

experts as far as the present state of human science and sacred theology allow.

Pamphlet 026

“However, this must be done in such a way that the arguments on both sides, those favorable and those unfavorable to evolution, be weighed and judged with the necessary gravity, moderation and discretion. And let all be prepared to submit to the judgment of the Church to whom Christ has given the mission of interpreting authentically the Sacred Scriptures and of safeguarding the dogmas of faith.

“On the other hand, those go too far and transgress this liberty of discussion who act as if the origin of the human body from preexisting and living matter were already fully demonstrated by the facts discovered up to now and by reasoning on them, and as if there were nothing in the sources of revelation which demands the greatest reserve and caution in this controversy" (Pius XII, encyclical *Humani Generis* (3896).

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Creation vs. Evolution

Creation is concerned with the origin of matter. Evolution is concerned with the development of matter. Beginning with the Bible account of the Creation, the world, according to the first chapter of *Genesis*, is said to have been created by God in six days. Hebrew was the language in which most of the Old Testament was originally written, and the Hebrew word for day (yom) means not only a day, but also a period of time or epoch. Hebrew was a language of few words, comparatively speaking, and some of these words had more than one meaning, depending upon the context. For instance, the Hebrew word for “brother” was also used for “tribesman,” “cousin,” and “distant relative.” Thus the word for “day” signified a division of time, rather than merely a twenty-four hour day. It could also mean a period of many years or even centuries. Therefore when Genesis declares that the world was created in six days, we are required to believe that the world was created in six divisions of time, the lengths of which are not stated. Thus, the Bible is in accord with the teachings of modern science. Geology and biology are completely agreed that the formation of the earth took place in six periods.

The English scientist, who is generally considered responsible, for the theory of “natural selection,” Charles Robert Darwin (1809-82), published jointly with Alfred Russell Wallace, in 1858, and made public in 1859, his work entitled “On the Origin of

Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life.” In this work, Darwin put forward natural selection as the principle or dominant factor in the evolution of species. The word “evolved” does appear, however, but only once as the very last word in the text. It was the English philosopher, Herbert Spencer, who first used evolution in basically the sense we use it today.

Before Darwin’s time, there had been glimpses of the evolutionary theory regarding the origin of species by a number of scientists. French scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), argued in the early 19th century that influences of the environment can be passed along to the next generation, may be justly described as the originator of evolutionary science, as the term is understood today. Much later Lamarck’s ideas on evolution were somewhat incorrectly simplified to the phrase “inheritance of acquired characteristics.” It was Darwin’s contemporary, the Austrian monk Gregor Mendel, who began to reveal the secrets of genetics. It is ironic that as far as can be determined, Darwin did not know of Mendel’s work, although Mendel did know of Darwin. Lamarck’s reasoning on the subject was based on scientific investigation. He dwelt at length on the effectiveness of the environment in changing, developing, and the extinction of certain habits and qualities and even organs, of animals and plants; and he argued that such changes, caused by environment were then perpetuated by heredity.

The process of artificial selection in use among gardeners and breeders of livestock suggested Darwin’s theory, the law of natural selection, to him. Artificial selection is the method taken by a gardener who, for example, desires to develop a variety of rose possessing some particular quality, such as, color or hardness. To effect the variety in question, the gardener will select for planting the best seeds from individual flowers that exhibit the characteristics, which he desires. By continuing this method for a number of generations, the gardener will eventually bring what may be called a new variety of rose into existence.

Darwin’s law of natural selection means that somehow nature took the part of the gardener, or the stockbreeder, and developed certain peculiarities in plants and animals, until, in the course of many years; new varieties and new species were the result. And the reason, which Darwin assigned for the operation of this law of natural selection, was “the struggle for life” with “the survival of the fittest.”

According to Darwin, man is only a higher type of animal, evolved from the lower species through the ape, by means of natural selection, and its call for the survival of the fittest. Immediately after its publication the younger scientists enthusiastically accepted the Darwinian theory of evolution, and for some years it held the center of the biological stage. But its supremacy did not endure.

The Church teaches that a Catholic may believe in the evolution of species as long as the evolutionary theory does not come in conflict with revealed religion, that is Catholic Truth and teaching. Of course, a Catholic cannot possibly believe in any theory of evolution, which denied the world’s creation by the Supreme Being, God. Equally, a Catholic cannot possibly believe that man, soul as well as body, is descended from an ape, since we are taught expressly that a person’s soul comes from God directly into union with the his body. A person must believe the inspired words of Genesis: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). What a Catholic must not doubt is that a person’s soul has never been in any process of evolution.

The First Vatican Council made sure that total evolutionism, which included an evolving god, was condemned as only a more subtle form of pantheism.

“The Magisterium of the Church does not forbid that the theory of evolution concerning the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that human souls are immediately created by God-be investigated and discussed by