

CARITAS FELLOWSHIP
 Truth & Consequences 2:
 Beginnings & Ends
 3 February 2011



Gauguin: Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? (1898)

Worldview in Medicine:

Where did I/do people come from? What is the purpose, if any, of humanity?

Genesis 1.1-3,26-31;2.15

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light...

...26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image,
 in the image of God he created him;
 male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2.15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Matthew 22.36-40

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

C.S. Lewis

(*The Four Loves*) God is love. Again, "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us" (1 Jn 4, 10). We must not begin with mysticism, with the creature's love for God, or with the wonderful foretastes of fruition of God vouchsafed to some in their earthly life. We begin at the real beginning, with love as the Divine energy. This primal

love is Gift-love. In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic speculation. It is essential. Without it we can hardly avoid the conception of what I can only call a “managerial” God; a Being whose function or nature is to “run” the universe, who stands to it as a head-master to a school or a hotelier to a hotel. But to be sovereign of the universe is no great matter to God. In Himself, at home in “the land of the Trinity,” he is Sovereign of a far greater realm. We must keep always before our eyes that vision of Lady Julian’s in which God carried in His hand a little object like a nut, and that nut was “all that is made.” God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them... If I may dare the biological image, God is a “host” who deliberately creates His own parasites; causes us to be that we may exploit and “take advantage of” Him. Herein is love. This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves.

(The Weight of Glory) There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat.

Benedict XVI

The universe is not the result of chance, as some would like to make us believe. In contemplating it, we are asked to interpret in it something profound; the wisdom of the Creator, the inexhaustible creativity of God, his infinite love for us.

We must not let our minds be limited by theories that always go only so far and that – at a close look – are far from competing with faith but do not succeed in explaining the ultimate meaning of reality. We cannot but perceive in the beauty of the world, its mystery, its greatness and its rationality, the eternal rationality; nor can we dispense with its guidance to the one God, Creator of Heaven and of earth.

Baltimore Catechism

1. Who made us?

God made us.

In the beginning, God created heaven and earth. (Genesis 1:1)

2. Who is God?

God is the Supreme Being, infinitely perfect, who made all things and keeps them in existence.

In him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)

3. Why did God make us?

God made us to show forth His goodness and to share with us His everlasting happiness in heaven.

Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him. (I Corinthians 2:9)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

Westminster Confession of Faith, Shorter Catechism

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Gaudium et Spes

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.

St. Augustine of Hippo

(Confessions) You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.

(de Trinitate) ...Let us direct our attention to those three things which we fancy we have found. We are not yet speaking of heavenly things, nor yet of God the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, but of that inadequate image, which yet is an image, that is, man; for our feeble mind perhaps can gaze upon this more familiarly and more easily. Well then, when I, who make this inquiry, love anything, there are three things concerned—myself, and that which I love, and love itself. For I do not love, except I love a lover; for there is no love where nothing is loved. Therefore there are three things—he who loves, and that which is loved, and love.

Michael Crichton

You cannot eliminate religion from the psyche of mankind. If you suppress it in one form, it merely re-emerges in another form. You can not believe in God, but you still have to believe in something that gives meaning to your life, and shapes your sense of the world. Such a belief is religious.

Today, one of the most powerful religions in the Western World is environmentalism. Environmentalism seems to be the religion of choice for urban atheists. Why do I say it's a religion? Well, just look at the beliefs. If you look carefully, you see that environmentalism is in fact a perfect 21st century remapping of traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs and myths.

There's an initial Eden, a paradise, a state of grace and unity with nature, there's a fall from grace into a state of pollution as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge, and as a result of our actions there is a judgment day coming for us all. We are all energy sinners, doomed to die, unless we seek salvation, which is now called sustainability. Sustainability is salvation in the church of the environment. Just as organic food is its communion, that pesticide-free wafer that the right people with the right beliefs, imbibe.

Peter Kreeft

Man's *dignity* rests on his *destiny*. He is not just from the dust and for the dust, but from God and for God.

Even the theory of evolution agrees with the Genesis account in seeing man as the culmination of the natural process. We naturally wonder what is the point and purpose of the whole universe; the answer is not just its gases and galaxies, but the man who asks that question. The galaxies are only the stage, the setting for the play; we are the actors.

The universe is a great cathedral. The stars and seas are God's holy pictures on the walls to raise the mind of man to worship and adore his Creator. Without God the cathedral loses its meaning, its dignity, and its destiny. So does man the worshipper.

Man has value and dignity because he is a holy thing, like the Eucharist. In man too, Christ is truly hidden.

Blaise Pascal

"All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions. However different the means they employ, they all strive towards this goal. The reason why some go to war and some do not is the same desire in both, but interpreted in different ways. The will never takes the least step except to that end. This is the motive of every act of every man, including those who go and hang themselves..."

"All men complain: princes, subjects, nobles, commoners, old, young, strong, weak, learned, ignorant, healthy, sick, in every country, at every time, of all ages, and all conditions... What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."

"God alone is man's true good, and since man abandoned him it is a strange fact that nothing in nature has been found to take his place... Since losing his true good, man is capable of finding it in anything even his own destruction."

Doug MacManaman

The end or purpose of life will ultimately be a question of existing most fully. The purpose of my life is to exist most fully not as a plant or animal would, but as a human person would. To exist most fully is to exist most fully as a being capable of knowing and loving. And so the purpose of life will have to do with knowing something and loving something, since knowledge and love distinguish me from brute animal ~ and it is the purpose of human life (not animal life) that we are searching for. The purpose of an animal's life will also be act, or the perfection of its existence. Since the animal does not have the power of intellectual knowledge and will, its perfection will consist in the perfection of its sentient nature.

And so to put it very simply, the purpose of a horse's life is to be a horse most fully and completely, by doing "horsy" things, eating the foods horses eat, becoming as strong as a horse can be, etc.. Man is specifically different than a horse or any other brute animal in that he has the ability to think and will. Man's perfection will consist in knowing and willing the highest object of his knowledge. But what does man know? He knows beings. Therefore, the purpose of human life will be to come to know and love the highest being. And the highest being can only be that being whose essence is "to be" (Ipsum Esse, or God). The purpose of life, therefore, is to know and love God.