

DIMENSIONS

**NEWSLETTER OF THE THOMAS MORE CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF CATHOLIC THOUGHT & CULTURE**

Rockhurst University

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Table of Contents

Thinking as Prayer	<i>Richard J. Janet</i>	2
Book Review: Leroy Seat, <i>Fed Up With Fundamentalism</i>	<i>Wilburn T. Stancil</i>	5
Religion, the Media and the 2008 Presidential Campaign	<i>Pete Bicak</i>	7
“The Ground Lies Well”	<i>Shirl Kasper</i>	9
Live French in Missouri	<i>M. Kathleen Madigan</i>	11
Religion and Science: Dialogue, Not Conflict	<i>Brendan Sweetman</i>	13
<i>Deep Down Things: Essays on Catholic Culture</i>		16
Thomas More Center News		17

Thinking as Prayer

The role of thought, and the compatibility of faith and reason, form an important part of the Catholic tradition. From the Book of Genesis (“God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.” *Genesis 1:31*) through the historical chronicles of the Old Testament, to the story of the Incarnation and Christ’s immersion in historical human reality, we are encouraged to ponder the good things that God made and to understand them as evidences of God’s own image and goodness. We call this the principle of sacramentality in the Catholic tradition, and we often reference that principle in our intellectual reflections on life, nature and created reality.

The early Church Fathers expounded on the role of reason in Christian belief. Origen recognized “a desire to know the truth of things” in human beings as a natural urge “implanted in us by God.” St. Augustine, of course, wrote extensively on the topic, suggesting that “everything that is believed is believed after being preceded by thought. . . . Not everyone who thinks believes, since many think in order not to believe; but everyone who believes thinks, thinks in believing, and believes in thinking.”

An important aspect of the Christian concept of reason as it developed historically was its insistence that truth, as an aspect of God’s plan and a reflection of his goodness, was by definition full of meaning and import for humankind. Early Christian thinkers pointed to the need for both a rational and engaged pursuit of truth. Such a pursuit recognized the meaning and relevance of truth, and could not be reduced to some detached, sophisticated exercise in human pride, yielding meaningless observations.

I have always admired C.S. Lewis’s approach to the relationship between faith and reason. In *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis has the experienced demon Screwtape admonish his nephew, the apprentice demon Wormwood, for trying to use reason to tempt his human “patient.” “By the very act of arguing,” Screwtape writes,

“you awake the patient’s reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favor, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences. Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it ‘real life’ and don’t let him ask what he means by ‘real.’”

In the Christian tradition, then, rational thought forms an important basis for, and complement to, faith. Even Mary, whom we rarely associate with human intellect, preferring to stress her obedience to God's will and her emotional appeal as comforting mother and intercessor – even Mary considered all the events of Christ's historical coming as an occasion for thought. Luke tells us that Mary “kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart” (*Luke 2:19*). All of which has inspired me to think about the role of thought and thinking in the fundamental Christian act of prayer. Can thought and thinking be an important motivation to, and element of, our prayers?

Christian prayer, of course, can take many forms. In the 1997 film *The Apostle*, Robert Duvall plays a charismatic preacher running from his own checkered past while trying to build a new congregation of believers. At one point, he walks over a bridge somewhere in the rural South and sees a Catholic priest below, blessing boats with holy water and reciting prayers from the Roman Rite. “You’ve got your ways,” Duvall thinks aloud, “I’ve got mine. But we both get it done.” Duvall’s ways were more emotional, as he sought a spiritual catharsis among his flock. Prayer can also be more structured and intellectual, as “the Apostle” recognizes on seeing the Catholic blessing of the boats.

According to the late Scottish theologian and philosopher John Macquarrie, prayer is fundamentally a *type* of thinking. “It is a mere caricature of prayer to regard it as emergency signals which we send out to God in difficult situations,” Macquarrie wrote in *Paths to Spirituality*.

“Prayer is a fundamental style of thinking, passionate and compassionate, responsible and thankful, that is deeply rooted in our humanity and that manifests itself not only among believers but also among serious-minded people who do not profess any religious faith. Yet it seems to me that if we follow out the instinct to pray that is in all of us, it will finally bring us to faith in God. . . . To pray is to think in such a way that we dwell with reality, and faith’s name for reality is God.”

For Maquarrie, as for the early Church Fathers, thinking was an important element in spiritual conversion, but thinking had to be engaged and engaging. In Maquarrie’s view, thoughtful prayer was passionate (i.e., it engaged the mind and the heart in raw and powerful ways), compassionate (it led the one who prayed to sympathy and concern for others), responsible (it considered the nature of things and accepted the consequences of faithful commitment), and

thankful (it constantly reminded the one who prayed of the bounty and generosity of God).

Can thought and thinking be an important element of our interior disposition as we pray communally in the Eucharist? In my experience, it can. I think at Mass, and I believe the Mass provides us ample opportunities and invitations to prayerful thinking. The Mass itself is a dynamic, interlocking ritual whose parts invite thought and reflection. The various collects and scripture readings, especially as keyed to the various seasons of the liturgical year, invite consideration of the themes for Eucharist of that day. The homily, of course, is often pitched as food for thought and reflection – always leading to commitment and action, as is appropriate for the engaged thinking of Christians.

I sometimes find myself thinking of the history of the Eucharist itself – a rite whose historical roots go back to the gatherings of the early followers of Jesus and whose structure, as recounted by Justin Martyr in his second century *First Apology*, still resonates with contemporary Catholics. My thoughts link me to the centuries of Christians who shared common beliefs and values, and who still join with me, in the communion of saints, to commemorate and celebrate God's love and sacrifice. Finally, the Mass can be an occasion for thinking about community. As I join with others in my parish, I think about the nature of the ties that bind us, and I am re-inspired to live my Christian faith in thought and action.

The world needs the kind of engaged and prayerful thinking that forms so large a part of our Catholic Christian tradition. Think about it.

Richard J. Janet, Ph.D.



***Fed Up with Fundamentalism: A Historical, Theological,
and Personal Appraisal of Christian Fundamentalism***
A Book Review

Leroy Seat, *Fed Up with Fundamentalism: A Historical, Theological, and Personal Appraisal of Christian Fundamentalism*. Liberty, MO: 4-L Publications, 2007.

For more than 35 years, Leroy Seat served as professor and later chancellor at Seinan Gakuin University (SGU), a university complex of more than 10,000 students in Fukuoka City, Japan. Currently he is a lecturer in Theology at Rockhurst University.

Seat was sent to Japan in 1966 to teach at SGU under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). After many years of faithful service to his denomination and the university, Seat found himself caught up in the fundamentalist controversy that raged in the 1980s and 1990s among Southern Baptists. And after the dust had settled, those of a more moderate theological persuasion, such as Seat, found themselves on the outside looking in. The culmination of this process that began in 1979 was the adoption by the SBC of a new confession of faith in 2000 that positioned the denomination in a much more rigid theological framework. Because Seat refused to agree to be bound by the parameters of that new document, he was forced into retirement in 2004.

While the topic of this book is broader than simply Baptists and fundamentalism, Southern Baptists do form the context out of which Seat writes. This personal contextualization provides a real advantage for the reader, because Seat's book illustrates that the type of militant fundamentalism that emerged from the "new" Southern Baptist Convention was not simply an innocuous theological sparring among academicians and pastors, but rather had real impact on real lives and livelihoods.

Fed Up With Fundamentalism is neither a diatribe against the "new" Southern Baptist Convention, nor a lament for the "old" SBC. Throughout the book the author's love and appreciation for his Baptist background are evident. Yet, Seat's pain and dismay over what has occurred in his beloved denomination are equally evident throughout. The book is not written out of anger but out of loss—loss of a tradition and heritage that has traded freedom for authoritarianism, diversity for uniformity, autonomy for centralization, cooperation for coercion, personal faith for civil religion. The fundamentalist theology forced on Southern Baptist theologians not only threatened to strip them of their theology but also their denominational home. Seat was faced with the option of losing his soul or his job. He chose the latter, and this book chronicles why.

Fed Up With Fundamentalism has many strengths, not the least of which is its concise and helpful survey of the rise of Christian fundamentalism in

America. As a reaction to the emergence of biblical criticism and liberalism in the 19th century, the fundamentalist movement originated as an attempt to recapture the basic, fundamentals of the faith. After the debacle of the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925, however, fundamentalism began to position itself as a militant movement, characterized by anti-intellectualism, obscurantism, and extremism. A more moderate form of fundamentalism would evolve into the “evangelical” movement of the 1960s and beyond, but the more strident form of fundamentalism would reappear in the 1980s and become the predominant theological perspective in such groups as the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Southern Baptist Convention. Many Southern Baptist theologians, including Seat, who had been trained in the broader perspective of mainline Christianity, found themselves marginalized by this embracing of a more rigid theology. Southern Baptist educational institutions began to purge their faculties of those who would not conform to the new theological parameters. Seat was caught up in this purge.

The heart of this book explores the many reasons why the author is fed up with fundamentalism. He includes such general reasons as fundamentalism’s tendency toward indoctrination, coercion, intolerance, and obscurantism. Seat also offers specific chapters on fundamentalism’s attitudes toward the Bible, religious freedom, war, women, abortion, homosexuality, and capital punishment. Seat concludes that the answer to fundamentalism is not to embrace liberalism, which has its own limits, but rather to go beyond fundamentalism to embrace the true message of Christ.

The subtitle of *Fed Up with Fundamentalism* alerts the reader that this is not only a historical and theological appraisal of fundamentalism but is also a personal one. The reader might be tempted to dismiss this book as rooted too much in the personal disputes of the author with his denomination, but such is not the case. While the book does make an important contribution to the growing literature of Southern Baptists who have been marginalized by the regnant leadership of that denomination, its examples and illustrations are broader than Southern Baptists. The issues Seat touches on are not peripheral but are central in the debates among most, if not all, Christian denominations today.

I recommend this book for those who would like to know more about the roots of fundamentalism, its theological perspectives, its strategies for expansion, and more importantly, the ways in which it cleverly packages and promotes not the “gospel of Christ” but a “different (*hetero*) gospel” (Galatians 1:6).

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Religion, the Media, and the 2008 Presidential Campaign

The discussion about the role of faith and religion in American politics continues to be enriched with reasoned viewpoints. In 2000, George W. Bush identified Jesus Christ as the political philosopher who has most influenced his life. Though it “shocked listeners,” said one *New York Times* writer, Bush immediately “energized his base”, as they say in the current political parlance. In 2004, John Kerry’s Catholicism was launched into the limelight, but in that election conservatives questioned not only his commitment to the Catholic Church, but also his stance on what have come to be called “values” issues. Both examples invigorated the discussion of politics and religion. The discussion often results, however, in framing distortions of religious content that are not helpful to the political process. I contend that, in addition to discerning statements and endorsements from reputable sources, this time around, too many viewpoints on religion in the campaign have come at us from pundits and bloggers on both sides in the form of unsophisticated rumors, sloganeering, and guerilla video. Few, if any, are enduring.

Like a lot of other issues in the 2008 presidential election, the role of religion has been difficult to follow. The trajectory began over 15 months ago when primary candidates lined up on stages around the country attempting to distinguish themselves from one another. We’re now culminating the campaigns with economic events so important to the country that each new day seems to present another immediate challenge, some real, some manufactured, and push important questions common to every election, including a candidate’s faith, into the background. Questions of religion in the candidates’ lives have ebbed and flowed along with questions about gas prices, the economy, the war, and everything else that people want to know about. Only Rick Warren’s Saddleback Civil Forum gave us much of a glimpse into the faith and values views of the candidates. Most viewers were likely to have responded to the event in much the same way they would to a presidential debate – they’ll take away answers that confirm their good feelings about one man, and ignore other answers. At least it was an honest effort to hear from the candidates about their views on faith and values.

Beyond the forum, what is the nature of the religion question this year? Some have said (and yes, would still say) it is the relationship of Barack Obama to Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Some writers framed Obama's relationship with Reverend Wright as unmasking Obama as un-American or, at least, casting him as radical. Further assertions about Obama included the claim that he was a Muslim as if, had it been true, that alone would have made him unfit for the presidency. His phrase that the bitterness of small town voters in Pennsylvania made them "cling to guns or religion" gave conservative pundits a chance to show Obama unscripted as holding a deep stereotype of hard-working small town Americans, and that his elitism led him to believe that small town voters were not smart enough to think beyond those issues. Still others might say the major issue is Obama's selection of Joe Biden as his running mate, yet another opportunity for a "first" Catholic in U.S. presidential politics – we've not had a Catholic Vice President, though several have run. *Fidelis* said the choice was a "slap in the face to Catholics" given Biden's pro-choice position, while *Catholics United* cited his strong record in other areas such as the violence against women act and his support of universal health care. Questions about Biden's Catholicism continue to divide writers in various Catholic publications, despite the fact that Rudy Giuliani, a pro-choice, pro-gay rights, Catholic Republican sounded the key note of the republican convention.

Curiously, John McCain's religion has not been framed as a major issue in the campaign, though Manya Brachear of *The Chicago Tribune* wrote that it is not especially clear if McCain is Episcopalian or Baptist. His responses at the Saddleback Forum are considered clearer and simpler than Obama's, thus resonating with listeners who see issues that way. Most media have framed McCain's choice of Sarah Palin, often very cynically, as his "response" to the religion question. Governor Palin's religious practices have been presented as extreme, perhaps too unsettling even for conservative voters. The media criticized her call for her church members to pray that the task for U.S. soldiers in Iraq was a "task from God," a statement that could be interpreted as supporting military action to fulfill God's will or for hope that the Iraq War is part of God's plan. Her speech as governor at a youth rally sponsored by her church that also featured a video of a "last days" scenario also raised consciousness of a potential problem on her view of the separation of church and state. Recent video has surfaced of Palin being blessed at the Wasilla Assembly of God Church by Kenyan pastor Thomas Muthee to protect her from the influence of witches. Palin is heard suggesting that it was his blessing that helped her win the governorship.

Unfortunately, these examples represent how the media have framed religion in 2008, and this is how many voters will be asked to consider the subject. The discerning voter must work hard to be fully informed not only on questions or policy, but also questions of value; the questions are two sides of the

same coin. The irony is that in a year when Rick Warren made an effort to do something substantive and unique, the religion question has actually been cheapened.

*Pete Bicak, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of
Communication and Fine Arts*

The Ground Lies Well

by
Shirl Kasper

"A beginning has been made for the establishment of a Jesuit college in Kansas City," Father Michael P. Dowling, S.J., wrote in 1909 to Father Rudolf Meyer, S.J., Provincial of the Missouri Province. "This location is pretty far out now; yet if the city continues its present rate of growth, a very few years will make it a desirable and attractive situation. The ground lies well."

When Father Dowling scouted out this 25-acre tract of land, he carefully chose a parcel south of Brush Creek, then the city limits. Wanting high ground, he selected the first plateau beyond Brush Creek – 52nd Street, though it was little more than rough farmland and far, at that, from the city center. The location had its advantages, though, especially its nearness to the Troost Avenue trolley line. The switching point at Troost and 47th Street was one of the busiest in the city, and it was only a few blocks away.

This farmland that became home to the University has a history, just like the University itself. It's a fascinating history intertwined with the tragic saga of the Mormon Church in Jackson County. The story begins long before there was a Rockhurst or even a town named Kansas City. It starts with a man named Edward Partridge, the first bishop of the Mormon Church, who came to Missouri in 1831 to buy up land for the site of the future Zion. These were the years of the Second Great Awakening when preachers and circuit riders fanned the fires of revivalism. Partridge followed this sweeping movement to western New York, where he became a disciple of Joseph Smith, who, in 1827, announced that an angel had revealed golden tablets to him, later to be transcribed as the *Book of Mormon*. Smith had been charged by God to reestablish the true church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints – the Mormons.

Smith sent Edward Partridge west, and on July 26, 1831, probably at the land office in Lexington, Partridge laid \$100 cash on the counter and purchased

an 80-acre parcel south of Brush Creek. A year later Partridge would purchase an adjoining 80 acres—land that, in time, would include today's Country Club Plaza, the Crestwood and Sunset Hills neighborhoods, Brookside Boulevard, and Rockhurst University.

In one of the ugliest chapters in Jackson County history, the Mormons were forcibly expelled from the county in November 1833. Partridge was tarred and feathered in the public square in Independence. Expulsion after expulsion followed, until the Mormons eventually relocated in Utah. As the Mormons fled Jackson County, much of the land they had purchased was offered at sheriff's sales and over time would blossom into some of the city's most coveted acreage. The land that Partridge bought would pass through a number of hands before Father Michael Dowling purchased his 25 acres for \$50,000 in 1909 for Rockhurst College.

Mass was first held on August 1, 1909 in a barn left by the family of Lurinda Peers, a previous owner of the land. "Twenty five acres are probably more than we need," Dowling wrote to his provincial, but "there will be plenty of room for buildings, athletic field, garden, walks and drive-ways, even if the plant subsequently develops into a university." Though Fr. Dowling admitted that "prophecy is a rare gift," he nonetheless predicted that the future was bright. He envisioned a flourishing Kansas City, a growing Catholic population, and a new Jesuit college ready to prepare young men for their roles in society. Indeed, the "ground lies well.

Shirl Kasper is a historian and writer.

This historical snapshot is excerpted from a new, comprehensive history of Rockhurst University that will be published in 2009 by the Rockhurst University Press. A centerpiece of the University's celebration of its centennial, the book will include more than 500 color and black-and-white photographs. For further information about this project or to share a Rockhurst memory, contact Bill Stancil at 816-501-4023 or bill.stancil@rockhurst.edu.

Live French in Missouri: An Educational and Musical Presentation by Dennis Stroughmatt

Did you know that French is alive and well in Missouri, and not just in classrooms, but in the language and customs of the locals in areas such as Old Mines, Missouri? Dennis Stroughmatt and his wife Jennifer (whose grandmother did not learn to speak English until the age of six) came to Rockhurst University on September 8th to attest to that fact, to tell us about the varieties of French still spoken today not only in Quebec, but in the US, and to demonstrate the fiddling associated with this Cajun and Creole francophone culture, especially in the celebration of the Guillanee (pronounced *guee-oh-nee* in Missouri). Dennis first

became interested in French history as a boy in the Vincennes, Indiana, area, but the flame of his passion was not really lit until he came into contact with French speakers and he realized that theirs was a living culture. He moved to the Old Mines, Missouri area to learn to speak French Creole and play the fiddle, though at first he was pushed out onto the porch at some of the house parties and only through working at his technique eventually got called back in to play in the master way he does today. Later he soaked up the culture in the "Cajun country" of Louisiana and finally actually studied the French language as an academic subject in Quebec. His tales are full of humor and interesting anecdotes about interactions between speakers of a variety of forms of French, including the time he asked where he could rent a "char" in France, which alarmed his interlocutors, because he was headed to Normandy, and that means "tank" in France today. In Missouri, this word, adopted from old French, means what we call a "car". Likewise, French traditions still exist in Missouri that are no longer practiced in France.

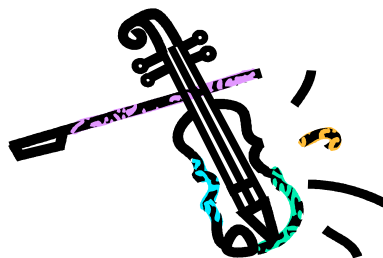
Stroughmatt explained how French speakers got to Missouri in the first place, from pioneers looking for gold or a route to China down the Mississippi and through the Gulf of Mexico, which never panned out, though lead was found, which led to mining, and to the arrival of priests who came to help souls and encourage the men who went native to marry, thus assuring the family unit and a stable French speaking population. The Catholic Church from the beginning has been linked with this culture, as the language of the Mass and of religious education was French, and the clergy often led particular celebrations, for instance, when the priest blessed the food to be shared as a gesture of charity at the Guillanee (originally Celtic, then Christian) community house celebrations. The use of French was repressed during the period of the Irish presence, particularly by nuns who punished its use in schools, but this only made the local population more determined in the long run to preserve their culture. Today, priests can still be seen blessing the food at traditional celebrations, and the Catholic Church remains an integral part of francophone culture in the US. Later at dinner, to my question about the future of French in Missouri, Dennis responded that it is like Mark Twain's remark that "reports of my death have been highly exaggerated."

The response to the speaker was overwhelmingly positive. Everyone loved the music played, especially the audience participation in which French vocabulary was learned, and many of those who wanted more bought CDs. My students were impressed by Stroughmatt's passion for his subject (he told me later that his family and friends thought he was crazy to pursue this "obsession") and the warm way in which he treated us like family. Ashley Bouchard wrote that if he had just listed the numerous facts he shared, it would have been boring, but that "it was actually very entertaining and compelling." Kevin Bernardi summed it up by calling him "an artist of heart". He will have to come back

some day, since students are asking for an *encore*: Melissa Ingle wrote “I would not only come again, but also bring more people with me, so that they can see the richness of the French culture that is still alive today in Missouri and the other states.”

I admit that though I have long taught about varieties of French throughout the world, including in the US, and have visited and soaked up the francophone culture of places like St. Genevieve, Missouri, I too was changed. I will no longer allow others to make fun of the way places like Versailles or Vincennes are pronounced in the area, realizing in a deeper way that this pronunciation is attached to a culture that has its own integrity, spunk, form of French and richness. What we try to do as part of Jesuit education is to experience life first-hand, reflect on it, and then make decisions, which can come down to changes in attitude and the way we think about and therefore act towards others. Events like this can take a lot of energy to organize and coordinate, but for the first-hand experience and change in attitude many of us felt, it was well worth it. Along with the Alliance Française, the Modern Languages Department and others, the Thomas More Center for Catholic Studies sponsored this event, and we are grateful for the gracious support of its director, Dr. Rick Janet.

M. Kathleen Madigan, Ph.D.
Department of Modern Languages



Religion and Science: Dialogue Not Conflict

Francis Collins, head of the human genome project, and author of *The Language of God* (reviewed in the last issue of the *Newsletter*), in which he talks openly and honestly about his religious beliefs as well as his work as a scientist, has also noted that there is a kind of unwritten law within the discipline of science that one does not discuss religious or spiritual matters. There is a reluctance to talk about the (in some cases obvious) religious implications of one’s scientific work (especially in the areas of cosmology, evolution, genetics, and neurology), and also a lack of enthusiasm for bringing up one’s own particular religious worldview. This explains perhaps why there are so few major scientists today who are prepared to discuss the interaction between their

work in science and their religious beliefs in the admirable way that Collins has done.

This reticence of scientists is a significant point because unfortunately our culture has now accepted the view that modern science is essentially atheistic in its practice and outlook. This realization has in turn led many people who would otherwise be sympathetic to science to look upon the discipline with suspicion, even with hostility. And so the “conflict model” of the relationship between science and religion (and morality) has become dominant, thereby stifling dialogue between science and its interlocutors, dialogue that many would find fascinating, timely, relevant and enlightening. It should be emphasized that Collins is right that this reluctance to dialogue mostly comes from the sciences; religious thinkers and philosophers have generally proved more open to engaging questions of mutual interest with scientists, than *vice versa*.

There are several reasons for why scientists might be coy about engaging in dialogue with other disciplines. One may be a reluctance by people to talk about their own worldviews and moral values in the context of more ultimate questions raised by their discipline. Thus, a scientist working in the area of evolution might be content with working on a study of the fossil record, without wanting to get into what the “tree of life” means for our understanding of the human species. A second reason is that many scientists today, especially at large research institutions, have an excellent, but very narrow, training. This means that they are generally not competent to discuss many of the more ultimate questions raised by their disciplines because it gets them into matters of philosophy and theology (we have seen this lack of competence in the popular publications of well known scientists, e.g., Francis Crick, Stephen J. Gould, and Richard Dawkins). A third and very important reason is that much of mainstream science at the national level is practiced against the background of a secularist, naturalistic worldview. This is the worldview that holds that all of reality is physical in nature, and, therefore, that everything can be explained in terms of matter and energy, operating according to the laws of physics. If this view is true, it would follow that science is the only way to understand reality, and that all questions have, at least in principle, a scientific explanation. It is the prevalence of this worldview in much of modern science as *background assumption* that sometimes breeds in the scientific community a kind of supercilious arrogance towards religion, and what is going on in religious-related disciplines. However, it is very important for us to distinguish carefully between science and secularism, and to appreciate that science gives no support to the secularist worldview, that this thesis is simply a bias of some people who happen to be scientists. This is a distinction that the Catholic intellectual tradition has always insisted upon; despite its occasional scrapes with scientists (most notably Galileo), the Catholic tradition, with its emphasis on the two wings

of faith and reason, has generally insisted on science and religion working together in dialogue in an attempt to understand God's creation.

It is true that science as a discipline generally adopts a stance toward the study of the physical realm often called *methodological naturalism*. This approach says that when doing science, only physical, testable explanations will be considered and pursued, because this is the best way to study the physical. But it does not follow from this that the only *possible* explanations for any aspect of reality are physical ones (this would be *metaphysical naturalism*), though it is obviously important to keep the two views distinct in one's work as a scientist, something that leading science writers have not always been successful at. Some thinkers (including creationists and Intelligent Design theorists, but also many scientists) have mistakenly confused these two approaches in recent discussions. It is true that some scientists are metaphysical naturalists, but it is essential to appreciate that, in principle, science is generally not, and need not be, committed to any kind of naturalism (secularism). This means that, to take the big bang theory as an example, science as a discipline makes no comment, and can make no comment, about the purpose of the big bang, about *why* it occurred. Of course, a scientist may have a view on this matter, but the larger question belongs in the domains of philosophy and religion.

These recent developments should force us to reflect carefully about science and its place in society. Often we give so much credence to the claims and impressive advances of science, that it often seems like nothing can compete with it; we might be tempted to acquiesce in a kind of scientific hegemony over the whole of knowledge, over the whole of society and culture. But we should be much less enamored of science in general when we realize that it offers us nothing on the ultimate questions, such as what is the purpose of human life?; what is consciousness and free will?; how did the universe get here?; what happens after death?; what is the best way to raise our children?; how much freedom should people have in a democratic state?; what is the right way to live?, and so on. This last question is a crucial one, for it is obvious that science cannot help us in the whole matter of values. Science can show us how to extract stem cells from embryos, or how to clone a human being, or how to build a nuclear weapon, but it can't tell us whether any of these practices is moral or not. The question of the right way to live is more important than the truth of any scientific theory.

How might science improve both its practice and its image? One way would be for scientists (especially agenda-setting scientists) to develop a greater appreciation for the philosophical, moral and religious implications of some of their work. They need not necessarily address these implications themselves, but they should recognize them, be sensitive to them, and occasionally talk about them in and outside of their discipline. Second, scientists need to be aware of the

naturalistic/secularist bias that is a driving force behind much of their discipline, and take steps to get rid of it, just as they would not tolerate a religious bias. Religions are not blameless here, of course, either. Indeed, we must recognize that both sides have contributed to the rise of the “conflict model” as a way of understanding science and religion. But just as religious believers should not be afraid of scientific research, so do scientists need to separate the facts of scientific theories (e.g., evolution), from speculation about these facts, and from their own worldviews more generally.

Third, this brings us finally to the training of scientists today. Those who work in science-related areas, broadly conceived, including biologists, chemists, physicists, astronomers, doctors, health care workers, psychologists, and nurses (to name only a small few) are often trained exclusively in the skills needed for their job. They frequently have no background in the liberal arts, or in religion, philosophy or ethics (scientists trained at Rockhurst are a happy exception here!). As a result, they sometimes fail to appreciate the human and moral side of their jobs, how their work affects the people they are dealing with as patients, clients, subjects, family members, citizens, and as human beings. Unfortunately this last problem is indeed serious, and it will take a wholesale rethinking of the way our major research universities teach science and science-related subjects in order to correct it.

*Brendan Sweetman, Ph.D.
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(Brendan Sweetman is the author or editor of seven books, including most recently, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, The Transcendent* [Rodopi Press, 2008]. This contribution is adapted from his recent article in *Ethics and Medics*, Vol., 33, No.6 [June 2008], a publication of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, Philadelphia.)

Deep Down Things: Essays on Catholic Culture

Edited by Joseph A. Cirincione

Written within the broad spectrum that is called the Catholic intellectual tradition, this collection of essays, initially delivered as lectures at the Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture at Rockhurst University, demonstrates the impact of the Catholic faith on the culture, from worship and things pertaining to worship to morality and literature. It shows clearly, as the secular culture of the West gives ground to alien forces, that the Church remains a beacon and not a weathervane. — *Jude P. Dougherty, Catholic University of America*

Deep Down Things explores common threads that characterize Catholicism. The contributors look successively at Catholic culture and everyday life of the parish

and of work, Catholic culture and the imaginative life of poets and fiction writers, and Catholic culture and postmodern life where individual conscience, skepticism, and relativism challenge Church authority and faith itself. They do so while looking for foundational components that persist and comprise a culture that Catholics recognize regardless of their diverse ethnicities, geographic locations, or historical epochs.

The authors of this collection have aimed to inspire both Catholics and non-Catholics alike, inside and outside the academic community, to deepen their own knowledge and appreciation of the Christian tradition generally and Catholic culture particularly. They hope to encourage sincere and open dialogue about Catholic culture (in the best tradition of Catholic thought) both to further the inquiry after truth and to enhance fruitful reflection upon Catholic culture and its contributions over time and across cultures.

About the Editor:

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[Ed. Note: This newly published book compiles lectures given by Rockhurst University faculty and guest scholars during a course on Catholic culture sponsored by the Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture in 2002. A reduced-price copy of the book may be ordered through the publisher's website at www.lexingtonbooks.com.]

Thomas More Center News

SPRING 2009 CATHOLIC STUDIES COURSES

CA1500 INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC THOUGHT & CULTURE
(3 credit hours) T Th 11-12:15, Kevin Cullen, S.J.

CA3500 THE JESUITS
(1 credit hour) Th 12:30-1:45, John Vowells, S.J.

No prerequisites or previous background is required. Students of all majors and interests are invited to register!

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christmas reception

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3:30-5:00 p.m.

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