

Dealing the special creation trump card to the Catholic church's evolution-stacked deck

The Evolution of Catholic Unbelief

Thomas L. McFadden

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John Woodmorappe

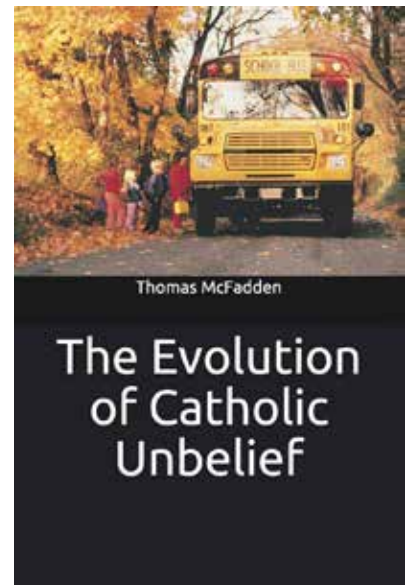
The book's author is an engineer. He is concerned about Catholic youth rejecting the Faith, and doing so out of deference to evolution, which has long permeated the Church. While much of his material imitates conservative Protestant modes of thinking, some of it is Catholic-specific, and he shows some unique insights into the creation–evolution issues. Because most readers of this review are not Catholic, I tailor my review to de-emphasize Catholic-specific issues.

Some readers may not be comfortable with the author's style. He uses a free-flowing narrative that injects references within the text itself and which mixes literary sources with references to websites and YouTube presentations. But his message does get through loud and clear.

Author McFadden includes a detailed list of creationist and ID organizations and their websites. One seldom-noted organization is a Catholic one, the Kolbe Center for the Study of Creation (kolbecenter.org).

Statement of the problem: the fruits of evolution

The author cites statistics that show that half the American Catholic



children baptized and confirmed in the last 30 years are now ex-Catholics or religiously unaffiliated. Part of this resulted from what McFadden calls the ‘dumbing down of the faith’. McFadden rejects the common media spin that the falling away is governed by disagreement with the Church on such ‘hot button’ issues as contraception, same-sex marriage, or clergy sex-abuse. In fact, he cites many ex-Catholics pointing to the “disconnect between religion and science” as the reason for their unbelief.

The foregoing is part of a deeper trend. The author writes:

“More than half of U.S. adults view science and faith as being ‘often in conflict.’ Given the weight and prestige of science in our culture, that puts faith in a corner. Simple

affirmations in favor of religious tradition or naïve apologetic approaches won't suffice—not least with young people as they encounter a range of challenging viewpoints” (p. 67).

McFadden elaborates on the bitter fruits of evolution. He comments:

“Evolutionary cosmology and evolutionary biology which are the materialist scientific consensus are taught as if they were proven facts to children from their earliest school days. The Church, which has the truth about our origins, has ceded the education of its youth on these matters to the secular culture to provide explanations for which no God was necessary” (p. 3).

He adds:

“At some point, teenagers recognize that the naturalistic evolutionary model of origins and the supernatural, fiat creation model described in the Bible, which they have heard read at Mass even if they never opened a Bible, can't both be true. They experience cognitive dissonance, and, to relieve the conflict, they must alter their beliefs in one direction or the other. According to the social researchers, too many teens resolve the disconnect between religion and science in favor of science” (p. 6).

Evolution unfairly rides the coat tails of scientific prestige

McFadden elaborates on how youth tend to equate the presumed factuality of evolution with the actual factuality of experimental science:

“After all, ‘science’ delivers the goods such as the machines and gadgets that enrich our lives. The fact is that's engineering based on operational/empirical science; the ‘science’ of cosmic and biological evolution is speculation based on inferences from historical data. The mechanism by which it happened

remains unknown and bound in conundrums. It's tooth fairy science Most Catholic adults (including clergy) are not informed on these matters so they can't help the kids discriminate between ‘faux science’ and real science” (pp. 6–7).

From the beginning, evolution rested on speculation, not evidence

Author McFadden discusses Darwin's *Origin of Species*:

“However, far from being a definitive work, the *Origin* is saturated with conjecture. In the final 1876 printing of the 1872 sixth edition, Darwin employed the word ‘may’ 642 times, ‘if’ 493 times, ‘might’ 203 times, ‘probable’ or ‘probably’ 182 times, ‘tend’ or ‘tendency’ 153 times, ‘suppose(d)’ 141 times, ‘perhaps’ 63 times, ‘no doubt’ 58 times, ‘I believe’ occurs 58 times, and so on. Yet Darwin's disciples hold a belief in the fact of evolution with a zeal that only their non-theistic religion can inspire” (p. 86).

The church was intimidated, almost from the beginning, into going lockstep with evolution

Shortly after the *Origin of Species* came out, a group of German bishops condemned it. McFadden adds that “There was in fact a consistent, if relatively quiet, rejection of human evolution on the part of the See of Peter throughout the last three decades of the nineteenth century” (p. 50). The Church generally avoided the issue, having been ‘burned’ by the experience with Galileo centuries earlier.

In 1894, Fr Leroy wrote a book promoting a ‘Christian’ evolution. There was some controversy, but Fr Leroy's book was not placed on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. Fr Luigi Tripepi criticized the book. He appealed to Church tradition in upholding the

factuality and literalness of Genesis 1. He objected to the speculative and *ad hoc* nature of various proposed ‘reconciliations’ involving theistic evolution, and, anticipating modern creationists, raised numerous scientific objections to evolution.

A spirit of appeasement

Finally, Fr Tripepi identified the *real* cause of the Church seeking a ‘reconciliation’ with evolution. McFadden writes:

“He [Tripepi] denounces the cowardice of too many contemporary Catholic scholars, who, by their excessive fear of what ‘science’ has to say, manifest nothing but the weakness of their own faith” (p. 48).

Powerful words! And so true.

The floodgates of compromise are open

One compromise leads to another. Jesuit priests George Tyrrel (1861–1909) and Alfred Loisy (1857–1940) became so enamoured with evolution that they rejected supernatural revelation entirely and ended up leaving the priesthood and the Church. (According to other sources, they had been excommunicated by the Church.) In either case, they had, thanks to evolution, gone off the humanist deep end. And who could forget Fr Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the famous renegade priest who essentially redefined Christianity in terms of evolution? In recent times, Fr. Bruce Vawter, who testified for the successful evolution-monopoly side at the Arkansas Trial in 1981, was effectively a disciple of Rudolf Bultmann, a prominent theologian who “demythologized” the Bible.

The foregoing can be generalized. For many decades, Catholic theology has come to be dominated by the modernism of Bultmann, who not only adhered to evolution but systematically

denied everything miraculous in the Bible. All the biblical events were arbitrarily redefined and trivialized. Thus, for example, Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 became nothing more than the masses of people getting persuaded to share their food with each other! The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was nothing more than an emotional 'encounter' that Christ's disciples had with His memory after the Crucifixion.

Avoiding the conflict entirely

Nowadays, more often than not, the Church buries its head in the sand. By not discussing the issue of special creation, the Church sends an unspoken message that the Bible is mistaken on this matter. McFadden comments:

"Cardinal Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI, published in 1995 a book called *In the Beginning* In that book's preface the Cardinal wrote that: '... the creation account is noticeably and completely absent from catechesis, preaching, and even theology. The creation narratives go unmentioned; it is asking too much to expect anyone to speak of them'" (pp. 8–9).

The vague character of theistic evolution

When the issue is raised at all, it is always the same. Evolution is never questioned. McFadden realizes the

self-refuting nature of theistic evolution: An inherently unguided process is now supposed to be guided by God. In fact, the only difference between theistic evolution and atheistic evolution is that the former employs theological language, albeit empty theology, to make its case.

The author repeatedly stresses the fact that the commonly voiced "God was behind it" assertions are superficial. He writes:

"It is one of these 'god-of-the-gaps' explanations on which theistic evolutionists rely to keep 'one foot in each camp,' so as to speak. They have no coherent explanation compatible with the theory of evolution. What it really may indicate is the shallowness of their understanding of the implications of a scientific hypothesis they otherwise support as a better explanation of cosmic and biological origins than the Bible. It is very facile for such Catholic evolutionists to pose as 'scientific' and 'orthodox' but a little more difficult for them to expend the mental energy necessary to become coherent in their belief" (pp. 27–28).

Retaining a 'literal' Adam and Eve in a framework of theistic evolution

Compromising evangelicals that promote theistic evolution typically

dismiss Adam and Eve as real people. In contrast, many Catholic theistic evolutionists allow for a 'real' Adam and Eve. All the animal and human evolution takes place exactly as in the atheistic scenario. However, at some point in human evolution, God steps in and infuses a soul into a hominid male individual and a hominid female individual. These are the 'Adam and Eve' as understood by Catholic theistic evolutionists.

Their 'Adam and Eve' scenario is internally inconsistent. It arbitrarily allows God to perform a miracle within a system that completely excludes the miraculous. It is also anthropocentric and God-restricting. Evolutionary theory is changed in order to make the appearance of humans something special, while strict naturalism is maintained in order to account for the appearance of animals and plants.

The scenario arbitrarily picks and chooses which events are factual and which are not. Thus, 'Adam and Eve' technically existed, but Adam was not made from the ground, and Eve was not taken from Adam's side. Death long pre-existed this 'Adam and Eve'. They had parents.

Absent another *ad hoc* miracle, this 'Adam and Eve' pair can still reproduce with other hominids, so, in no sense are these 'Adam and Eve' the biological parents of us all. It also contradicts Catholic dogma. Note that



Figure 1. A classic painting of creation by Michelangelo

Pope Pius XII, in *Humani Generis*, had taught that all humans are descended from Adam. Without miraculously imposed reproductive isolation, they are not.

Though not mentioned by McFadden, the whole scenario is unrealistic on its face. According to evolution, there is, to begin with, no such thing as a soul. We are nothing more than a bundle of animal drives and reflexes, different in degree but not in essence from all other animals.

Finally, McFadden points out that the entire scenario is completely *ad hoc*. He writes:

“Even supposing for the sake of argument that this hypothesis could be shown not to be intrinsically contrary to revealed truth, it suffers from the fatal defect of being totally gratuitous: that is, there is no positive evidence whatever from either revelation or reason to suggest that it is true. Rather, it seems like a desperate attempt to mix together two radically different world-views that cannot blend in with each other any better than oil and water” (p. 54).

That’s a succinct way to put it. It professes to be both scientific and religious, but it is neither.

Non-literal Genesis days? The *reductio ad absurdum*

In common with compromising evangelicals, Catholic theistic evolutionists assert that the days in Genesis 1 can be long periods of time, based on the fact that “a day to the Lord is like a thousand years” (e.g. 2 Peter 3:8). McFadden points out that this is a simile. After all, if (A) is *like* (B), this is not the same as saying that (A) *is* (B). Besides, such usage of this verse is self-refuting: 2 Peter 3:8 also says that “a thousand years as one day”. So, instead of supporting the Day–Age theory, it could just as easily argue that the creation took place over a much *shorter* period than six natural

days and could even have happened instantaneously. Such is the *reductio ad absurdum* of making the Bible say anything that one wants it to say.

In fact, according to the author, Thomas Aquinas argued for an instantaneous creation (p. 39; though some say he taught six literal days). Aquinas, according to the author, maintained that Genesis 1 taught six days because the original recipients of the text were “not educated enough” to grasp an instantaneous creation. Now modern compromising evangelicals tell us the exact opposite: They assure us that Genesis 1 says six days, but actually refers to a long period of time, because the original recipients of the text were “not educated enough” to grasp a creation over extended periods of time! That is what happens when one insists that the Bible cannot mean what it says because “ancients were dumb”.

Genesis 1 is literal

The word *yom* can mean a long period of time. But the context must clearly justify it. McFadden points out that Day–Age theorists commit the fallacy of an unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic range. Just because a word may mean something in some other context, it does not mean that it does so in Genesis 1.

Whenever the word *yom* is modified by a cardinal number (one ... two ... three) or an ordinal number (first ... second ... third), used a total of 359 times in the Old Testament, it always means a literal day of 24 hours, or refers to the light portion of the day–night cycle. In Genesis 1, there is a cardinal or ordinal number after each *yom*.

McFadden points out that Genesis 1–3 has a narrative structure. It is not figurative or allegorical literature. It has numerous intertextual links with other Old Testament verses, not to mention New Testament ones. The genealogies are another hallmark of historicity.

Paradoxically, evangelicals are now more ‘Catholic’ than most Roman Catholics.

The author quotes from a December 2013 study, conducted by the Pew Research Center, on Americans. He writes:

“The report said that 68% of white, non-Hispanic Catholics believe that humans evolved from animals over time and just 26% believe that humans existed in present form since the beginning. The only groups with a higher belief in human evolution than white, non-Hispanic Catholics are the unaffiliated (76%) and mainline Protestants (78%). Among white Evangelical Christians, 64% believe that humans were created as they are now, just as the Fathers, Doctors, Councils and Popes have taught” (pp. 7–8).

Conclusion

The Catholic Church has imbibed the bitter poison of evolution. It has taken over not only science, but also all aspects of Catholic learning. The Church is now in lockstep with evolution, largely out of fear of being ‘unscientific’. Meanwhile, the compromise with evolution does not impress anybody. Young people are leaving the Church in considerable numbers, owing largely to the irreconcilability of evolution and Church doctrines.

Hope for a turnaround is offered by some Catholic creationist organizations. They imitate Protestant creationist organizations and have done some original thinking of their own. More power to them!