

The *Born-Alive Infants Protection Act* had a simple goal—to guarantee for any infant who survived an abortion that he or she would receive the same kind of medical treatment as any otherwise-born infant. In doing so, it established the premise that the infant-surviving-an-abortion was just as much a human being worthy of the law's protection (and our solicitude) as was the infant born by other means. It did not, obviously, roll back the "right" to abortion. However, it put a premise in place in federal law that can be used to teach the American public, and a legal principle that can be used, as Arkes shows, to justly and appropriately bring federal oversight to bear on the practice of abortion. One of the great secrets of the abortion industry is that abortion clinics are subject to less regulation than are veterinary clinics. However, using the *Born-Alive Infants Protection Act*, federal agencies can, and should, be inquiring into the practices of any hospital or clinic that performs abortions. This will save some lives, it will expose the abortion industry to scrutiny, and it may cause Americans to think. Even if it saves merely a few lives, as Arkes remarks "the whole world is contained in those lives."

But the possible result of this "modest first step" is much greater. If used by President Bush and pro-life successors, it can begin to roll back the unchecked abortion license by building on the "modest" idea that the unborn is a human being, equal to all others, and worthy of the state's interest.

Hadley Arkes has written a book of much erudition and wit. It is a sobering story, but far from a hopeless one. Arkes's refutation of the "right to choose" is philosophically sophisticated and devastating. We can only hope that all people of good will, particularly those confused over the nature of rights and of the abortion "right" in particular, will take notice.

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**Dawkins, Richard.** *A Devil's Chaplain: Reflections on Hope, Lies, Science, and Love.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003. viii + 264 pp. Index. American edition published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2003.

*A Devil's Chaplain* is a collection of thirty-two essays, newspaper articles, eulogies, book reviews, and book forewords that spans the breadth of Dawkins's professional career, from the late 1970s until now. (Henceforth, they all will be referred to as "essays.") The collection is divided into seven sections according to theme, each section having a short introductory overview by Dawkins. The book also has an autobiographical and personal character that is largely expressed in the last two sections, one titled "There Is All Africa and Her Prodigies in Us" that consist of several forewords to books about Africa—it turns out that Dawkins, who is now Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, spent his early childhood years in Kenya—and another titled "A Prayer for My Daughter." Aside from the section overviews, an introductory essay explaining the origin of the book's title (*A Devil's Chaplain*<sup>1</sup>), and an open memorandum to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, there is little new material here; nearly all of the essays have been previously published. The utility of compiling and publishing the seven sections, however, is that the reader

<sup>1</sup>Charles Darwin himself coined the phrase in a letter to his friend Joseph Hooker when he wrote: "What a book a Devil's Chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low and horridly cruel works of nature" (8), no citation given. In this first essay, Dawkins elaborates on how nature really is like this (blundering, wasteful, cruel), and how "[humans] are the only island of refuge from the implications of the Devil's Chaplain: from cruelty, and the clumsy, blundering waste" (11). He writes that the Devil's Chaplain might conclude that humans have "the biggest gifts of all: the gift of understanding the ruthlessly cruel process that gave us all existence; the gift of revulsion against its implications." (12). There is not a hint of a belief in the goodness of nature here.

sees an overview of Dawkins's work along with a bit of personal perspective.

Section 1 contains an essay titled "Gaps in the Mind" that begins with the delightful argument that the evolutionary lineage connecting humans with chimpanzees is similar to a "ring species" such as the single Herring Gull/Lesser Black-backed Gull ring species, whose members are "linked by a continuous series of interbreeding colleagues all the way around the world" (22). In this example, the difference between the gull ring and the human/chimp ring is that, in our case, all of the interbreeding intermediates are now extinct, and our ring extends through time rather than geographical space. This is an interesting way for us to visualize our connectedness with other apes and, by extension, with other species on earth. Unfortunately, Dawkins turns this image into the nightmarish suggestion that there is nothing ethically wrong with creating a human/chimpanzee hybrid. Thus, delightful image becomes nightmarish suggestion.

The reflection on bioethical issues continues in the next essay of section 1 ("Science, Genetics and Ethics: Memo for Tony Blair"). Dawkins weighs in on such ethical issues as abortion (in favor of it), human embryonic stem cell research (ditto), and human cloning (ditto again). In his discussion of cloning, he states that "a placenta is a true clone of a baby" (35)—an absurdly reductionistic statement that equates a human baby with a collection of tissues. The price Dawkins will pay for writing in this manner is that no one will take him seriously on ethical issues, and some will question his understanding of biology.

In the essay "Darwin Triumphant" in section 2, Dawkins, a long adversary of Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould (now deceased), seems to reverse his earlier position that evolution can occur only gradually, that is, through the accumulation of minor genetic changes over eons. He writes: "I find it plausible, for instance, that the invention of segmentation [of animal bodies, an important event in evolutionary history] occurred in a single macromutational leap" (86). It is this apparent reversal,

and similar ones expressed in his book *Climbing Mount Improbable* (1996), that prompted Gould to write: "As a former anathamee, I can only cheer from the sidelines and say 'bravo and welcome.'"<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, at the same time that Dawkins is conceding the possibility of a role for macromutational events in evolutionary history, he is also displaying great naïveté about the complexity of living organisms. He writes: "There exists a recipe for transforming the genome of a human into the genome of a hippo or into the genome of any other animal" (83) and further: "an embryologist of [the year] 2050 will feed the genome of an unknown animal into a computer, and the computer will simulate an embryology that will culminate in a full rendering of the adult animal" (113).

Dawkins is a truly gifted writer. He has the ability to craft a metaphor that perfectly explains the concept he is trying to communicate. For example, in an essay on memes<sup>3</sup> titled "Chinese Junk and Chinese Whispers" in section 3, he brilliantly explains the difference between gene-based inheritance and so-called Lamarckian inheritance by comparing two children's activities: constructing an origami Chinese junk and playing the game of Chinese Whispers (in which each child in a line of children whispers a phrase to the next in line). But Dawkins also uses his gift to attack the Catholic Church and religion as a whole. He does this in three essays: "Viruses of the Mind," in which he defines Roman Catholicism as a "gang" of "mind viruses" (137); "The Great Convergence," in which he attacks scientists and theologians who are trying to forge a coming-together of science and religion; and "Time to Stand Up," in which he blames the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on belief in an afterlife, and states that Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitism "owed

<sup>2</sup>Stephen J. Gould, "Self-Help for a Hedgehog Stuck on a Molehill," *Evolution* 51.3 (June 1997): 1020–1023.

<sup>3</sup>"Meme" is a term that Dawkins himself invented. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a meme as a "self-replicating element of culture, passed on by imitation."

a lot to his never-renounced Roman Catholicism" (158). He also denies the possibility that science and religion can occupy "separate magisteria," a view Gould put forth in his book *Rocks of Ages* (1999). After asserting that Catholics' naive propensity to believe in mysteries (transubstantiation, the Virgin birth) allows perpetuation of these beliefs both vertically (through generations) and horizontally (to unrelated contemporaries), Dawkins writes:

And now to the point. Is it possible that some religious doctrines are favored not *in spite of* being ridiculous but precisely *because* they are ridiculous? Any wimp in religion could believe that bread *symbolically* represents the body of Christ, but it takes a real, red-blooded Catholic to believe something as daft as the transubstantiation. If you can believe that you can believe anything, and ... these people are trained to see that as a virtue. (141, original emphasis).

By describing Catholics as "these people," however, Dawkins unwisely excludes them from his reading audience. This serves to mute his book's impact.

Section 4 is a series of eulogies or obituaries Dawkins gave or wrote for deceased friends (novelist Douglas Adams, evolutionary biologist W. D. Hamilton, and writer John Diamond). Section 5 presents his reviews of several of Gould's books, including *Ever Since Darwin* (1978), *Hen's Teeth and Horses' Toes* (1983), *Wonderful Life* (1989), and *Full House* (1996). In his review of *Full House*, Dawkins explains why he believes that evolution is progressive. He argues against Gould's view that the apparent progressivity of evolution is an illusion—a statistical anomaly much like the demise of the 0.400 hitting average in baseball—arguing instead that "the evolution of complex, many-parted adaptations [in organisms] must be progressive" (212). He invokes the "coevolutionary arms race" as one of the "main driving forces for progressive evolution" (213), suggests that the embryological *bauplän* (body plan) is a myth (216), and argues that major events in evolutionary history such as the origina-

tion of chromosomes, multicellularity, and segmentation "constitute genuinely progressive improvements" and as such can be labeled progressive (216–217). But in the process, he commits a fallacy that Gould warns us against and Dawkins himself recognizes: giving "undue weight to new arrivals on the geological scene" (209). Indeed, from our human vantage point, we see only the *newcomers* in each historical era so that, for example, "the arrival of eucaryotes looks more progressive than it really is because of the failure to depict the persisting hordes of procaryotes" (209). In other words, looking back, we tend to incorrectly see these major evolutionary events as milestones in a progressive process.

In conclusion, *A Devil's Chaplain* gives the reader a cross-sectional view of Dawkins's thinking on a range of topics, from biology to ethics to religion. It provides an introduction to the world according to Dawkins, and shows us that his ideas about genes, inheritance, and evolution have not changed much since the 1970s. Indeed, his ideas have not kept pace with discoveries in biology, which reveal that epigenetic factors play important roles in biological development, inheritance, and evolution. He continues to promote a reductionistic view of nature. But, most importantly, although he is a highly talented writer, he uses his talent to attack religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular.

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Guevin, Benedict M. *Christian Anthropology and Sexual Ethics*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002. xxx + 210 pp. Bibliography. Indexes.

This book is not for the fainthearted or for those satisfied with mediocrity. The author challenges the reader to ponder deeply