In First Things (October 2005): Dr. Stephen Barr commented on Cardinal Schönborn's op-ed in the NY Times, **article here.**

Dr. Robert Bennett now comments on the comments.

Should *The Design of Evolution* be subtitled: Satan's plan for mass apostasy ?

On to the review:

Catholic theology has never really had a quarrel with the idea that the present species of plants and animals are the result of a long process of evolution—or with the idea that this process has unfolded according to natural laws.

This opening slippery sentence is a paragon of the whole creation – evolution debate. It's a fitting choice, as its truth hinges on the very word of evolution itself. With no qualification the word is ambiguous. Is the meaning micro-evolution or variation within species – the individual different features within a specific kind, like eye color in humans or beaks in finches? This interpretation is a truism, believed by anyone who comprehends its definition. Of this there is no debate

Then there's macro-evolution – the transformation of species, from one kind of being to another, as in reptile to bird (sic). Of this type there is nothing of substance but debate galore. Left undefined the meaning in the public consciousness is always that of macro-evolution, even though only micro-evolution is seen in their pets.

Why isn't this distinction ever made to clarify the arguments to non-scientists, who see obvious micro-evolution in their pets, and assume that's the visible proof of (macro-) evolution? Is it because confusion over the meaning of 'evolution' (and also over 'species', 'mutation', etc.) abets the pro-evolution side, just as disingenuous profession of ignorance about the temporal beginning of human life abets the pro-abortion side?

Taking evolution to be the macro type makes this opening statement above clearly false - never a good way to start a discourse! From the Patristic period forward, magisterial theology has always held that creation ended on Day 7: No creation of new kinds (aka species ?) was possible after then. Micro-evolution processes have unfolded since then, explaining all the different individuals within each type of biota.

The first sentence is another of the "great deceptions" used by all evolutionists of whatever persuasion --- they claim the long time period to be a fact. But those long ages can't be proven to exist. Furthermore evolution runs against natural laws of biogenesis [life only comes from life] and thermodynamics . Therefore macro evolution is an "unnatural" hypothesis and begs for a strong challenge from the Church.

These great deceptions can be summarized :

- Evolutionists blur the distinction between microevolution and macroevolution, no doubt to neutralize and confuse the unwary.
- They never acknowledge that for their unnatural hypotheses to be successful it must disobey the well established natural laws of thermodynamics and biogenesis. Evolution theory therefore is irrational!
- They ignore cutting edge science of the past 20 odd years that suggest that the five billion year age for the Earth simply does not exist. What they ignore in the earth's vast fossil record is the occurrence of global catastrophes and not evolution of life from inanimate molecules to microbes to man.

As evolution was not even a thought in the imagination of theologians until a century and a half ago, no response to a non-existent theory could possibly be forthcoming. Fr. Brian Harrison has carefully researched the development of the Church's response to evolution in the dusty halls of the **Vatican archives.**

We should all be grateful to Fr. Harrison for this service in His service. The complete reference should be consulted, as what follows is an abbreviated digest of Fr. Harrison's findings.

Shortly after Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, the first significant magisterial response on the part of the Successors of the Apostles was that of the German Catholic bishops, who, in their Provincial Council of Cologne [only one year later] (1860), condemned the idea of natural human evolution in no uncertain terms:

Our first parents were formed immediately by God. Therefore we declare that the opinion of those who do not fear to assert that this human being, man as regards his body, emerged finally from the spontaneous continuous change of imperfect nature to the more perfect, is clearly opposed to Sacred Scripture and to the Faith.

[Aside: St Albertus Magnus, the great teacher of Aquinas, was as skilled in natural science as St. Thomas was in philosophy. Didn't he die in Cologne? Isn't Pope Benedict a native of Germany? Isn't Cologne also the site of the recent World's Youth Day ? So at the site of Albert's grave, the Church's expert Doctor on natural matters, the first firm magisterial response to evolution came from the bishops of Germany, whose native son now reigns as Pope. And the Pope came to this same city of Cologne 145 years after the Council, to address the youth of all the world….. Is all this coincidental or providential? Father, Your will be done!]

In the next decades, no declarations were made on this subject by the Holy See, although Vatican Council I had on its agenda a reaffirmation of God's special creation of the bodies of Adam and Eve, and probably would have promulgated this teaching had the Council not been cut short by the Franco-Prussian war. Nevertheless, Rome's silence in response to Germany's eloquence obviously signified her consent, since those bishops were simply repeating what the Church had always taught, and what was taught in all approved Catholic theology faculties at the time.

A Dominican scholar and evolution partisan, Fr. Léroy, published a book around 1894 upholding the opinion of Darwin, affirming that:

- in the Genesis narrative the only truths of orthodoxy are the creation of the universe by God and the action of His providence;
- the ‘how’ of creation is left to human investigation;
- Moses’ narrative is ‘an old patriarchal song, . . . a tissue of metaphors’;
- science cannot take any account of the literal sense of Genesis.
- the only divine intervention in Adam’s creation was God’s act of infusing the soul

After being challenged by the Holy See, Fr. Léroy contends in his own defense that:

- the Church has so far condemned only atheistic evolution;
- the Bible tells us nothing of the *manner* in which plants and animals were made;
- evolution is not contrary to Tradition; Augustine’s *rationes seminales* comes quite close to evolution.

Direct quotes of Congregation for Defense of the Faith theologians of the late 1800’s, responding to Fr. LéRoy:

Fr. Léroy, . . . instead of combating the absurd opinion of evolutionist anthropologists with the dictates of Revelation, seeks to harmonize evolution with Sacred Scripture and Divine Tradition. . . Evolution, as all Catholic philosophers teach, stands resolutely condemned by the science of ontology as well as by empirical science.

"This providential law regarding hybrids breaks through the ranks of all the evolutionist sophistries"

"I express the desire that the author be seriously warned and repressed in the intemperance and audacity of his thoughts, which will please evolutionists as well as atheists and materialists, but which cannot be accepted by true Catholics."

"The human organism could never have been the terminus of a natural evolution. . . Rightly, therefore did the Council of Cologne – cited by Fr. Léroy – condemn that opinion, which Scheeben (*Dogmatica*, Bk. III, n. 384) goes so far as to qualify as heretical".

"Certainly, it is impossible to regard as safe (*sicura*) a proposition which is opposed to the unanimous consensus of the Fathers and Doctors".

"[evolutionists] postulate means for [bringing about] such transformations that are totally insufficient and often ridiculous". [addressing a modern topic - the total inadequacy of ‘chance mutations’ as the supposed driving mechanism behind evolution]

[Catholic theologians of this era] “on the basis of the authority of Sacred Scripture, understood according to the unanimous interpretation of the holy Fathers, respond with one voice that man’s body was formed by the direct and immediate action of God, distinct not only from the first creation of matter, but also from the concurrence which God, as first Cause, gives to the operation of secondary causes."

. . . “these few [denying that God is the *unique efficient cause* of the bodies of our first parents] cannot diminish in any way the concord among theologians which until recently was full, solemn, uninterrupted and universal, in regard to this question. . . . [They] cannot carry weight in comparison with those in Rome who have carried out serious studies of the Fathers and of the great philosophers and theologians of the Church down through the centuries. Much less can they claim any authority in the face of the elevated wisdom of the Most Eminent Judges of the Roman Congregations".

"[Evolutionary biology is not] in harmony with Genesis, taken in its most natural sense, nor with the morally unanimous judgment regarding Genesis itself which has been given to us by the Fathers and Doctors. Moreover, it is not supported by scientific evidence." [True then, true now]

In regard to Gen. 2: 7, that God "formed man from the dust of the earth":

"an almost unanimous consensus of the Fathers, Doctors and Theologians has understood that phrase literally, and so as to exclude the cooperation of created forces".

.."[arguing for] the evolution of an organism which God would then render human touches those limits beyond which boldness would turn into rashness, and so merit condemnation".

“Could one ever explain [the origin of man’s body] by a transformation through natural processes and forces, . . . that is, by the natural evolution of an animal organism which reaches the point of requiring the infusion of a human soul – an infusion which results in the organism then becoming, truly and perfectly, a human body? Or rather, must it be admitted that the formation of the first man’s body, prior to God’s infusion of the soul, came about through the unique and immediate action of God, and that only thus can it be explained?"

In Gen. 2: 7 two actions of God are clearly specified:

. . ." that is, He disposed the already-created clay of the earth in a form which was apt, or required, to be informed by the soul; then He "breathed in his face the breath of life". Moreover, it is said that only after the infusion of the soul did the body molded from clay possess life: ". . . and man became a living soul". Thus, **prior to that it had no life at all. Therefore, it could not have come about through evolution from any animal.**
"

[it would be contrary to Gen. 2: 7, and therefore heretical, to postulate any natural cause by which a material body could become] "sufficiently disposed to receive an intellective soul"

Gen. 1: 26-27 does not mention any intermediary between God and the first man and woman:

"indeed, such mediation is excluded; for He alone created the man whom he created in His own image and likeness".

Public retractions by the evolution partisans

Fr. Léroy, when his book was placed on the *Index*:

"I have learned today that my thesis, which has been examined here in Rome by the competent authority, has been judged unacceptable, above all in what concerns the human body, since it is incompatible with both the texts of Sacred Scripture and the principles of sound philosophy".

A similar censure against the book Evolution and Dogma, by J. A. Zahm, led to this note to his translator:

"I have learned from unquestionable authority, that the Holy See is adverse to the further

*distribution of **Evolution and Dogma**, and I therefore beg you to use all your influence to have the work withdrawn from sale"*

CDF collective opinions

Ontology demonstrates that essences are unchangeable, while empirics shows that hybrids are sterile.

Léroy's views are roundly condemned as "anti-Christian and anti-Catholic".

St. Thomas is cited in *ST* Ia,Q.91,a.2, and Q.92,a.4:

"The first formation of the human body could not have been accomplished by any created power, but immediately by God".

Léroy's opinion is said to be scientifically untenable because there are no facts that support evolution. (Interesting that the exact same can be said today – *a fortiori.* Also, the same can be said about facts that disprove geocentrism. But this is off-topic….for now.)

If Adam's body evolved, why should that have only happened once? Multiple human evolution is polygenism – an unconditionally forbidden belief.

All of the Fathers distinguish a three-fold action of God in the creation of man:

- His creation of matter;
- His formation of the body;
- His infusion of the soul.

They distinguish the formation of man from that of other creatures.

Until 1858 all theologians taught that God is the *unique efficient cause* of the bodies of our first parents.

A doctrine can be *de fide divina* although not yet *de fide catholica* when it is clearly contained in Scripture, but has not so far been authentically proposed as such by the Church, to be believed by all. It is thought that the immediate formation of

Adam's and Eve's bodies by God falls into this category. This truth is variously classified:

- "Catholic doctrine"
- "pertaining to the faith"
- the contrary opinion is heretical, insofar as it is opposed to Genesis.

In any case errors less grave than heresy cannot be embraced by the faithful.

Other Old Testament texts which speak of man's formation by God from the earth without a hint of any intermediary: Job 10: 8-9; 33: 4, 6; Sirach 17: 1, and Wisdom 7: 1.

Significant appeals are made to the "undisputed" immediate creation of Eve, which even Fr. Léroy admits cannot be read as evolutionary: this fact necessarily sheds new light on the formation of Adam as well.

Would it not be improbable that only the woman, and not the man as well, should be formed by the direct action of God?

Note that not even the innovators dare to suggest that Eve's body, as well as Adam's, was a product of evolution.

If they can't be reduced to symbolism, verses opposed to their evolution position are ignored.

Other issues

As long as the Roman Magisterium itself appears to be patient or benign towards these evolutionist novelties, the traditional theologians feel that they too should stop short of roundly condemning them.

Then the issue of innocence: ordinary devout Catholics are scandalized and incredulous at the notion that the human race is descended from ape-like ancestors; this point needs to be taken into account as one witness among others to the faith that has been handed down over the ages.

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. [True then, true now]

While Nero fiddled, Rome burned. Now, while Rome fiddles, does the Church burn?

Two important differences that separate the theological climate then from now:

- Then, the clear opposition of the vast majority to Darwinian evolution
- Then, the obedience of the dissemblers in retracting their publications.

Pure Darwinists thought Léroy's theory illogical in allowing the supernatural infusion of a rational soul in man: if lower beings derive their whole nature from lower forms, why should man be an exception? A consistent evolutionary approach requires the materialistic view that the soul too evolved. By trying to belong in both camps, thevolutionists fit in neither.

The non-Catholic Professor Virchow of the University of Berlin abandoned belief in evolution because of the absence of intermediary forms – 'missing links' – in the fossil record. (only

included because this objection sounds a very familiar modern note.)

Specific conclusions drawn from the Holy Office archives

Re human evolution. There's a widespread popular perception about the history of the Church's relations with science, that the Vatican notoriously blundered in the seventeenth century by condemning Galileo and proscribing all works propagating the Copernican worldview. The Vatican thus 'prudently' abstained from intervening with similar condemnations of evolution. This is the thought behind Dr. Barr's saying that the Catholic Church "has never really had a quarrel with the idea … of evolution."

The anti-Darwinian decision of the German bishops in 1860 was tacitly "approved" by Rome, although apparently given little publicity

At the papal seminary in Rome the dogmatic theology text declared the immediate formation of Adam's body by God to be a "most certain truth" derived from Revelation.

Rome did not embark on a vigorous anti-evolution crusade, as did some Protestant denominations. No papal bulls or encyclicals thundered against the novel ideas; but neither did any such 'heavyweight' documents ever condemn Galileo or Copernicus.

When specific works supporting evolution confronted the Congregation with the need to speak out 'for' or 'against', the decision was invariably and unambiguously negative.

Re Sub-Human Evolution.

Rome never censured the hypothesis of biological evolution in reference to lower, sub-human species.

The Council of Cologne limited its condemnation to the hypothesis of a "spontaneous" (i.e., purely natural) evolution of the human body.

No public magisterial statement emanating from Rome has ever affirmed that the natural evolution of lower species is incompatible with divine revelation.

If the ‘six days’ of Creation week are understood literally and historically – as plain and straight-forward language - this obviously does rule out (macro-)evolution of any kind. If the seventh day is understood as the end of Creation, as Genesis says and Tradition upholds, then this also rules out (macro-)evolution of any kind.

Re opposition to human evolution.

The principal doctrinal point is : the reality of an immediate divine intervention in the origin of the human body, by which the matter used by God became apt or disposed for the reception of a rational soul.

Leroy’s point 5 was deemed unorthodox, since it was contrary to Genesis 2:7, which was held to be historically true. The natural sense of Genesis indicates two logically distinct divine actions:

- the formation from ‘clay’ of Adam’s body and
- the ‘breathing in’ of the life-giving soul

An unbroken consensus of the Fathers, Doctors and approved theologians interpreted the text in this sense.

Now a philosophical objection: How could a purely material, biological process produce matter apt for reception of a spiritual soul - an effect differing in kind from its cause? Where was the radical distinction between the nature of spirit and matter?

Toleration of ‘special transformism’.

Secular science was insisting that hominids were in fact man’s ancestors. The Church’s opposition to this produced the compromise or ‘concordist’ hypothesis dubbed ‘special transformism’: the matter upon which the Creator intervened was not inorganic or inert, but already living - a ***supernatural*** intervention at the moment of Adam's conception was necessary to give his body the genetic and physical features of a true human being. ‘Natural transformism’ simply removes the Creator from this equation, but does not address abiogenesis - how the transition from inorganic to the first organic was made by purely natural means.

Catholic theistic evolutionists now said they could accept human evolution while still upholding the traditional doctrine of a special creation. Special transformism was never censured by the Holy Office.

Regarding the first woman.

No censure was necessary, during this period, either of :

- a polygenistic account of human origins or
- the body of the first woman was also a product of evolution.

No reformer went so far as to question God’s miraculous formation of Eve from Adam’s side as he slept. This truth was reasserted by the Supreme Pontiff himself as an "undoubted" part of "the Church’s permanent doctrine" (Encyclical *Arcanum*, February 10, 1880, §5).

The much more substantial scientific evidence today against evolution makes this Vatican reaction more relevant and opportune than ever. This decision against ‘natural transformism’ has never been reversed (nor can it be) by any subsequent decision of the See of Peter.

Pope Pius XII showed very qualified openness to human evolution in *Humani Generis* as 'special transformism', and Pope John Paul II's 1996 allocution to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, in its strictly doctrinal statements, manifests his intention simply to confirm what his predecessor had already said in 1950.

But 'special transformism' suffers from the fatal defect of being totally *ad hoc*; there is no positive evidence from revelation or reason to support it. It seems like a desperate attempt to mix together two radically different world-views that cannot blend in with each other if the creation description is taken objectively, not subjectively. No evolution scientist would ever accept this concept of miraculous supernatural intervention as having the slightest scientific support for evolution. The operational premise of modern science is that any reference to religious/supernatural causes is positively precluded.

But the *kind* of miracle being postulated here finds no more support from revelation than it does from science. Nothing in the Bible or Tradition suggests even remotely that God carried out any miracle involving the conception of Adam by a pair of ape-like, semi-human creatures.

Will Catholic theology of the 21st century return to the historical truth of that natural and traditional reading of Genesis which CDF theologians and the Holy Office defended in the 19th century - the direct, immediate formation by God of the first man's body from *non-living, inorganic* matter?

We must detest and constantly avoid what the trickery of heretics is trying to accomplish, and matters which have been religiously and fully defined must not be brought up again for debate
St. Leo the Great

The historical record shows great similarities between the Vatican responses in both controversies involving Galileo and Darwin:

- Galileo was called in and rebuked by the Holy Office, as were Fr. Léroy and other innovators.
- Works defending the Copernican system were placed on the Index of Forbidden Books, as were Léroy et al. two and half centuries later.
- A consistent, if relatively quiet, Vatican rejection of both Galileo and human evolution persisted for several decades afterwards.
- Of most importance, the root cause of the dissension in both cases was the liberal interpretation of Genesis as symbolism, metaphor, myth or poetry in the face of challenges by

secular science.

Notable differences in the two cases were:

- Anti-Darwinian censures emanating from Rome never received nearly as much publicity as the Galileo case.
- A single lay scientist was the focus of the first conflict, a group of clerics of the second.
- Galileo was a public figure and personal friend of the Pope and Vatican insiders; the evolution supporters were relatively unknown to the public and the See of Peter – even their books had limited circulation.

Today there is ongoing unresolved dialogue about the level of belief expected for a literal creation and, less so, for a geostatic universe. So the responsibility of each player with respect to point # 4 above needs explicit consideration. Professed unbelievers, bound only by natural law, are held by their conscience to the extent their moral ignorance is invincible. For children of the light the responsibility is neither as simple nor subjective.

In all that follows regarding Catholics the viewpoint is not of judgement but of observation - NJJO: Not Judging, Just Observing.

According to the principle of a well-informed conscience, a moral obligation to satisfactorily understand and freely accept science claims contrary to the plain words of Scripture falls on all the faithful. NJJO

For clergy and laity, rejecting the Word of God as written and agree with such science's claims would require very strong proof. NJJO

The validation of these claims that usurp Genesis by the teachers of the innocent is at the highest level of moral obligation. NJJO

Those teachers without a science background would seem to be required to obtain one in the

specific areas of contention, or refer to a trusted believer who has the required science background. NJJO

Those with a God-given talent for science matters have the highest obligation to thoroughly investigate and resolve such science claims, in accord with the principle of an informed Christian conscience. There is always the potential that a Catholic scientist's personal decision in these matters may affect pastoral or Magisterial attitudes and decisions. NJJO

In regard to talents, we could all be guided by the parable about the distribution of talents read this week, Matt 25:14-30. In the taxonomy above, we each can see where we stand. NJJO

Rarely is the type and serious degree of moral duty explained in such cases where the Word of God is equated or even subordinated to modern science. The reasons for this situation of moral uncertainty is one that should be explored, but not here. To equate His Word with interpretations of natural discoveries by fallible men could reasonably be seen as violating the very First Commandment: You shall not have strange gods before Me. NJJO

To say that God's Word can be replaced or refused on one's own authority, thus making of oneself a god ……. for this we resort to the dictionary:

blasphemy

A contemptuous or profane act, utterance, or writing concerning God or a sacred entity. The act of claiming for oneself the attributes and rights of God. An irreverent or impious act, attitude, or utterance in regard to something considered inviolable or sacrosanct. Iinsulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God or a religion and its doctrines and writings and esp. God as perceived by Christianity and Christian doctrines and writings Expressing disrespect for God or for something sacred The act of depriving something of its sacred character

And to Matt 12:31,32

Therefore I say to you: Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but *the blasphemy of the Spirit* shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him:

but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

The Douay-Rheims comment: This kind of sin is usually accompanied with so much obstinacy, and such wilful opposing the Spirit of God, and the known truth, that men who are guilty of it, are seldom or never converted: and therefore are never forgiven, because they will not repent. Otherwise, there is no sin which God cannot or will not forgive to such as sincerely repent, and have recourse to the keys of the Church.

This completes the reply to the first sentence of the article – the rest will be less extended!

As the 1909 Catholic Encyclopedia put it, these ideas [evolution] seem to be "in perfect agreement with the Christian conception of the universe."

From a promo for the 1909 Catholic Encyclopedia:
"One **Protestant** reviewer called it 'the greatest work undertaken for the advancement of Christian knowledge since the days of Trent.'"

Hmm. Would a Catholic promote the Protestant Encyclopedia?

Catholic theologians were more hesitant with respect to the origin of the human race, but even here, the old encyclopedia admitted, evolution of the human body is "per se not improbable" and a version of it had "been propounded by St. Augustine."

Using as an authoritative source of Catholic belief an ecumenically-oriented reference nearly a century old that conflates Christian doctrine is beyond problematic. Sensibly unifying just Protestant doctrine is impossible, with over 20,000 sects. This seems desperate for support from any document titled "Catholic". Where's the Magisterial assent and approbation?

Why don't we historically stereotype St. Paul by citing his beliefs prior to the conversion on the Damascus road? For the same reason we don't ignore Augustine's maturation in Christianity as reflected in his writings. Why pick an early version of his struggle for truth which reflects his immaturity? For that matter, you could pick a quote from his early Manichaean days to show that a canonized saint believed in natural dualism.

Christians who believe in macro-evolution may eventually realize its conflict with both objective empirical science and the revelations of Genesis and revert to the orthodox and traditional truth of creation, as did the writer. Who would be so demanding as to hold up beliefs formerly held as if their final convictions?

The '*seminales*' of Augustine had no connection with new species (or the potential for generating new species), as species had no meaning at that time (and very little scientific objectivity now).

Any appeal to Augustine's well-known *rationes seminales* ignores what the great doctor had in mind – at least as regards human origins – a merely
obediential potency
in primitive matter, a potency that required an immediate divine action to actualize. That clearly has nothing in common with the modern evolutionary hypothesis regarding human origins.

And so the Church is required to reject atheistic and materialistic philosophies of evolution, which deny the existence of a Creator or His providential governance of the world.

Or which deny the plain, straightforward meaning of Scripture without excellent cause!

The first formal statement on evolution by the magisterium did not come until the encyclical letter Humani Generis of Pope Pius XII in 1950.

Not so. See the opening response above, especially the declaration by the Council of Cologne in 1860.

Then, in 1996, in a letter to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Pope John Paul II acknowledged that the theory of evolution is now recognized as "more than a hypothesis," thanks to impressive and converging evidence coming from a variety of fields.

A letter doesn't capture the correct context. The Pope presented his comments publicly on receiving the PAS scientific report on evolution (a report never released to the public, by the way). A speech isn't quite right, either, since his words were not personally delivered but read to the PAS in French.

Ignoring the context of the Pope's statement is, as always, an invitation to misrepresentation, so intended or not. The Pope was summarizing the report from the Pontifical Academy of Science

on the scientific support for evolution. It's unclear what initial parts of the speech are paraphrasing the PAS report, and which are his own thoughts, since drafts for his speeches are often ghost-written.

Catholics know that the Pope's views and opinions are always of interest – assuming all of the speech truly represents his opinion. In any case nothing binding or definitive can be inferred from a speech accepting the work of the agnostic PAS scientists. The PAS members may be divided on many specific science issues but do agree unanimously on one thing - the validity of evolution science.

A positive evolutionary spin is put on the Pope's phrase that evolution is 'more than a hypothesis' (typically, not even the whole sentence is quoted). But the interpretation can be read as a belief that evolution is an "unfalsifiable or discredited theory", as a disproof is also more than a hypothesis. The Pope makes no further clarification of his meaning for the phrase.

Native French speakers have translated the phrase in question as "more than one hypothesis", which infers that the Pope considers evolution to be just one of many guesses at the origin of life and its variety in nature. All these important nuances are glossed over by taking the contested phrase out of context.

..a lengthy document from the International Theological Commission contained, along with much else, a lucid and careful analysis of evolution and its relation to Catholic teaching.

The International Theological Commission, a body of 30 Catholic theologians from around the world, ADVISES the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on pressing theological issues. Established 35 years ago by Paul VI, its purpose is to examine the most important doctrinal questions. In general, though, the commission's reflections only take the form of study and research documents to support the CDF.

Last year, in Oct 2004 , a new group of members assembled to start their five-year terms. They settled on three topics for reflection - none of which involved modernism or its offspring – evolution. This is a disappointment, as any subject the ITC takes up is sure to be on the Vatican's radar screen. Of course this last ITC direction was set by John Paul II; it remains to be seen what the hot buttons of theology are for Pope Benedict XVI.

Some worry that by adopting the standards of the secular academy in science and arts, Catholic theology risks losing its identity. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger himself once wondered if Christian theology had made a mistake by relocating from the monastery to the university (We also wonder, Holy Father).

Among the questions the ITC will ponder is this: "To whom is theology accountable?"

Why is this question with so obvious an answer even asked? Could it be our best external clue to the internal lack of direction and confusion within the ITC?

Christoph Schönborn, … reacted indignantly to the suggestion that "the Catholic Church has no problem with the notion of 'evolution' as used by mainstream biologists—that is, synonymous with neo-Darwinism."

Even more, why the brief flash of truth in the NY Times op-ed, albeit ambiguous to some, then the less visible backpedaling last month in Vienna? Is this the usual Vatican damage control, prompted by indignant thevolutionists, accustomed to beating the Magisterium over the head with a scientific sledgehammer? Vatican veterans of the internal bureaucratic wars of inertia had predicted as much after the NY Times broadside across the bow of the USS Amchurch.

We can probably expect some evasive, ambiguous, politically-correct Vatican back-tracking, now that the 'shocked, shocked' scientific establishment is quivering with outraged horror at Cardinal Schönborn 's recent statement on evolution.

This will be a test of whether Pope Benedict corresponds with his new grace of state as Peter's Successor. Let's pray that his backbone holds up under the crushing posthumous weight of Darwin that he inherited.

[Cardinal Schönborn:] Brushing off the 1996 statement of John Paul II as "vague and unimportant"

Clearly so. Did it compel belief by the faithful? Was it a rote summary of the PAES report – the Pontifical Academy of Evolution Sciences? Was it, at best, the Pope's opinion ? Was it even his opinion, or generated from a ghostwritten draft? Was it even understandable in its abstract references? If it was important, why did the Pope choose to deliver it in French, one of his few weak languages? Why did the Vatican press have to issue corrections after the initial release?

….In the United States, the harsh questions and mocking comments came fast and furious.

And does that ridicule say more about:

- the liberal US press aligned against Catholicism,
- the apathetic Amchurch, which offered no support to the cardinal, or
- Rome and its inertia in addressing evolution ?

Could it really be that the modern Church is condemning a scientific theory?

How shocking…. If in conflict with revealed truth, of course! What else? Did not a renaissance Church discipline a lay scientist who confused the mathematically possible with the scripturally impossible, in the Galileo affair?

Was the cardinal meddling in the world of nature, as is implied here? No more than St. Bellarmine did four centuries ago by asserting the primacy of Scripture over medieval musings on the organization of the cosmos and computational expediency. The Church was asserting what was supernaturally defined, which circumscribes – always – what is naturally possible.

Would that the Church would find a modern Bellarmine, to abjure Darwin as Saint Robert did Copernicus and Galileo! May Your will be done, Father.

How much doctrinal weight does Schönborn's article have?

About as much as the Pope's comments on the 1996 PAS report. Its real significance is threefold:

- finally, a Vatican cleric seemed to speak out against theistic evolution
- the reaction among Catholic thevolutionists was remarkable, as a raw nerve was hit that threatened their comfy fence-straddling life-style.
- business as usual continued around St. Peter's Square, as the Church's secular image of being modern and accommodating to scientific speculation was given a quick touchup.

The Church in recent centuries has avoided taking sides in intramural scientific disputes—which means the form as well as the content of the cardinal's article came as a shock.

A result of the widely acknowledged phenomenon of Catholic Galilean guilt, for his alleged 'torturing' and for taking issue with science on a topic which it claims as its exclusive domain – the architecture and dynamics of the universe. Could a false collective guilt span four centuries?

Yes, nothing less.

neo-Darwinism is based on the idea that the mainspring of evolution is natural selection acting on random genetic variation.

Some concepts unexpressed here but highly relevant ……and embarassing: *Random* = undirected in neoDarwinism; paleoDarwinism does not explicitly separate or exclude the cause from the effect, but leaves the issue open. Darwin was not, in this sense, a neo-Darwinist.

The mechanism of neoDarwinism is variation inter species, not the micro-evolution of intra-species variation. And variation specifically is attributed to genetic mutation, which is ALWAYS shown experimentally to be neutral or negatively affect the offspring. A positive mutation would be the appearance of a beneficial characteristic which was **demonstrably not latent in the genome**
. In a Catholic context, such a mutation would have to produce a beneficial new form or function in the living type which had not been coded into the DNA by the Creator before Day 7, when He rested from all He had created.

This is the central misstep of Cardinal Schönborn's article. He has slipped into the definition of a scientific theory, neo-Darwinism, the words "unplanned" and "unguided," which are fraught with theological meaning.

Thevolutionists often point out how clever the results of evolution are, even though mindlessly selecting as though groping in the dark, like the blinded Polyphemus in the Odyssey.

"Mother nature" and other personifications subliminally infer a nurturing and purposeful environment, evoking appreciation for the wonder of it all. Yet Charlie's official party line is stumbling, fumbling, bumbling guessing behind it all. Yet there's always the illusion of intelligence, the implication of purpose behind it all, but it's officially just one big crapshoot. All say amen to the god of science.

Is the cardinal twisting the meaning of 'random' in a religious direction?

Not according to the dictionary.

Random :Without a governing design, method, or purpose; unsystematically According to the thesaurus, *random* is used as a synonym for *unplanned* five times; for *unguided*, once. These words are fraught with implications of intelligence, not necessarily theology.

The word “random" as used in science does not mean uncaused, unplanned, or inexplicable; it means uncorrelated. …..In common speech, “random" is often used to mean “uncaused," “meaningless,", “inexplicable," or “pointless."

Thesaurus occurrences of *uncorrelated* as synonym for *random* : zero. Again the standard references say no. All these last four are listed as synonyms for ‘random’ exactly 0 times – that’s zero times.

The last three words are, however, good descriptions for this whole line of thought. Look, every lottery player knows what random selection of a lottery ball means. If a selection is guided or planned then the drawing is said to be ‘fixed", a clear term for the result. If no external intelligence influences the lottery ball, we say the result is not “fixed". It’s fair if it’s unplanned.

The extended detailed diversion here into the semantics of random, as though it were some unfamiliar term, only comprehensible by a Darwinist, is enough to bore even a statistician. License plates and poetry ??

The sequence of states exhibits a degree of randomness: a car from Kentucky, then New Jersey, then Florida, and so on—because the cars are uncorrelated:

Hawaii or Alaska, notwithstanding? This sort of confusion in semantics is typical, when the normal meaning of a word is forced to be otherwise by an underlying agenda.

Why not take the high road , the metaphysical view – why are their natural laws at all? Because a world of chaos, of actions with unpredictable effects, cannot support free choice. We know that free will cannot be changed, as love - of God or of fellow humans - is impossible without it.

Creation requires stability and predictability, the source then of all natural laws, some of which are also moral laws. God’s purpose in the world is to create an arena in which free will can play out. That requires a background of stability for moral decisions – natural events must have consistency so that our actions have anticipated consequences – in a world of chaos , where would be free will?

This stability of natural events and processes is known to man as natural law. The science of today is based on discovering these ‘laws", which is not complete, despite the unwarranted optimism that science is approaching the “Theory of Everything". From childhood life experience gives us sufficient information to make any moral and salvific decisions – science is unnecessary to know this minimum natural knowledge (else only scientists could be saved!)

Natural law reflects the moral law in this, that some effects are not predictable from their causal application. From flipping a balanced coin enough times we know that the H/T ratio will approach one. From the lottery we learn that winning is possible, but only for other people! And from simulated mutation by irradiation of flora and fauna, we have learned that mutations, the mechanism of neo-Darwinism for natural selection, NEVER produces a beneficial change that was not already latent in the genome.

So if the word “random" necessarily entails the idea that some events are “unguided" in the sense of falling “outside of the bounds of divine providence," we should have to condemn as incompatible with Christian faith a great deal of modern physics, chemistry, geology, and astronomy, as well as biology. This is absurd, of course.

What is absurd is that any event be considered outside divine providence, as all things are held in existence- after creation – only by His continuing maintenance of existence, as primary cause. When we say an event is random, we just mean that its occurrence is unexplained by our current knowledge. It may or may not be explained in the future, when the secondary natural cause is discovered. But we always know Who is the primary cause. .

… currently lively disagreement involves scientific observation and generalization concerning whether the available data support inferences of design or chance, and cannot be settled by theology."

Nor should theology attempt to settle a pure scientific matter. But theology can answer whether anything is pure chance as per its very existence. To wit, all things are created for His purpose, which may or may not be discernible by men. The question really is: “If science is able to objectively discern design , will it admit so, or deny such for subjective and ideological grounds?

And if empirical science, using only evidence in its own domain, does conclude that nature operates by chance, how can that be distinguished from a natural search for truth, but operating in ignorance of a supernatural purpose? And what purpose might that be? As revealed in Genesis.

If an “inference of chance" as part of the explanation of a phenomenon cannot be ruled out on theological grounds, then the competing claims of neo-Darwinians and their Intelligent Design critics about biological complexity cannot be settled by theology.

For neo-Darwinians: Genesis 1 provides the knowledge of species origin as intact kinds and the completion of creation in six 24 hour days, limiting future life forms so as only varying within kind.

For Intelligent Design: Genesis 1 and the First Commandment solves their purported ignorance as to the identity of the Designer.

In which way did God make life? Was the molecular deck “stacked" or “shuffled"?

OK, from the poker deck take this lesson. Shuffle the deck trillions of times and count how many times one of the 13 kinds of cards turns into a different kind. How many times does a deuce turn into an ace?

The answer to this is the same as the number of trans-species changes since the creation of the world. As the playing card is fixed as to kind, each living thing is fixed from its origin to be only one type of being.

People have used the words “random," “probability," “chance," for millennia without anyone imagining that it must always imply a denial of divine providence.

Why so sharp an inference? How did the cardinal imply a denial of divine providence?

’ In the Catholic perspective, neo-Darwinians who adduce random genetic variation and natural selection as evidence that the process of evolution is absolutely unguided are straying beyond what can be demonstrated by science."

This line would be correct, did it not beg the question, by assuming that there is a “process of evolution".

But to employ arguments in science based on statistical randomness and probability is not necessarily to “oppose" the idea of chance to the existence of God the Creator.

Correct. The odds of both abiogenesis and macro-evolution are so low, they are even less than

winning the power-ball(HA!) Then why does evolution science defy logic by supporting the statistically impossible theory of evolution? “It’s statistically impossible, but it could happen ? The ideologically savvy can smell a different agenda.

I personally am not at all sure that the neo-Darwinian framework is a sufficient one for biology.

Mutation as the mechanism of evolution is as defective conceptually as its products are physically.

Cardinal Schönborn ….. ended up giving credibility to their [neo-Darwinian]claim and obscuring the clear teaching of the Church that no truth of science can contradict the truth of revelation.

A strange conclusion, given all the preceding thoughts that conflict with it. Does the problem then lie in the truth of Revelation?