

past in most American cities, is alive and well in London, which has five upmarket dailies and a half-dozen or so mid- and down-market tabloids. And the new quality tabloids have proven acceptable even to people whose upper-class status previously required them to turn up their noses at the rubbishy tabs. The broadsheet *Guardian*, whose circulation had been about 400,000, found itself losing readers not only to its left-wing competitor, *The Independent*, but to *The Times*, and even to a free morning tabloid put out by the mid-market *Daily Mail*.

The Guardian's "iPod" solution, unveiled in September, is a smaller paper that is about three inches taller than the standard tabloid and

Could a shift to the smaller format be the salvation for today's troubled American newspapers—or would it be newsprint's last gasp?

is trying "to do the opposite of what a tabloid does," observes Wolff. It retains the broadsheet's "classic, hierarchical, multi-story front page," and it preserves "that crucial, elemental newspaper distinction: the fold," which serves the editorial function of distinguishing the important front-page stories from the lesser ones. With this anti-tabloid "emphasis on order, discern-

ment, modulation," the great left-wing paper is hoping "to occupy the pride of place once held by *The Times*, as paper of record, as paper at the center of British political life." It's also hoping, of course, to win back the circulation lost to the other quality tabs.

Since *The Independent* went "compact," editor Simon Kelner says, 55 broadsheets around the world have followed suit, including, most recently, *The Wall Street Journal's* European and Asian editions. No major broadsheets in the United States have made the change yet, says Wolff, but there's little doubt that the big American newspaper chains, and even *The New York Times*, are watching "the British experiment" very closely.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Cardinal Error

THE SOURCE: "The Design of Evolution" by Stephen M. Barr, in *First Things*, Oct. 2005.

WHEN CARDINAL CHRISTOPH Schönborn, archbishop of Vienna, lashed out at neo-Darwinism in a *New York Times* op-ed piece last summer, it was front-page news. After all, the cardinal reportedly is close to Pope Benedict XVI. Was Schönborn signaling that the church might align itself with the intelligent design movement, in opposition to the scientific theory of evolution? Such an alignment, notes Stephen M. Barr, a theoretical particle physicist at the Bartol Research Institute of the University of Delaware,

would contradict the Catholic Church's long-standing position on evolution.

Barr thinks the cardinal's op-ed argument is a muddle. Schönborn says that by neo-Darwinism he means "evolution" as used by mainstream biologists. Yet elsewhere in the article, he writes that "evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense [is] an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection." Barr calls this Schönborn's "central misstep": "He has slipped into the definition of a *scientific* theory, neo-Darwinism, the words 'unplanned' and 'unguided,' which are fraught with *theological* meaning."

Christians believe that nothing in

the universe occurs outside God's providential plan. But, says Barr, that doesn't mean that "random" events can't occur within that plan. As used in scientific discourse, *random* "does not mean uncaused, unplanned, or inexplicable; it means uncorrelated." Consider an analogy: A writer of prose, unlike the author of a sonnet, does not make lines end in syllables that rhyme. As a result, the sequence of syllables will show no correlation between them—that is to say, they exhibit randomness. But that doesn't mean that the work was "unguided" or "unplanned," or that the words were not chosen. Similarly, Barr writes, "God, though he planned his work with infinite care, may not have chosen to impose certain kinds of correlations on certain kinds of events, and the motions of the different molecules in a gas, for example, may exhibit no statistically verifiable correlation."

The Catholic Church has said that intelligent design is a scientific question, beyond the capacity of theology to answer.

The International Theological Commission recognized that distinction in its 2004 report *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, which states that in “the Catholic understanding of divine causality, true contingency in the created order is not incompatible with a purposeful divine providence.” The intelligent design movement’s contention that “a purely contingent natural process” cannot explain all the available scientific data is, said the commission, a scientific question, beyond the capacity of theology to answer. The commission was headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger,

who is now Pope Benedict XVI.

The first formal statement on evolution reflective of the church’s teaching authority was the encyclical *Humani Generis*, issued by Pope Pius XII in 1950. The pope stated as dogma that the human soul, being immaterial, could not be the product of evolution, but he also said that the human body’s evolution from lower animals could legitimately be investigated as a scientific hypothesis.

In a 1996 letter to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Pope John Paul II reiterated Pius’s essential point, but added that much evidence had emerged in support of the theory of evolution, making it now “more than a hypothesis.” Schönborn, in his essay, dismissed John Paul’s statement as “rather vague and unimportant.” But if a papal letter to scientists can be thus dismissed, says Barr, how much doctrinal weight should be given to a cardinal’s column in a newspaper?

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Not for Sale

THE SOURCE: “Markets, Morals, and Civic Life” by Michael J. Sandel, in *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, Summer 2005.

While it’s true that there are some things money can’t buy, are there some things it shouldn’t be *allowed* to buy? If some people are willing to sell their kidneys, for example, should they be permitted to? If so, then why not let them sell their votes too? In the moral analysis required to understand the limits of markets, argues Michael J. Sandel, a Harvard University political theorist, lies a road to understanding the true nature of freedom and civic life.

Many liberal critics object to sales of human organs and other market transactions on the grounds of injustice. The sellers are coerced, they argue. People who sell their kidneys are desperate for

EXCERPT

The Evangelical Thirst

The caricature of American evangelicals as incurious and indifferent to learning is false. Visit any Christian bookstore and you will see that they are gluttons for learning of a certain kind. They belong to Bible-study groups; they buy works of Scriptural interpretation; they sit through tedious courses on cassette, CD, or DVD; they take notes during sermons and highlight passages in their Bibles. If anything, it is their thirst for knowledge that undoes them. Like so many Americans, they know little about history, science, secular literature, or, unless they are immigrants, foreign cultures. Yet their thirst for answers to the most urgent moral and existential questions is overwhelming. So they grab for the only

glass in the room: God’s revealed Word.

A half-century ago, an American Christian seeking assistance could have turned to the popularizing works of serious religious thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, John Courtney Murray, Thomas Merton, Jacques Maritain, and even Martin Buber and Will Herberg. Those writers were steeped in philosophy and the theological traditions of their faiths, which they brought to bear on the vital spiritual concerns of ordinary believers: ethics, death, prayer, doubt, and despair. But intellectual figures like these have disappeared from the American landscape and have been replaced by half-educated evangelical gurus who either publish vacant, cheery self-help books or are politically motivated. If an evangelical wants to satisfy his taste for truth today, it’s strictly self-service.

—MARK LILLA, professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Sept. 18, 2005)