they encourage us to explore bioethical issues in our own tradition and to be willing to listen to insights from others. Even if Catholicism ultimately rejects such insights, the Church's understanding of the person, bioethics, and her own mission will deepen in the process.

Adorno's conclusion on international policy will resonate with all who recognize the existence, importance, and value of human dignity:

> Precisely because bioethics is close to the most cherished aspirations of people, and since people are essentially the same in the United States and in Guinea, in France and Japan, it is not that difficult to identify some minimal standards that are valid worldwide. Human dignity plays in this regard a unifying role by reminding us that there are certain things that should not be done to anybody, anywhere (negative requirement) and that all human beings are entitled to some basic goods (positive requirement). From this perspective, human dignity is not only the ultimate conceptual ground for the recognition of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, but also the most valuable bridge between cultures that we have (141).

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The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning

by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

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Many books reaffirm religious faith despite attacks waged in the name of science. *The Great Partnership*, by contrast, *unites* science and religion, showing how understanding the meaning of our lives depends on their compatibility.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks was chief rabbi of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013.The important distinction he makes at the outset of the book is this: "Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts things together to see what they mean" (2). Hence we need *both* religion and science. "They are the two essential perspectives that allow us to see the universe" (2). Sacks frequently notes the ways in which contemporary atheists miss that fundamental compatibility; the straw men they knock down are nothing like the unified, coherent perception that derives from valuing both religion and science.

The Great Partnership is organized in three major parts: (1) God and the search for meaning, (2) why it matters, and (3) faith and its challenges. Sacks opens with two distinct stories of creation, one scientific and the other religious. He then explains that the different interpretations are not about scientific facts but about meaning. "The search for God is the search for meaning. The discovery of God is the discovery of meaning. … To be human is to ask the question 'why?'" (25). The opposition between atheism and religious belief is established very clearly: "Only something or someone outside the universe can give meaning to the universe. Only belief in a transcendental God can render human existence other than tragic" (30). Sacks goes on to say that *proving* anything is not the point, because "meaning is always a matter of interpretation" (32). "Science does not yield meanings, nor does it prove the absence of meanings" (38). An individual can live without meaning, but a society cannot. Sacks cites the example of Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, who retained an element of human freedom and

dignity in the face of horrible dehumanization by recognizing that "the search for meaning constitutes our humanity" (37).

Building from the principle that science takes things apart, and religion puts things together, Sacks notes that the left and right hemispheres of the brain tend to specialize in these two activities, respectively. The theme of left-brain and right-brain cultures recurs throughout the book. Sacks notes that the logic and abstract conceptualization of left-brain thinking is indicative of the dominant thought processes of Greek philosophy, and he buttresses his argument with examples from ancient Israel and China and from studies of gender differences. The faith of the early Hebrews, on the other hand, was oriented more toward the intuitive right-brain: "The key acts of the mind—believing, desiring, intending, choosing—have to do with the way the individual seeks to interact with the world" (52). The differences echo the difference between argument and narrative, between the systematic and the empathic, and between science and religion.

Sacks describes how Christianity blended the ancient Jewish faith with Western Greek culture. First, he stresses that Jesus was a Jew who spoke Aramaic and taught within a culture foreign to Greek modes of thought. "Greek is a language into which the personal religious background of Jesus does not go" (61). And yet Greek is the language in which the New Testament was written. Sacks reaches the remarkable conclusion that Christianity is "a religion whose sacred texts are written in what to its founder would have been a foreign and largely unintelligible language" (61). He stresses that Western civilization developed from this most unusual synthesis between Athens and Jerusalem, and identifies a pervasive misunderstanding "that science and philosophy on the one hand, and religion on the other, belong to the same universe of discourse" (62). He proceeds by contrasting Greek and Hebrew interpretations of key points in the Bible.

Jumping to the seventeenth century, Sacks describes the divorce between science and religion that took place when "the great arch stretching from Jerusalem to Athens began to crumble" (71). Philosophers began seeking "in the religious life the kind of certainty that belongs to philosophy and science. But it is not to be found. Between God and man there is moral loyalty, not scientific certainty" (73). Topics like proving the existence of God were never a feature of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Judaic faith was exempt from the turmoil that stretched from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, which spelled the "eclipse of the Greek rationalist tradition" in Europe, because Judaism recognized that "in the bible, people talk *to* God, not *about* God" (72).

Next, Sacks points out an emerging new synthesis based on the recognition that *meaning*, which lives in relationships, exists quite independently of philosophy and science. He is not pessimistic about the break between science and religion, and concludes the chapter by saying that "once we recognize their difference we can move on, no longer thinking of science and religion as friends who became enemies" (77). In this way, we can build a home "that is neither blind nor deaf to the beauty of the other as the living trace of the living God" (77).

Sacks also describes the personal trajectory that led him through a period of atheism in his early life to become chief rabbi of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. To the Christian reader, this is a wonderful insight into a journey that made religious faith the central focus of his life. "*Faith is not certainty. It is the courage to live with uncertainty*" (97, original emphasis). At the conclusion, Rabbi Sacks marvels at "the faith God must have had in humankind to place us here as guardians of the vastness and splendor of the universe. We exist because of God's faith in us" (98).

The second part of the book poses the question, "When we lose God, what else do we lose?" (101). Sacks asserts that people do not adamantly reject religion but gradually drift away from it, no longer considering it relevant. Since religion is rooted in relationships, both with God and with each other, Sacks traces the transition from the religious to the secular through a shift in focus from *we* to *I*. This change is characterized by the loss of five key aspects of relationships: "belief in human

dignity and the sanctity of life," the sense of citizenship and commitment to the common good, morality, marriage, and "the possibility of a meaningful life" (102, 103, 104).

Sacks brilliantly summarizes this decline into secularism through the contributions made by various authors, including Darwin, Freud, Marx, and Hitler. Individual chapters insightfully assemble the components that mark the decay of our sense of human dignity and the shifts in our understanding of the politics of freedom, morality, relationships, and a meaningful life in modern society.

After illustrating the dehumanizing effect of secularism, Sacks turns his attention to thinkers who searched for meaning in life, drawing from sources as diverse as Holocaust survivors, Tolstoy, the Book of Ecclesiastes, Camus, and others. He notes the recurring use of "I" by the despairing, and contrasts that with those who invest in building relationships: "Instinctively … they knew that Tolstoy's life made sense in a way that Camus's did not" (204).

Sacks shares an insight about Darwinism that has also been enunciated by Arthur Peacocke, John Polkinghorne, and John Haught: Darwinism actually supports creation by God. "This is Darwin's wondrous discovery: *the Creator made creation creative*" (216). "The story told by modern cosmology and Darwinian biology is wondrous almost beyond belief. It tells of a universe astonishingly precisely calibrated for the … possibility of life. … Finally one life form appeared, capable of standing outside its biological drives for long enough to become self-conscious of itself and the sheer improbability of its own existence, and sensing in all of this a vast intelligence that set it in motion, and a caring presence that brought it into being in love" (231–232).

A later chapter addresses the problem of evil. Sacks cites three pathways by which people interpret evil, which "have in common … that they are all, ultimately *philosophies of acceptance*. Abrahamic monotheism is not a religion of acceptance. It is a religion of protest. It does not *try* to vindicate the suffering of the world" (240). Thus, Sacks says, it accepts both sides of the contradiction—If God exists, how can evil exist?—and he asserts that the entire discipline of theodicy, "the vindication of God's goodness in the face of evil, … is inapplicable to the Hebrew Bible " (240). He says that we struggle with this because our thinking is built on Greek principles of logic, and the meaning of the Bible is lost in translation. "[Faith] feels both sides of the contradiction. God exists *and* evil exists. The more powerfully I feel the existence of God, the more strongly I protest the existence of evil" (241).

Sacks identifies five specific hazards that can lead people to do great evil in the name of religion: (1) hard texts, (2) dualism, (3) messianic politics, (4) the pursuit of power, and (5) the inability to see that there is more than one perspective on reality. He examines each in turn. Fundamentalism maintains that "we can move *from text to application without interpretation*" (252, original emphasis). Sacks points out that both atheists and fundamentalists make exactly the same mistake: reading sacred texts literally. Another danger, believing that only your own vision has validity, "is as likely to be found among the new atheists as among religious fundamentalists" (263). Fortunately, there is a pathway out: "We need a strong, vigorous, challenging dialogue between religion and science. … Bad things happen when religion ceases to hold itself answerable to empirical reality, when it creates devastation and cruelty on Earth for the sake of salvation in heaven. And bad things happen when science declares itself the last word on the human condition" (265). Sacks concludes that the answer is not "no religion" but "the critical dialog between religion and science" (266).

In the final chapter, "Why God?," Sacks assembles all the pieces in order to contemplate the wondrous simplicity of the universe. Sacks presents a brief summary about cosmology, draws attention to the anthropic coincidences, and explains the absurdity of the multiverse, which is essentially a glib rationalization that allows scientists to hold onto their atheism. It violates Ockham's Razor, a fundamental principle that prevents festooning a theory with unobservable complexities: "The rule of logic

known as Ockham's Razor—do not multiply unnecessary entities—would seem to favor a single unprovable God over an infinity of unprovable universes." As a further example, Sacks notes the suggestion that life arrived from Mars, and explains, "Since no trace of life has yet been found on mars, this too sounds like replacing one improbability with another." Human beings are just too complicated "to be accounted for on reductive, materialist, Darwinian science" (270). After reviewing other contemporary science issues and arguments, Sacks points out that "science gives us a sense of wonder. It does not disclose the source and origin of that wonder" (273). The "greatest improbability of all" (281) is the survival of religion: faith survives the attacks of atheism. "Yet, in defiance of all the evidence *on their own terms*, the new atheists argue that religion is an epiphenomenon, an accidental byproduct of something else: once functional, now dysfunctional. If this were so, it would have disappeared long ago. Its survival is the supreme improbability" (282–283).

Ultimately, Sacks returns to the religion of Abraham, "the God who defies predictability and probability. By setting His image on humanity, he gave us too the power to defy probability, to stand outside the taken-for-granted certainties of the age and live by another light. That belief gave the West its faith in the great duality chartered by science and religion, the orderliness of the universe on the one hand, the freedom of humanity on the other" (283). It is the partnership of science and religion that "must now join together to protect the world that has been entrusted to our safekeeping" (291).

This is a terrific book. Rabbi Sacks has given us a very fine guidebook for steering a course through our modern world, where science and religion each have an important part to play. His approach, which emphasizes Abrahamic religion, is thoroughly Jewish, but not disparaging of either Islam or Christianity. Its fourteen chapters would fit nicely into a one-term college course. Sacks weaves science and religion together into a coherent picture that most people can scarcely imagine is possible. His grasp of the origins of science and religion and how they were blended together—but later separated—is exceptional, and he explains the entire synthesis very clearly. I can highly recommend this book to readers from all disciplines. You don't have to be a scientist to appreciate *The Great Partnership*.

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