

rable decency and that the art, literature, and philosophy they create often possess considerable merit. Yet prudent conservatives will also recognize that the merits of such works usually reflect an unacknowledged indebtedness to religious traditions in which they were produced.

Even as they credit the achievements of individual atheists, prudent conservatives will remember that the emergence of atheism as a respectable perspective has “dis-integrated our common intellectual life.”<sup>7</sup> And when conservatives acknowledge the rectitude of particular atheists, they will do so conscious that such individuals are what Coleridge labeled as “men who are better than their principles.” The deficiencies of such men’s principles will always leave them powerless to respond to critics who challenge the incoherence of their morality. Even if the deficiencies of a godless morality do not always vitiate the lives of its exponents, they make it nearly impossible for them to inculcate their morality in the next generation. No wonder that the rigid secular moralism of the late Victorians for which Stephen was spokesman dissolved in a riot of promiscuity among their Bloomsbury offspring.

A secularized culture may enjoy its moments of political harmony and may thrill to exhibitions of artistic brilliance; it may even occasionally witness instances of noble self-sacrifice. But in a culture which has lost its religious moorings, the moments of redeeming light must grow ever more fugitive and aberrant. The hope and moral commitment essential to a cultural health which endures across generations, defying the shadow of mortality, must finally depend upon faith and worship. Without God, a Thomas Hardy or a Wallace Stevens may now and then provide a brief instant of clarity and illumination. But then the night returns, leaving us in deeper despair than before. In the end, we must either surrender ourselves to the dark and frigid abyss or bow in reverent worship before the Father of lights: “Our peace in his will.”

1. *Werke*, XX, 324. 2. Lawrence M. Krauss, *Atom: An Odyssey from the Big Bang to Life on Earth and Beyond* (Boston, 2001) 281-282. 3. *The Adolescent*, Part 3, Chapter 7, III (1874; New York, 1971) 472. 4. Krauss, *Atom*, 227. 5. *Religion* (Oxford, 1982) 214-215. 6. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians* (New York, 1986) 27. 7. James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore, 1985) 263.

## *Thesis: Antithesis*

*Jude P. Dougherty*

WHATEVER THE PRESUPPOSITIONS of the conservative mind, those of the liberal mind

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with which it is rightly contrasted are clearly identifiable. The remote antecedents of the liberal mind are to be found in the Enlightenment, Anglo-French and German, and in its manifest antipathy

self-assertion. Fragmentation, that is, the idolatry of the individual will, is detrimental to a free people. Essentially it is a refusal to recognize truth. What is truth, a fragmented society asks. Who guarantees that anything is certain? Do I decide truth? Am I my own god?

The conservative finds in Catholic Christianity the answers to the primary questions that concern him regarding freedom and order: What is freedom *for*? Why are we free? What is the truth of the human person? How can we be certain of truth? How can we have authentic community?

Catholic Christianity boldly answers that freedom is living in Christ. The freedom God gives us is true freedom, bestowed in love. With his grace, we are free to grow in virtue, so that we can gradually put aside our enslaving selfish and distorted passions, thus seeing more clearly the beauty of Christ.

Catholic Christianity offers the conservative a real guarantee of truth, a relief from the modernist idolatry of individualism and the impossible, crushing

burden of myself as my own god. Christ has given us his Church, which is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—the Body of Christ, containing perfect truth and unity. Authority comes from no human source but from Christ himself.

As Christ promised us, he has not left us orphans but has given us his Holy Spirit, who guides us in every moment. Each day, if we choose, we can participate in the sacrament of the eucharist, when Christ gives us, fully and completely, under the appearance of bread and wine, his very body, blood, soul, and divinity. In the eucharist God himself breaks the radical barrier between divine and human and comes to live in us. He offers us not a symbol of himself but himself in stunning reality.

In partaking of his body in communion, we are joined in the universal community of the Church, by which Father, Son, and Spirit link us with all those baptized, living and dead. The conservative who seeks the final answer to freedom and order in community will find it here.

## *Beyond the Frozen Void*

*Bryce Christensen*

THOUGH SHREWD ENOUGH to hide a dark perspective from public view, Marx's gifted collaborator, Friedrich Engels, anticipated a grim ending for the proletarian paradise he promised his followers. Hence, despite his political optimism for the coming century, he confessed a cos-

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mic hopelessness for the coming eons:

Millions of years may come and go, hundreds of thousands of generations may be born and die; but inexorably the time comes when the sun exhausts itself and its warmth is no longer sufficient to melt the ice coming from the poles...and finally there is not enough warmth for life itself. Gradually, the last traces of life disappear and the earth becomes a dead, frozen globe, like the moon.<sup>1</sup>