

The Confessor's Tongue for April 25, 2010

Fourth Sunday of Pascha: Paralytic

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great

Abba Anthony said, "Just as fish die if they stay too long out of water, so the monks who loiter outside their cells or pass their time with men of the world lose the intensity of inner peace. So like a fish going towards the sea, we must hurry to reach our cell, for fear that if we delay outside we will lose our interior watchfulness."

Saying 10 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: The monk has a special vocation, to leave the world and all ties thereto and to live separated from the affairs of the world so he can devote himself to prayer. In the desert, the advice to monks was always to "stay in your cell" for "your cell will teach you everything." Even in the desert, the monk was tempted to "make the rounds", to "hang out" with other monks, to fall into idle chatter. Even worse was the monk who was frequently absent for business in town. The canons of the Church affirm the special vocation of the monk; he is to remain in his monastery, subject to his bishop, engaged in prayer and whatever work he is given. To be outside for long is to be in the wrong environment and to run a serious spiritual risk.

Likewise, the first (but not only) place of a Christian in the world is the Church. The natural expectation she has of all Christians is that they gather every Lord's Day in the Lord's house. To be voluntarily absent for three or more weeks in a row is to excommunicate oneself from the Church. If we are absent for long, we begin to die spiritually. Just as the employee goes to work every day appointed for him by his employer, so the Christian sets aside the time asked of him by his Lord.

In the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a third-century document containing material still more ancient, Christians are urged to "assemble yourselves together every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the Lord's house....And on the day of our Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God who made the universe by Jesus, and sent him to us, and condescended to let him suffer, and raised Him from the dead" (Bk 2.59). This was written for laity in the world who had to work six days a week, not for monks! Of course, it was written long before the coming of our many addicting, time-wasting technologies which serve well to kill time but have little eternal value.

Most parishes do not even bother to try to serve daily services, fearing that no one would come. But certainly it is not too much for our Lord who made us and died for us to ask that we be present at the Vigil for two hours Saturday evening (especially if we plan to go to Holy Communion), the Hours and Divine Liturgy for two hours Sunday morning, and perhaps an hour at a midweek service? Altogether, that would represent five hours a week in church of the 168 given to us each week, or 2.9% of our time. Take another

five hours for prayer and reading at home, including time preparing for Communion, and you have ten hours, just under 6% of our time each week. Even if we exclude from our calculations eight hours per night for sleep, that ten hours still represents only 8.9% of our waking time, not even a 'tithe' offered to God. Even if you attended all the services here each week (Vigil, Liturgy, 3 Vespers, 5 Matins—about 12 hours) and spent four more at home, that 16 hours would still be but 9.5% of your total time each week and 14% of your waking time (if sleeping 8 hours)—not a lot to ask when eternity is at stake.

Sometimes we wonder why our spiritual lives are weak and why we make little progress. The answer may well be how little time we devote to preparing for eternity. If nearly all our time is spent in the world engaged in worldly activities, how can we expect to become fit for heaven? Many of us would be ashamed to see how much time we spend each week watching television or movies, playing sports or video games, reading novels or newspapers or surfing the web compared to how much time we spend on the One we call our Lord.

Since this life is preparation for the life to come, let us, for a moment, compare our Christian practice with college, which is popularly thought to prepare us for adult life 'in the real world'. How likely would you be to graduate if, while signed up for a full load (12-15 credits), you attended five hours of class (of the 12-15) a week and studied five more hours (usually 2-3 hours of study outside of class are required for each hour spent in class, so 24-60 would be needed) for a total of ten spent each week on college? In other words, you skip half your classes and study only 20% of the recommended minimum. Good luck. As Christians, how can we expect progress and success in spiritual life and entrance into the Kingdom if we (grudgingly) give God but two or three hours a week? Sunday Liturgy alone with a hurried "our Father" as we fall into bed each night won't cut it.

Moreover, we notice that it is not just time out of the cell that is a threat to the monk but time spent with 'men of the world,' or worldly people. Bad company corrupts good morals. Our choice of friends plays a decisive role in the quality of our spiritual life, as we become like those with whom we spend time and open ourselves too. If most or much of our time is spent with people who drink too much, do drugs, doubt God, scoff, and otherwise live sinful lives, it should not surprise us if we find ourselves doing such things too and that our love for God and His people and Church is growing cold.

Our life is found in Christ and His Body, the Church. As Christians, that is our natural environment (through baptism) just as a fish lives in the water. May we all be found more commonly in our natural element for the salvation of our souls!

Fr. Justin Frederick

From Touchstone Magazine
A Review of the Book "Hitler's Ethic: the Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress"

Reviewed by Joe Keysor

This book provides an invaluable antidote to fuzzy thinking about the Hitler-Darwin link and the Nazi dictator's relation to Christianity. Neither an attack on Darwinism nor a defense of Christianity, it emphasizes that Hitler was neither an nihilist who delighted only in destruction, nor a cynical opportunist, but that he had a real system of ethics in which conventional evils became right, just, and good, if only they served the evolutionary advance of the human race.

"Hitler was not a moral monstrosity who delighted in doing what he knew to be evil, but a well-intentioned ideologue, thinking himself a benefactor of the human race."

Weikart does not "claim in this book to provide a complete explanation for the Nazi ideology," and he recognizes that there were significant ideological elements in Nazism that preceded Darwinism; but, relying on extensive quotes from Hitler himself (primarily from his speeches and writings but also from conversational remarks generally accepted by scholars), he establishes Hitler's belief in the evolutionary origins of man and in the concept of life as the progress and development of higher life forms (including human life) through a pitiless struggle in which the strong survive and the weak die.

Hitler regard Aryans as the vanguard of evolutionary development, so to protect the German "race" and lead it to world domination was to ensure the evolutionary advance of humanity. Whatever helped toward this goal was right and moral; whatever hindered it was wrong and immoral. As Weikart explains,

Evolutionary ethics underlay or influenced almost every major feature of Nazi policy: eugenics (i.e. measures to improve human heredity, including compulsory sterilization), euthanasia, racism, population expansion, offensive warfare, and racial extermination. The drive to foster evolutionary progress—and to avoid biological degeneration—was fundamental to Hitler's ideology and policies.

Hitler opposed homosexuality, abortion (by healthy German women at least), and birth control, not because they violated any divine law, but because they interfered with the growth and progress of the German race. His imperialism was intended to ensure the domination of those highest on the evolutionary scale. Extermination or enslavement of the weak was meant to protect and benefit those best suited to lead.

Weikart concludes that Hitler was not a moral monstrosity who delighted in doing what he knew to be evil, but a well-intentioned ideologue, thinking himself a benefactor of the human race—he had a high aim and purpose, believing he could cleanse the world, purify it, and make it a better place. He is

careful to point out, however, that "the purpose of my analysis of Hitler's ethic is by no means to exonerate him for his crimes against humanity by explaining that he really had 'good intentions.' On the contrary, the point is that evil can be—and often is—perpetrated under the guise of doing good."

A significant feature of the book is its demonstration that Hitler's ideas were well entrenched in influential segments of German society before Hitler came to power in 1933. Though this situation was described much more thoroughly in Weikart's earlier book, *From Darwin to Hitler*, this second book by itself provides ample documentation of the fact that Hitler's ideas were not just his own inventions or eccentricities.

Also worth noting is Weikart's observation that historians of science are increasingly reluctant to dismiss Nazi racial science as mere pseudoscience. If we define legitimate science as "what most scientists accept as valid at any given time, even if later those ideas are shown to be mistaken," then applying the label "pseudoscience" to Nazi racial theories may be anachronistic. Many authoritative and respected medical professors, doctors, educators, biologists, and anthropologists of the time accepted racism and other aspects of Hitler's program as scientifically valid....

Details in the book provide disquieting insights into our own society: Darwinism mandated in the schools, babies considered not fully human and hence liable to be killed for some period even after they are born, health care for certain people considered a waste of resources, mercy killing, the belief that we are only animals and that human ethics should therefore be derived from Darwinism—these remind us that the spirit animating Hitler and his many followers did not vanish in 1945.

This book will make it more difficult to reduce Hitler to merely a criminal lunatic or a power-hungry madman. It shows that he was instead a variety of moralist with a mission, an ethic, a goal, and an ideal—a man of strong principles that, in his mind, justified lying, murder, hatred, cruelty, an oppression for the good of humanity. These meshed seamlessly with, and to a great extent emerged from, a theory of life as the result of amoral evolutionary struggle.

Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress, by Richard Weikart, Palgrave Macmillian 2009 (254 pages). Reviewed in *Touchstone Magazine*, March/April 2010

Upcoming Events 2010

13 May, Thursday, Holy Ascension
22 May Saturday, 10:00 a.m. Baptisms
23 May Sunday, Holy Pentecost
30 May, Sunday, Pre-Memorial Day Picnic, 3:00 p.m.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!