

## 'In the Beginning...' – A Catholic Understanding of the REALITY of the Good Creation and the Fall

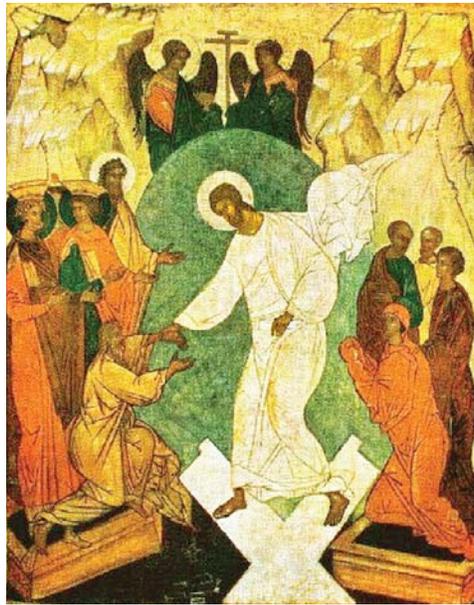
[This is Part II of a two-part series.]

As we reported in our last newsletter, we were recently honored by the visit of Mr. Hugh Owen, founder and director of *The Kolbe Center for the Study of Creation* in Mt. Jackson, VA ([www.kolbecenter.org](http://www.kolbecenter.org)). Mr. Owen gave us a fascinating PowerPoint presentation entitled: "Creation, Evolution and the Crisis of Faith". It is impossible to do justice to Mr. Owen's presentation, in all its impressive detail and fervent Catholic unction, but here is a summary of some points:

A survey conducted in the late 1970's in Germany, searching for the reasons why people no longer went to Church, revealed the following statistic. Of all the many and varied reasons, a staggering sum of 47% attributed their spiritual apathy to the difference between the theological and scientific explanations for the origin of the world. (From Carl Winterstein, *Bible-Science Newsletter*, June 1976, p. 8. Cited in Paula Haigh's *Thirty Theses Against Theistic Evolution*, Theses 13).

And what is the main reason why so many people do not believe in a *good and loving* God? Death, destruction, decay and disease. These are the reasons why so many people do not believe in a good, loving God. But let us examine what the Catholic Church has taught about how to interpret the Bible and, in particular, the Book of Genesis, which reveals to us the good world God created "In the beginning ...".

Pope Leo XIII taught that the "literal and obvious



Christ's purpose was to restore to us what we had lost in Adam "that what we had lost in Adam . . . we might recover in Christ Jesus." (CCC, 518).

sense" of Scripture as intended by the sacred authors must be believed unless reason or necessity forces us to reject that teaching in favor of an exclusively figurative interpretation. Against the background of this doctrine, it can also be shown that Lateran Council IV, the Council of Florence, and Vatican Council I, properly expounded with the help of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, strongly support special creation. Furthermore, the findings of modern natural science harmonize with special creation and contradict the fantastic theories of evolutionists and progressive creationists.

Theistic evolutionism fosters contempt for Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and undermines confidence in God and his Word. The traditional understanding of Genesis fosters a love

and appreciation for Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and strengthens trust in God.

By embracing Darwinian evolution as the "only scientific" explanation for the origin of the different kinds of living things, theistic evolutionists have not only jettisoned the constant teaching of the Fathers, Doctors, and Councils; they have also unintentionally impugned the goodness and wisdom of God. This is because, unlike St. Thomas and the Fathers and Doctors who taught that God created all of the different kinds of creatures perfect according to their natures, for man, in a perfectly harmonious cosmos, theistic evolutionists like Teilhard de Chardin teach

that God deliberately produced—through evolutionary processes—many different kinds of creatures only to destroy them so that something more highly evolved could take their place.

Moreover, according to the theistic evolutionists, this imaginary god of evolution used a process of mutation and natural selection that littered the earth with diseased and deformed creatures in the process of producing the alleged “beneficial mutations” that purportedly transformed reptiles into birds and sub-human primates into men. Whatever one wants to call this evolutionary god, it is not the God of the Bible, of the Fathers, and of the Doctors of the Church, the God of whom St. Thomas says again and again that “all His works are perfect.”

Even theistic evolutionists must admit that all of the Fathers, Doctors, and magisterial pronouncements of the Catholic Church upheld the literal historical interpretation of Genesis for more than 1800 years. According to this common doctrine:

- God created all of the different kinds of creatures *ex nihilo* in six days or less.
- Adam was created before Eve, who was formed from Adam’s side.
- God created a perfectly harmonious world for Adam and Eve. There was no human sickness, death, disease, harmful mutations or man-harming natural disasters prior to the Fall.
- Prior to the Original Sin, all of nature was under the dominion of Adam and Eve and was subservient to them.
- Original Sin brought human death, disease, harmful mutations, and man-harming natural disasters in the world.
- There was a global flood in Noah’s day, which killed all of the people and animals on the earth except for those on Noah’s ark.
- Early man was physically and mentally superior to modern man. The patriarchs lived to the long ages ascribed to them.

In his second epistle, St. Peter reveals a vision of “scoffers” who depart from the “literal and obvious sense” of Sacred Scripture. This prophecy may be seen to have a special importance in these “latter days.” Writing in the first century, St. Peter predicted:

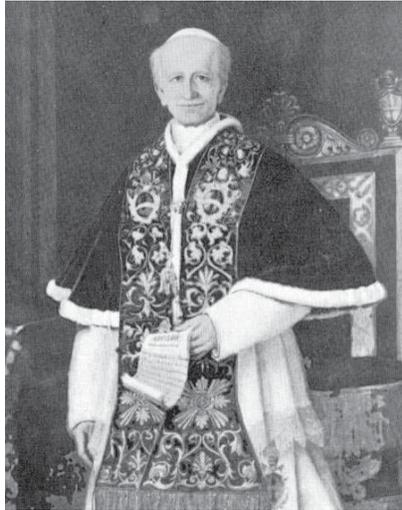
*“Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.’ They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and the earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*

(2 Peter 3:3-7)

In this remarkable prophecy, St. Peter predicted that in a future time “scoffers” would arise who would deny God’s supernatural creative action “in the beginning of creation” and His dramatic inter-

vention at the time of the Noachic Flood, thus casting doubt on His sovereign intervention in the *future* at the Second Coming of Christ. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, St. Peter foresaw that the scoffers would predicate their denials on the stability of the natural order—on the grounds that “all things have continued as they were” “since the fathers fell asleep.”

In modern times this principle became known as “uniformitarianism,” or “the present is the key to the past.” Just as St. Peter had foretold, “uniformitarianism” became the guiding principle of Charles Lyell, Charles Darwin, and other naturalistic evolutionists who argued that natural scientists could extrapolate from present-day processes in the order of providence all the way back to the beginning of creation. St. Peter seems to have foreseen that to champion their evolutionary theory they would have to “deliberately ignore” the fact of the Flood. And, indeed, Darwin wrote in an unpublished manuscript of 1873: “Lyell is most firmly



The commentator...must carefully observe the rule...not to depart from the literal and obvious sense, except only where reason make in untenable or necessity requires.

Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, 1893

convinced that he has shaken the faith in the Deluge far more efficiently [in his writings on geology] by never having said a word against the Bible than if he had acted otherwise.”

Karl Marx did not deny the existence of God, but He denied the existence of the God of the Bible and of Catholic Tradition. He denied a God who created the order of the universe out of love, who placed man at the center of that universe, and who intervened in its affairs—even to the point of taking human nature and suffering, dying for our redemption. Frederick Engels wrote of Marx and Darwin:

What they [Marx and Darwin] both celebrated was the internal rhythm and course of life, the one the life of nature, the other of society, that proceeded by fixed laws, undistracted by the will of God or men. **There were no catastrophes in history as there were none in nature. There were no inexplicable acts, no violations of the natural order.** God was as powerless as individual men to interfere with the internal, self-adjusting dialectic of change and development. (Frederich Engels, “Eulogy for Karl Marx”)

These thinkers flatly contradicted the unanimous teaching of the Church Fathers who held, with St. Paul, that “all God’s works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Hebrews 4:3)—after the creation of Adam and Eve—and that God created all of the different kinds of creatures, including man, by a supernatural divine action, in six natural days (the majority view) or in an instant (the minority Augustinian view). Indeed, all of the Fathers would have concurred with the fourth century “Apostolic Constitutions” that the

Both the Council of Trent and Vatican Council I taught that no one is permitted to interpret Sacred Scripture “contrary to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers.”

Vatican Council I, Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith, Chapter 2 (DS, 1788).

Sabbath was observed “on account of Him who ceased from His work of creation, but ceased not from His work of providence.”

Thus, the farthest thing from St. Peter’s mind was to expand the length of the days of creation to allow for

a natural development of creatures. Indeed, St. Peter’s primary point in the third chapter of his second epistle is that creation—like the Second Coming—is a supernatural divine action which “scoffers” will try to reduce to a natural process.

Charles Lyell and his colleagues were so successful in promoting their “new geology” of millions of years that by the end of the nineteenth century even some Catholic intellectuals became convinced of its truth. For example, in 1882, Vigouroux, a Sulpician well known for the polyglot edition of the Bible and who became Secretary of the Biblical Commission in Rome, wrote in his Mosaic Cosmogony According to the Fathers of the Church: “Geology has established that Creation was not simultaneous” (p.34); and “It was reserved to our time to discover clearly the true meaning of the cosmogonic days.”

These private statements of Vigouroux proceed far beyond what is certain, to say the least. These statements illustrate the error of embracing the false philosophy of evolution. Such errors come at a great cost. And there is nothing novel about this emphasis on the importance of the Catholic doctrine of creation. Centuries ago, the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote:

“The opinion of those who say with regard to the truth of faith that it is a matter of complete indifference what one thinks about creation, provided one has a true interpretation of God ... is notoriously false. For an error



I cannot believe that man is only a perfect monkey. This is the question of evolution ... This theory not only does not agree with the results of today’s experimental science, which is in constant progress, but in reality it contradicts these findings, as has been carefully documented.

—St. Maximilian Kolbe

about creation is reflected in a false opinion about God.”

We can be confident in rejecting evolution as a bogus philosophy masquerading as science, in agreement with Nobel Prize-winning biochemist Sir Ernst Chain, who concluded that evolution was an “hypothesis based on no evidence and irreconcilable with the facts.”

We know that Our Lady of Fatima has promised us: “In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.” Is it unreasonable to hope that during this period of peace a new evangelization will take place on the firm foundation of the traditional Catholic doctrine of creation? ✠

For further information on the traditional Catholic doctrine of creation, and to request a seminar to be held at your parish or church group, please direct all inquiries to:

Hugh Owen, Director,  
The Kolbe Center for the Study of Creation  
952 Kelly Rd., Mt. Jackson, VA 22842

howen@shentel.net  
phone: 540-856-8453  
www.kolbecenter.org