

GALLOPING ATHEISM

As late as 1982 a listener to Australia's national broadcaster, the ABC¹, could hear, prior to the 7.15 am news on AM radio, a five minute reading from the Bible. This public acknowledgement of the truth of God's revelation reflected the values which had underlaid the establishment of Australian society from the time of the colonisation of the country in the late 18th century.

Protestantism dominated the colony's early years but its influence waned. Catholicism, on the other hand, grew in strength to the point where a Eucharistic Congress held in Sydney in 1953 attracted half a million people. The Church had an extensive parish and school network throughout the country and, with its religious orders and its architecture, it presented a powerful presence in Australian society. The Church ran a popular enquiry centre and radio programs provided answers to questions on the Catholic faith the public.

Despite the differences between them, Catholicism and Protestantism were united in support of the revelation of God manifested in Jesus Christ. The general ethos of Christian belief carried the nation through two world wars and the upheavals of Korea and Vietnam.

But atheism, which had appeared in the public domain more than a century prior, was growing steadily in influence. It infiltrated the public mind through the philosophical and scientific disciplines of the universities and through the influence of organisations such the Fabian Society. In the 1960s its appeal to the public mind surged with the push for self-indulgence in the debate over contraception. Many welcomed a philosophical theory that would exclude the need for responsibility to God in sexual matters. At about the same time another influence came into play, the re-emergence within the Catholic Church of a heresy, atheistic in tendency, which had troubled the Church in the first decades of the century, Modernism². Led by Pope John XXIII, the Church's bishops gathered in Rome relaxed the rigour of the Church's previous hostility to worldly views. The Second Vatican Council provided a catalyst for the resurgence of the heresy and its influence had much to do with the ambivalence of certain of the Council's statements. Little wonder then that public calls for "moral freedom" over the contraception debate met with mixed responses from Catholic bishops.

The prospering of the atheist cause operated to suppress the tenets of Christianity in the curricula of state schools. The resistance of certain parents to this change was outweighed by others whose religious beliefs had largely evaporated. New teachers formed in the atheist atmosphere of tertiary institutions passed its ethos to their charges. Meanwhile, under Modernism's influence, the teaching of doctrine in Catholic schools began to be compromised. The example of self sacrifice of religious brothers and nuns dissipated as many forsook their vocations. In time, that example

¹ The Australian Broadcasting Commission; later the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

² Derived from the damage done by Protestantism to philosophical thought.

was to disappear almost completely. Here again, Modernism was at work. The bishops ceded their schools to bureaucracies, "Catholic Education Offices", removing the rightful authority over them of the parish priests. In very little time the destruction of Catholic schools as seminaries for the nurturing of the faith of future Catholics was complete. With few exceptions, they became little better than public schools run in competition with the state system.

Any Catholic parent who sought to preserve his child from the perniciousness of the Modernist influence was circumvented by his child's peers. Here the maxim *similia cum similibus congregantur* no longer indicated a community for good, but for harm. More astute parents realised that they must isolate their children completely from the sources of its transmission, the state and Catholic school systems, and their indoctrinated pupils. Many turned to schooling their charges at home. Many others whose children had lost their faith in the Catholic school system came to realise too late the course they should have followed.

*

*

The chief instrument for this dissipation of the nation's religious heritage was the mass media, particularly, television. The natural resistance of people to such a radical change in their belief systems was speedily undermined by television's facility to affect the subconscious, conveying its message not so much by argument, as by suggestion. Radio came to be peopled by atheists who larded their news commentary and programs with views subtly nuanced against religion.

The ABC's avowedly religious programs, such as the radio programs conducted by Caroline Jones, *The Search for Meaning*, or by Kay McLennan, *For the God who Sings*, were removed, or relegated to time slots where their influence was nullified. Religious views were treated no longer as a focus, but as a curiosity, or as something to be attacked. There were plenty of potted experts or ex-priests to assist in the task.

The ABC became a publisher, and a competitor with commercial booksellers and vendors, of books, music and films. Its *ABC Shops* now promoted the works of haters of religion like David Marr and of advocates of atheism like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. The nature films it offered were, without exception, works of adherents of Darwin's atheistic evolutionary theory. Any assertion of a view of natural history which regarded God as the author of the universe was treated with ridicule.

So was the predominantly religious faith of Australia's people replaced with another faith, secular and pernicious, and utterly irrational.

The Faith of Atheism

Atheism replaces faith in God with faith in an idea, the idea that the universe can be explained satisfactorily without an adequate cause. Atheism is no less a species of belief than the religious faith it mocks. It is a new faith. It has a belief system. It has faithful followers. It has a high priest.

Nothing comes from nothing. I am not the source of the gifts I possess; they are given me. I may not know by what or by whom they were given but one thing is certain: I did not give them to myself. The atheist admits the gift—not as gift but as *thing*; as *reality*—but denies the source; denies the giver.

More does not come from less. If I find myself possessed of the highest of the gifts given to the creatures of the world—intellect, will and all that goes with them: not just a beast determined by brute nature, but a person with the facility to work out my own destiny—why am I not justified in concluding that the giver, IT, must be a being which has, too, at least virtually, the same attributes as I have received? that this IT, too, must have intellect and will? *Nemo dat quod non habet*: if I am a person, surely the IT must be a person too. In other words, this IT cannot be an ‘it’ at all. IT must be SOMEONE!³

The atheist rejects these arguments because atheism has managed, so he says, to discredit their major premises. Something *can* come from nothing. More *can* come from less! It has been proved—by Charles Darwin! It was not natural scientist, Charles Darwin, however, but the philosopher, Herbert Spencer, who first propounded the theory. But Spencer’s theory, rooted as it was in subjectivism, was unsound.⁴ It denied any but a material causality, which is impossible. For every thing that exists has not just one, but four causes.

The high priest of the new faith is the natural scientist. As he sits in front of his computer, he will tacitly concede the matter from which it is made—its *material* cause; the intricate formality according to which the matter is designed and constructed—its *formal* cause; the inevitability of a maker, or makers—its *efficient* cause; and, the reason it was brought into existence, an instrument to aid men in their considerations and works—its *final* cause.⁵ Yet when he turns to his proper subject, the elements of the natural world, he will deny the existence of any but the *material* cause and pretend that factors which are not causes at all, time and chance, are sufficient to make up for any lacunae in logic. If he has doubts about the rationality of this position, he finds consolation in the huge numbers of its supporters. He is driven by the democratic imperative. If the majority of people say something is true, then it must be true!

The natural scientist proceeds like Karl Marx. He does not start with facts and from them develop a thesis. He begins with a thesis—*the universe can be explained satisfactorily without an adequate cause*—and then tries to make the facts to bear out that thesis.⁶ He asserts, *ad nauseam*, that he has found the facts. But has he?

³ This is precisely how the French poet, Paul Claudel, was affected when the reality of God came to him in an inspiration from on high in Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, on Christmas Day, 1886: “Et voici que vous êtes Quelqu’un tout à coup!”

⁴ Spencer is said, on his deathbed, to have rejected everything he had written.

⁵ St Thomas Aquinas sets out the proofs for this in his commentary on the second book of Aristotle’s *Physics*. The section is reproduced in an appendix to the author’s article entitled *Decoding David Attenborough* which may be found on the web at http://www.superflumina.org/decoding_DA.html

⁶ Cf. Paul Johnson’s telling study of Marx in his *Intellectuals*, London, 2000.

The Darwinian theory's most comprehensive scientific critic, New Zealand molecular biologist, Dr Michael Denton, concluded a long analysis of its defects twenty years ago in this way:

“Neither of the two fundamental axioms of Darwin's macroevolutionary theory—the concept of the continuity of nature, that is the idea of a functional continuum of all life forms linking all species together and ultimately leading back to a primeval cell, and the belief that all the adaptive design of life has resulted from a blind random process—have been validated by one single empirical discovery or scientific advance since 1859. Despite more than a century of intensive effort on the part of evolutionary biologists, the major objections raised by Darwin's critics such as Agassiz, Pictet, Bronn and Richard Owen have not been met...”⁷

Dr Denton rejected the evolutionists' claims to objectivity, insisting that it has always been the anti-evolutionists in the scientific community who have stuck to the facts and a strictly empirical approach⁸. He drew this telling conclusion:

“Ultimately, the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century...”⁹

The secular scientist is dishonest. As E.F. Schumacher related many years ago, he *says* he is interested only in phenomena, in facts, but should some fact come along which falls outside the *a priori* setting of his atheism, he turns his back on it.¹⁰ Schumacher cited, inter alia, the instance of Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth. For 35 years she lived, observed by all, on no other food or drink than the daily reception of the Blessed Eucharist. Yet scientists ignored the phenomenon. “If the documentary evidence and eye-witness accounts relating to [her] cannot be accepted as reliable evidence,” Schumacher wrote with justice, “then all evidence is unreliable, nobody can ever be believed, and human knowledge is impossible.”¹¹ The atheist cannot explain such things. He cannot explain the incorrupt body of St Marie Bernard Soubirous in the church of the Visitation nuns at Nevers in France. He must label such things as the products of hysteria, or fraud. Moreover, he *dare not* investigate them closely for fear his faith may be destroyed!

The atheist lives in a world of his own contriving, his mind closed to the crucial issues of reality. He did not bring himself into existence: he does not keep himself in existence: he knows not how long he will live. He did not specify the nature that he enjoys so freely: he cannot say why it is that he has come into existence as man rather than as monkey, donkey, cockroach or worm. All the natural benefits he enjoys have been given him, as indeed, is the very air he breathes.

Michael Baker

4th December 2007—*St John Damascene*

⁷ *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, London, 1985, p. 345. Dr Denton's conclusion is not diminished by his (atheistic) view that in this Darwinism corresponds to what he regards as the religious myths of previous ages.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 353-4

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 358

¹⁰ *A Guide for the Perplexed*, London, 1977; my copy, Abacus, 1986, pp. 106 et seq.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110