

HAWKING POSITS FALSE CONFLICT

In an interview last night with ABC-News reporter Diane Sawyer, scientist Stephen Hawking opined that human life is “insignificant in the universe,” and then went on to say that “There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, [and] science, which is based on observation and reason.” He concluded by saying, “Science will win because it works.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue took exception to Hawking’s views today:

How any rational person could belittle the pivotal role that human life plays in the universe is a wonder, but it is just as silly to say that all religions are marked by the absence of reason. While there are some religions which are devoid of reason, there are others, such as Roman Catholicism, which have long assigned it a special place.

It was the Catholic Church that created the first universities, and it was the Catholic Church that played a central role in the Scientific Revolution; these two historical contributions made possible Mr. Hawking’s career.

Reason, in pursuit of truth, has been reiterated by the Church fathers for nearly two millennia. That is why Hawking posits a false conflict: in the annals of the Catholic Church, there is no inherent conflict between science and religion. Quite the contrary: science and religion, in Catholic thought, are complementary properties. Ergo, nothing is gained by alleging a “victory” of science over religion.

Religion without reason, Pope Benedict XVI instructed us in his Regensburg address in 2006, leads to fanaticism. That much Hawking seems to understand. What he doesn’t get is its contra: science without faith also leads to disaster—the genocidal regimes in Germany, the Soviet Union, China and

Cambodia being Exhibits A, B, C and D.