

ETERNITY



Everything comes to an end... Seeing how the things of this world pass away ought to console us for the nearer we are approaching that end towards which all our being should tend.

St Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart (1747-70)

There was a chap named Arthur Stace who performed a singular service for the people of Sydney before he died in 1967. For 35 years, from 1932, he wrote on the footpaths and pavements of the city and its suburbs every week in copperplate the single word *Eternity*. His inspiration came from the preaching of the evangelist, John G. Ridley, on the following text in *Isaiah*—

“Thus says the High and Holy One who inhabits eternity whose name is Holy and who dwells in the high and holy place. I am with the humble and contrite of heart to revive in them the spirit of humility and of contrition...” (57: 15)

Ridley had remarked in the course of his preaching: “Eternity, eternity: I wish I could sound or shout that word to everyone in the streets of Sydney. You’ve got to meet it. Where will you spend eternity?” Arthur Stace took up the challenge. Bureaucracy couldn’t cope, of course, with this breach of its petty regulations and Arthur was frequently challenged by the authorities for defacing the city’s footpaths. His response was unanswerable: “I had permission from a higher source.”

It is the season of Advent when we await Christ’s promised return, He Who will judge the living and the dead. It is the season when the Catholic Church reminds the faithful of the critical importance of the question—*Where will you spend eternity?*

The great scandals that have befallen the Church as a consequence, in large measure, of the willed embrace by her bishops of secular and Protestant values at the Second Vatican Council have hardened those who adopt the belief in *No God* in their resolve not to turn back from their headlong rush to perdition. “At the end of life,” they tell themselves, “there is only oblivion”.

No man brings himself into existence: existence is given him. No man chooses to come into existence: existence is chosen for him. No man chooses, moreover, to be a

man rather than a monkey, a donkey or a fish. His essence is chosen for him. Both *what* he is and *that* he is are beyond the power of his will. The refusal to acknowledge these issues, the refusal to acknowledge reality, is the chief characteristic of atheistic folly, an inevitable result of its immersion in materialism which refuses to acknowledge the critical importance of the formal in things. Its ultimate stupidity is suicide whose proponents never stop to ponder the question—*If I did not bring myself into existence, how can I expect to take myself out of it?*

Atheism has been cemented in place by abandonment of moral principle, especially in respect of the sexual powers. First, there was the move to legitimize the disorder of contraception, precipitated by the permission given it in 1930 by the Anglicans. Next, people found excuses for abortion in the hard case of conception after rape. The watershed case for abandonment of principle was *Rex v. Bourne* in 1938 in England. Wholesale abortion was made 'law' in the English *Abortion Act 1968*. The next step down the primrose path was the legitimizing of perverted sexual conduct, achieved at the public level by removal from statute books of criminal provisions. Atheists are now trying to force members of society to reject the natural order in respect of gender—as if this, too, was within human power.

At the philosophical level the error involved is the confusion of *the voluntary* (what is within the power of human will) with *the natural* (what is outside that power). Underlying the delusion is the subjectivist principle "reality is what I say it is" advanced by William of Occam, adopted by Martin Luther and put into homicidal practice by the younger Henry Tudor (Henry VIII). Since, the atheist refuses to acknowledge nature's Author, instead of seeing the natural world as something given him to aid him in achieving his end he is constrained to look upon it as nothing but matter for the form of his own choices.¹

We never have more than a moment together of this earthly life at any one time. Human life is a continuum, a perpetual flux, as Heraclitus noted. The realization moved Boëthius (St Severinus) to define eternity as "perfect possession altogether of endless life"². The underlying theme, the *bass continuo* as it were, in each of the four great issues that every man must face (whether he likes it or not), death, judgement, heaven and hell, is *eternity*.

Where will you spend eternity? Only a fool closes his mind to the importance of the question.

Michael Baker

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¹ The belief in 'climate change' is part of the business. If the natural world is no more than the chance collection of material things—if it has no Author Who has foreseen from all eternity the disorder man can work in His creation and has ensured that the damage man will do is limited by his limitations—then the atheist must worry over apparent meteorological changes. As Chesterton said, the one who refuses to believe in God will believe in anything.

² *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. vi