mysteries of the human condition. Later speculation, and this not exclusively Christian, come to concentrate on coercive government, slavery, and the division of property as the particular consequences of original sin, each effect in a certain sense lying outside the human will itself. From this

latter context, already found also in Plato and the Stoics, the project to rid ourselves of property, government, and human inequality was seen as the means whereby the original state of integrity in man could be restored in some, usually planned, future. Such a hope lies vividly behind all socialist traditions and is directly related to the ultimate origin of human problems.

The technological solution began rather from the sweat of the brow and Aristotle's Statues of Daedalus wherein men had the hope of achieving their well-being not via slavery or via labor reform but by technological means so that human wants would be met by the union of nature and technology. This is more of an elitist approach, perhaps originating in modern times with someone like Saint-Simon, and argues that political reform is really beside the point until unlimited energy can be produced and applied in order to free men from the exigencies of their original condition. The biological revolution — with its earlier counterpart in the psychological — roots man's problem, on the other hand, in the very structure of his birth and family life, indeed in his very formation. All social ills are the faults of imperfect genetic configurations and family relationships that impinge on a more ideal physical corpus. Thus, we have the approach of the genetic engineers and the various Freudian theories.

The Christian solution, of course, held that we should first seek the Kingdom of God and all these things would be added to us. The import of this should not be overlooked. For it means that there is no ultimate solution that does not involve man's freedom and his relation to God. The elevation of other hypotheses as explaining causes of man's ambiguous condition constitutes the major threat to man's being. We are no longer sure that the various projects to eliminate what is wrong with man cannot succeed. Much literature and planning currently suggest that they can. What is in doubt is, should these alternatives be successful, whether there will still be man. We have, then, a deep conflict situation about the meaning and condition of the *good* man in the world. And we have proposals to create him quite at odds with religious and moral presuppositions, indeed in despair of them. Plato began philosophical speculation when the good Polis, Athens, killed the best man. We now must wonder if the knowledge state will not remove man altogether.

Whether the relative incidence of good and evil varies much from generation to generation or from place to place is difficult to judge. Certainly the kinds of virtue and vice seem to vary from people to people and age to age, yet it remains doubtful whether any given society does not in its course manifest most of the standard varieties. On rereading Aeschylus or Aristo-

phanes or Plato or Tacitus or Paul or Augustine, it is difficult really to believe much in moral evolution. This would suggest that no age is closer to beatitude than any other. It would also assume it was a major illusion to propose to men that they can still achieve perfection in this life, by whatever means, such that they will manifest none of the vices of men. Indeed, it might almost be said that a healthy society needs to protect the very possibility of vice, to be leery of the notion that sinless men can be produced by some worldly process. If this be so, it would appear to argue to a kind of freedom that does not place one age or people in an advantageous position over another. No class or generation exists for the sake of the future enjoyment or betterment of another. This relative constancy in the incidence of good and evil has not been easy to accept because it seems to negate any sense of progress in the fundamental sense of spiritual, moral improvement.

This lack of obvious improvement — Solzhenitsyn points out, for instance, that the Czar's prisons were considerably more humane than Stalin's or even Brezhnev's — has become a major cause for the more radical modern proposals to reformulate man and society such that evil would be completely identified and eliminated by means other than religion or ethics. Christianity, with its patient proposal for change based on freedom, repentance and grace, is judged to have been around too long even to pretend that it holds the key. "Look at Ireland or Lebanon" has become something more than a geographical expression. What is of interest here, however, is that the price of this elimination of evil by political, biological, or technological means invariably involves the elimination of freedom itself. This is the cost of the accomplishment of such higher goods. This consequence forces us to hesitate, to reconsider what we are about when we talk earnestly about improving our human lot. And from a Christian point of view, it clarifies what it is we want to protect, what we can change.

We are helped in this by the very level of technology we have achieved, by the possibility that our kind need no longer inhabit this planet alone. What has been called the "extra-territorial imperative," the fact that our well-being need no longer be considered solely from the limits of the planet, Earth, forces us to ask what it is we should export should we decide to send man elsewhere. To put it another way, would it be possible to send man in such a way that those so-called effects of original sin, however they be described or defined, be removed. We ought to know how much we want to tamper with man's distinctive characteristics. Do we want to live more than four score years and ten? Do we want to render sex "in

vain" by producing our kind in some other fashion or by some other process? Do we want to jeopardize our own uniqueness and irrepeatability by producing duplicates of ourselves instead of new persons? Do we want to remove suffering and evil and imperfection at the cost of the moral control we ought to have over ourselves and our lives? All of this involves some kind of a judgment about the kind of beings we are and want ourselves to be.

From this, the question arises, is there a "better" kind of human "being" available to us than the one historically and naturally given? What made man to be man was never subject to a human will. Man was by definition and experience that being born of woman by a mysterious nine-month process. Men did not invent themselves nor this process. They believed in a special status, even sacredness, of this fruit of conception and birth. Indeed, around this concept, society was to be formed. In the *Epistle of James*, it is written, "Of his own will He brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. . . ." (1:18)

There was always a problem about human birth — Plato and Aristotle advocating infant exposure in certain cases, a much more humane system in a way than our present practice which makes no effort to find out if what supposedly is "deformed" really is so. Herodotus tells of tribes where the aged slipped off on their own to die. Was there to be another criterion for legitimacy in existence other than simple birth of woman? Was there a norm of race or excellence or health or intelligence according to which we were to judge the reality of what was human? Are we correct now when we see our enforced law defining what is to be protected by human legal sanction as anything over three months, or six, or nine, or even later? Or is it the other way around, was the human already decided for us such that our task, our freedom was fundamentally to accept what was given, perfect or not, desired or not? Does the problem, in other words, always reduce to our wills and our choices?

The question is whether the human enterprise is merely a human enterprise or whether it already consists in more than itself. Even to remain human do we have to recognize that we are also the sons of God? This latter has been the Christian view such that men were what they were supposed to be in their form and substance. In so far as there was another law in their members according to which they did other than they would, this was not a defect in their being, in their physical make up requiring a new "genesis." Its remedy was the drama of the free mortal and could only be confronted in that freedom. The search for a means

to improve man other than through his intelligence and freedom and his grace is ultimately a kind of despair, a refusal to accept the kind of being man is created to be. This refusal is working itself out in our time in political councils, biological laboratories, ecological schemes, and technological structures all aimed in one way or another at eliminating the results of original sin by a method that bypasses freedom and reduces man's beatitude to this worldly dimensions.

In the beginning, I cited a brief passage from Herodotus to the effect that some Greeks visited Egypt merely "out of curiosity, to see what they could see," and for no other reason than that it was wondrous and interesting. The great spiritual problem of our age, and it is no less than that, consists in the realization and belief that God did not err in creating us the men we are nor did he leave us without a way to achieve that for which we were made — that is, nothing less than eternal life. This way does not consist in changing our structure or the locus of our ultimate happiness but rather in keeping the one and achieving the other through freedom that may lead to worldly disaster. This freedom challenges us to realize that as men, we are already what God wanted us to be but that as free men we must also choose to accept our humanity as a gift which grants us a good we did not and could not expect. Paradoxically, our good is ultimately not ours.

The unceasing curiosity of mankind wants to possess a knowledge of good and evil. What remains for it to recognize is that the elimination of freedom is a real possibility now being proposed in our laboratories and political cells as the answer to the problem of making men good. If we must reject this controlled "good" to remain free, so be it. Freedom thus turns out to be a greater risk than even the Divinity might have wished. If the doctrine of heaven is now to become a kind of earthly, secular project resulting from man's knowledge and will, we should not be surprised if the doctrine of hell is likewise so secularized and brought forth in the same process. Reflecting on this possibility from the prospective of Christian revelation, Josef Pieper wrote:

Viewed from within temporality, the history of man will not end simply with the triumph of the true and the good, not with the 'victory' of reason and justice, but with something that again may scarcely be distinguishable from a catastrophe. And the prophecy seems to speak not primarily of a cosmic catastrophe, nor of what might be called physical exhaustion of the historical forces of order, but rather of a tremendous exponential increase in power of a pseudo-order, a world wide

tyranny of evil...

Pieper then cites Dostoyevsky's terrible passage from the Grand Inquisitor: "In the end, they will lay their freedom at our feet and say to us: Make us your slaves, but feed us." And then he continues: "Because this (apocalyptic) conception of history allows room for human freedom to choose evil — and what is more, for the Evil One as a demonic power in history — divisiveness, failure, irreconcilable discord and even catastrophe cannot, on principle, be excluded from history, not even from its average course." (*Hope and History*, Trans. R. Winston, New York, Herder, 1969, pp. 84, 86) Thus the freedom we seem more and more to be left with is our choice of an imperfect world in which freedom remains or a perfect world that is in fact more of a hell and a catastrophe in its efforts to improve the lot of men.

In the First Book of his *Retractions*, Augustine reconsidered: "Each of these, namely, faith and good works, is ours because of the result of the free choice of our will, and yet each is the gift of the spirit of faith and of charity to us." (1, XXIII, 2) What we must now confront is the fact that beyond faith and good works, even our being lies open to our free will, even admitting as we must that our very being too is a gift of the Spirit to us. In the *Alcestis* of Euripides, Death says to Apollo, "You cannot always have more than your due." This search for more than our "due" is the driving force of much of the intellectual ferment of our era. And it is odd that it seeks to avoid or eliminate death for the perfect who are chosen to live. For the Christian, the imperfect, the sinners, the weak still remain the locus of grace. Nietzsche was prophetically right in sensing this. We are, in fact, given more than our due, but only as the result of the free choice of our will which is the gift of the Spirit of faith and of charity to us.

The elimination of human freedom is becoming now possible to creatures who wander about for mere curiosity, to see what they can see, to creatures who can, in other words, destroy their own capacity for curiosity and freedom to see what they can see. I suspect that Christianity, whether it likes it or not, will find that more and more the crisis of faith will be reduced to one issue, that of keeping men free, of reminding them that their evil as their good comes ultimately from within a man, and there alone, as it reminds us in the *Gospel of Mark*. (ch. 7) Christianity indeed will even find itself defending the possibility of what it clearly calls vice because it realizes that the schemes to remove it also destroy the humanity of our kind. God chose the weak and the foolish to confound the strong. It is probably no coincidence that the strong

are in the process of choosing to eliminate the weak and the foolish. God, we are told in the Old Testament, will not be mocked. A careful reading of much of our scientific and political and psychological literature suggests this is literally a statement of fact.

What we never suspected, in conclusion, was that this ultimate mocking of God would be incarnated in his image, in an attempt to create another kind of good man and good earth than the one classically proposed in ethics and Scripture. "We should not try to create a world that frees men of the limits of our human condition," Stanley Hauerwas has written, "for it is

exactly such a desire that creates our inhumanity." ("The Morality of Population Control," *Catholic Mind*, June, 1975, p. 20). Of the many complex issues of our era, this, ultimately is the central one, the only one that really matters.

Man is the risk of God.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them...." (Genesis, 1, 27-28)

God is likewise the risk of man.

IN MEMORIAM

Bishop (Emeritus) Timothy Harrington

Mrs. Frances H. Shea

We also ask your prayers for ITEST members who are ill. May they feel the restoring hand of the Lord.

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