

attributed to the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin. As a paleontologist, he was involved in the infamous Piltdown and Peking Man fiascos. I went to a Jesuit high school in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I still remember being taught evolution and that Piltdown Man was one of our ancestors. But in 1953 this was shown to be a fraud—over 40 years after its ‘discovery’! When Chardin’s beliefs became clear, the Church tried to suppress his ideas. Unfortunately, instead of suppressing the teaching of evolution the Church attempted to suppress his eschatology, the logical fruit of marrying evolution and theology and ignoring Scripture. He believed creation and mankind would continue to evolve until we reached the ‘Omega Point’, a utopia when we will usher in the ‘Christos’, the millennium. Although Chardin’s writings were ambiguous and highly philosophical, he became especially popular among theologians and the educated laymen. When I started to become serious about God in college, someone gave me Chardin’s *The Divine Milieu* and *The Phenomenon of Man* to help me grow. I was hopelessly lost within two pages and gave them up. (Chardin later became known as the ‘father of the New Age movement’.²)

The period between 1950 and 1985 was a triumph for evolution. The official Church avoided the issue with the exception of briefly trying to suppress Chardin. Soon, Adam and Eve were no longer excluded from evolution. In 1985 and 1986, and again in 1996, Pope John Paul II again dealt with evolution, but in the usual ambiguous, generally positive way. The pope clearly accepted theistic evolution. His most publicized statement was during the 1996 Pontifical Academy of Sciences:

“Today, almost half a century after the publication of the encyclical [*Humani Generis*], new knowledge has led to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis” (p. 231).

Like other papal statements, the pope saw the weaknesses in the theory of evolution and he wanted both sides of the issue to be discussed, but unfortunately his statement was purposely exaggerated by the media and theistic evolutionists as supporting evolution. Today official Church gatherings rarely discuss both sides of this issue. This is not surprising, given that the members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and other church authorities, which advise the Church, are theistic evolutionists. However, some priests, bishops, and cardinals do not endorse evolution.

The Catholic Church has given very little attention to evolution since 1996. It is as if the Church deems it as a settled fact. A 2004 International Theological Commission simply went along with evolution. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, gave a few comprehensive lectures on evolution. Although he had doubts about large-scale evolution, he would fall generally into the theistic evolution camp. It appeared that correct definitions could bring clarity to the debate. Pope Benedict XVI made no official statement on evolution. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, from Vienna, Austria, did publish a brief editorial in the 2005 *New York Times* upholding the new theory of Intelligent Design. Of course the article produced outrage by atheists and many theistic evolutionists.

The Catholic Church today

Pope Francis wrote the most recent pronouncements on evolution and seems to have ‘given away the store’. At a 2014 session of the pro-evolution Pontifical Academy of Sciences, he

“... warns that when reading the Genesis account of creation one may ‘imagine that God was a magician, with such a magic wand as to be able to do everything.’ However, according to the Pope, “[I]t was not

like that. God created beings and left them to develop according to the internal laws that He gave each one, so that they would develop, and reach their fullness” (p. 296).

But if we cannot take the clear words of Genesis, written in historical narrative, as straightforward history, then why would we accept the Resurrection or the Virgin Birth? Chaberek seems to downplay the pope’s remarks by stating the pope did not define his terms.

Chaberek declares that it is about time that the Catholic Church really did a thorough study of evolution. They would then expose the wrong ideas, like Haeckel’s embryos, as the fraud they were.^{3,4} Sadly, the embryos are still portrayed within Church publications. He writes:

“The last place a reader would expect to find this fraud is a Catholic encyclopedia. However, even in the latest edition (2003) of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Haeckel’s drawings are featured under the entry *Evolution* without any correction” (pp. 26–27).

They would also discover that biochemistry is strongly against evolution, as Chaberek states:

“Rapid developments in biochemistry are raising many obstacles to the common evolutionary scenario, and theologians now face the need to reinvestigate the original doctrine of the Church and explore whether theistic evolution is in fact compatible with the Christian view of creation” (p. 4).

His book confirms that definitions of terms like species, evolution, and science are very important and commonly misunderstood by theologians and lay people. This lack has caused much confusion, not only in the Catholic Church, but also in the culture as a whole. Chaberek states the Church would gain from not having all pro-evolutionists in their important commissions. Most importantly, they need to quit putting scientists on a pedestal. Scientists are as fallible as other people.

I notice that theistic evolutionists continue to bring up the persecution of Galileo, but theistic evolutionists have rewritten the history of Galileo. They also have misrepresented the early Church Fathers and Medieval theologians by saying they supported evolution. Chabarek does a service by documenting in the book, and especially in an appendix, that the opposite is the case. He points out that some theistic evolutionists have especially shallow thinking: “In effect, many theologians would argue for theistic evolution precisely because ‘there cannot be conflict between science and faith’” (p. 272).

Conclusion

I think Catholics are starting to wake up to the issue of evolution, a trend that will continue as they analyze the case for biblical creation. It is possibly too much to ask for them to reconsider deep time and Noah’s Flood. However, there is a Catholic YEC ministry called the Kolbe Center for the Study of Creation. A few YEC books have been written recently by Catholic priests.^{5,6} Chabarek is a proponent of Intelligent Design (ID) and states that large-scale evolution is not observed and realizes that evolution still has unresolved difficulties, even after 150 years:

“This situation has not substantially changed for 150 years, since all the new scientific discoveries that were assumed to support biological evolution usually revealed unconquerable difficulties as well” (p. 228).

He writes several particularly insightful analyses of the irrationality of theistic evolutionists, who reject ID, such as:

“But the only alternatives to intelligent design are precisely those ‘materialistic philosophies’ that the pope called contrary to the Catholic faith about creation. Thus, theistic evolutionists encounter two serious problems: On the one hand they are unable to clearly define the reason

for their rejection of intelligent design, while on the other they must accept the existence of a divine plan in nature to remain orthodox Christians. At best, this leads to an inherent conflict of inconsistency within theistic evolution” (p. 226).

The acceptance of some sort of intelligent design, if not the whole agenda of the Intelligent Design movement,⁷ really should be a no brainer for anyone that calls himself a Christian.

The author also mentions some conundrums for those who believe in human evolution, such as why would the human body evolve ‘defenselessness’ in shedding fangs, claws, thick fur, etc.? Moreover, why would bipedalism evolve?

“This is a problem for evolutionary theory. From a Darwinian point of view, natural selection preserves beneficial changes and eliminates disadvantageous ones, so there would be no evolutionary justification for bipedalism in an animal that can already move faster and more efficiently using all four limbs. If anything, evolution would be expected to move in the opposite direction, from bipedal to quadrupedal locomotion” (p. 188).

Unfortunately, the author still believes in deep time and billions of years, and he even disparages young-earth creationists. Like the Church, he would do well to study the evidence for a young earth, Noah’s Flood, and the biblical exegesis of Genesis 1–11. He has some very mistaken ideas about creation science, which shows, on the most charitable interpretation, that he has failed to read even introductory creationist literature:

“Perhaps some creationists see God as a quite unpredictable magician. On the young earth view, for instance, God must have directly created fossils in the strata, as well as all other signs of the old age of the universe, over the course of the period of creation, understood as six natural days” (p. 297).

The author’s recommendation for the Church

The purpose of the book is to spur the Catholic Church into rethinking its ideas on evolution:

“In this book, I argue that the Catholic Church has not taken an unambiguous stand on evolution. Catholicism currently lacks a straightforward answer to the question of whether evolution, understood as the origin of species, is compatible with the Church’s teaching” (p. 3).

Catholics will find this book will give them insight into the importance of the debate between Genesis and evolution, especially the history of their own tradition’s teaching on creation.

References

1. The letters after his name, O.P., stand for *Ordo Praedicatorum* (‘Order of Preachers’), the formal name for the Dominican Order, which also included Thomas Aquinas.
2. Lane, D.H., *The Phenomenon of Teilhard: Prophet for a New Age*, Mercer University Press, Macon, GA, 1996.
3. van Niekerk, E., Countering revisionism—part 1: Ernst Haeckel, fraud is proven; *J. Creation* 25(3): 89–95, 2011; creation.com/haeckel-fraud
4. van Niekerk, E., Countering revisionism—part 2: Ernst Haeckel and his triple-woodcut print, *J. Creation* 27(1):78–84, 2013; creation.com/haeckel-woodcut
5. Warkulwiz, V.P., *The Doctrines of Genesis 1–11: A Compendium and Defense of Traditional Catholic Theology on Origins*, iUniverse, New York, NY, 2007; reviewed by Oard, M.J., *J. Creation* 22(2):21–22, 2008; creation.com/warkulwiz.
6. Wynne, J.M. and Wynne, S.A., *Repairing the Breach: Explaining the systematic deception behind the war of worldviews, and how Christendom can turn the tide*, P3 Printing, Dallas, TX, 2008.
7. Wieland, C., CMI’s views on the Intelligent Design Movement, creation.com/idm, 30 August 2002.