

Human embryos pass through a “gill slit” stage. These are “developments in the direction of man.” Therefore, to accord the human embryo the dignity of a human being from conception is biological nonsense.

In reality, of course, the development of the human embryo is quite distinct from that of other vertebrates, and there is no empirical evidence to support the claim that he (or she) passes through any stage that is not fully human, in the biological sense of the word. However, a misguided faith in evolution continues to erode the faith of many Christians in the humanity of the unborn child.

Come, Holy Spirit!



The Kolbe Center aims to equip Catholic evangelists with a decisive advantage in the third millennium by rooting their apologetics in the true Catholic doctrine of creation, supported by sound arguments from theology, philosophy and natural science.

Once persuaded of the bankruptcy of molecules-to-man evolution and of the reasonableness of special creation, the practical atheist will be able to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the claims of the Catholic Church.

"[C]aution must be used when there is rather question of hypotheses, having some sort of scientific foundation, in which the doctrine contained in Sacred Scripture or in Tradition is involved. If such conjectural opinions are directly or indirectly opposed to the doctrine revealed by God, then the demand that they be recognized can in no way be admitted" (Humani generis, 35).

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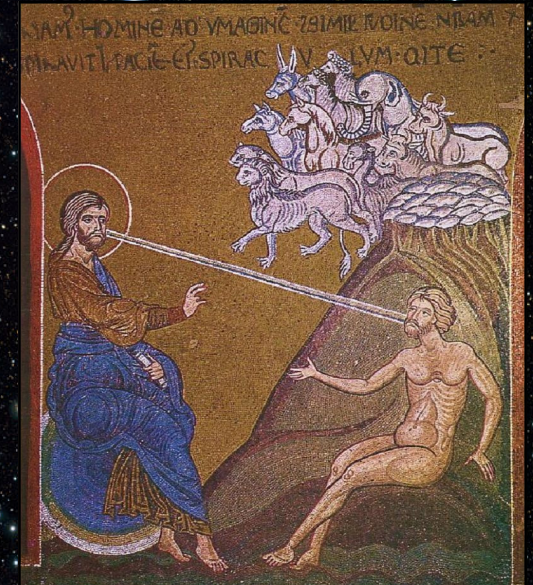
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EVOLUTION AND THE CULTURE OF DEATH

BY HUGH OWEN



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All forms of evolutionary theory require a radical rejection of God's revelation about the creation of Adam and Eve. Genesis speaks of God forming Adam's body from the slime of the earth and breathing into it the breath of life. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held that God created the body of Adam together with his soul, not the body before the soul or the soul before the body. The Sacred Liturgy affirms the full Humanity of Jesus from the moment of the Incarnation on March 25, just as it affirms the sinless humanity of the Blessed Virgin from the moment of her Immaculate Conception. In both cases, a human body and soul were created together, not the soul before the body or the body before the soul.

This teaching on the creation of Adam and Eve has been the common teaching of all of the Fathers, Doctors, Popes and Councils since the time of the Apostles. However, since Darwin, many Church leaders have been afraid to rule out the possibility that natural science might discover irrefutable evidence for human evolution. There are three reasons why this fear is no longer justified. The first has to do with the limitations of natural science; the second with the actual state of the scientific evidence; and the third with the obvious harm that this hypothesis has done and is doing to souls. Nowadays it seems unfashionable in many circles to suggest that natural science *has* limitations. But the Catholic Doctors who laid the foundation for the development of the natural sciences during the past 800 years recognized and accepted these limitations. An integral part of their enthusiastic attitude towards the investigation of nature was their understanding that the origin of the order of nature and of the natures of living things could not be explained by natural processes, or, to use the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, "In the works of nature, creation does not enter, but is presupposed to the work of nature." St. Thomas knew for certain that the origin of human nature—the creation of Adam and Eve—lay beyond the sphere of natural science. While natural scientists could learn many things about the structure and functioning of the human body, it was obvious to him that scientific research could no more shed light on how God formed the body of Adam from the dust of the earth than it could shed light on how Jesus changed water into wine at the Wedding of Cana. He distinguished between the order of creation, when God created the different kinds of creatures by His Word, and the natural order of providence, which only began *after* the creation of Adam and Eve.

Modern natural science has almost completely abandoned this distinction between the order of creation and the order of providence. However, twenty-first century natural science has amply confirmed the reasonableness of this distinction. For example, in the field of genetics, scientists have learned a great deal about genetic information, but no scientist has observed the spontaneous appearance of a new genetic program, such as would be needed to produce a new organ, like an eye or an ear, in an organism that lacked such an organ. Instead, twenty-first century genetics has discovered that, far from evolving or increasing in functionality, genetic information degrades and devolves over time, at a rate that, in the words of one geneticist, "places a limit on the length of vertebrate lineages"—a limit much lower than the ages assigned to them by evolutionary theory. Indeed, the discoveries of 21st century genetics have been fatal to all current hypotheses of human evolution, as they demonstrate that it would be impossible for a common ancestor of chimpanzees and men to acquire the necessary "beneficial mutations" without acquiring a greater number of harmful mutations—a number that would lead to extinction long before human evolution was achieved!

The full extent of the danger inherent in evolutionary speculation emerged soon after the publication of *Origin of Species* with the popularization of the concept of "embryonic recapitulation." Darwin had argued that similarities in structure among diverse life forms indicated that they had all evolved from a common ancestor. According to anatomist Ernst Haeckel, the existence of similarities in embryos of various kinds of organisms proved that the higher life forms "recapitulated" their evolutionary history before birth and that they had all descended from a common ancestor. To make this "proof" more compelling for his contemporaries, Haeckel doctored drawings of the embryos of fish, salamanders, chickens, turtles, rabbits, pigs, and human beings to exaggerate their similarities and minimize their differences. Although Haeckel's fraud was discovered and exposed during his lifetime, the evolutionary hypothesis demanded common descent, and the concept of embryonic recapitulation continued to exert a profound influence on the study of embryology for many decades. To this day, biology textbooks all over the world argue that similarities between embryos of fish, amphibians, reptiles, humans and lower mammals constitute evidence for the evolutionary hypothesis. Typical is the caption that accompanies drawings of embryos of various life-forms from a widely used American biology textbook published in 2002. It states:

Notice that the early embryonic stages of these vertebrates bear a striking resemblance to each other, even though the individuals are from different classes (fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals). All vertebrates start out with an enlarged head region, gill slits, and a tail regardless of whether these characteristics are retained in the adult.

This statement gives the impression that human embryos possess gill slits. But this is patently false. The pharyngeal arches in human embryos have no connection with breathing whatsoever but develop into the outer and middle ear, and into the neck bones, muscles, nerves, and glands. Moreover, embryologists have discovered that the realization of the same body plan—such as five digit extremities—in diverse organisms (such as whales and humans) is controlled by different genes and is achieved through totally different embryonic pathways.

Tragically, the idea of embryonic recapitulation has not only led embryonic researchers down the wrong pathways—it has also led to a denigration of the unborn child. All over the world, abortion advocates have used the alleged similarity between human and lower animal embryos to trivialize abortion in the early stages of pregnancy. For example in Germany pro-abortion activists:

skillfully exploited the disunity of the German Catholic intellectuals to bring their demands for the legalization of abortion to the legislature. ... Karl Rahner, who was in the forefront of the fight over [the loosening of] paragraph 218, wrote in *Naturwissenschaft und Theologie* (brochure 11, page 86, 1970): "I think that there are *biological developments which are pre-human*, but these developments are still aimed in the direction of man. Why cannot these developments be transferred from phylogeny to ontogeny?" (emphasis added)

With these words, Fr. Rahner, the most influential Catholic theologian in the German-speaking world, inadvertently formulated an evolutionary rationale for abortifacient contraception and abortion. Today, the implicit message of most high school biology textbooks is still clear: