

PERCEPTION



A DIVAGATION ON THE WHEREABOUTS OF GOD

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“We think something is ‘perceived’ or contacted by our knowledge only when the whole grid of all its little interconnections can clearly be seen, and the thing itself can now be inserted into the larger grid of our needs and inquisitiveness. But this is just what God in his incomprehensible mystery is not ‘all about.’ What our experience of perceiving the incomprehensible constitutes is precisely not the pitiful leftovers of a perception that ‘sees through’ things but the ultimate and primordial essence of perception itself.”

Karl Rahner SJ

F R A N K A R U N D E L L

Cover: “Snake Charmer” by Henri Rousseau (1844-1910)
Musee d' Orsay, Paris

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Baltimore Catechism # 1 was originally issued by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1885. The Words and Meanings copyright was recorded in 1898 and 1933. It was sold by Benziger Brothers, New York, USA. Lesson Second, page 6, question 15, asked:

Q. Where is God?

A. God is everywhere.

Baltimore #2, a reprint of the 1933 edition, still in Lesson Second but on page 7, question 15, repeats:

Q. Where is God?

A. God is everywhere

Baltimore #3, supplemented by Rev. Thomas L. Kinkead, Lesson Second, page 38, question 166 asks:

Q. Where is God?

A. God is everywhere

Baltimore #4, was an annotated version for the use of SundaySchool Teachers and Advanced Classes by the Rev. Kinkead and obviously others. Page 35, question 15 once again asks:

Q. Where is God?

A. God is everywhere

This time an addendum to the answer elaborates on the extent of everywhere. “Everywhere” not spread out like a great cloud, but whole and entire in every particular place: and yet there is only one God, and not as many gods as there are places. How this can be we cannot fully understand, because this also is a mystery. A simile, though it will not be perfect, may help you to understand. When we speak of God, we can never give a true and perfect example; for we cannot find anything exactly like Him to compare to Him. If I discharge a great cannon in a city, every one of the inhabitants will hear the report; not in such a way that each hearer gets his share of the sound, but each hears the whole report, just as if he were the only one to hear it. Now, how is that? There are not as many reports as there are persons listening; and yet each person hears the whole report.

It's pretty clear that the Baltimore Series was created to simplify, for the young, (starting at age 6), the mysteries of Christianity, specifically Catholicism, with regard to the Deity. Much earlier, following the invention of the printing press, the primary tool for teaching the “faith” was catechisms. Usually a manual of religious instruction supplied to trained catechists, normally nuns, parish priests, brothers or lay people. They were designed, using simple language in a question and answer format. “The object, to convey in summary and practical form, the documents of revelation and of Christian tradition, for personal education in the faith.” (Encyc. Of Catholicism), p 236.

Just after Vatican II (1971), a General Catechetical Directory was published. Reading through it leaves little doubt as to why many in the Curia, at the time, thought it to be too vague. It became the forerunner of a new and extensive Catechism, published in 1994, the "Catechism of the Catholic Church."

Another precursor of Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1975, was the Jesuit Father John A. Hardon's Catholic Catechism, authorized by Pope Paul VI; "it essentially brought modern Catholic teaching into one book." As for the question of the whereabouts of God, in chapter II titled "The Living God," under the heading "Divine Attributes," Father Hardon wrote:

Confronted with the growing tide of atheism, whether overt or disguised as humanism, Vatican I issued a unique profession of faith in God. Unlike former credos, which faced the more subtle questions of the trinitarian life of God, this one addressed itself specifically to God's existence and nature. At stake was the faith of all believers and not only of Catholics or Christians, since the opposition denied the validity of the very concept of a supra-mundane being, whether he is called God or Yahweh or Allah.

The holy, Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church believes and professes that there is one true and living God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. He is almighty, eternal, beyond measure, incomprehensible, and infinite in intellect, will and in every perfection. Since he is one unique spiritual substance, entirely simple and unchangeable, he must be declared really and essentially distinct from the world, perfectly happy in himself and by his very nature, and inexpressibly exalted over all things that exist or can be conceived other than himself. The good Jesuit then explains "fifteen internal attributes of God, independent of his role as Creator, were enumerated." Father Hardon continues to paraphrase Vatican I's document.

He is a living God, where life declares animate existence and vitality to the nature of his existence ... God's immensity or

measurelessness is another way of saying that he is sublime and therefore beyond all spatial dimensions ... In the first article of the first-century creed we read, “For the first thing believe, that there is only one God ... who encompasses everything, which he alone cannot be encompassed.”

On the attribute of ‘infinity,’ the Jesuit says:

“The Fathers of the Church furnished the vocabulary for this attribute. They speak of God as infinite, boundless, un-circumscribed... The spiritual substance of God may be understood in two different ways, and both are necessary to a sound grasp of the divine nature. Since he is pure spirit, God is therefore immaterial. He has no body or corporeal dimensions. More positively, however, he has a mind and a will.”

In a final reiteration, Father continues:

“The final attributes of God's transcendence, as really distinct from the world; of perfect happiness in himself and without dependence on any other being for beatitude; and of sublimity above whatever exists or could conceivably be—are all relative to creation and follow logically on all that historic Christianity believes about God. But they needed to be brought into the open, because modern atheism, which denies the God of Christianity, has its own substitute for the Deity. What it postulates is not so much a world without God, as a world that is God.”

Which, of course, is Pantheism. Finally, the Catechism of the Catholic Church was published, “also known as the Universal Catechism, a compendium of Catholic teaching originally published in French, with the approval of Pope John Paul II, on October 11, 1992. It was prepared by a papal commission of

twelve cardinals and bishops, under the direction of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (later Pope Benedict XVI). The Catechism is intended to guide bishops in formulating local catechetical programs.” (Encyclopedia Of Catholicism, p. 236). There are four entries that speak to the “whereabouts of God,” in my opinion. They are: 42, 223, 300, 301 in the Catechism.

In this day and age, after Vatican I's warning about the encroachment of atheism and John Paul II's elaboration on the devastating effects of relativism under the guise of modern liberalism, no Catechism can get away with phrasing a question as simple and innocent as: “Where is God?” and answer it with the equally disarming and dismissive “God is everywhere.” The world of science, since the sixteenth century has been offering definitive answers to the most vexing questions with respect to the understanding of life itself in biological and physiological terms. That makes any metaphysical suggestions offered by theology sound like pipe-dreams or sheer insanity. Today, any well-educated computer nerd would answer the question, “Where is God?” by noting, “facetiously, God is in the gaps.” If you google “The God of the Gaps,” you will be struck by its scientific hubris, while the greatest gap still remains, science’s proof of causality. Science never meant to disprove the Creator, through many scientists have tried and are trying. One cannot disprove what is beyond proof. It is a matter of perception which we shall elaborate on a little later.

Now, in Section IV of the Catechism, “How can we speak about God?” number 42 answers:

God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, image

bound or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God “the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable” with our human representations. Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God.

That includes, I presume, “everywhere,” when it comes to God’s whereabouts; though everywhere is surely abstract enough to at least suggest the ineffable, but maybe not for creatures of the human variety from six to sixteen. Under the “Implications of Faith in One God,” number 223 says:

“Believing in God means coming to know God's greatness and majesty: ‘Behold, God is great, and we know him not.’ Therefore, we must ‘serve God first.’”

Here the Catechism quotes from Job 36:26, and St. Joan of Arc. Under the direction of Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) this Catechism is much more inclined to the documents of Vatican II than those of the Neo-Scholasticism of Vatican I. The mysteries of faith are expressed by more developed theological concepts, though still, simply stated. Robert Browning's, “God's in his heaven all's right with the world,” expressing the normalcy of God's distance from humanity, is countered with the normalcy of God's dwelling within us from the gospels. Under the heading: “God transcends creation and is present to it,” Number 300 states:

“God is infinitely greater than all his works: You have set your glory above the heavens. Indeed, God's greatness is unsearchable. But because he is the free and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures’ inmost being: “In him we live and move and have our being.” In the words of St. Augustine, God is “higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self.”

Quoting liberally from “Psalms” and “Acts” and from Augustine’s Confessions, the writers contrast the unknowable God, with the God that is known. Indeed, had we not known the great saints and mystics of salvation history through the indomitable grace of God, and only known the pragmatists and positivists of secular history, rationally, we may have had to accept this unfeasible idea as a solipsism. Fortunately, the real-world and the laws of probability convinces us otherwise. For example, “Behold the lilies of the field,” etc., if you will. Number 301 continues:

With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence.

In retrospect, the word "everywhere" almost seems adequate now, expressing enigmatic theological understandings even though it may leave room for pantheistic conclusions. Right from the very start, *when instinct became perception, humanity knew of God.*

Apprehension, developed over time by the senses and the mind acting in conjunction, once and for all, provided the insight or the perception of the existence of a being as the primary cause of all apparent complexity. Remember, it was the Greeks who called Chaos a god. When reason and will came to man, it was accompanied by an anxious foreknowledge of his own personal generation by a responsible power beyond himself; beyond simply pro-creation to an initial propagatory force, a “theory of everything,” if you will. The Catechism puts it more poetically:

“The desire for God is written in the human heart.” (Section I, Chapter One, #27) This act of (faith), undeniably displayed by our ancestors and exposed by archeology, paleontology, and other sciences, has been wrongly interpreted as primal-man creating gods out of his fear of the unknown; standing God on his head, so to speak.

In an unimaginable “energy event” everything that was to be, began. As we subsequently discovered we can only tell who or what started it all by studying what (is), while knowing full well (It) made sense, but sense didn't make (It). Everything, every place, and person since, has been giving us strong hints as to our origin. Every scrap of evidence in both Physics and Metaphysics from Cosmology to Consciousness leads us to the grandness of being, including the “uncertainty” of it all. Most scientists, philosophers and theologians are in awe of how living matter, by precise, natural, providential succession and selection advances by an evolutionary process, seemingly on its own, to a known yet unknown future.

If you're more traditional, you can surmise that we were made from clay by an omnipotent, omniscient Potter and will wind up regenerated, we hope, at the “center” of all being. The wonderful quote from Pere Teilhard de Chardin, “God makes things make themselves” is being more understood as new aspects and new discoveries are found in the fields of both science and theology.

Believing in spirit is an elementary human condition; believing in the One God has taken a little longer despite the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who himself, was the single most amalgamating event in human history, a fusion of the human and the divine, in the Spirit, One God, everywhere,

previously known, still anxiously expected, if you have been graced to believe it.

It is interesting when one searches the bookshelves and finds hundreds of titles referring directly to “God.” To give a few examples: “The River of God” by Gregory Riley, a professor of New Testament and early Christianity; “A History of God” by Karen Armstrong, a former nun; “God, a Biography,” by Jack Miles, a former Jesuit seminarian now director of the Humanities Center at Claremont Graduate School; “god is not Great,” by the late Christopher Hitchens, a commentator columnist; and others. People who are former (religious), communicators to the public, critics, teachers, and the like, recognize the fact that “God” in the title of a book or thought-piece is good business. Publishers know there has never been a time in history when human beings were not inquisitive about God. That is not to say that people who write or speak about God are all doing it only for commercial purposes, yet, in many instances the God-promoters (or detractors) have had a lot of success because of the prevalence of the human characteristic affirming a personal connection to God in one way or another. The understanding that God is up-and-about somewhere has been a chief feature of the human ethos. The question then becomes: If God is— where is He? Have a look at the few titles; the words “Biography,” “History,” “River” or even the word “Great” intimates a human closeness or observance; implying that God can be known; but how, where? Karen Armstrong said:

“I was unhappily aware that what little religious experience I had, had somehow been manufactured by myself as I worked upon my own feelings and imagination ... but nothing ever (happened) to me from a source beyond myself. I never glimpsed the God described by the prophets or the mystics.

With her well-researched tour-de-force of God's history through the ages, Ms. Armstrong ends her book with a poem from Thomas Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush"; she says:

"Hardy expressed the death of spirit that was no longer able to create a faith in life's meaning. In the last verses of Hardy's poem he wrote: ... "every spirit upon earth Seemed feverless as I."

*"At once a voice arose among The bleak twigs overhead In full-hearted evensong
Of joy unlimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small, In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul Upon the growing gloom."
So little cause for carolings Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew And I was unaware"*

After four hundred pages of the signs and symbols of God as seen by men and women through the ages, delicately written by this former nun, she ends on a sad note of despondency. Ms. Armstrong writes: "if we are to create a vibrant new faith for the twenty-first century, we should ponder the history of God for some lessons and warnings." Her expectations are puzzling. She must know we may (have) faith, but we do not create it. Most of us live in the hope that we may be granted the gift of grace becoming a faith to live in the presence of God with love. Isn't this, perhaps, the hope the thrush engendered in Hardy? The hope that had the frail avian "fling his soul upon the

growing gloom.” “The blessed hope, whereof he knew” and of which Hardy “was unaware.”

To hope, is to pray for the grace of God to enlighten the “common gloom.” Forging ahead on that basis, at least, is faith in the hope of unconditional love. That cannot be too far from “the Kingdom of God.” One must truly love and hope to be loved. Faith, after all, is only the assurance of things hoped for according to St. Paul in Hebrews 11: 1

Another book of the same variety that is more or less a history of Christianity from the “beginning” is: “The River of God” by Gregory Riley. The “River” analogically traces man's convictions of the whereabouts of God from a myriad of sources as it courses through time. Each “tributary” adding to it the thoughts, ideas, presumptions, suppositions, and assumptions relating to the Deity– from the myths, mysteries and concepts of a variegated heterogeneous world population. Riley writes:

“The river dictated that nothing could remain the same and survive. The lesson was that no single culture had (full knowledge) of God; subsequent history would teach that human beings still do not know God as God (is).”

In other words, Riley is asserting that God, as God, has not (personally) been totally figured out by his “children,” his creations; and so, the river runs on. Riley ends with: What is old is challenged and must respond. What we know of God today is again being challenged and forced to respond. That has (forever) been the Divine Plan. That is the process of the River of God.

Thanks to Riley, I guess we now know, at least, what the

“Divine Plan” is. We know that it is “the process” of the Father’s self revelation without him showing us his “face” or his “glory.”

The Christians established a creed, holding what one (must) believe, if one is to call himself or herself a Christian. That (Credo) or communion, helped the followers teach what they believed to be a true understanding of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. A council was held at Nicea in 325 CE. Though it was not the first synod of the Early Fathers, it was the one that established, or hoped to establish, *unity* in the Christian faith, since there were quite a few critical differences of opinion among them as Riley's work points out. The participants at Nicea understood that they were formalizing, if not finalizing for all time, what Jesus’ life, death and resurrection really meant. They, in effect, were changing the hereto-fore water of the "river" to the "wine" of the (true) Church of Christ as explained in Scripture; even with all its ambiguities. In fact they were commissioned by Christ himself. Riley says:

“Time and again in the history of the church someone or another, heretic or saint, Christian or not, has been the bearer of a (new) word from God that has brought change in direction and reformulation of old ideas.”

I would agree with Riley on that point. Many since the first century (have) brought us what they consider a "new" word of God, but we have only had one Jesus Christ, the Christ that John's gospel says (is) the Word of God in person, who is God indeed. Have we finally seen God in Christ? Let us continue with Professor Riley's thoughts. He tells us:

“The River of God did not (produce) Christianity. It brought to Jesus and the early Christians the vast store of ideas and traditions that (they) used to form their unique expressions of religious truth. Religions do not arise out of rivers. They are formed by humans acting from the combination of crisis and inspiration.”

He goes on to explain this phenomenon using the term “punctuated equilibrium” a modern view of evolution which describes: “long periods of near changeless equilibrium punctuated by moments of rapid change brought about by crises in the environment.”

There's no doubt that man certainly created religion; but can we say that man, along with creating religion, created God (which) is, or (who) is the object of religion? Wasn't the perception of God present a priori, i.e., before the activities described as “religion” began? Put another way; were not the first individuals who moved from instinct to perception, from animal nature to human nature, aware of a spirit greater than their own? Man, at least as far as I know, has always looked beyond for the source, the “spring” from which Professor Riley's analogical River flows. Religion appears to be the natural outpourings of the primitive understandings of a primal source. No matter which religion one proclaims there has continuously been the concept of an “eternal return,” leading to a unity of spirits in the One eternal God. This has been one of the priorities commensurate with human nature.

Are we to understand, according to the Professor, that the “River” delivered to Jesus all of the information about God he needed to proclaim himself God, or “Son of God” from what had come before him? This would be a total denial of Christianity's whole premise; that the Christ, Jesus, is God, and

the Second Person of the Trinity as stated clearly in the Creed taken from the testimony of men and women who knew him, who even touched his wounds after his resurrection from the dead. It is true however that Jesus' salvific mission came through the Jews. Riley is correct in saying that his book is "A New History of Christianity" since every earthly crisis, be what it may, brought on new thoughts of God up to the Incarnation, when in "the fullness of time" God himself in the person of Jesus, became man, died, was buried and rose from the dead, in the mystery of Easter. That (is) Christianity. If you will not nor can not believe that, your Christianity is only subsistent. At least for the last two thousand years the "River of God" has always flowed through the Sanctuary of the church from the Cross. The Cross of Christ was and is the pre-eminent "punctuation" since the dawn of time and space. As a man, Jesus adds credible evidence to the Professor's premise; as *God*, the Jesus of the Gospels, the river's course was set straight and clear. The hope of all mankind rests on the promises he made in the name of the Father.

Professor Riley leaves us with somewhat the same despondency that the former Sister Karen left us with. Okay we've got Christianity *now* but it will, most likely, morph into some other "true" religion later on and just be one more, albeit large, tributary to the River as all the others have been. In the interest of hope hear the words of Christ:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."(Matthew 24: 35)

Only through the grace of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit can we believe that in Jesus, God delivered himself to us as the river reached the sea, every river's final goal. Only if there is no eschaton, no end of time, can the Professor's

premise have any credence. What “River of God” will course through eternity with those worthy of the promises of Christ in the presence of God; Father, Son and Spirit.

In the last six hundred years nothing has advanced so feverishly, as man's knowledge in the fields of science and technology. Science has, for some, become itself a religion where man is “god.” A religion where man is both creator and destroyer. Whitman's "Song of Myself" begins:

*“I celebrate myself, and sing myself
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.”*

This is the freedom of modernity, where man, unable to uncover the whereabouts of God, turns to his self to calm his distress and ease his discontent. There (are) “bearers of a (new) word” but the word is not of God, usually the word is “progress.” In science God has little place. Have we gone from “God is everywhere,” to God is nowhere to be found? If that be the case, Jesus is reduced from “Savior of the World” to just another prophet expounding obsequious promises. “Love God, and Love one another,” may be too vague for our scientific adventure. “What is old is challenged and must respond,” as Professor Riley has told us. Is God not responding to us? Even those who claim to represent him are, in many cases, hypocritical or simply disgraceful. The great hope today is in Microbiology, and the "Great River" is Evolution. Can you see the hubris in: “I never glimpsed the God described by the prophets or the mystics”? I'm certain Ms. Armstrong, at least once in all of her studies, heard Jesus' answer to Phillip's request: “Show us the Father.” We can almost hear the sigh Jesus heaved when he said:

“Don't you know me, Phillip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me (has) seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father?"” (John 14: 9)

Jesus' prescience has always been questioned. How could he say he (knew) Abraham for instance? Professor Riley suggests that Jesus' informed mind synthesized all the prior multiplicities of gods and goddesses, the entire pantheon of hand-crafted or imagined gods since the beginning of time, and called him "Abba." Before the Christ, God was "out-there"; with Jesus, God is here and now.

In modern political parlance many may ask, “What did Jesus know and when did he know it,” deciding beforehand that the one thing God could never do would be to lower himself to a human condition even though he may have created it all. With that thought, there is no God, at least not an omnipotent one, and a Son of God, totally imaginary. The question is: Has the phrase “O my God” become simply a rhetorical exclamation? Why would there be any reason to expect the “help of God” when we need him, if he has completely no relevance in our routine lives? Jesus’ “love God, love one another,” should certainly not be an intermittent posture. It was he who brought God's will to us, so that he could say, with authority:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

With these admonitory remarks it seems that the whereabouts of God becomes more clear by trusting the veracity of “The Son.” The premonition to do (that) is not reasonable; it is grace, a gift that is not self-generated but found almost “everywhere” if one has the boldness to look. “Seek and you shall find” says

he, within whom, the Father (is), and who is (in) the Father, as we hope to be in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

What is this (in) Jesus is talking about? How does an uncomplicated, simple human being navigate this (in) business?

About twenty years ago, John F. Haught, a theologian at Georgetown University also wrote a God book. The book was titled “What is God, How to think about the Divine.” How to books, especially in theology, peak our interest, but we have always felt a certain amount of skepticism regarding them, since after about fifty years of reading I have vaguely concluded that there are no rigid “hard and fast” rules that automatically click you into the condition of knowing anything perfectly; especially with regard to the “Divine.” On the back cover, Professor Haught's editor, wrote:

“Many sincere people in our day believe that talk about ‘God’ is at best little more than a heartwarming whistling in the dark, and at worst a cover-up for human weakness. Is it possible to think realistically and honestly about being such as God?”

“Before we can say anything specific about God, we must deal with the very notion of mystery itself. Where do we encounter mystery in our lives and how do we speak of it? John Haught suggests five ways in which we daily confront mystery, and he contends that these experiences of *depth, future, freedom, beauty and truth* are transcendent experiences that are open to critical reflection and analysis.”

So here we are, back in the bag again. Confronting mysteries is one thing, solving them is another. We generally "confront" mystery all the time. Where did my glasses disappear to! How

come the bank bounced my check; I thought there was plenty of money in the account? The mysteries of a “transcendent” variety such as depth, future, freedom, beauty and truth, surely require more philosophical reflection and analysis than most of us have the time to give them. But Professor Haught gives us quite a bit more to chew on when explaining, under the heading of “freedom” about the psychological consequences of the concept of “transference, which he calls:

“A form of creative fetishism, the establishment of a locus (a handy thing or person), from which our lives can draw the powers they need and want.” He continues: “We usually direct our transference toward the nearest (finite) “beyond” instead of an (infinite) “transcendent beyond.”

John Haught quotes Ernest Becker from “The Denial of Death” (New York: Free Press, 1973):

“...People need a ‘beyond,’ but they reach first for the nearest one; this gives them the fulfillment they need but at the same time limits and enslaves them. Most people play it safe: they choose the beyond of standard transference objects like parents, the boss the leader”...

I would add all the “speciality people,” like the lawyer, the doctor, the priest or minister, the congressman or the president. You could go on suggesting people, places or things other people find the need to latch on to.

Many feel they haven't the capacity to do the heavy lifting about their anxieties or the inevitability of non-being. The Professor continues:

“It is understandable that we should project onto them an illusory omnipotence, an unrealistic numinosity we hope will proportionate to the anxiety of non-being we intuit as a constant accompaniment to our existence. We refuse to admit that we are thereby striving to turn these finite power sources into infinite ones. And the impossibility of this project is one that we usually do not acknowledge until we have experienced utter disillusionment.

Haught lifts a piece from Peter Homans’ “Theology After

Freud.” The good doctor is quoted to have said:

“If the sick man had asked: ‘How knowest thou that my sins are forgiven?’ the answer could only have been: ‘I, the Son of God, forgive thee.’ In other words, a call for unlimited transference. And now, just suppose I said to a patient: ‘I, Professor Sigmund Freud, forgive thee thy sins.’ What a fool I should make of myself.”

Perhaps Doctor Freud might have at least been able to forgive the trespasses committed against him, as he would, in turn, wish his to be forgiven. But, I understand that he was a bit unforgiving. In this case, rather than speaking of “unlimited transference” or “God,” I think the doctor may have been taking a slap at “priestly confession” as explained in the Catechism, 1461-1467, p. 367. Who knows? Anyway, with regard to the whereabouts of God the Professor continues:

“The ‘absence of God,’ therefore, becomes intelligible to those who realize that no “visible” finite entity can all by itself be an adequate power base for the courage we need to accept our threatened existence. The demand that God be ‘visible’ stems from a transference idolatry. Such a demand is implicitly a

diminishment of our existence by chaining it exclusively to the fragility of finite, available, manipulable beings. The divine must be ‘absent’ in order to transcend the finite status of our limiting transference objects. God must be "absent" in order to be the ground of our freedom.

We have a small problem with this “absence of God.” We have been talking about how people would instantly transfer to the “Father” all of their trust, if they could only find him. If we're not able to transfer to a Pure Spirit without a body who is everywhere but nowhere to be found, we still have the anxiety of belief in disbelief. Haught says, it takes courage while seeing only the symbols of ultimate power and reality or “revelatory symbols,” he goes on:

“If we experience these phenomena as symbolic it is only because we simultaneously perceive them as transparent to something infinitely more expansive than themselves... inasmuch as it sees all things as participating in an ultimate power of being — it pronounces them good.”

At the end of his Chapter (3), Freedom; the Georgetown Theologian resolves the issue for us:

“To religious consciousness, then, all things are intrinsically symbolic. Our viewing them as symbols frees both them and us from being frozen in an identity that is too restricted. Symbolic consciousness bestows a sense of freedom by relating all things and all persons to an ultimate and infinite horizon of being. Religion is the search for and the anticipation of this horizon as the *foundation* of our freedom.”

We can see all this symbolism working “for new and deeper manifestations of its ultimate horizon,” at least up to the Incarnation.

I strongly doubt that there are many people in the world today who believe Jesus never existed. The question with regard to Jesus is, is he God? Those who believe he isn't are not Christians. On the other hand, those who believe he was not mincing words when he said he “knows” the Father, and that, “No one comes to the Father, except through me,” believe on the basis of God's self revelation in Jesus the Christ, the Messiah. The Apostles like all Jews were monotheists, but some accepted Jesus' words as the truth, i.e. that he and the Father (are) One, and that the Holy Spirit is also part of the Trinity making up One God. So it was Jesus who disclosed the Trinity which was later explained to the faithful by the Early Fathers to the best of their ability. The very essence of Christianity is the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, put plainly in the context of the “Kingdom of God.” The works Jesus performed before the eyes of the varied population of occupied Israel were proof-points, but surely not the heart of his message. He then sent the “twelve” to spread the Good Word, or God's Word - literally. They did! The Apostles' Creed was an early codification of what they taught while the New Testament was being put together. Christianity went from cult to sect to church in less than a hundred years. In our opinion, the human search for God ended with the Resurrection.

Professor Haught, in his introduction to "What is God" says:

Philosophers did not invent the notion of God. It came to human consciousness and insinuated itself into history by way of the spontaneous life of religious people.

True enough until God came to those people as a person, with the name, Jesus of Nazareth. Theology became Christology, and Christology Theology. We (have) seen God, in the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, through Christ. Jesus does not diminish the Father but (glorifies) him. Though misunderstandings of the whereabouts of God have ceased, his “Word will never pass away.”

Humanity is in a continuous mode of discovery. That is why Theology is strengthened by Science as Science discloses Theology. The unity of being, or life itself, is discovered, both in its practicalities (and) its transcendency, in its physics and its metaphysics. How could we study matter without the powers of perception; without making assumptions based on probabilities? Many scientists as well as theologians are talking past one another as far as the Deity is concerned. Some scientists are attempting to "prove" God showing the incredible workings of the human organism, or the spectacular activities of the forces of nature; as theologians reckon with the transcendental complexion of the human mind vaulting into the “beyond”; into realities perceived to exist as God, known yet unknown. Since God is the creator of all things, visible (and) invisible, I would assume, at least, that both theology and science are on the same track, fortunately heading in the same direction and not heading (at) one another. The age of the pure materialist is slowly closing. The deeper we get into “true” reality the closer we get to God’s work of nature and nature's work in revealing God. The whole law and the prophets simply depends upon the love of God and each other and should be clearly seen in Jesus Christ and his church. Karl Rahner, the eminent theologian, put it so well when he wrote:

“The spirituality of the future will be concentrated on the ultimate data of revelation: that God is, that we can speak to him, that his ineffable incomprehensibility is itself the very heart of our existence and consequently of our spirituality; that we can live and die with Jesus and properly with him alone in an ultimate freedom from all powers and authorities; that his incomprehensible cross is set up above our life and that this scandal reveals the true, liberating and beatifying significance of our life.

But, alas, with regard to "the" Church Rahner says:

The Church is also always the Church of sinners, whose members by their actions deny what they profess. In fact the Church cannot in this connection rely totally on the argument that it is made up of human beings and therefore, like every other historical community or association, reveals human nature. The Church's role is to be par excellence the place in which the power of grace demonstrates its victory over the depths of malice and narrowness in human beings.

Would that it were so, but where in God's name can you get a clearer explanation than (that) from a human being. Rahner would most likely disagree and point to St Ignatus Loyola, who would point directly to Jesus the (person) at the beginning and the end of the line. The “alpha” with God the Father, and the “omega” with God in the Spirit with us, to return, in glory, to judge the living and the dead according to scripture.

There is one more issue of perception in this divagation which we would like to touch on. “Darwin's Gift to Science and Religion” is a book published in 2007 written by Francisco Jose Ayala. Dr. Ayala is a heavyweight in the scientific community. I subscribe to the journal, "Theology and Science,"

whose purpose is “to publish critically reviewed articles that promote the creative mutual interaction between the natural sciences and theology.” Among the fifty-four members of the board of Theology and Science, there are differences of opinion with regard to the understanding of evolution. Dr. Ayala is a member of that board.

“Intelligent Design” stems from the English clergyman William Paley's work: *Natural Theology*, 1802. It generally states, while speaking of the human eye: ... “only an omniscient and omnipotent Deity could account for these marvels of mechanical perfection, purpose, and functionality, and for the enormous diversity of inventions that they entail, (p. 16 of “Darwin’s Gift”)

Paley set the argument against "chance" by the famous analogy of a cave man finding a stone and a watch while crossing a heath. "The watch's mechanism is so complicated it could not have arisen by chance." This concept is known today as "irreducible complexity" and is the cornerstone of the "Intelligent Design" hypothesis. Unfortunately for its proponents, it cannot be proven scientifically.

Ayala, who opposes the I.D. people quotes Darwin himself. In his autobiography Darwin wrote:

“The old argument of design in nature, as given by Paley, which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, falls, now that the law of natural selection has been discovered. We can no longer argue that, for instance, the beautiful hinge of a bivalve shell must have been made by an intelligent being, like the hinge of a door by man.”

Without going into the detail which Ayala gives to exemplify the differences between "Natural Theology" and "Natural Selection," he says:

“Evolution is not the outcome of random processes. There is a ‘selecting’ process that picks up adaptive combinations because these reproduce more effectively and thus come to prevail in populations .”

“Natural selection is an “opportunistic” process, which increases the ‘creativity’ of evolution as expressed in the multiplicity and diversity of species.”

Ayala makes a clear case for Natural Selection, posturing in “Chance and Necessity” on p. 76:

“The scientific account of these (previously stated) events does not necessitate recourse to a preordained plan, whether imprinted from the beginning or through successive interventions by an omniscient and almighty Designer ... There is a natural process (namely, natural selection) that is not random, but oriented and able to generate order or “create.” The traits that organisms acquire in their evolutionary histories are not fortuitous, but rather determined by their functional utility to the organisms, designed, as it were, to serve their “life needs.”

The supporters of ID (Intelligent Design) take their hypothesis much further than I can possibly outline here, but I believe they all agree that: “human biology” in the twenty-first century faces two great research challenges: the ape-to-human and the brain-to-mind transformations." Ayala writes:

By the ape-to-human transformation, I refer to the mystery of how a particular ape lineage became a hominid lineage, from which emerged, after only a few million years, humans able to think and love, who have developed complex societies and who uphold ethical, aesthetic, and religious values. By the brain-mind transformation, I refer to the interdependent questions of (1) how the physicochemical signals that reach our sense organs become transformed into perceptions, feelings, ideas, critical arguments, aesthetic emotions, and ethical values; and (2) how, out of this diversity of experiences, there emerges a unitary reality, the mind or self. Free will and language, social and political institutions, technology and art are all epiphenomena of the human mind.

In my non-learned estimation the issue between ID and Natural Selection (natural processes) “without any need to resort to a Creator or other external agents” is the issue of (causality), as the controversial center. While science is busy with the “how,” theology is busy with the “why, for what purpose.” Ayala is able to separate the two this way:

“ID proponents argue that the theory of evolution is incompatible with religious beliefs. Curiously, they share this conviction with materialistic scientists. I argue that both ID’ers and materialists are wrong: science and religion are compatible because they concern different realms of knowledge.”

But are they different realms of knowledge when one considers “causality”? If the former Dominican priest is correct, We humans are the only creatures that have self-awareness, a perception of our own existence as individuals who live for a time and eventually will die. If natural selection gave us that self-awareness, where is God? Where did that perception come

from? Did it generate from a mutation based on environmental changes that gave us our larger brains, or was it from God's plan to produce the human race in the "image" of himself. If it was a "natural" event it had to begin somewhere, somehow, and for some reason. That's science, isn't it? Was the Big Bang chance? No one knows the answer to the causality question — yet the Big Bang was, positively, a beginning, nay, Our beginning. Can any human being say either how or why it happened; or more exactly what caused it?

Religionists, or specifically, monotheists, believe it was God who is the primal cause. Atheists, of the scientific variety, believe in varied causes, all hypothetical, and primarily based on higher mathematics all quite bizarre, yet no more bizarre than the attribution to an omnipotent Spirit. The difference is that man has been convinced of the "Great Spirit" from the earliest times. The formulations of western thought with regard to the Deity came out of Greece combined with the Jews and finally with God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Scientific understandings are recent. Let's look at a few more of Professor Ayala's remarks. Within his wonderful explanation of "genetic mutation" over many billions of years, primarily linked to environmental changes, the Ape to Human and the Brain to Mind transformations took place with the help of "natural selection." The Professor explains:

"Humans have a very large brain relative to their body size, and a cerebral cortex that is disproportionately large and complex even for their brain size. Abstract thinking, symbolic language, complex social organization, values, ethics, and religion are manifestations of the wondrous capacity of the human brain to gather information about the external world and to integrate that information and react flexibly to what is perceived."

“With the advanced development of the human brain, *biological evolution has transcended itself, opening up a new mode of evolution: adaptation by technological manipulation of the environment.* Organisms adapted to the environment by means of natural selection, by changing their genetic constitution over the generations to suit the demands of the environment. Humans (and humans alone, at least to any significant degree), have developed the capacity to adapt to hostile environments by modifying the environments according to the needs of their genes.”

Let's stop here for a moment and have a look at what Ayala says about “hostile environments” and the adaptation capacity of “humans alone” with regard to the (*needs*) of their genes. Whatever or Whoever lit the fuse to the great “fireworks” display at the beginning of time and space, set in motion the metamorphosis of everything everywhere. Transformation was and still is the name of the game. If you happen to be a Teilhard de Chardin fan, which I am, the words "God makes things make themselves" become even more operative here.

The age of the Earth, determined by radiometric dating of meteorite material is said to be 4.54 billion years old. The continents as we now know them were once connected. They were part of, first one, then two super continents which began to separate about 205 and 135 million years ago. Climate, also fluctuated, as ice ages moved about. The oldest fossils that have been found were from the same period as the oldest stones. They have a bacteria-like structure, still there was no atmosphere as we know it today. The first vertebrates emerged as fish. After the ozone layer developed, plants and animals could begin to live on land. The first plants began to exist on land about 450 million years ago. Approximately 200 million years ago mammals then birds came into existence. Mammals

would fulfill a dominant role after the extinction of the dinosaurs, about 65 million years ago. (Paraphrased from Deltaworks.org)

About 40 million years ago the primates, one of the many groups of mammals (live birthing, hairy animals with milk producing females) that had first emerged in the age of dinosaurs were dividing into many forms, all environmentally conditioned. Any good paleontology or anthropology book will be profuse in its detail between “the missing link” and you and I, though they might not all agree. Since our interest is God's whereabouts, let's return to Ayala's statement about “genes needs” and how the “biological revolution” *transcended itself*.

Was it the forces of nature that caused biology to transcend itself? Did it all just happen that genes had needs; or on the other hand, did “needs” have genes? Where was it that perception started? Could the phenomenon of the change of one letter of the DNA (not) cause the mutation that eventually had the brain enlarge, or was it a necessity? Genes don't think. Was it chance that moved the tectonic plates around? Is the order in nature, including its disorder, such that the ID people have a serious point? The former Dominican tells us that the ID hypothesis “is bad science or not science at all.” He goes on to say that “ID is bad religion and bad theology, because it implies that the designer has undesirable attributes that we don't want to predicate about God.” What (we) don't want to predicate about God is irrelevant. We need to say that the biosphere, that is, “biology” cannot transcend itself. The biosphere is not a self; “humankind has ushered in a new mode of adaptation far more powerful than the biological mode,” says Ayala. Only “humankind” is made up of selves, and only selves can transcend themselves. On page 111 the Professor says: “Biological knowledge does not eliminate religious belief.

Rather, scientific knowledge may provide a basis for theological insights.” Let me repeat the professor’s statement on p. 94: "We humans are the only creatures that have self awareness, a perception of our own existence” On page 111 he says: “Biogeography, the fanciful distribution of organisms throughout the world, can be reasonably interpreted as an outcome of evolution, rather than of the capriciousness of the Creator.” No one wants to argue a case against the Theory of Evolution, which, I think, is proven in its process, but it seems that the Professor wants to put up a case against the Creator who is “seen” in his work in progress by the Intelligent Design folks. The search for the whereabouts of God goes on. So far he hasn't shown "himself" to the Professor or to the ID people, except in Jesus Christ.

As the brain evolved, so the mind evolved. If we accept the premise that "evolution by natural selection" is a secondary cause, Primal Causality (God) has still not shown his face. God is everywhere, but not to be found. I ask, is a “gene need” a qualification, a proviso, a stipulation, an intuitive recognition or appreciation. Perception is cognition. No primal cause, no life. No “spirit” no life, no life, no cognition, no cognition, no religion, no religion, no God. If that first "mutation," that gene need, led the way, the Primal Cause caused (it) no less than Time, Space, Depth, Future, Freedom, Beauty and Truth. We don't really know how, but many do know “why” explained by Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. Love, proven to be the reason now and forever “everywhere.”

Science is best at building better mousetraps, not necessarily building whereabouts "traps" for God. Theology is faith seeking understanding. Science is erudition seeking “faith”; or should I say the Absolute? What *real* scientist would not agree with that?

“Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.”

6 January (before Epiphany)

Gospel Acclamation see Mark 9:6

Alleluia, alleluia.

The heavens were opened and the voice of the Father
thundered:

This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.

Alleluia, alleluia.