



As we discussed in the earlier essays on faith and reason, divine revelation and scientific discovery are both gifts that come from God and that can guide us back to God. As such, they cannot contradict each other. Hence, a genuinely Catholic appropriation of the discoveries and insights of evolutionary science must be consonant with God's revelation of Himself that culminated in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

The next series of essays on Catholic theology and evolution will discuss the Catholic Church's doctrine on creation and human origins. What has God told us about His creation not only of the world but particularly of the human creatures that He had made? What revealed truths would have to be brought into conversation with evolutionary theory?

To answer these questions, there is no better text to go to than to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which contains a catechesis that beautifully summarizes Catholic doctrine on creation that is revealed in sacred Scripture. It speaks "first of the Creator, then of creation and finally of the fall into sin from which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to raise us up again" (CCC, no. 279).

First, the Catechism teaches that the world is created. The ancient creeds of the Catholic Church confess that God the Father is the "Creator of heaven and earth" (Apostles' Creed), "of all things visible and invisible" (Nicene Creed). The New Testament reveals that God created everything by the eternal Word, His beloved Son. It is through the Son that "all things were created, in heaven and on earth... all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col 1:16-17). The Church's faith likewise confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the "giver of life," "the

Creator Spirit," and the "source of every good" (CCC, no. 291).

Metaphysically, this means not only that the eternal Triune God created the temporal world at the beginning of time, creating something where before there was nothing, but also that He sustains the world in time, preventing what He has created from being annihilated, returning back to nothing. Nothing exists that does not owe its current existence to God the Creator (CCC, no. 338).

Next, the Catechism teaches that the world was created for the glory of God. As St. Bonaventure explains, God created all things "not to

# Catholic Teaching on Creation and on Human Origins

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increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it" (see CCC, no. 293). God has no other reason for creating than His own love and goodness. Thus it should not be surprising that He created an ordered and good world. It is an ordered creation because it is the creation of a wise God, who wills the interdependence of all His creatures. Creatures depend on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other (CCC, no. 340). Not surprisingly, it is also a beautiful creation where the order and harmony of the created world result from the diversity of beings and from the relationships that exist among them (CCC, no. 341). Lastly, it is a good creation because it shares in God's goodness, which is why the sacred Scriptures reveal that after He created the world, "God saw that it was good... very good" (Gen 1:4ff).

Third, the Catechism teaches that the creation of the human being was the summit of creation



because he is made in the image of God. Of all the visible creatures, only the human being is able to know and to love His creator. He is “the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake” (CCC, no. 356). God created everything for human beings, but they were in turn created to serve and to love God and to offer all creation back to Him (CCC, no. 358).

Significantly, sacred Scripture reveals that God created the first human beings in a state of harmony, not only with God, but also within themselves, with each other, and with all the other creatures around them. Our first parents were constituted in an original state of holiness

so that they were able to share in divine life (CCC, no. 375). This original state, called the state of original justice, was a state of grace where the first human beings were free from the disordered tendencies that we experience today. As long as they remained in the divine intimacy, the first human beings did not have to suffer or to die.

Finally, however, the Catechism teaches that there was a historical fall when the original human beings fell into sin: “The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents” (CCC, no. 390). The original sin involved disobeying God’s command, and all subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in His goodness (CCC, no. 397).

Sadly, because of this original sin, the harmony in which the first human beings had found themselves when they were created was destroyed. When they rejected God, they also rejected His gifts. This rejection led to disorder within each human being, between human beings, and between human beings and the other creatures that surrounded them. This privation of grace and of harmony was inherited by all subsequent human beings who would, therefore, experience suffering and death. Christians, however, believe and are convinced that “the world has been established and kept in being by the Creator’s love; has fallen into slavery to sin but has been set free by Christ, crucified and risen to break the power of the evil one” (CCC, no. 421). 

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