

Confession

A short story by James Hoskins

Some time, somewhere....Adam began having doubts about his faith. His mother was deeply concerned about him. She had been an active member in the church for as long as he could remember and faith was her life. Adam's doubts had progressed past his private thoughts and were starting to come out in his speech. His mother was heart broken to hear her son question all she had taught him. She feared he had been reading books of false doctrine or, even worse, that his brain had been corrupted by evil philosophies. But she feared most for his salvation. She urged Adam to go and talk with Father Antony. Finally, after much reluctance, Adam agreed. After all, he regretted his lack of faith almost as much as his mother did. Indeed, he felt guilty for it. Yet, there were so many things that did not make sense to him.

Father Antony was an extremely intelligent man. He had quite an impressive vocabulary, yet he could still put complex ideas into common vernacular in a very thoughtful way. As Adam entered the Father's quarters, his eyes passed over a long bookshelf containing all the books of the Holy Canon. Father Antony looked up through his reading glasses and greeted Adam with a warm smile.

"Hello Adam! Good to see you here. It's been a while."

"Yeah, well, it wasn't entirely my idea," Adam replied.

"I know, your mother called me," the Father said with a grin.

"That sounds like her," said Adam as he gazed at all the books.

"Your mother loves you very much Adam. She's just worried about you. I'm glad you came. Please sit down."

After a very uncomfortable silence of what seemed like an hour, Adam began, "Well, I guess I should start by saying I've been having a lot of questions."

“About what?”

“Everything!” Adam’s eyebrows raised.

The Father, twiddling his glasses in his hand, said calmly, “Why don’t you tell me some specifics and I’ll do my best to answer your questions.”

“Okay,” Adam said reluctantly. “How do we *know* that life is a product of Chance?”

“Excuse me?” The Father had a disturbed look on his face.

“I said, how do we know that life is a product of Chance? The Church teaches that humans just *happened* to turn out this way, that life is a fluke of nature; an accident. How can we know that?”

“Oh, dear.” The Father got up from his chair and began pacing around the room. “Your mother said you had some questions, but she didn’t say anything about this! I thought maybe you had questions about evolutionary mechanisms or situational ethics, but I didn’t know you were questioning the very existence of Chance itself! This is very bad.”

“But my mom said you would answer my questions,” Adam said defensively.

The Father stopped pacing. “I’m sorry Adam. You’re right.” The Father sat back down. His voice was calm now. “I know you did not come here to present me with a diatribe against the Church. It is important for you to express your feelings. I apologize for getting upset.”

“That’s okay Father,” Adam replied with relief.

“Now, what is it exactly that you don’t understand?” The Father asked with his eyes closed as if he was waiting for someone to hit him.

“Okay, it seems difficult for me to believe that a machine such as the human body, which is more complex than any man-made computer, could have been created by Chance; by a long series of accidents.”

“I understand.” The Father nodded his head with his eyes still closed and thought for a moment. “Adam, have you ever heard of Saint Darwin’s Bigcilia?”

“No.”

“It is a beautiful church in England with a steeple designed to resemble a cilium, the whip-like tail that propels cells in many microorganisms; you know, similar to the tail of a sperm cell.” Adam nodded. “The cilium is a complex working engine that produces a horsepower beyond that of any human innovation, yet it is irreducibly complex. That means if you took away any one of its parts it would render the entire system useless. Now, if your eyes follow the steeple down to the very base, you will see an inscription that reads, ‘Through numerous, successive, slight modifications,’ a quote from the Gospel of Darwin.”

Adam appeared confused. “Do you know what that means,” asked Father Antony. Adam shook his head. “It means that *anything*, no matter how complex, could be formed, little by little, through Natural Selection, and random mutation, given enough time. Isn’t that a grand testimony to Chance’s creation!”

Adam still looked confused. “Why so perplexed?” Father Antony asked.

Adam spoke slowly as if he were thinking it out as he said it. “Didn’t you say that if you took away any one of the parts that make up the cilia it would render the entire system useless?”

“Yes.”

“Doesn’t that mean that all the parts would have had to have been there at the same time for the machine to work? How could it have been built up little by little over time?”

“Well...,” the Father hesitated. “Adam, have you been reading books on the theory of Intelligent Design?”

“Yes, but-”

“Adam! Did not your mother warn you of such polemics?!”

“Yes she did but-”

“Adam, these are specious theories. They may sound nice, but they are false. The enemy’s lies are always pleasant to the ear.”

“But how do we know that we are right and they are wrong?!”

“Simple. Evidence,” the Father said smugly.

“But they offer evidence too,” Adam replied.

“Son, you know very well that only a holy Priest of the Church of Science is fit to interpret the data.”

“But Father, these men and women are highly educated. They got their degrees from some of the same schools as you did. Many of them are scientists themselves.”

“Their credentials are not recognized by the Church. One cannot believe Intelligent Design and still be a true scientist.” The Father’s voice was different now. It was stern and cold.

“So you’ve examined their theories then? You’ve found flaws in their arguments?”

“That doesn’t matter,” said Father Antony. “One does not need to examine their theories or consider their arguments. All one has to do is see that their conclusions contradict that of the Church. That’s how you know they are wrong.”

Adam looked away in frustration. “Son, you are a bold and intrepid young man. You are a born leader. Your mother even named you after the father of us all: Adam; that first cell from which we all evolved, the first to have life breathed into it by Chance itself. And I think you are sincere in your search, but this is a very exigent matter. This is bordering on heresy. Your salvation is at stake!”

“But Father, you always told me to question authority and be a free thinker.”

“Not when it comes to this Adam. Do you realize that if you continue down this path you could lose your salvation and be banished to the fiery plains of Kansas! That place reserved for obdurate and evil persons! A place where people do not believe in Chance! A realm of absolute misanthropes, where there is screaming and gnashing of teeth!”

“Father, how can you say people are evil just because they believe differently than you?”

“Adam, need I remind you of the words of the apostle Dawkins: ‘It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I’d rather not consider that).’¹”

“Isn’t that a bit harsh?”

“Adam, these people want to have Intelligent Design taught alongside Evolution in their schools!”

“Why is that wrong?”

“They want to have both arguments presented in the classroom and leave it up to the students to decide which is true! What could be more wicked! It opens our doctrine up to heretical criticism and, worst of all, it endangers the authority of the Church and the Priesthood to say what is science and what is not.”

“But, if we are so certain our view is true, then shouldn’t we welcome criticism? Wouldn’t allowing students to see a fair contrast between the two views simply reinforce their belief that the Church’s view is the true one?”

“It may seem so, but as I said earlier the lies of the enemy are always pleasant to the ear. Such young impressionable brains are easily misled. You were. Do you want your classmates’ blood on your hands?”

“No.”

“Okay, then. Besides, the Psalms of Lennon urge us to imagine how peaceful and wonderful the world would be if belief in the supernatural were eliminated. How perfect the world would be if everyone thought exactly the same!”

Adam shook his head. “That just doesn’t seem right.”

“Adam, these aren’t my words. I’m simply quoting from the Holy Canon. Are you doubting its authority too? Do you still believe it is Chance inspired?”

“I guess...I don’t know Father. I want to believe. A lot of this is just hard to swallow. I still don’t understand how it has been *proved* that life is a product of Chance.”

“I know it is difficult to understand, son, but we must assume that life is the product of a non-intelligent cause.”

“Why?”

“Because any theory that would conclude that life is the product of an *intelligent* cause is not scientific.”

“Why?”

“Look, son.” The Father let out a deep sigh. “You just have to have faith. I know it’s hard, but the more you do it the less unpleasant it will become. Doubts are like emotions, they’re temporary and fleeting. I’ve given you a good paradigm for answering future questions you may have. Now we must quash this. You can no longer be intemperate in your intellectual diet. I’m going to recommend that your mother exact these evil books you’ve been reading and destroy them.”

“Father, no!”

“Adam! This is for your own good. Complain all you want, but this is what has to be done.”

Adam slumped back in his chair.

“I don’t want you to develop resentment toward the Church or the Priesthood. You need to understand this is an intervention with your well being in mind. Do you believe me?”

“Yes sir.” Adam was staring at the floor.

“Good.” The Father got up from his chair and pulled something out from his desk. “Here, take this.”

One glance and Adam’s body revolted like a child being forced to take cough medicine. “But my mom already has a double helix up in our living room!”

“Do you have one in your room?”

“No.”

“Okay then. Take this and put it up on your wall tonight so it is the first thing you see when you wake up. It will be a good reminder each morning before you start your day. Oh, one more thing, your mother told me she gave you a helix necklace for Winter Holiday last year. Perhaps you should start wearing it. Now go home and I’ll see you at service tomorrow morning.” Adam took the double helix and walked out defeated.

The next morning, at church, Father Antony spoke with veracity. He preached as if it was his last sermon. Adam could almost feel the fire and brimstone pelting his head and shoulders. But as hard as Adam tried to believe, he still felt doubt. The uncertainty still lingered. The old sayings and adages did not provoke the same feelings anymore. Then the congregation rose to sing that old beautiful hymn, *Amazing Chance*.”

“Surely,” Adam thought, “this will provoke some feeling inside.” Adam sang with all his might:

Ama - zing Chance, impo – ssible

That made a life like me.

I once was just particles,

Now evolved to high species.

“Nothing,” Adam thought. “I feel nothing.” As the ceremony went on Adam’s thoughts began to drift. The songs and the Father’s voice began to fade into the distance. Adam started to get inspired. He wanted to get these feelings out. No. He *needed* to get them out somehow. His mind began to concoct a clever lampoon about the Church and her dogma. When he got home, he began writing, “Some time, somewhere....”

Works Cited

1. Johnson, Phillip. The Right Questions. Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 2002. p. 81.