

Jesus the God Man Bible Exploration and Appreciation Incarnation and Transformation Part 1 Adult Formation/Spiritual Life May 8, 2003 7:30 p.m.

I'd ask you to pray with me. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit and the sevenfold gifts of that Spirit, especially wisdom, understanding, and counsel. Help us to listen and think and question in your Spirit to build up our faith and to equip ourselves for the proclamation of the gospel, through Christ our Lord, Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Tonight's presentation and the next two Thursdays are, strictly speaking, Theology. Now what is "Theology"? **Theology is "faith seeking understanding"**—faith seeking understanding. If you do not have faith, you cannot seek understanding. Faith comes first. I presume knowledge of the Creed of the Church; I presume that you have heard the **Creed**, and it makes some sense to you. I also presume that you have listened to the **Eucharistic prayers of the Church**. The reason for this is there is a **twofold purpose in these three evenings**.

The first is contemplation. Now contemplation is really, first and foremost, the fruit of—what? Where does contemplation originate?—besides saying grace; and, of course, you would be right about that. It's the grace specifically of the sacrament of the Eucharist. **Contemplation is the grace that comes directly from the Eucharist**. And contemplation, as I use the word—and it's true, many people use the word differently, but in the Catholic sacramental context I'm using here, contemplation means the capacity to be with—the capacity to be with—the mystery of faith, the capacity to live with the mystery of faith, the capacity to *sentire*—a Latin word meaning "to feel" really, to feel with the Church. "*Sentire cum ecclesia*" is a term used in Latin. It means to feel with the Church. **To really deeply feel with the Church is already to be practicing contemplation**. I'm not speaking of contemplation as a practice, as much as I'm speaking of contemplation as a habit. For the ordinary Christian, by "ordinary Christian" I mean you, I mean myself. I'm not talking about contemplation as practiced by somebody who goes up onto a mountain and doesn't come back for a long time. I'm not talking about the contemplation in people who have an enormous amount of time on their hands. I'm talking about **contemplation in the life of the ordinary believer when the ordinary believer avails himself or herself of the grace of the sacraments** and, of course, has some kind of **prayer life** and is **open to the gifts of the Spirit**. So contemplation is the first.

There is a second very different purpose: **to engage our intellectual culture**. Now what does that mean? It means to understand what is going on around us. What are people talking about, especially the people who are really influencing the young in academic circles, the leaders, the intellectual leaders of our country? Who are they—not so much their names—what are they doing? What are they thinking? **What are the influences on the minds of modern-day Americans?** Why? Because if our role is to

evangelize—and it is; there’s no doubt about that; it’s the role of every single believer to evangelize—we have to know something about, if I dare say, “the opposition.”

Intellectually, we are not living in a Christian country—intellectually, we’re not! There may be a lot of Christians here, but the basic people who run things, especially the universities, are not really Christian people. And therefore, if we do not have any idea where they’re coming from, how are we ever going to confront the message that they are sending?

Actually, I don’t really think that the intellectual message of modern America is very sophisticated, personally. Some people might think it is, but I don’t really think it is. And I don’t think it’s overwhelming. I don’t think it’s over our head or anything like that, except people like to try to—let’s say they may like to try to—pretend that it’s overwhelming and that you are inferior if you don’t understand what they’re talking about. But that is not necessarily the case at all.

What is often the case is that we **ordinary Christian believers just don’t know the terms, and therefore don’t feel confident in confronting people with their ideas.** And part of the tradition of what was called “**apologetics**” was **always learning what the opposition thinks, learning how to counteract the opposition.** And for whatever reason—and I have no idea what it really is, but for whatever reason—that whole idea of apologetics has fallen away in our Church.

For that matter if you talk about so-called “Catholic” institutions, you might have to ask—it takes a while to figure out what you mean by a Catholic institution. You know, what do you mean by “Catholic”? Do you mean that the faculty adheres to the teaching of the Church? No, it doesn’t mean that. It’s almost as if the legal system of the United States does not allow that to exist. **So “Catholic” institution you will always say now in quotation marks if we mean academic institutions.**

Nonetheless, engaging in this intellectual culture is very important. And it’s a winnable thing! And, indeed, I want to encourage you to read a book that is recently out called *The New Faithful*. The book *The New Faithful* is written by a woman who is a journalist, who has really investigated students in various basically high-ranking universities, like Harvard, University of Chicago, Stanford, University of Michigan, Yale, Princeton, and so on—that high-quality type of institution—and what is happening is you have **more and more Christians who are following a very orthodox kind of Christianity.** So there is a return to orthodoxy. Why? Well, it’s really inevitable because the opposite is so vapid and meaningless! Nonetheless, I want to look into it.

Now I would like to start today by showing you a real magazine, *Scientific American*. The *Scientific American* magazine represents what a lot of intellectuals think. I’m afraid most people consider it **mainstream**, in other words, it’s not some sort of really far-out magazine—it’s mainstream! But the May issue, in my view, is so **bizarre** it’s beyond belief!

Here is the main article. “Infinite Earths”—Infinite Earths—“in Parallel Universes Really Exist.”¹ That’s the caption of the article! Okay! Open it up—is this a joke? I open it up thinking, oh, this is a joke! Okay. So here we are: Parallel Universes by Max Tegmark. Max Tegmark is co-author of a book with a very fine British physicist, whom I respect very highly. This article he wrote himself. “Parallel Universes Not just a staple of science fiction, other universes are a direct implication of cosmological observations.” Now what does that mean? I don’t know! But I’ll read further.

He starts out: “Is there a copy of you reading this article? A person who is not you but who lives on a planet called Earth, with misty mountains, fertile fields and sprawling cities, in a solar system with eight other planets? The life of this person has been identical to yours in every respect. But perhaps he or she now decides to put down this article without finishing it, while you read on.” I kid you not. This is not a put-on—this is for real!

“The idea of such an alter ego seems strange and implausible,” he admits, “but it looks as if we will just have to live with it, because it is supported by astronomical observations. The simplest and most popular cosmological model today predicts that you have a twin in a galaxy about 10^{28} meters from here. This distance is so large that it is beyond astronomical, but that does not make your doppelganger any less real. The estimate is derived from elementary”—here is a key word—“elementary probability and does not even assume speculative modern physics, merely that space”—listen to this one—“is infinite (or at least sufficiently large) in size and almost uniformly filled with matter, as observations indicate. In infinite space, even the most unlikely events must take place somewhere.” How’s that for logic? He is serious, okay!

Now further on he explains why he believes this. He says, “There are two tenable but diametrically opposed paradigms for understanding the correspondence between **mathematics and physics, a dichotomy that arguably goes back to Plato and Aristotle.**” And he goes on to explain that for Aristotle reality is what’s basic and mathematics simply approximates reality. But for Plato mathematics is basic, the real thing. Actually Plato didn’t say mathematics. He said that ideas are the real thing and observers observe it imperfectly—the famous image of the cave.

Now I have some papers, and I did forget another person I want to put on here, but we can always add more people. This gentleman goes on to say “**Modern theoretical physicists tend to be Platonists,**” etc., etc. And I would say that is basically the crux of the problem. On this paper I’ve divided—I put two different groups down: **idealists and pragmatists.** Now by “pragmatists” I’m not talking about the so-called “School of Pragmatism,” which is found in the United States associated with people like William James. I’m speaking much more broadly. But it’s a difference that he already described between Plato and Aristotle, because **these two different ways of looking at life are going to cut right through our whole history,** the whole history of the Church. And they are going to affect our theology; they are going to affect everything. Interestingly enough, you are going to find **saints on both sides.** And, mind you, you’re not going to say every philosopher is one or the other of these. No, these are two basic tendencies.

There could be others. But they're not very interesting to me because **these are the two tendencies that account for most of our theologies.** Let's go down the list.

Plato. Plato is noted for this idea that the world as we see it is really a shadow of true reality, which is an idea, so that **ideas are more real** than you are, or than things. And the idea of you is more real than the actual personality that you have.

Aristotle, on the right side (of the paper) **does not buy into Plato's ideas.** Aristotle was Plato's student, but he broke with him because he thought that Plato had made a terrible mistake, that he had not made a clear distinction between an idea and what really is. Now how does this happen? Well, in a sense, you have to read Plato. You have to read people like Hegel.

Hegel was a great idealist, as well. And reading these people—they're very interesting authors! But if you read them, what you find out is that they begin in their minds. To them **the reality of life is in the mind.** And pretty soon, what you're going to realize, is they're not actually living in the real world, because for them the mind is the real world. And this gives a certain stamp to their thinking. There are many Catholics who have thought this way.

One is **St. Augustine,** to some degree. Augustine saw the city of God as an idea for life on earth. The city of man is the way things are, but the city of God is the way they ought to be. And the whole idea that Augustine was promoting was that the **Church should build itself up into this ideal society.** I think it's actually a little bit on the dangerous side. But that's a dispute. You can argue against it or for it—whatever.

St. Anselm. St. Anselm wrote a book called "*Cur Deus Homo?*"—meaning "Why God Man?"—which is related to the topic of incarnation. But that's not why I brought him up originally. Anselm has this argument for proving God and it goes like this: he says, "I have in my mind the idea greater than which there is nothing; therefore, God must exist." That is idealism. That is dealing with **the mind as the real locus of reality.**

Sir Isaac Newton. *Principia Mathematica.* Now Newton is another man who is really relevant to what we are doing here, because Newton was really drawn to the Bible; and Newton liked the Bible and he wanted to study the Bible and he was interested in prophecy, but he couldn't believe in Christianity because he said, "The incarnation of Christ is impossible. God cannot become human." Now Newton is one of the primary leaders of modern science. Now his idea of the world, if I'm not mistaken, is basically **everything is caused by something else.** So it's a very tight world **without randomness.** Everything is caused by something else. Is that really the way the world is? Actually, no. That's been corrected. I mean, scientists realized that he wasn't correct. But he was a great mathematician and he was a great thinker and a great scientist and he made a lot of contributions. But he also represents, in my view, a fundamentally wrong point of view.

Now let's go over to the right side. **Albert the Great**. I don't know if you have ever heard of Albert the Great. Albert the Great was one of Thomas Aquinas' teachers. He dabbled in **alchemy**. Now alchemy has not turned out to be considered a science. But at one time it was considered a science. And in a sense it is correct, but not in the sense they thought it was. What was alchemy about? It was about the transformation of matter. Now what they were really trying to do was to turn—well, there are two different levels of alchemy. One thing they tried to do was turn **ordinary matter into gold**. That was one project. But actually that's almost a symbol of another project, which is to **transform the human nature into something golden**. So they had this idea of the transformation of nature, but they thought they could do it through means at their disposal. As it turns out, transformation is a very important theme in the Bible, but it's transformation not by nature. It's **supernatural transformation, that the power to transform nature does not come from nature itself, but comes from the transcendent**.

Nonetheless, he taught Thomas Aquinas and **Thomas Aquinas** is, in the opinion of some people anyway, the beginning of the **true pragmatist point of view**—more even than Aristotle, for reasons I don't want to go into right now. But when you get to Aquinas you get to someone who deals with what is called the "**Scholastic method**." Now that's very important for us. What does the Scholastic method mean? It means this, someone raises a question, and Aquinas says, "Well, let's look at what tradition says." Well, Augustine said this, and Basil said this, and the Fathers say that, and the Council of Alvira said this, and so on. And see, he marshals the evidence, and then he mulls it over and reflects on it and says, "I answer that" this is the answer. Usually it has to do with pros and cons. Think of this method. It's a very powerful method; it's a very good method. It's an **open-minded method**.

Now the funny thing is Thomas Aquinas, who was an open-minded thinker and who wanted to ask questions, **ended up being quoted by people who weren't interested in questions!** And his answers would be presented as **the** answer. His questions would be **the** questions. Other questions were not accepted. His questions were the questions. His answers were the answers. This is really trying to take Aquinas and moving him out of the pragmatist side of that paper and putting him on the other side, where it's his ideas that matter, as if it's a whole perfect summary of truth. That's kind of turning St. Thomas into an idealist, which he wasn't.

We have Rousseau on the left side. Who is **Jean Jacques Rousseau**? Anybody ever hear of him? All right, he wrote a very famous novel—he did a lot of things. What do you know about him? You said you knew something about him? Anybody know anything about Rousseau? What's important is **his concept of the "noble savage"**. What is the noble savage? This noble savage idea is very much alive today. It is an idea that nature is basically perfect the way it is and that primitive peoples do not need the influence of the Church; they do not need the gospel; they do not need civilization; they don't need anything; they have everything they need because they're born noble. In fact, it's civilization, including Christian civilization, that has ruined everything.

Now **Margaret Mead**—who has ever heard of Margaret Mead? Margaret Mead worked back in the 20's, after World War I. She went to various places, especially New Guinea, as I understand it, and elsewhere; and she would report on these noble savages. The only trouble is modern studies have shown that everything she wrote, or ninety percent of it, was false, that in fact these **noble savages were never noble at all!** They were homicidal. They were incredibly brutal. They were incestuous. They were everything contrary to the noble savage idea. So there are no noble savages! But this idea, see, and this is what's important: the idea has more power than the reality because **the idea is the reality for idealists.** You understand this pattern that runs through the left side of the paper?

Now **Thomas Jefferson.** “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” Well, we like that. That's a nice thing—the Declaration of Independence. But, you know, does it make any sense? Are there any truths that are self-evident? Of course they're not self-evident! That is an exaggeration of his own mental reasoning and his own personal point of view, which he then declared to be blatantly obvious and something that any reasonable person would have to accept! I will overlook the fact that he didn't really mean by “men” all people. He didn't really mean women and he really didn't mean blacks or colored people. He simply meant white men. But that's beside the point. The point is, what he said wasn't evident anyway! But **for an idealist,** if it's evident, it's true—**if it's evident to me, it's true—it should be evident to everybody else!**

Carl Jung. Now I don't know that Carl Jung has had a tremendous influence on psychiatry, necessarily, but he has had some influence on modern psychology. Surely he has had influence on one very popular writer, who became very famous and every word he has ever said has been spoken on television. Who is that? **Joseph Campbell.** So Campbell learned from Jung. And what was Jung's big thing? **The reality of archetypes.** What's an archetype? It's basically an idea. But his idea is that these ideas actually exist outside of our minds, are actually the basis of reality, and that our reality has to be measured in terms of them.

Now, for example, his greatest archetype is called “Das Selbst”, “the self.” And when he writes about it, you would get the idea he is talking about God. So people said, “Well, Carl, are you talking about God?” He said, “I am talking about the idea of God.” See? That's all he cares about—the idea of God, the idea of the ego, the idea of the self. All these are ideas; and **that's where reality lies: in the realm of ideas.**

Karl Marx. Marx follows Hegel. **Hegel was a great idealist.** His introduction to philosophy is over six hundred pages. He is very interesting, but he is lost. He is not grounded in what really is. See? He has beautiful ideas; you could even call him “romantic.” In fact, quite a few of these you could call “romantic.” Rousseau is romantic. Hegel is romantic.

Kant—no, Kant is not romantic. Kant was an incredible guy. He lived in this small city called “Koenigsberg,” which at that time was part of Prussia and later became part of Russia. That's where my great grandmother was from. They said, people said that they

could set their clocks on his walk. He made a walk every day at exactly the same time, past every single spot at the very same moment every single day. His life was like the life of a machine. See? Now he wrote the great *Critique of Pure Reason*. In that critique he said, “Well, actually, we can’t know too much. **All we can know is already in our mind.**” What science does—and he was a fan of Isaac Newton—is taking in data from the world and putting them into categories that the mind already holds. That’s really not a very powerful idea; I mean, it became powerful, but it’s really not a very good idea. It’s a rather limited idea of what people can know. But **Kant influenced a lot of people, especially Carl Jung and his followers and Hegel. And Hegel influenced Marx.**

And **Karl Marx** is another idealist. Now earlier on when we talked about Plato, and I could have added another—**Buddha**. We could add him before Plato—**Buddha**. **Most of these earlier idealists were spiritually oriented people.** By the time we get to **Marx there is no spiritual orientation at all.** So idealism doesn’t necessarily mean one thing or the other. A person could be a Catholic and an idealist. A person could be an atheist and an idealist. A person could be a transcendentalist like Plato or Buddha and be an idealist, or he could be like Karl Marx and be a total materialist and be an idealist. So **idealism is not a school of thought. It’s more a way of intuiting reality.** You know what Marx tried to do was impose his idea of the communist utopia on society. See? What is this? It’s an idea.

Mao Tse-tung—the same thing. **Mao Tse-tung was an idealist.** Mao had an idea of what the new China was supposed to be. Eighty million people didn’t fit into his idea, so he killed them! Mao never had any compunction, because his concept of reality was rooted in his ideas of reality. He never violated that. You see, there is a great limit to conscience. **Mao never violated his own idea of reality.** But his idea of reality led to—well, eighty million dead!

B.F. Skinner. Who has ever heard of him? Tell me something about him. He was a person who believed that the human being, the human nature, doesn’t exist. There is no such thing as human nature. **Human nature is pure potential,** and you can make anything out of a child you want. He used to brag: “Give me a child, and I will make a violinist out of him,” or “I will make”—whatever—I remember violinist. That was one of his claims, which, of course, is completely nonsense. To be a violinist you have to have certain particular dispositions and you have to have certain qualities of mind and physique. So that’s **Behaviorism.** That became a **powerful influence in modern times.**

And the funny thing is they used a term that Aristotle used—the “**blank slate.**” But Aristotle used it to deny Plato’s idea that we’re born with ideas already in our heads. Aristotle said, no, we’re not born with ideas. We gain ideas as we interface with reality. B.F. Skinner used the word in a different way. He used it to mean there is no nature. We’re a blank slate. Now behind that are many so-called “**Utopian**” **ideas for revolutionizing the human society,** for fixing the problems of people, engineering, behavior engineering. Okay.

Albert Einstein. I put him on this side because Einstein was a great thinker. First of all, this idea of relativity came out of his head. It wasn't like "Eureka," where he had an insight. You know, Archimedes' story of Eureka, trying to figure out how to account for—what? Specific gravity, more or less, right? And all of a sudden he saw, you know, he saw it in the water, so to speak. He saw how to account for this and he said, "Eureka, I found it. I discovered it!" But Einstein just **had this incredible mind that had this vision of the entire universe operating on principles that no one had ever thought of before. And that's what he developed into his theories.**

Now this article said that mathematicians in general are idealists.

Pope John Paul II is a kind of an idealist too. He calls himself a phenomenologist, but **phenomenology is a form of idealism.** And if you read his writings, you can see this. In particular and relative to what we're going to talk about later, in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* he recommends that people pray that even those who die without grace, you know, die in the state of what we call "mortal sin," he says that we should pray that somehow God can still save them.

Now think about how could this be? My understanding of what Aquinas says is that when a person dies the **soul is preserved**, but the **body obviously decays.** The soul cannot make a decision; **the soul can only receive experiences passively** but cannot decide because **to decide is to act as a person, but body is part of a person.** But an idealist doesn't think that way. **For an idealist, the mind is the person;** the body is just an attachment. You see the difference? They're not absolutely opposite, but they tend to be very different. Now he said they are diametrically opposed; well, in science they can be, but they're not necessarily diametrically opposed. But they are different points of view; they surely are not the same. So I put "most physicists, question mark," because this article says so—I'm not so sure.

Let's go to the other side and look at some of that.

Galileo. Galileo was a scientist, but he was **a pragmatic scientist.** What did he say? First of all, he was living in an era where they had a school of thought that had figured out all kinds of stuff, and he was observing, boy, this is really complicated and there is something wrong with this. So he looked—he looked! **He observed.** He didn't invent the telescope, but he used the telescope. And he wrote down his observations and he figured something out that, practically speaking, this idea that the ptolemaic astronomers had developed about the orbits really didn't make any sense. So that's how he worked. That's a little different. See, it doesn't come from a vision as much as it comes from observation. You see the difference?

Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross. Now if you read John of the Cross, John of the Cross talks about **his experience.** He is not talking about ideas. There's a difference. Teresa of Avila says, "Don't pray to become a mystic. If God wants you to be a mystic, he will make you one." What is prior there? What has priority? Experience.

Going back to the Buddha, which I said I could have added before Plato. See, the **Buddha was an idealist**. He had this great dissatisfaction with life. He saw suffering and he saw misery and he saw that some people were wealthy and some people were poor and he saw life was fundamentally unjust, and therefore his answer was to **leave life**. And he taught his disciples not to desire anything, to **dampen desire**. In a certain way he was **searching**, but what was he searching for? We won't know. He used to talk about **"no thing,"** not "nothing"—"no thing." He was going beyond the world as we know it, which, of course, is perfectly fine. But it's very different from his viewpoint and **John of the Cross, who is confronted with a God who is coming to him**. That's different. Teresa of Avila is confronted with a God who is coming to her. She isn't out seeking. See the difference?

Now even in our Catholic tradition there is what you call "apophatic tradition," meaning you don't talk about God because you really don't know anything; you admit what you don't know. And John of the Cross got into that, and Buddha was into that. Buddha didn't want to talk about God because he didn't know anything about God. Now some say Buddha was an atheist. Well, that would only be true if by "atheist" you mean a person who doesn't talk about God. But he didn't deny the transcendent. When you get to Karl Marx he denies transcendence. You see, there's a difference. So even when we use words you should ask yourself, well, what do you mean by that? **Modern atheism isn't simply discomfort with the word or an admission that we don't know, but it's a denial of transcendence itself**, which then makes it similar to—what? What would be the biblical word for denying transcendence? What does the Bible call it when we deny transcendence? Idolatry. That's what idolatry is. So modern-day atheism is idolatrous—that's different from just not talking because I don't know. See? Okay.

Shakespeare. I put Shakespeare down here because I think Shakespeare has a wonderful, balanced, personable, Christian, conscientious, sensitive, sensible view of life—profound really! It's very **pragmatic** in that sense. **He knows what life is all about**, and he knows the difference between being and not being; and that's one of the most important things—"to be or not to be." That was the great question that **Aquinas** always asked. The **difference between being and existence**, is the way he put it. In other words, **idealists are only concerned with being as idea, which would be being as possibility or in this article being as probability**. But Aquinas says, no, we have to go farther and ask is this really real; is this really the way it is? That's the judgment, the question of judgment—to be or not to be, in the sense of to exist.

Francis Bacon. Bacon is the one who really developed the **scientific method**, the idea of verifying your theories.

Thomas Hobbes. What does anybody know about Thomas Hobbes? Thomas Hobbes had this very practical realization that **human beings have a very definite proneness to violence**. Is this for real? Of course it is. Would Rousseau agree? No, Rousseau would not agree. You have heard of the Enlightenment, of course—you've heard of this term, the "Enlightenment"? It took place in Europe at the end of the

seventeenth and the eighteenth century. These men are coming in that time, but Hobbes is not like the rest of these men. He is more realistic, pragmatic, and pessimistic.

Ben Franklin. You know something about Ben Franklin, a **practical man**.

Madison. As opposed to Jefferson, Madison was much more practical. Madison was even what you call “**positivist**.” Madison wanted to pin everything down. The U.S. Constitution—I think he would turn over in his grave if he saw what has happened to it. But he wanted to pin everything down. Law is what we write. I don’t know what he would have ever made of this right to privacy and all these other things. I don’t think he would have gone along with it.

Darwin. Darwin is an important figure in the history of our modern culture because of this idea of **evolution**. He didn’t invent the idea of evolution. But, you know, he shocked Christianity because of—what? He really promoted the idea that **nature was nasty**—not just human nature. You know—that’s a funny thing—Christians accepted the human nature as nasty because of—what? Original sin. But the rest of nature couldn’t be nasty. That had to be nice. But Darwin pointed out it wasn’t nice. Well, wait a minute, I thought God was in charge of everything but human beings. I think human beings had freedom, but the rest of nature didn’t; therefore, the rest of nature was under God’s control, so how could it be nasty? Well, look at it. Look at what we see. You see dog-eat-dog—you do! You see a world where animals feed on each other, the whole idea of the **food chain**. You do see a world where **parasites** cause great suffering for the host. What is disease anyway? Disease really is a matter of life-forms trying to live off another life-form: bacteria, for example. Viruses, I guess, aren’t really alive; but then they come into a cell and they take a life of their own. So—nasty. So Charles Darwin really shocked the sensitivity of Christian people by showing how nasty life was—would God do that?

And secondly, showing how so much that goes on in evolution is due to **chance and randomness**. Now Catholics really didn’t care too much about that, but Protestants did, because if you ever study Calvin, Calvin condemned the whole idea of chance. Calvin was very similar to Isaac Newton in believing that everything that happened in the world happened because of something else. In the East it’s called “Karma.” It means cause and effect. Every effect has a cause. There are no accidents. There is no randomness. There is no chance. Well, evolution shows lots of things are chance.

This is going to be very important in thinking about the Incarnation of God, the Son of God. How do you work out this idea of human nature evolving? In what way has it evolved? **John Paul said we have to take evolution into consideration**. How do we figure that out? Incidentally, many people think that because of chance that has ruled God out of the picture. Well, it’s only ruled out one concept of God. But it doesn’t rule God out at all for this very reason that, for example, if you build a gambling casino and people come, you will be assured of making money. You don’t have to load the dice. You don’t have to play with the decks or fool around with the cards or do anything. Chance itself will provide you with a very rich profit. In the same way randomness in

life doesn't take away at all from the fact that **all put together, life is like a casino which produces tremendous profit.** So there is no contradiction there. But some people perceive a contradiction there.

Sigmund Freud I don't want to go into, but he was more or less **a realist, a pragmatic** person, but atheistic and had no use for religion.

Niels Bohr—quantum mechanics. I don't want to talk too much about this.

Jacques Maritain. Maritain was a great philosopher before and after World War II, a prominent Catholic. And he influenced quite a few Church leaders, especially Paul VI. He developed what's called "**Christian Humanism.**"

Merton also is such a person.

And **G. K. Chesterton**, who really belongs a little further up. Chesterton's famous statement was "Scrambled eggs are scrambled eggs." And his point was that Aquinas and that a **pragmatic person looks at what is** and affirms what it is, and doesn't go looking into some idea. **Ideas are not reality. Reality is reality.** So I just added him there, too.

So that's just a little background. Why did I do that? Well, because **we're living in a world that's split between these two different avenues.** As we get into our Scriptures, we're going to find our Scripture by and large is not written by idealists. **Our Scriptures are written by people inspired by God, but whose culture is pragmatic.** They're interested in what is.

Biblical Categories Concerning the Human Person:

First of all, in the Bible there is the word "**Flesh.**" The Hebrew word is "Basar," the Greek word, "Sarx." That's **the earthly component**, the earthly component of our nature. Now earthly is taken here quite literally, and quite rightly so, because we are made up of earthly minerals and earthly components. And our cells and our atoms existed before we did. You understand this? You are aware of this, that the atoms that make up the universe came from the sun or some other sun, and it's all part of the development of matter? So **the physical component.**

Then the second is the "**Soul**" or the "Nephesh," and the Greek word is "Psyche." Sometimes related to the watery component—that's more or less symbolism—but it's the **sensitive component, the feelings.** Our feeling nature is rooted in the nephesh.

Third, the "Spirit" or the "Ruah," the "Pneuma," in Greek. That's **the spark of life**, the breath, the wind, the air. This, in the Bible, belongs to God. Spirit belongs to God. All living things live only because God breathes his breath into them. **If it were not for the breath of God, nothing would exist—nothing living would exist—it's a living thing.**

Death is the dissolution or disintegration of these components: the spirit goes back to God whence it came. Ritual sacrifices take advantage of this and connect a petition to the returning animal spirit. So when you read about all the sacrifices in the Old Testament, that's what they were doing; they were providing a means to contact God. The soul, the nephesh that is, sinks into the pit at the center of the earth—in Hebrew this is called "Sheol." The soul cannot do anything in Sheol but wait to be reunited to a body in resurrection if, indeed, people believe in resurrection. This is not a clear belief in the Old Testament; it is mentioned here and there, now and then. Pharisees accepted it; Saducees did not. I knew a lady once who told me that she asked her rabbi whether there was life after death, and he said, "Don't think about that." So some would say, no; but some would say, yes. The flesh, of course, rotted in the grave. So that's the biblical idea. Now which side would that be on? Idealist or pragmatist? Really pragmatist. It's a pragmatist view of dealing with life.

Plato and other idealist philosophers believed that the soul or psyche shared in the eternal reality of ideas. While the Fathers of the Church did not share the concept that souls were eternal, some thought they were pre-existent, in particular Origen—I mentioned him before. What does that mean? That means that some of these folks believed that at the beginning of creation God created all the souls that would ever exist, and that later on as people were born he would assign these various souls. Now you may say, well, that's nice, but who cares? Well, the problem with that theory is, if you believe in that theory, then the reality of the person is not simply an idea in the mind of God, but the reality is really the soul, and the body is kind of just something added later. Not that it's necessarily unchristian to believe it, but it's not necessarily, let's say, a view that brings body and soul together.

Thomas Aquinas rejected this view. **For him the soul is made for the body—the human person is both together.** So now this goes into an issue that he says when a person dies the soul is not the complete person and it's still oriented toward a body, and that's why **we believe in the resurrection of the body—we don't believe in the immortality of the soul**—we believe in the resurrection of the body. It's when the body is resurrected that we can be a whole person. Therefore, the soul alone is not a person; it cannot think, reason, or choose. Now admittedly, this is Aquinas' opinion; it could be wrong. He doesn't really have access to any way of proving anything, so we have to keep that in mind.

Now God may supernaturally inform the soul, but the whole person is not there to do anything himself, is not able to do anything himself. And this has to do with the idea of **purgatory**.

The soul is united to God in two ways: naturally and supernaturally. Now the natural union between the soul and God is absolutely essential for existence. If that were ever to disappear, then that soul would no longer exist at all. However, the union which is supernatural and is called "likeness to God" represents the true, original purpose of God in creation. **God created the human nature in his own image and likeness.** From

the very beginning, the human being, even though the body may have evolved, the human being, as a being, as a distinct being, exists to have a supernatural likeness to God.

Now did this **likeness to God** actually exist in the beginning? I don't know. The story of the Garden of Eden gives the impression that Adam and Eve were created in this supernatural condition and then lost it through sin. That is a possible interpretation of history, but maybe it isn't correct. Maybe the potential was there and they failed to accept or to receive the gift of God, because as John of the Cross goes on to describe the supernatural likeness unto God, he says this is really given to us, which Aquinas agrees as well, Augustine, all of them do—this is **really given to us in Baptism**. Now it can come through other ways, of course, because God is not bound by the sacramental system; but normally and in terms of our paradigm, our sacramental paradigm, it comes in Baptism.

Now the problem is that although **Baptism forgives all sins, it does not remove all attachments to created matter**, or to the world, you might say. So the likeness to God is not really as clear as it should be. It would be like a mirror that you can't quite see well. It needs a lot of polishing. Now **what life on earth is for is the purification of the attachments**. Now **if a person dies, they can no longer do anything for their own purification**. **The idea of purgatory is that God's grace aids us, we being in a passive state, and brings about the purification for us**. So really the idea of purgatory is actually a very merciful and beautiful idea. It was turned by many people into something rather awful or forbidding.

For example, I remember in Europe I saw quite a few murals in which they would have hell and purgatory painted with great details, as if anyone knew—but, of course, they did because they read Dante! And I'll never forget this one in particular, which I really enjoyed because I had already begun exercising in a gym. And this purgatory looked just like a gym with all this equipment where you had to constantly be on a treadmill or you had to constantly lift weights or whatever it was. And it really was fantastic. If you ever go there, you have to go see this. And the interesting thing is they also talk about—they show hell. And they have big insights into hell, too, and the capital sins. For example, they show people with the sin of gluttony and they are tied to chairs and the demons are heaping up wonderful food on the table in front of them, but they can't eat any of it, because they are tied to these chairs.

But this supernatural likeness, see, has to be brought to perfection and, according to St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross, that has to be done by the grace of God even without our, you might say, initiating anything, because we can't do anything after we die. So that's what that is all about.

Now **even in this life**, of course, we can receive **supernatural graces** that might affect our minds, and we might call them "**visions**" or we might call them "**consolations**." In fact, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila go into great detail into all of these gifts we can receive from grace. But they insist that the **greatest gift of all is really infused contemplation**. Remember, I started with this? Infused contemplation

means that **the soul is united to God in such a way that the soul really becomes God.** But, of course, as John of the Cross says, **not substantially, but experiences itself,** if I dare say this, in perfect humility, being **divine and eternal by participation.** And that experience is infused contemplation. And in that experience **the intellect perceives God in a way that is totally beyond words;** therefore, none of these mystics can tell us what it is because of the very nature of words.

And that's the next part we have to get into, **the very nature of words and concepts,** because we say that **Jesus is the Word of God. What does that mean?** When we talk about the **beatific vision,** which is this supernatural likeness to God brought to perfection, we mean that **the soul perceives the Father the way that Jesus perceives the Father.** And it can do this. In fact, what Aquinas is implying the whole time is it can only do this **because Jesus made it possible in his human nature, that prior to the birth of Christ, there was no human form of divine knowledge; it didn't exist.** It wasn't just that God hadn't given it to anybody; it didn't exist! **The Incarnation of Jesus himself creates this, creates the virtues which we call the "infused virtues."** Many of these things are created, it seems to me anyway, **in the very suffering of Christ.** What is the life of Christ about? It's about **a total human experience,** and yet, at the same time, who is experiencing this? God! Who is experiencing this? **God is experiencing this!** Who is Jesus? Jesus is God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. And so it is **the very experience of Jesus that creates the grace that we receive in our lives to live life in the Spirit, or a spiritual life, or a holy life.**

Now I don't want to get too far afield. People say, "Well, now how could the Blessed Mother be conceived immaculately if all graces were really created by Christ in his human existence? Well, this goes a little bit farther into, let's say, philosophical ideas and concepts, but **God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—does not exist in time.** Jesus was incarnate in time, approximately two thousand years ago. However, **God perceives all things outside of time.** The Church, actually, believes that the Blessed Mother received the graces she did, which are called "**prevenient graces,**" which means they come **before Christ,** but they are **from Christ.** So as Pope Paul said recently in a talk on the Blessed Mother, that Mary was saved by her Son. **Mary was saved by her Son, but she enjoyed the salvation from prior to his existence on earth.** Now people say, "Well, how can that be? Well, it's not logical in our normal sense of logic, but we're always bound in our ideas, see, to sequences, temporal sequences. But **temporal sequences are not part of reality; they are just part of material existence.**

The same with space. We think of souls as going somewhere. Well, not really. Souls don't go anywhere. **A soul exists in a dimension that is not visible to us,** that is not tangible to us, **but it's not somewhere else.** So when we start asking questions about God and how God works in time, we sometimes end up with ideas that sound bizarre like that article; but actually that article **is** bizarre, but this isn't!

So back to the intellect, when the intellect starts to perceive God through this divine likeness, what it perceives is simply **ineffable;** and this is the basis of John of the Cross saying, "**Nada, nothing.**" There's nothing I can say. There's nothing I can tell you.

But, of course, as these various consolations and various experiences would pass, then what would set in would be an **enormous suffering**. When you are talking about **the dark night of the soul, you're talking about a soul that has been deprived of a light that we've never seen**—or probably we haven't seen. So you have to think about this when John of the Cross is talking about how he is suffering. He is not suffering physical pain the way we would suffer if we were sick or something. He is talking about suffering the absence of something that we don't even know exists!

And Aquinas says that **Jesus during his passion lost the beatific vision**. Aquinas believed, and it's not something that we can prove, it's not an article of faith—but **Aquinas believed that Jesus throughout his entire human existence had a likeness unto God, which was supernatural, infused into his intellect, that he knew who the Father was**. It makes sense to me because, after all, he talked about the Father all the time in ways no one else had a clue. But Thomas says in the passion this was taken away from him. And he said, if it hadn't been taken away, Jesus' passion really would not have been suffering; but since it was taken away, it is that loss that is more than anything **that he suffered, the loss of his Father's vision**, the very vision that we will have in heaven.

Now you've heard the expression that Jesus opened the gates of heaven. Well, in a sense that's like a picture, but it's not right. **Jesus is the gate of heaven, because it's in his human nature that the vision first arose that we now are given, which is called the beatific vision**. So now the saints in heaven see the Father as Jesus sees the Father. But Jesus himself, even in his earthly experience had some degree of that, although it probably was **related to his age**. **As he grew in age and wisdom** he would naturally grow in this.

But according to Aquinas it was withdrawn when he suffered. And if you remember on the cross he says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And we think of this as, well, he lost his friends and he was tortured and all this; but if you think about it, that physical suffering was nothing in comparison to the loss of the vision he had of his Father.

Question: Is it vision or relationship?

Answer: It's both. **The vision is a relation**. It's a relation, not a relationship—a relation.

So now this is speculative, I mean, we weren't there, but it's a speculation of people who have been very richly graced, who are, first of all, very bright people and they were very richly graced by God; and they have shared their insights with the Church. And so I feel that they are very profound and rewarding ideas.

So that's why these issues then of beatific vision, purgatory, limbo—**what is limbo?** Limbo is an idea because Augustine and many other Church Fathers believed literally in the story of Nicodemus, "Unless you be born again of water and the Spirit, you cannot

see the kingdom of God.” So they believed that this likeness unto God, beatific vision, was not possible for someone who was not baptized. But they said, well, God wouldn’t punish someone who through no fault of his own was never baptized if they were basically open to God and so, therefore, he would give them a natural vision—whatever that would be. And that’s where limbo came from. “Limbo” literally means “vestibule.” But that is a theory that has been dropped. I mean, **I don’t know anybody who talks about limbo anymore, so we shouldn’t either.**

Finally, damnation. I think we should talk for a moment about damnation. We have a few minutes. **What is damnation?** The word itself means—what? “Damnatio.” What does it mean? No, not separation—similar. Actually, it’s “loss”—loss—okay. Loss of—what? (Loss of closeness to God.) And loss of likeness! It’s the loss of likeness. Now the idea really is that **the real pain of damnation is not only losing the likeness, but knowing you lost it.** That’s why Augustine says that the suffering of the baptized is much worse than the suffering of the unbaptized, because the unbaptized have no way of knowing what they lost and therefore their suffering is relatively minor; in fact, he says that it’s perfectly just. People simply are rewarded for their good and punished for their bad, but they don’t really suffer the loss of the vision because they never knew what it was and had no ability to know what it was.

Anyway, these are just some thoughts, which I wanted to bring up for you to think about, you know, life, death, soul, body, nature, because we’re going to talk about how Jesus—now the Church believes—next week we’re going to start with the Creed. Be sure to read the Creed—read it every Sunday, right? Read the Creed. **What does the Church believe about Christ and how do all these ideas fit into his life and our lives?** What’s the connection? And **how can understanding Christ’s Incarnation deepen our life of prayer? How can it deepen our appreciation of Eucharist? How can it deepen our everyday experience?** Those are some questions I want you to mull over, think about. Write down some questions. Write down questions during the week, and then bring them next week at the beginning.

Question: Now you have got that the soul cannot think or choose?

Answer: Without the body. Well, **the intellect is a faculty of the soul, but it needs the body to work.**

Question: The intellect is not operative without the body?

Answer: It could be operative in a passive sense of receiving. **There are two different parts of the intellect: the agent intellect and the possible intellect.** The “possible intellect” means the part of the intellect that receives understandings, ideas. **God can give the soul understanding, but the soul can’t produce its own without the body.** That’s the way I understand Aquinas. That’s not the way I would understand Augustine or someone else. So it’s not necessarily Church teaching or anything. It has to do with the unity of the soul and the body in the human person. Another way of asking

the question is how could the intellect work without the brain? How would it work?
What would it do?

Question: The whole person can do nothing by himself. Is there something by St. Augustine that we can't do anything by ourselves except through the Holy Spirit, that we can't say "God" on our own?

Answer: He may have said that. But that's really a different issue. Here it's talking about the intellect. Can the intellect understand and judge anything without the body? That's the point. I would say, Aquinas would probably say, no; maybe Augustine would say, yes. It's not a question of whether God can give the intellect understanding—God can do that. But can the soul without the body learn anything? I don't believe so. So there's a difference. Think about that.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

¹ Max Tegmark, "Parallel Universes," *Scientific American*, Vol. 288 No. 5 (May, 2003), 41-51.