

## TWO CONFERENCES ON EVOLUTION

“A plague o’ both your houses!”

*Romeo and Juliet*, Act 3, sc. 1

Between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2009 there was yet another Vatican sponsored conference on evolution in Rome, this one at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Eminent scientists and theologians met to address “biological evolution” 150 years after the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in “a critical appraisal”. But there was little criticism, and that little was quickly suppressed.

A week prior, in Rome’s National Research Council, the American based *Kolbe Center for the Study of Creation* had sponsored a rival conference, a symposium, which, to give it due, *did* offer criticism of Darwinian evolutionary theory, albeit with a twist, what in modern jargon might be termed “spin”. According to *Kolbe Center* principal, Hugh Owen, the presentations offered there on 23<sup>rd</sup> February “delivered a devastating refutation of the evolutionary hypothesis.”

You cannot demonstrate (i.e., prove conclusively) the falsity of the Darwinian thesis at the scientific level: there are two reasons. First, and fundamentally, evolutionism is not a scientific, but a philosophic, thesis. It can, therefore, only be dealt with at the philosophic level. Secondly, science is hamstrung by its *modus operandi*. It cannot penetrate beyond the observable because all its conclusions reduce to the observable. Pope Benedict XVI spoke to the point in the course of an address to a seminar at Castel Gandolfo in September 2006 when he said—

“[It is] important to underline that the theory of evolution implies questions that must be assigned to philosophy and which themselves lead beyond the realms of science.”

Contrary to belief, evolutionism did not begin with Darwin. It began with the philosopher, Herbert Spencer.<sup>1</sup> Darwin merely applied that philosophy in the natural realm.

Nor can you demonstrate the falsity of evolutionism at the theological level, for the proper object of theology is God, not His creation. Theology concerns itself with evolutionary theory only when some element of it contradicts the demands of Divine revelation; then it turns to the Church’s philosophy for answers.

You can only arrive at the truth by embracing reality. You cannot get there by following someone’s *idea* about reality. Darwinian theory is a body of thought driven by an idea, namely, that the whole of creation can be explained adequately without recourse to any cause but the material. The promoters of the *Kolbe Center*, too, are driven, by an idea, an idea at odds with theological reality, the Protestant idea that the revelation of creation in sacred scripture is to be interpreted literally, not figuratively. From this they conclude that the universe was created in six 24 hour

---

<sup>1</sup> Though its roots go back to Descartes, and the philosophical error in which it is grounded derives ultimately from the theological error of Luther.

days, and is only some 6,000 years old. The Church has ruled on the issue in a fashion which excludes the possibility of the certitude of their interpretation.<sup>2</sup> But the *Kolbe Center's* promoters know better than the Church. This leads them to misrepresent the Church's ruling, or to cast doubt on it, or to infer that it is reformable, when it is binding, certain and irreformable. This is a form of *gnosticism*.<sup>3</sup>

Having, as they think, discovered the truth about the age of the universe, they conclude that they have solved the Darwinian dilemma: "evolution" is impossible. Hence, the evidence they adduce is directed not so much at demonstrating the impossibility of the working of evolutionary theory as in confirming their thesis about the age of the universe. This approach characterised much of the February conference where speakers attacked the accuracy of the Lyellian geological time scale, and of radiometric and carbon 14 dating. Needless to say, for every scientist they produce on these topics, the camp opposing them can produce a hundred. The weight of scientific opinion is overwhelmingly against them.

To give the *Kolbe Center's* promoters their due, however, they came closer than the promoters of the rival conference to the truth. For one of their contributors, the philosopher Dr Alma Von Stockhausen, exposed the roots of the philosophy of evolutionism in the heresy of Martin Luther and in the philosophy to which Luther's rebellion gave birth. Yet the contribution suffered because it was offered as subsidiary to the *Kolbe Center* mind-set, rather than as prefatory to the argument damning the evolutionist thesis for its failure to address reality's demand that there are four causes of every contingent thing.

One must distinguish God's Holy Church from her ministers. She never errs, while they err frequently. However much the Church's bishops and theologians may be bemused by the dilemma posed for the modern world by Darwinian theory, the Church herself is not in doubt. She has always had the answers. They are contained in the teachings of her greatest mind, St Thomas Aquinas. One need only plumb those teachings to discover them.<sup>4</sup>

Michael Baker

21<sup>st</sup> May 2009—*Ascension Thursday*

---

<sup>2</sup> On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1909, the *Pontifical Biblical Commission*, then an arm of the Church's magisterium, ruled as follows: "Whether in that designation and distinction of six days, in the first chapter of *Genesis*, the word *Yom* (day) can be taken in either its proper sense as a natural day, or in an improper sense of an indefinite space of time; and whether among exegetes it is permitted to discuss this question freely? Affirmative. [Ruling n. viii] (DS 3519)

<sup>3</sup> This gnosticism was manifest in the attitude taken by their principals, Hugh Owen and Gerry Keane, to the reasoned dismantling of their thesis by Australian theologian, Fr Peter Joseph, in a paper he wrote in March 2006, "Genesis and Literalism". When he presented Hugh Owen with a copy of the paper, he was informed that they would let him have their reply. Implicit in this was the mind that no matter what his arguments, they were answerable: they *knew* they were right and that he was wrong.

<sup>4</sup> The author has exposed the principles in the papers *Atheism's Great Cosmogenic Myth* at [http://www.superflumina.org/atheism's\\_great\\_cosmogenic\\_myth.html](http://www.superflumina.org/atheism's_great_cosmogenic_myth.html), and *Decoding David Attenborough* at [http://www.superflumina.org/decoding\\_DA.html](http://www.superflumina.org/decoding_DA.html), and elsewhere in papers to be found under the heading *Evolution* on the superflumina website.