

Remarkably, Suleiman recovered from this setback and planned another invasion. He would not live to see it. It was left to his successor, Selim, to continue the fight against the Christian presence in the Mediterranean. Selim's troops attacked the nearby island of Cyprus and tortured to death the gallant Venetian commander who defended the town of Famagusta. News of Cyprus' fall shook Southern Europe and aided the Pope in forming the Holy League to counter the threat.

With foresight, Philip II of Spain chose his half-brother Don Juan of Austria to command the combined fleet of Spain, Venice, and the Papal States. A man of ability and ambition, Don Juan had just suppressed a Muslim revolt in Spain. Although no naval commander, he knew how to fight. Like a Renaissance Eisenhower, he successfully marshaled jealous commanders of several nations into an effective fighting force.

Understanding that inactivity would kill the coalition, Don Juan moved his fleet of 200 galleys and larger ships known as galleasses into Greek waters to meet the Turkish fleet. The vast fleets met off the Greek coast not far from where Octavius, nearly 1,500 years before, defeated the galleys of Antony and Cleopatra and decided the fate of the ancient world. Don Juan moved his galleasses into a skirmish line ahead of his galleys, so they could break up the Turkish fleet with broadsides—a tactical innovation that presaged the age of fighting sail. The Christian cannons shattered Turkish galleys and broke up their attacking front. Then the galley fleets closed, Don Juan aiming his galley directly at that of the Turkish pasha.

Lepanto may have been the most costly sea battle in history. Nearly 40,000 men were slain or drowned. The Christians broke the Turkish fleet, and a soldier brought Don Juan the pasha's head in a dish.

Voltaire once said that nothing is more well known than the siege of Malta, but today Malta and Lepanto are all but unknown. Crowley, noting that these events have been down-

played by mainstream historians, sets the story straight. Aficionados of the Malta siege will appreciate his new research on the fortifications, which greatly aids understanding of the battle. Crowley's revisionist instincts fail him only in his cursory treatment of the Christian commanders, who, like Sun Tzu's ideal general, respected and cultivated the moral law, and adhered to proper methods and discipline. Had the Turk leaders understood these two formidable men, they might have heeded the Chinese philosopher's implied advice: Do not fight such leaders!

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## What God Has Joined

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

### Descartes' Bones: A Skeletal History of the Conflict Between Faith and Reason

by Russell Shorto  
New York: Doubleday;  
253 pp., \$26.00



Seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) believed that God moderates reason. That is to say, faith prevents man from falling deeply into error. Yet the writing of this brilliant man of faith—in particular, his *Discourse on Method* (1637)—has encouraged a separation of faith and reason that has tended to divide human beings from the very God on Whose protection they depend. It has also separated us from our fellow man, and, in a very real sense, created a certain psychological division within ourselves that is characteristic of modern life. Russell Shorto, a writer for the *New York Times*, realizes that faith

and reason are both essential components of healthy human existence. In *Descartes' Bones: A Skeletal History of the Conflict Between Faith and Reason*, he takes on the challenging task of reversing this Cartesian dualism.

The motif that runs throughout the book is that of the relocation of the philosopher's mortal remains. Shorto uses this peregrination to demonstrate the effect of Descartes' thoughts throughout the centuries. It is most effective in showing how his famous "*Cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I am") effectively moved the traditional locus of reality and truth from outside of man (that is, from the transcendent Other), to within man himself. Shorto relates how this new outlook threatened the sacramental system of the Church and reduced the influence of theology, causing the Church to lose Her hegemony over society.

Ample credit is given to the importance of Descartes' inductive method in laying the foundation of modern scholarship, especially in the areas of medicine, technology, and even political science. But Shorto is aware of the moral alienation that has resulted from the scientific determinism inherent in Descartes' thinking. It found political expression in the French Revolution; propagated a procession of pseudosciences, including the 19th-century craze for phrenology, which held that the size of a skull and its protuberances could determine intelligence and predict criminality; and provides the basis for the materialist philosophy prevalent today.

Shorto attempts nothing less than the reconnection of man to the metaphysical aspects of his being, relating Descartes' bones to the idea of relics, usually bone fragments or other objects associated with saints, which help us to keep in touch with those holy men and women who have gone before. Yet the veneration of relics reflects a porous view of reality whereby heaven and earth are in constant communication. Shorto's adaptation of the practice reflects a very different perspective, one that is essentially earthbound. The "relics" of Descartes speak of a more insular mystery—that

of man himself.

While Shorto does believe there is more to man than biology (materiality), this “more” doesn’t seem to have any supernatural source. He promotes Descartes’ view of human emotion as the glue that binds the breach between faith and reason. However, this premise reduces religion to little more than sentimentality. And that is a concept which has been condemned by the Church as modernism, a heresy that rejects supernatural revelation and reduces religion to psychologically induced emotionalism or mere neural activity.

Shorto contends that the mystery of humanity can be unveiled in face-to-face dialogue. (In fact, he sees the human face itself as the revelatory vehicle of both reason and emotion.) Yet, while no one can deny that dialogue is a starting point for insight and healing, personal encounter alone is not sufficient to overcome the differences between the conflicting paradigms of truth that separate the scientific camp from the various traditions of religious faith. Differences in fundamental beliefs are not easily bridged, as the split between Islam and the West, and the divide between pro-life and pro-choice views, readily attest.

The ultimate answers must come from a source that is bigger than either biology or emotion, and is not limited by manufactured intellectual constructs. However, being open to those answers requires a proper understanding of—and belief in—God. And belief requires humility, which is a gift of all true religion and presumes a respect for the dignity of man that comes from a source outside of man.

This book is clever, informative, and insightful, yet it must be read with care. For in the end, Shorto does not unite what Descartes has separated. He merely promotes secular humanism.

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## The Way of the World

by H.A. Scott Trask

### Ghost Train to the Eastern Star: On the Tracks of the Great Railway Bazaar

by Paul Theroux  
Boston: Houghton Mifflin;  
496 pp., \$28.00



In his essay on “self-reliance,” Emerson wrote that “travelling is a fool’s paradise.” He was referring to those who travel to escape the boredom or sadness of their lives, and who hope to return home somehow transformed. Yet we may add those who travel to boast (“Look, here I am at the Parthenon!” or “I kayaked off Antarctica!”), and those who hope to experience, if only temporarily, a state of bliss, as indicated by the demand for luxurious accommodations. Such vain quests are characteristic of the pampered tourist rather than the adventurous traveler. Travelers don’t know where they’re going, while tourists don’t know where they’ve been.

In all of his travel writing, Paul Theroux has never shrunk from telling it as it is. This is what makes his writing so valuable, so essential. Few tourists would wish to observe his rules of travel: Go alone, go cheap, stay on the ground, be patient, avoid luxury, leave all electronics behind. Yet it is only by following them that one learns anything about the world, or has anything to write about or tell about afterward. “Luxury spoils and infantilizes you and prevents you from knowing the world. That is its purpose.”

In *Ghost Train*, Theroux retraces his 1973 trip—as recounted in *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975), his first travel book—by train through Asia *via* the Orient Express, and back *via* the Trans-Siberian. His only significant deviation is a northern detour around Iran and Afghanistan, which takes him through the southern Caucasus and former Soviet Central Asia.

This is Theroux’s best, most philo-

sophical work. The motif of change, of relentless transformation as a natural law, suffuses this book and gives it a meditative and slightly mystical air. “It is only with age that you acquire the gift to evaluate decay, the epiphany of Wordsworth . . . nothing is perfect, nothing is complete, nothing lasts.” Travel “gives you glimpses of the past and the future, your own and other people’s.” What he sees is a world that, on balance, is getting worse, despite (or is it because of?) progress, development, globalization.

Most people on earth are poor. Most places on earth are blighted and nothing will stop the blight getting worse. . . . [T]here are too many people and an enormous number of them spend their hungry days thinking about America as the Mother Ship. . . . Most of the world is worsening, shrinking to a ball of bungled desolation. Only the old can really see how gracelessly the world is aging and all that we have lost. . . . No one on earth is well governed.

Theroux does not exempt from this judgment the United States, which he views as something of a paradise lost. What bothers him is “the disposable dreariness of American architecture,” the increased crowding, the erosion of privacy, and, above all, the loss of space. “[It] was the way of the world. The population . . . has doubled in my lifetime, and the old simple world I had known as a boy was gone.”

Everyone he meets on his journey wants to move to America, or Canada, or the western fringe of Europe. In Eastern Europe, “the great wish was to travel west, to leave home.” Rumanians are on the move, “furnishing western Europe with factory workers, hookers, and car thieves.” In Georgia, the young and educated all want to flee to America. The same is true of Azerbaijan, despite its oil wealth and abundance of jobs. Theroux is taken aback by a young and well-employed Azeri patriot, who, after praising the beauty and glory of his country, an-