

Dear All,

Someone famous once wrote about *the skull beneath the skin*. I suppose that that is just a more sober version of *Beauty is only skin deep*. And both of those are but vernacular echoes of the Church's reminder that *you are dust and will return to dust*. However you phrase it, the fact is that whatever 'masks' we wear to identify ourselves to others or to hide from them, we are only mortal and that mortality is the next-to-last truth about us.

Were this the last truth about us, then the existence of God the Creator would be an irrelevant issue, as would any dogmatic nostrums about morality, or even natural law. A life that exists only to perpetuate its kind and then to die is literally viral – the life of a virus.

But, if a life that begins outside of the discernible and predictable dynamics of biology, we presume that it has a purpose that transcends those parameters. For such a life, there is meaning and purpose and hope – and love – that go on and on, even after death.

One of the most chilling comments I ever heard from the mouth of an advocate of physician-assisted suicide was the clear assertion that *this is neither a moral nor a religious issue – it is purely legal*. That could be the mentality of a virus!

Why, one reasonably asks, are humans the only beings we know of who seem to be concerned about this topic? We know that other 'higher' life forms seem to fear death and some appear even to grieve and have burial customs that suggest a desire to maintain the communal presence of the departed, but the goal of this behavior lies totally within the realm of biology and the social organization of the species.

Are we, humans, merely deceiving ourselves about our unique worth? Have we concocted an idea of immortality to comfort ourselves against the dark and cold of the grave? Have notions of heaven and hell be developed only to control and corral us in this life? How do we know anything about what follows death?

I do not want to get into any long anthropological study of the evolution of life-after-death theories in world religions. I don't even want to get into a big treatment of Christian ideas on this topic; they are much more diverse that you would imagine and almost more fanciful than most sci-fi. I want only to remind myself and you that the *Creed* which begins by asserting our faith in *God ... the Creator* ends by asserting our faith in *the resurrection of the body and life everlasting*. Our life begins outside of our mere biology and ends when the failures and weaknesses of biology and biological sciences have left us as bones or dust or merely memories.

I'm not sure how this will progress, but I think we need to say more about this ... and, so. I will.

Really and truly and immortally yours,

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