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CREATION AND EVOLUTION:
A CASE IN CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

A long Essay Submitted to the Faculty of Theology in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the award
of Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies

By

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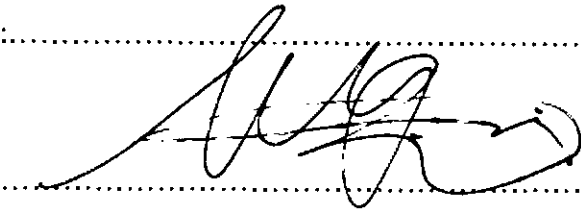
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NAIROBI-KENYA
AUGUST 2004 – JANUARY 2005

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through personal readings, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for the academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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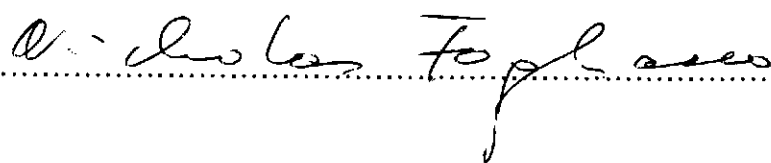
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This long essay has been submitted for the examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

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Name: **Rev. Fr. Nicholas, Fogliacco, I.M.C. (S.T.D.)**

Date:..... 

Is evolution a theory, a system or a hypothesis? It is much more: it is a general condition to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must bow and which they must satisfy henceforward if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light illuminating all facts, a curve that all lines must follow.

**Pierre, Teilhard de Chardin S.J.
1881-1955**

The Great Thing in this Evolving World is not so much where we are but in what Direction we are moving as God's Creation.

DEDICATION

With love and insolvent gratitude I dedicate this little work first, to the Teilhardian Scholars. Secondly, to all visionary women and men and friends, who persistently draw forth the slumbering within me.

At my heart are all those who **think Nature**.

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I sincerely also wish to thank my SPIRITAN Family for the conducive environment they constantly offered me in developing this essay: financially, materially and above all spiritually. And special regard to Fr. Tom McDonald (CSSp) and Pedro V. Gomes (CSSp) for their tireless work of reading and making critical suggestions on grammar. The same token of thanks go to The Catholic Bookshop, Nairobi i.e. Daughters of St. Paul, for availing the latest books-editions related to this subject. A vote of thanks also to Tangaza Library. On this note, to you all, I say bravo! God bless.

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INTRODUCTION

This essay is an attempt to understand the scientific evidence that organic evolution is a fact as pointed out by Pope John Paul II in his recent statement in (1996).¹ It is an opportunity for me to see how religious thought about creation and evolution is presently conceived; given the past traditional understanding that species were created and fixed once and for all in God's creative activity, which presupposed that evolution could not take place. In the past organic evolution had made very little impression upon many areas of human knowledge, and more so in theology. But presently there is attention of many theologians from different religious faiths that has increased considerably on the question of the origins of the universe and its dynamism to the future. The fact of organic evolution is apparently becoming clearer with the evidence varying from one discipline of knowledge to the other. The organic evolution embraces a principle of novelty at work, which integrates its past into the present, and is directed to the future. Following this awareness, then, there is a profound link and unity between creation as a reality and evolution as a reality, that both are open to the future dimensions of beings. And this is the link and unity I focus on in this essay.

In chapter one therefore, I start by defining the essential terms 'Creation' and 'Creationism' that will carry us throughout in this work, as we look how creation is envisioned from the Christian theological context. In doing this, I focus first of all on the Old Testament, to see what the biblical narratives on creation say, particularly (Gen 1-2). Then, what follows is the way creation was perceived in the Old Testament Prophetic and

¹ "Magisterium Is Concerned with the Question of Evolution. For It Involves Conception of Man." Pope John Paul II, *Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 22, (1996): no. 6.* in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, October 30, 1996. The address was given on October 23, 1996.

Wisdom literature. I conclude this chapter by looking at the Christian understanding of creation particularly in the New Testament, which has handed over a strong biblical traditional inheritance to the present Christian theological vision of creation. My aim in this chapter is not to criticise or interpret anything, but to see how this notion of creation emerged in the general Christian context.

In chapter two, my attention goes on the scientific understanding about creation. I start by defining the essential scientific terms of 'Evolutionism' and 'Scientific Creationism'. I then look at the notion of microevolution and macroevolution in which scientific evolutionists argue that evolution takes place or occurs along these lines of change. From that we see how evolution that is quite evidenced in these dimensions of microevolution and macroevolution is becoming part and parcel in the religious/theological circles and faiths. My focus here is on how believers and those who happen to be both believers and scientists, approach this idea of creation as God's exclusive activity. Because, presently, creation is quite inseparable with the way God's creative activity is perceived as continuous in evolution. And this brings us to the way the integrity of God's creation ought to be, as human beings understand it presently, both from religious and scientific points of view.

In the last chapter, I look at how human beings, presently, understand themselves as the summit of God's creation, which is basically from the Christian perspective. This leads us to the contrasting message that is powerfully coming from ecological theology with the argument against human dominance and control in the entire creation of God as experienced in the modern world. That is, the issue of 'Anthropic Principle' that finds its support more clearly in the first account of creation narrative (Gen 1:28-30). This entire

theological perception is summed up by the general theological outlook of how we can perceive God from both religious/theological and scientific points of view without unnecessary antagonistic relations. Because, our God as a God of mutual relations in the Trinity is our very God in an evolving universe. Finally, I give a short summary and some concluding remarks. This is followed by a bibliographical reference indicating my sources of research on this essay.

CHAPTER I

CREATION AS A THEOLOGICAL VISION

1.1 Definition of the terms: Creation and Creationism

The term 'create' means to bring into existence², to originate or to give rise to, to produce by what one does. And the term 'creative' is an adjective connoting the power or ability to create things. Then the term 'creature' is a noun denoting a living being as a result of the creative activity of the creator to create. Virtually, every case of a natural creation or artistic creation is such that some matter is involved. But creation of the world is neither natural nor artistic, i.e. the physical world and its processes. Therefore, the creator's unique creative act brought into existence the whole world and its diverse productive and generative processes within the universe. From the Christian point of view, this is what is called 'creation out of nothing' (*creatio ex nihilo*)³. In this regard, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in his book *In the Beginning, A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, maintains that God created the world out of nothing and that Israel always believed in the creator, God, whereby its faith is shared by all great civilizations of the ancient world.⁴

² *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*. New York: Publishing Comp. Inc. 1971. s.v "Create" and "Creation".

³ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994 edition, no. 338. "The world begun when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature and all human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted and time begun."

⁴ Joseph, Ratzinger, *In the Beginning. A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 5-10.

All theists therefore, accept the doctrine of creation, but the term ‘creationism’⁵ today usually refers to the beliefs of biblical literalists who reject organic evolution. Creationists claim that the various kinds of life could not have been created by natural processes from inanimate stuff, but only by God’s “special creation”. They argue that every species of life as it is now classified biologically, was brought into existence by direct divine creation sometime in the remote past. Distinct species for them could not have evolved from prior organisms. They hold that there might be incidental variations over time within a species, but new species cannot arise from the older ones. This implies emphatically that the first human beings could not have evolved from nonhuman species of life; that human beings endowed with an eternal soul were created in their present form directly by God.

If human beings had come about by way of evolution, this would mean for them that there was no primordial sin and therefore, the coming of Christ was needless. That creation was whole and complete in the beginning, and that whatever imperfections we now observe in nature/creation, such as diseases, extinctions, suffering and death are the effects of an original sin by our first parents, Adam and Eve. Such fundamentalistic and literal interpretations are hard to reconcile with evolutionary accounts of life and the universe presently. And it is not at all the point of focus in this essay to engage into this old age debate. Here I am just offering a general scope of ‘creationism’. The creationists’ response has always been that scientific accounts of origins of the universe are wrong and that they fail to meet the scriptural perspective. Therefore, creationism is often associated with a very literal interpretation of the biblical passages. It is an argument, which claims

⁵ Creationism is a doctrine of creation holding that matter, the various forms of life and the world was created by a transcendent God out of nothing and that each human soul is separately created in each individual born. Creationists are believers in this theory.

that the complexity of living organisms as a whole is too great to have come into existence through evolution.⁶ From this understanding, we now see how the biblical narratives about creation influences and plays a pivotal role in the doctrine of creation in the Christian theological context.

1.2 Biblical Narratives on Creation (Gen 1-2)

In Hebrew, the word '*Bara*' which means to create is used in three different contexts in the book of *Genesis*: the origin of the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1); the origin of animal life (Gen 1:21) and lastly the origin of human beings, (Gen 1:27). This book has two different accounts of creation stories, the first account (Gen 1:1-2:4a) is considered the second in composition (5th century b.c) and the second account (Gen 2:4b-25) is considered the first in composition (9th-8th century b.c). The first account comes from the '*Priestly*' tradition ('*P*') whose interest centred on the law and on the liturgy of Israel; while the second account belongs to a tradition of writing called '*Yahwistic*' ('*J*'), deriving its name from that which God revealed to Moses as '*Yahweh*', (Ex 4:3).

These accounts both express Israel's newfound faith in God the Creator. For Robert Butterworth, they are not Israel's way of answering a scientific question about the origins of the world, but a religious truth.⁷ In these accounts, the creator is anthropomorphically pictured as a potter and as a farmer, who creates and plants his garden. God performs eight different works of creation that are spread in six days of creation. And human beings stand out as at the summit of God's creative activity (Gen 1:26), created in his image and likeness, with intelligence to name all other creatures and

⁶ William, B. Dress, "Creationism and Evolution," *Concilium 2000/1* (2000): 45-51. Also cf. Antony, F. Campell, "Evolutionary Theory and Biblical Discourse," *Concilium 2000/1* (2000): 94-95.

⁷ Robert, Butterworth, S.J., *The Theology of Creation*, Theology Series No. 5, editor Edward Yamold, S.J., (Indiana: Fides Publications, 1969). 33.

with freedom to choose. Above all, they are created with the relational ability to their creator, to each other and to their environment. In this case as far as we know, inferred from these accounts, whether influenced by them or not, human beings are the only species on earth endowed with freedom, responsibility and the capacity to love selflessly.

Now as already affirmed, these sacred passages of the scriptures express that, the world was created by God and in order to teach this truth they express it in terms of the cosmologies that were in use at that time of the writers. Therefore, the inclusion of these two accounts of creation in their present position at the beginning of the book of Genesis does not mean that the faith of Israel first, began with God as the Creator, instead, as the Saviour as we shall see below. Because, the Israelites are a people who for a long period of time had developed a faith in a God who saves them, (cf. Gen 46:6f; Ex 22:29; 23:19; 34:26; Num 18:12-13; Deut 26:5-9). That is why they saw God and God's activities in a historical experience.⁸ "With the Jewish mind the process is reversed: God is known first, the world as creature comes last."⁹ So their God was gradually realized to be the master of the universe and its forces; the creator of the entire universe, (cf. Jer 5:22f; 27:5; 31:35-37).

⁸ Theodore, Hierbert, "Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible", in *Theology of the Earth Community, A Field Guide*. Editor, Dieter, T. Hessel, (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 23-26.

⁹ Nicholas, Fogliacco, I.M.C., *Christian Anthropology, Partial Notes, Part One- Creation*, (Nairobi: Tangaza College, Constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 2003-2004), 7. Fr. Fogliacco is a lecturer at *Tangaza College* in Systematic Theology Department.

1.3 Prophetic and Wisdom Literature on Creation: Old Testament

1.3.1 Creation in Prophetic Literature

Looking at the Prophet Jeremiah's understanding, creation is still considered not so much as God's act of bringing things into existence, but as an act of God the saviour, who takes part in Israel's history. For him, like the Prophet Isaiah as we shall see his conception later, creation is the mighty act of a God who will remain faithful to his people in saving them from their enemies and natural calamities. Creation therefore, is perceived not outside the context of God's historical relationship to Israel itself.

In the second book of Prophet Isaiah, commonly known as (Deutero-Isaiah), in chapters 40-45, the writer expresses a fuller concept of the Jewish faith in their God, who is the creator in the context of saving them. They understand creation in relation to God's saving activity of his people as a chosen race. Their God is not only above all the nations but also above any other gods of the neighbouring tribes and kingdoms. From faith in God as the saviour, for the Jews, there developed fully a wider and deeper faith in God as the creator of all things, (Is 40:26; 54:5). Above all, this God is the only one who exists and no other, (Is 41:4; 43:10-13; 44:6; 46:9-11; 48:12). Therefore, Deutero-Isaiah positively expresses a monotheistic faith, that there is only one God. The gods of other nations are not gods at all. In fact the four special poems known as '*Songs of the Servant of the Lord*': (Is 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12) describe a perfect servant of God, destined to bring back the scattered people, to be a light of the nations, to preach the true faith, to bring forth justice, to expiate the sins of the people by his death and be glorified by God.

It is from this conception that the New Testament writers will identify this *suffering servant of the Lord* with Jesus Christ as the perfect servant of God foretold, (cf. Mt 12:17-21). Therefore, as monotheistic faith fully emerges, the faith in God the saviour develops in a wider and deeper level simultaneously with faith in God as the creator of all things (Is 54:5). This very faith in a God who creates by saving is also expressed in the writings of the Psalmists as they praise the mighty deeds of *Yahweh*, who creates by 'word', (Ps 8:3-8; 19:1-6,24ff; 33:6,9; 89:10; 104:1-3,24-28). But in the Wisdom literature we get a shift in understanding God, as the one who creates by 'word' 'wisdom' and love.

1.3.2 Creation in Psalms and Wisdom Literature

Wisdom literature is one of the most important areas to which scholars have looked for evidence of how Israel conceived creation and nature. The natural phenomenon of creation plays a significant role in this wisdom literature to the point that there is a close link between suffering, death in creation and redemption and new-life in creation, (cf. book of Job). First of all, in this literature, creation expresses a profound religious/faith awareness of God's continuous activity of creation. For example, in the book of Wisdom the writer acclaims *wisdom* and her role in *Yahweh's* creative activity, (Wis 7:22-26; 8:1, 6; 9:9; 10:15-11:8; 13:1,4-5) as present when he made the world and governs all things well. Definitely therefore, there had emerged a wider and deeper religious belief that the God who created all things, created and creates by expression of a 'Word', (cf. Judt 16:14; Ps 33:6,9). In this case 'wisdom' is personified as a divine quality, though distinct but at the same time identified with the creator,¹⁰(cf. Bar

¹⁰ R. Butterworth, *The Theology of Creation*, Op.cit., 47.

3:15,22,29,38,4:2; Prov 3:19ff; 8:22-31). In other words, these scriptural verses like (Sir 1:4-9; 24:3,6,10-17) expresses '*Lady wisdom*' as equivalent to God's 'breath' or 'word' with some divine qualities. Therefore, in the Psalms and in Wisdom literature, God creates through 'word' and 'wisdom' respectively.

In consideration with the above, it becomes obvious that the sense of createdness of things must have thrived for a long period of time among the Israelites, (cf. Amos 4:13; 5:8). And they also had a sense of a continuous creative activity of God (Is 48:13). Thus, the existence of things was a matter of constant renewal of life, which derives from God, (Eccles 3:15). This is expressed vividly in Psalms and Wisdom literature. But surprisingly, embedded in this faith and hope was the awareness that human beings have a God-given dignity and their lordship is expressed over the rest of creation, (Ps 8:3-8; 89:5-12; 2Mcc 7:22, 28). The God who creates out of nothing is the one who cares for them.

Therefore, in this section we have observed that the Prophetic, the Psalmist and Wisdom literature in the Old Testament, generally throw some light beneath the Genesis accounts of creation in which we see not only Israelite's faith in a God who saves completely in a monotheistic perspective but also a God who creates out of nothing. That there is only One God the Creator and Saviour, who is not only unequalled over the dominion of what he creates but also transcends all the created reality. This very faith came to be traced back by the New Testament writers, who, in expressing their faith in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, traced back into the Old Testament in order to understand God's divine plan of salvation history. In this sense, the gospel writers had to see what such texts like (Is 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; 2:1-5; 4:2-6; 25:6-10:

11:1-10; 40:3-5; and Wis 7:22) all implied, in relation to Jesus Christ, (cf. Mt 12:17-21; 3:1-12; Jn 1:1ff). So, as this very faith of salvation-history unfolds itself in the coming of the Son of Man, faith in God the creator and saviour did not need to change but it got more clarified and intensified (Mk10:6; 13:19; Jn17:24,28; Act 4:24; 10:36-37; 1Cor 10:26; Rom 4:17) in the early Christian Church and even up to us presently.

1.4 Christian Understanding of Creation: New Testament

Naturally, faith in God the creator and saviour was already part and parcel of the beliefs of those who witnessed in writing, to the truth of Jesus Christ. That is why the notion of creation and salvation in the Old Testament was recaptured fully in the New Testament, in the Early Church-preaching. Jesus Christ was ascribed the qualities of the perfect image and likeness of God the Father, who creates; and Jesus Christ who saves, (Mt 12:38-42; Lk 11:31-32; Jn 1:8-10; 6:38-39; 1Cor 1:24; 2:6ff). But at the same time, we see also the very qualities of the personified '*Lady Wisdom*' who is divine, unstained, holy, eternal light, etc, in the Old Testament (Wis 7:22-30) are ascribed to Jesus too. Therefore, from this background set by the Old Testament; in the New Testament Jesus Christ came to be understood as the first born of all creation (Heb 1:6) with his pre-existence from the beginning, (Phil 2:5-11; 1Jn 1:1; 2:13ff) before the foundation of the world. So, the pre-existence of Christ became the principle behind God's creative activity. The entire creation is now understood to have had its beginning in God through Christ Jesus who came to be known as the *Alpha* and *Omega* (Rev1:8; 21:6;22:13) and creation owes its culmination and finds its completion in Him.

In this regard, Jesus Christ becomes the eternally guiding principle in bringing the entire creation of God into the future eternal glory of God (Gal 6:15, Rom 8:19-23). That is why creation, being a Christian doctrine, is understood within the parameters of God's mysterious plan of salvation. In this case, therefore, creation is understood by Christians up to now, as the entire act of God who created *out of nothing*¹¹ in the Trinitarian relationship and Jesus Christ becomes the power and wisdom of God as human beings become the object of God's merciful love of redemption. Above all, creation and salvation are conceived as two different acts of God that are quite inseparable in God's self-revelation. For Israelites' faith, God is first known in his intervention in their history as a saviour, a God of history, and then, is understood as the creator. But from the Christian perspective, this perception changes in the opposite. God the creator comes to be experienced in faith with the same continuous clarity as God who saves, and makes his presence and power manifested in and through his intervention in human-history. A God who not only creates by wisdom but also saves in love. This conception was clarified and furthered in the New Testament and above all in the Early Church.

Therefore, the Christian understanding of creation is revealed as a mystery¹² to be seen in the light of Christ as the redeemer and saviour of all creation, (Rom 8:19ff; Gal 6:15). Given the fact that early Christian theology had centred most on how the three persons (Trinity) related internally; than how they functioned, the focus of interest moved from their functions in creation to the unity they have in the divine essence; hence interest in creation itself submerged.¹³

¹¹ Cf. *Lateran Council IV* (1215); DS 800; 3025. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 296-298.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "God creates by wisdom and love. no. 295.

¹³ St. Thomas, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), Vol. I. Q. 45, article 7.

On the whole perspective in this chapter, we have observed that creation is entirely the activity of God. And this activity of God is at the same time a saving activity in the Jewish faith and from the perspective of Christians. Therefore, from the point of view of Christianity, creation is understood as the first and essential step into the existence of the world, that is continuously unfolding in God's divine plan of salvation and is to be brought to completion in Jesus Christ. Creation presently is seen not only in terms of human being's salvation and fulfilment by God in Christ, but also, as of the entire creation, given the fact that God's creative activity still continues, (Is 65:17; 66:22; Rom 8; 2Pt 3:13). This perspective takes a different picture all together in the scientific worldview and more so in organic evolution.

CHAPTER II

CREATION AS A SCIENTIFIC VISION

2.1 Definition of the terms: Evolutionism and Scientific Creationism

There is a complexity in definition of these terms and particularly the term 'evolution' because of the different or rather varied meanings it takes in any given context of knowledge. For this reason proper distinctions and limits should be made in order not to misapply these terms when it comes to sciences and theology.

Evolutionism¹⁴: From a proper scientific point of view, the term 'evolution' is understood as a one way irreversible process in time, which during its course results into new, diverse and higher levels of organizations of beings. For many scientists, evolution takes place in all levels of phenomena in the universe but has been more fully and explicitly experienced in the organic life or biological level.¹⁵ Therefore, the term evolution in human sciences connotes a different understanding from the way it is applied in organic and inorganic levels; although, in the general understanding, evolution implies a change, which can either be gradual or rapid but permeates all spheres of existence¹⁶.

In our case here we shall be limited to organic evolution. But because evolution is closely connected to what scientists say about creation, then, a definition of 'scientific creationism' is important.

¹⁴ A theory of evolution holding that creation changes in a certain direction, from lower, simpler or worse conditions to a higher and more complex or better conditions. *Webster's Dictionary*, s.v "Evolutionism"

¹⁵ Raymond, J. Nogar, O.P., *Evolutionism, Its Power and Limits*, (Washington: The Thomist Press, 1964) 6.

¹⁶ *Webster's Dictionary*. Op.cit., s.v "Evolution".

Scientific Creationism: is a belief usually from trained scientists who are believers too, and accept the tenets of creationism¹⁷, but they follow scientific methods to analyse the biblical creation stories as a source of good science; while the evolutionary materialist scientists see the biblical creation stories as bad science hence they hold on to scientific evolutionism.¹⁸ In either case, John Haught says that in scientific creationism and evolutionary materialism, there is a failure to read either nature or the scriptures at their deeper levels.¹⁹ Scientific creationism goes on arguing that since nobody has ever directly observed the evolution of one species into another, the theory of ‘special creation’ by God takes precedence over the Darwinian ideas of organic evolution, that is, slow and successive appearances of new species from the lower forms of life. Thus, for them, evolution is just but a theory to confirm scientific creationism.

Given all these debates, what remains is that as creation can be found in the understanding that the universe was created by God; so too, evolution can be found in the awareness that there is novelty, change in the very creation of God, whether in small quantities or large quantities. Presently, creation is a ‘fact’ and evolution is a reality too. Therefore, evolution denotes a continuous process of transformation which embraces the entire creation in disclosure of new realities,²⁰ at the same time it is a general perception which sees in the history of all things, organic and inorganic as a passage, transformation from simple to complex, from undifferentiated to differentiated conditions of being.

¹⁷ Cf. footnote No.5 above on page 5.

¹⁸ *American Geological Institute, 1999 Statement: “Earth History and the Evolution of Life Must be Taught: Creationism is not Science”*. Creation science is based on faith and is not supported by scientific observations and has no legitimate place in any science field. (See www.nap.edu).

¹⁹ John F. Haught, *Responses to 101 Questions on God and Evolution*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2001) 73.

²⁰ Hans Kung, *Eternal Life? Life after Death as a Medical, Philosophical and Theological Problem*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1991), 223-224.

These diverse transformations from simple to complex beings may occur in small or large quantities at a time or in varied times and in various or localised places.

2.2 Microevolution and Macroevolution

In Darwin's understanding, all forms of life descend by way of gradual modification over the course of time from a common ancestor²¹, and the explanation of this gradual modification including the emergence of new species, is due to natural selection. Over a long period of time, small adaptive changes can be accumulated and bring about not only changes within a given species, but at times new and distinct species as well. Today, evolutionists refer to small changes within a species as microevolution and the larger changes that lead to new species as macroevolution.

There is an abundant amount of data that supports these modes of evolution. For example, the fossil records, bio-geographical distribution, comparative anatomy, geology, embryology, radiometric dating, and now the study of genetic timetables (genomes). In this case microevolution means a small alteration or change that occurs in an organism but can be noticed after a long period of time that eventually results into modification within a particular species. Therefore, microevolution has an intra-species variations characteristic where even differences can be extremely pronounced in a species but interbreeding is still possible. This kind of evolution is even accepted by scientific creationists now. Its evidence, however, is always indirect as it occurs minutely in individual members of a species.

²¹ Charles, Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 6th edition, Trans. by J.w. Burrow, (England: Penguin Books, 1859), 320.

Macroevolution on the other hand, is a process of transformation through which completely new species emerge. According to evolutionary science, macroevolution, because of geographical isolation, gradual genetic drift away from a parent population or other ways of diverging from their ancestors over the course of time, new species do emerge. This process is referred to as '*speciation*' and it brings about entirely new species. This is where macroevolution poses a problem for many religious opponents of Darwin. It is of course truly sad that we human beings who debate a lot on these issue, do not live long enough to observe these firsthand speciation events inferred from the data presently available in the genomes variation species.²² But this shouldn't be the reason to discard these scientific findings. Therefore, for competent scientists in this area, macroevolution occurs in large-scale levels and can be evidenced directly in some areas. Macroevolution tends to proceed in out-bursts or explosions in some unexpected situations.

Besides that, it is now basically established that we human beings live on a very special planet, on which life and intelligence are possible. But at the same time, it is found out that there are profound continuities between the three levels of inanimate, the animate and human life, (*moderate theory of evolution*).²³ In this case, the creative transformation from inanimate to life, to intelligence and to consciousness is an evolution which radically begins from the lower orders of being to higher orders, as the higher

²² This was the basis for Pope John Paul II's concern in his *Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences* in October 22, 1996, when arguing for the ontological difference or rather discontinuity of human beings in relation to that of other animals that run counter to the physical continuity that is always the focus in research into the evolution of life in the fields of physics and chemistry. He calls for a philosophical and theological exploration of evolution, which respects both the ontological difference that mark human beings as spiritual creatures and the ultimate meaning of the Creator's designs. Cf. this article, no.6. and also footnote no. 24 below, the book page: 106.

²³ Karl, Rahner, *Hominization, The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem*, no.13, (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 31, 62.

levels or orders preserves all or some realities from the lower levels or natures.²⁴ In this regard, evolution from lower levels and in small quantities tends to higher levels but gradually; while evolution in large quantities, is more pronounced in groups than in individual members of a species. With all these facts ascertained, what it all amounts to, regardless of scientific prejudices, (materialism) is an affirmation that creation in its entirety is in a state of journey (*in statu viae*) towards an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which no human mind knows scientifically yet, but where the creator himself has destined it.²⁵

2.3 Evolution and Faith in Our Contemporary World

Evolution in itself as a phenomenon is not a systematized scientific law, although it occurs everywhere in a non-systematic process. For some scientists, evolution is postulated along with a denial of the presence of God as the Creator. For others, evolution is viewed with a belief in the presence of God; while there are other scientists who think that creation is unguided in the sense that God created the universe and left it to its own devices. But there are other evolutionists who affirm God's initial creative activity and for them, this creative activity of God continues as they allow some form of presence of the divine activity in the universe; but God does not control his creation, hence for them, the process of evolution has brought the world to be what it is now.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22, 47.

²⁵ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Op.cit., no. 302. See also John F. Haught, *The Promise of Nature, Ecology and Cosmic Purpose*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 123.

Presently, for many scientific thinkers who are believers also, as evolutionary biology and cosmology have widened the temporal and spatial dimensions of nature, what has traditionally been called “God” in the human historical context, now appears to be too small for them. In any case, theology has taken up this situation to ensure that our notion of God is not pushed to the periphery from the truth of God’s self-revelation. “Many people still find it very difficult to accept that God can exercise his providence through the natural law or orders, no less than through modifications or suspensions of such natural operations.”²⁶ For such fundamentalist creationists that Nemesszeghy refers to, it becomes difficult to dialogue with scientific findings. Scientific knowledge, properly understood, can only enlarge our sense of God. As regards to faith therefore, there is no contradiction with science in maintaining that the cosmic potencies are and can be used by the creator to act as secondary causes in the process of continuous creation.²⁷

If today we are tempted to isolate ourselves from contemporary science and especially evolutionary biology, this very separatist approach in effect denies us, as believers, the very idea of a God whose creation is in evolution. Even if evolutionary processes as understood now, will undergo more improvement, revision and deeper understanding, theology cannot and will never close its eyes anymore to the impartial discoveries of biology, geology, palaeontology, space-explorations, etc. Therefore, from the Christian perspective, we believe that God creates and sustains his creation in being and that he continues to make all things new, (cf. Eccles 3:15) whereby, he is immanently

²⁶ Ervin Nemesszeghy S.J., *Theology of Evolution*, edit., Edward Yarnold, (Winsconsin: The Mercier Press, 1972), 87.

²⁷ Georges, De Schriver, “The Evolution of the Cosmos and Life,” *Concilium*2000/1,(2000): 42-43. See also the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on this understanding, Nos. 282-289, 296, 300-313.

involved in his creation. Creation is not as a result of an arbitrary act of God's divine will. Creation is understood as an expression of the love of God who remains faithful to what he has created in love. When God creates, he does it in freedom and love and above all with a promise- to save.²⁸ In other words our God of creation is the God of providence and at the same time of its destiny.

If God is truly love, then this love would invite and persuade, not compel the cosmos to reach beyond itself toward new modes of being, towards new creation. In evolution therefore, with all its ambiguities, (microevolution and macroevolution) faith discerns at least in some way, the coming of a new creation, as creation itself is not yet perfect. Once humanity fully realizes that it lives in a journeying universe, the cosmic future becomes full of possibilities. And henceforth the stumbling block of reconciling faith and evolution becomes not the sufferings we experience in a nature that is dynamic and the disfigured human history of wars, environmental degradation but acquainting ourselves with the startling image of a God who seeks the world's freedom and who shares fully in the world's pain. God restores what would otherwise be displaced. That is why Jesus' incarnation is a solidarity with all nature and history that takes on an unfathomable but redemptive meaning, (Phi 2:5-11).

²⁸ Christopher, Schwobel, "God, Creation and the Christian Community: The Dogmatic Basis of a Christian Ethic of Createdness," in *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History and Philosophy*, editor, Coline E. Gunton, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 156-159.

2.4 God's Creative Activity as Continuous in Evolution

Evolution as already indicated above, presupposes that creation is still going on as much today as in the beginning. Therefore, the ongoing creation invites theology to extend its hopes not just to a heaven for humans' hereafter alone, but also ahead to a destiny that must somehow include the whole universe. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly says:

Creation has its own goodness and proper perfections, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying (*in statu viae*)' towards an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it... For 'all are open and laid bare to his eyes, 'even those things that are yet to come into existence through the free action of creatures'.²⁹

Besides what this source of faith says, in biology, as already said, there is found a profound continuity between the three levels of inanimate, animate and human life. Therefore, God grants his creatures not only their particular existence but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other.³⁰ God remains the first principle cause who operates in and through secondary causes; despite the fact that along the line of evolutionary process, involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, and both constructive and destructive forces of nature.

In such a situation, scientific evolutionary perspective affirms that from the very beginning, the order of the universe aims at the production of life. That many factors, while individually contingent, converge in order to bring about the complex conditions

²⁹ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Op.cit., no. 302. See also Vatican I Council I, *Dei Filius* 1, DS 300; Wis 8:1; Heb 4:13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 306.

for the emergence of life on the planet earth.³¹ Therefore, from our theology of evolution, faith in creation can no longer be confined to something that occurred once and for all. It is a continuous divine creative activity. In this regard, Richard Lucien says:

Creation is a costly process. Creation is an act of kenotic love; in creating, God limits self and allows a cosmos to emerge with its own autonomy. God in God's creative causality makes room for human freedom and autonomy to emerge and for a natural order to be characterized by open-endedness and flexibility. ... The creator has to work from inside creation, suffering its pains of growth and chancy development.³²

Although it is observed that species tend to remain stable for a considerable long period of time, some tend to undergo sudden transformation, i.e. 'macroevolution'. In this case some theologians like Karl Rahner have argued that God's creative activity as a transcendental cause, is not predicamental or arbitrary; it does not cause something, which the creature does not cause; but causes the operations of the creature which exceeds and transcends its own possibilities.³³ Therefore, both scientists and theologian-evolutionists are now coming to terms and to the awareness that from the very beginning matter-life-consciousness and the universe in its entirety was created to grow and it needs to grow from imperfections to perfection.³⁴

So in this section, we have seen that 'balanced reflections' on evolution as a continuous creative activity of God, retrieves a deeply biblical sense of God as one who relates to the world as a giver of promises yet to be realized. And such reflections give a sense of our being participants not domineers in the ongoing process of a cosmic creation. Indeed, what is going on in evolution is the world's suffering with the groaning

³¹ Wolfhart, Pannenberg, "Faith in God the Creator and Scientific Cosmology," (Washington: *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Vol.28, (Fall 2001), 458.

³² Lucien Richard, *Christ the Self-emptying of God*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 136.

³³ Karl Rahner, *Hominization.*, Op.cit., 100-101.

³⁴ J. F., Haught, *The Promise of Nature, Ecology and Cosmic Purpose*, Op.cit., 123-124.

Spirit of God toward new creation. With evolutionary awareness, henceforth, human beings realize that the world is infinitely deeper, more open, more dramatic and more interesting than a world ever imagined being completely passive, submissive and static to a divine scheme.

Therefore, nature itself bears the shape of the *cross*, but it also bears the promise of *resurrection*. As John Haught again argues:

Emphasizing the doctrine that God's creativity works continuously, and not merely 'in the beginning', Catholic theology allows for the possibility that evolution implies ongoing divine creation. It firmly rejected all forms of fundamentalist creationism arguing that evolutionary science (as distinct from evolutionist materialism) is completely compatible with the doctrine of divine creation. It also holds that biblical revelation is debased whenever it is treated as a source of information that science can discover by itself.³⁵

It is then from this perspective, that we see in the following section, how and where this evolutionary science/faith against fundamentalist creationism, is leading humanity in rediscovering the integrity of God's entire creation in an evolving world.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

2.5 The Integrity of God's Creation in an Evolutionary Faith

Theological reflections on creation and nature is still very marginal in our Catholic theology, and almost absent in our seminaries. I speak this from experience. Anyhow, in spite of Catholics' strong sacramental tradition of relating divine activity closely to the natural world (cf. Wis 13:1-9), some theologians more often than not, focus on God's activity in the human sphere rather than in nature³⁶ and its evolution. But even non-theologians today are aware of this. And this is what the *2004 Nobel Peace-Prize Winner*, Professor Wangare Muta Maathai, meant in her speech at Oslo when she said: "unless humanity reconciles itself with nature (its environment) human problems will continue to rise and no proper human dignity will be achieved in our age."³⁷ Elsewhere, Michael McCarthy would say: "But the traditional view of creation has been more utilitarian: the world is put there for our use, (Gen1:28ff). ... However, today, it is seen that the earth has its own wondrous and absolute value, independent of us, our duty is to live in harmony with it. ... Environmental crisis have links with poverty and injustice."³⁸

Ecological theology from this perspective argues that thinking about God only in terms of human concerns will only continue to make humanity estranged from not only God but also from the natural world that has brought humanity to the present age. This theology allows us to re-articulate the ecological connectedness and the bond human beings have with all of the other forms of life in a single earth community. However, given the fact that many theologians and even biblical scholars are stealthily moving the biblical accounts of creation in the background, for some, these narratives will continue

³⁶ For Edwards, "Creation is a sacrament of divine presence". See his book *God of Evolution*, Op.cit., 124.

³⁷ These words are my direct quotation when I was listening to Professor Wangare Maathai being interviewed by a *CNN Television Newsmen* just after her reception of the Prize on 10th December 2004.

³⁸ Michael, McCarthy, "Planet Earth- Its Fate in Our Hands", in *The Tablet*, 21 February, (2004), 6.

to convey to humanity some ultimate secrets of their nature and situations they find themselves in, as responsible³⁹, free and selfless loving beings, although the opposites of these situations are more prevalent, i.e. irresponsibility, misuse of freedom and selfish love.

In creating, God wills the interdependence of his creatures and that is why he allows the secondary causes to further his creative activity. In fact, countless diversity and inequalities in nature speak for themselves that no creature is self-sufficient. Now, if God creates things that co-creates in order to further his creation, then, each creature has its individual inherent integrity to be recognized fully as a relational being. This aspect of relationality finds a strong support from both the theology of evolution⁴⁰ and ecological theology as they point to one reality- creation of God, not only in continuity but also in relationality. Even the Astrophysicists today argue that in the earliest moments of configuration of matter at the time of the *Big Bang*, life and consciousness came to be possible only because of this relational aspect in matter, i.e. combinations of the elements.⁴¹ That is, for life to be, very complex and complementary factors are needed. And that is why any life is a relational reality.

In this respect, the contemporary understanding of creation theology and evolution theology advocates a profound respect for the created order in which its future dynamism receives an open-ended flexibility; unless jeopardized by some human interference. In other words, there is no one single species or system in the universe that

³⁹ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 307.

⁴⁰ A Theology of evolution is a systematic set of reflections that tries to show how evolution, including those features that scientific sceptics consider to be incompatible with religious faith, illuminate the revolutionary image of God given to Christian faith. See J.F. Haught, *Responses to 101 Questions*, Op.cit. 49-50.

⁴¹ Diarmuid, O'Murchu, *Quantum Theology*, (New York: The Crossroad Pub. Comp., 1997), 24.

evolves in isolation. Any change at every level, from subatomic to cosmic level is relational.⁴² It is only from this awareness that our well being is because other created realities are operative. Therefore, every created reality should get its due integral role in the entire creation. Co-creation presupposes co-relationality. That is why Vatican Council II states: "Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him, they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice freely given to the Creator."⁴³

Following this skein of thought, then, what this Church awareness speaks to us now is that, our personal destiny cannot be separated from that of the entire cosmic creation, which consists of God's compassionate seeking of all creation to be in his everlasting divine presence (Eccles 3:15). Here I hold that the integrity of all created beings will be enhanced if the theology of creation and of evolution re-examines the so-called '*dominion theology*'⁴⁴ Gen 1:28ff to a co-creative and co-relational theology of stewardship. And above all, these theologies should re-examine the human perception that all other creatures were made for its benefit. For some theologians, this is a modern sin of '*specieism*' or anthropocentrism.⁴⁵

⁴² Palmyre M.F. Oomen, "Theology and Sciences in Dialogue", (*Concilium* 2000/1 (2000), 130.

⁴³ Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, *Gaudium et Spes*, no.14, 7th Dec 1965, Gen. editor Flannery Austine O.P. (Mumbai: St. Paul's Publ., 1975.

⁴⁴ Dominion Theology is at loggerheads with ecological theology which tries to show how ecology, including those features that biblical faith fundamentalists in creation stories consider to be in compatible with religious faith, recasting the image of human beings given to Christian faith as the sole beneficiary of God's creation.

⁴⁵ Diarmuid, O'Murchu, *Evolutionary Faith, Rediscovering God in Our Story*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 145-150.

Indeed, every created reality has an integral part in the entire creation of God. But each in its own level to participating in the co-creative activity of God. Therefore, this entire chapter has been an attemptive response to chapter I to see that the concept of continuous creation as God's creative activity was not just an event 'in the beginning' but as an ongoing process; whereby co-creation is possible but with full awareness from human beings' point of view of relationality. This aspect of relationality will feature again in the following chapter but in a slightly different perspective, when we examine how human beings perceive themselves in this evolving world and whether they see the purpose of evolution in their lives in relation to the entire universe.

Therefore, the overall idea in this section is that each created reality has an indispensable status in the entire creation of God and before their creator, and that each creature has intrinsic worth; not because of itself, but because of its origin. And this origin, transcendental in its character, must never in any respect be thought of as purely static, but as the ground of the world in movement and becoming, rising above to its future completion in the Creator.

CHAPTER III

HUMAN BEINGS IN AN EVOLVING WORLD

3.1 Human Beings as the Summit of God's Creation (Gen1:26)

In our Catholic Catechism we read: "Man is the summit of the Creator's work as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures."⁴⁶ According to Christian faith, human beings occupy a unique place in the entire creation because, first of all, they were created in the image and likeness of God; secondly, human beings unite the spiritual and material worlds; thirdly, they are also created male and female who can relate and love each other selflessly. And above all, they can enter into a special relationship with their Creator-to love and serve him.⁴⁷ In the order of biblical creation, God creates in the hierarchy from the less perfect to the more perfect creatures. We also see human beings as God's summit of creation; is alluded to by Jesus himself, in the gospels (Lk12: 6-7; Mt12:12). However, in any case, the Church is also aware that there is a solidarity among all creatures arising from the fact that all of them have the same creator and that all are ordered to his glory.⁴⁸

Besides these conception, in relation to the scriptures, therefore, we learn that the universe had a beginning and it has a purpose or a goal, (Prov 8:12,22; Ps 19:1; Is 45:18; Rom 8:19-23; Eph 3:1-10; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-14; Rev 4:11), but human beings have a unique integral role to play in order that this creation may reach God. This perception has no conflicting understanding with an Anthropology of whichever kind, since Anthropology generally acclaims human beings as a living, intelligent and cultural/social

⁴⁶ *The Catechism of The Catholic Church*, no. 343.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, No.358. (Cf. also *Gaudium et Spes no.22.1*, Vatican Council II documents, Op.cit).

⁴⁸ *The Catechism*, Op.cit., no. 344.

being, who is conscious, free, and speaking and above all a religious/spiritual being. But whenever humanity is pictured from physical sciences, like palaeontology, biochemistry and geology etc, none can establish or deny categorically that the first human beings were constituted in a state of sanctifying grace and that humanity lost this grace in some primeval transgression against their creator; hence the need for redemption.

What is evidentially clear in organic sciences is that, since the beginning of the universe, the entire occurrences, or process tend to complexification, or rather the lower conjugates are subsumed in the higher conjugates which tend to the direction of the emergence of life-intelligence-consciousness and above all the spirit. And this spirit culminates or is fully expressed in the human beings-'*persons*'⁴⁹. But at the same time, this spirit tends to self-transcendence. However, on a different note, Pope John Paul II clearly argues that:

The sciences of observation describe and measure the multiple manifestations of life with increasing precision and correlate them with the time line. The moment of transition into the Spiritual cannot be the object of this kind of observation, which nevertheless can discover at the experimental level a series of very valuable signs indicating what is specific to the human being. But the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom, or again, of aesthetic and religious experience, falls within the competence of philosophical analysis and reflection while theology brings out its ultimate meaning according to the Creator's plans.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Pierre, Teilhard de, Chardin, *How I Believe*, trans.by Rene Hague, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 3, 13-16.

⁵⁰ Pope John Paul II, "*Message to Pontifical Academy of Sciences*", October 22, (1996): No. 6. See on the Web site: www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/evolution98 .

Now before we look at the notion of 'anthropic principle', it is worthwhile to see clearly the position of evolutionary theology about human beings, as the summit of God's creative activity.

Earlier on, we saw that microevolution can gradually bring about macroevolution. But we do not directly witness speciation happening simply because we do not live long enough as emergence of a new species may take millions of years. However, evolutionary theology affirms that the very depth of the transcendental/divine creative creativity is consistent with its working through more 'natural' levels of causation. This is what exactly St. Thomas Aquinas affirmed.⁵¹ But in any case, trying to locate this divine activity within or at the level of natural biological causation; amounts to limiting this divine activity. In other words, God's divine creative activity is the ultimate ground of all natural causes and is inaccessible to science itself. This is the mistake scientism and materialist philosophy do make, that science is the only reliable way to the truth and that matter, the purely physical realm, is all there is to reality, respectively.⁵²

Still on the evolutionary scale, unlike other lower animals and other primates, human beings are not only toolmakers but also tool-users. Other lower animals sometimes use stones and occasionally sticks, but they do not first retreat to a remote place, where they work in a focused way sharpening their stones and sticks, preparing them for later employment. At least it has not happened yet. Therefore, for evolutionists, as John Haught says, "in the tool, the image and the grave human nature is already evolving into a culture. And once culture emerges, the blind laws of biological evolution

⁵¹ T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Op.cit., 1.45. art.7.

⁵² J. F., Haught, *Responses to 101 Questions*. Op.cit., 35.

take backstage, no longer in complete control of the human life on earth."⁵³ Now at this level, as it was earlier mentioned, the term evolution takes on a whole new character, unlike the one defined above in organic matter. But for the evolutionists to be realistic have no idea about what specific direction this human evolution on the cultural level will take, in the far distant future. Was Teilhard de Chardin right when he questioned and responded that: "Is evolution a theory, a system or a hypothesis? It is much more, it is a general condition to which all theories, all hypothesis, all systems must bow and which they must satisfy henceforth if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light illuminating all facts. a curve that all lines must follow."⁵⁴

Endowed with intelligence, language, and creativity in freedom, ethical sensitivity, religious longing, and eventually scientific knowledge and technology, human beings have learned to survive the cruelty of natural forces and threats. And now the dominant threat to our survival is no longer creation in entirety but human species itself. Perhaps, evolution has the potential to unfold in surprising ways that human beings can hardly anticipate at the present; as matter, life and mind merge into one another on a seamless continuum of atoms⁵⁵ for there is no sharp lines separating matter from life, or life from the mind. However, we know that physics and biochemistry cannot be able to discern the deeper meanings in life to which religions seek to awaken humanity.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁴ P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, intro. by Sir Julian Huxley, (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 241.

⁵⁵ J. F., Haught, *Responses*, Op.cit., 25.

⁵⁶ Karl Rahner differentiates the limits of the 'Biblical statements' and 'Scientific statements' and brings out the relation between the two. But he maintains that "The higher the 'evolutionary development climbs, the clearer it becomes what genuine real potentialities were comprised in the beginning." See his book *Hominization*, Op.cit., 102-109.

Christian faith from evolutionary theology looks at the Spirit of God as present in creation, animating each species in a manner proportionate to its characteristic mode of organic or information complexity (genetical make-up). It is the same faith that recognizes that human beings are the only species on earth endowed with freedom, responsibility and the capacity to love selflessly. Biology, Chemistry and physics cannot do that. Therefore, our biblical creation-account narrative writers had an intuition of a uniquely human set of characteristics⁵⁷, which justifies a religious anthropology and at the same time, attributes great nobility to human beings as the summit of God's creation. And evolutionary theology affirms this. It is especially in the human capacity for making and keeping/breaking promises and for compassionate love that the biblical writers say human beings were made in the image and likeness of God.⁵⁸

But does this human uniqueness we have seen above mean that other creatures do not bear the imprint of their creator, (Rom8: 19-23)? To answer this question is a mere repetition of what has been already said about the integrity of God's creation in the previous chapter. However, as this question ushers us into the notion of 'Anthropic principle', we can say that creation as a whole, forms a wider community of forms of life and it reflects the source of life in a richer way than any individual species could, humanity included. Humanity therefore, in an evolutionary theology is now learning that its existence has interdependence and an inherent relationality with the rest of creation.

⁵⁷ The general state of humanity's estrangement from God, from each other and from the natural environment as well. That a human being is born in a world already cultured by greed and violence, which tends to be inherited and shared. Above all, the general state of human incapacity to save themselves from this state of affairs. Hence only God can save them. J.F. Haught, *Responses*, Op.cit., 80-82.

⁵⁸ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Op.cit., no. 357.

3.2 (Gen1:28-30) as the Source of the Question of ‘Anthropic Principle

Besides not finding any substantial meaning in the created realities as relational and interdependent, traditional theology sought to understand the meaning of human intellectual and spiritual uniqueness to justify the human domineering attitude in the creation of God, in which definitely it must have got support from the literal interpretation of (Gen1:28-30). For Theodore Hierbert:

It is the ‘Priestly’ dominion theology of (Genesis 1), by which humans alone are made in the divine image and given authority over the rest of creation, that has really captured the imagination of modern environmentalists interested in the Bible- critics and defenders alike. The main debate has been whether the priestly writers thought of this powerful human being as a ruthless despot or a benevolent steward.⁵⁹

Even some theologians in the past have vehemently argued that the world would have been meaningless and valueless if human beings were not there to give it meaning and purpose.⁶⁰ In essence, anthropic principle claims that human beings have inalienable rights over the rest of creation hence they can claim the right to manipulate and control creation to their own advantages. In this case, the Church is very clear on “*Respect for the Integrity of Creation*”.⁶¹ The Church says: “Use of minerals, vegetable and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to

⁵⁹ T. Hierbert, “Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible,” in *Theology of the Earth Community*, Op.cit., 30.

⁶⁰ Samuel Wilberforce is a well-known contemporary Anglican Bishop who argued that if Darwin’s thesis is true, then the book of Genesis is a lie, and Christian revelation is a delusion. See Ervin Nemesszeghy, *Theology of Evolution*, Op.cit., 10.

⁶¹ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Op.cit., no 2415.

come;...”⁶² For Gene McAfee, he strongly argues that when read deeply and well, the Yahwistic account of creation (Gen 2:4b-25), human beings are placed in creation to care for it as citizens not as masters.⁶³

In the world of evolution therefore, this understanding that the goal/purpose that other creatures were made for human beings does not hold any longer. Because humanity is not unique in the entire creation just because of what it can impose from outside the created order (*technology*). But because presently, humanity comes to an awareness that their real uniqueness is to be stewards by responsible participation from within creation itself. Bearing in mind that human beings belong to a greater whole (evolving process) from without which, humanity neither has meaning or future hopes⁶⁴, (cf. Rom chapter 8). It is from such understanding that evolutionary theology finds deeper meaning in the themes of revelation, incarnation and redemption in terms of cosmic evolution and not simply of individual species-existence; and this awareness of relationality and interdependence illuminates us to understand what kind our God is, in this evolutionary worldview.

3.3 Our God in an Evolving Universe

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we see that human beings unite the spiritual and material worlds and through this aspect they establish a relationship with their Creator, (cf nos.343-355). Therefore, creatures or creation in itself and in its entirety cannot have an ultimate purpose that is different from the purpose their creator has for creating them, (Vatican I, Dz 300; Ps 19:1). As God’s creative activity is not something within human experience whether by direct revelation or empirically, it is always

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Gene, McAfee, “Ecology and Biblical Studies”, in *Theology of the Earth Community*, Op.cit., 35.

⁶⁴ D. O’Murchu, *Quantum Theology*, Op.cit, 60.

mediated to human beings through finite things. Yet every finite being, in its existence and development, depends entirely and immediately on God's providence as a transcendental cause. Now if humanity unites the material and spiritual worlds, for Teilhard de Chardin, a being who can reflect on his/her self-being, is no longer wholly subject to matter and to the law of the physical world.⁶⁵

Where self-transcendence is found, there is always a knowledge of the creator, however implicit and unrealised that knowledge may be. Therefore, human beings are destined to a spiritual life, destined to God who is the Spirit Himself. The basic question here is how can Christianity 'presently', talk meaningfully about God the Creator and Saviour whose creative activity continues? Many theologians today like Karl Heim, Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jurgen Moltmann, etc, embrace the theological thought that the book of Genesis 1-3 teaches the truth of God's transcendence and immanence in his creation and his on going relationship to what he has created. For example, Moltmann maintains that creation takes place and flourishes within the divine-life, the Trinity.⁶⁶

Today, theologically speaking, it becomes only meaningful to talk about our God in continuous creation as a creator who, in his mutual relations in the Trinity, creates and enables the creatures to become more.⁶⁷ In this sense, we can see that, the entire creation is not yet what it is to be, and it waits in hope to be brought into the transforming

⁶⁵ P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*, trans. by Norman Denny, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 271.

⁶⁶ Jurgen, Moltmann, *The Trinity and Kingdom of God, The Doctrine of God*, (London: SCM Press, 1981), 109-110.

⁶⁷ Denis, Edwards, *The God of Evolution, A Trinitarian Theology*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 12-13.

relationship with the risen Lord, (Col 1:16-20).⁶⁸ On the same note both Catholic and Protestant theologians have talked a lot about *Christology in an evolutionary worldview*. For example, Rahner says: "The God-man is the initial beginning and the definitive triumph of the movement of the world's self-transcendence into the absolute closeness to the mystery of God."⁶⁹ In other words, the Incarnate God becomes the summit of consummation of all things created by God. He becomes the *Alpha* and the *Omega* as the Church language puts it:

The word of God through whom all things were made, was made flesh so that as a perfect man he could save all men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilizations, the centre of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspirations. It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead. Animated and drawn together in his Spirit we press onwards on our journey towards the consummation of history, which fully corresponds, to the plan of his love: 'to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth', (Eph 1: 10).⁷⁰

This is the link (*Alpha*) and unity (*Omega*) I mentioned in my introduction to this essay that I was to focus on. Because, creation as God's continuous activity is linked in relationality and interdependence, to the first born of all creation that is evolving and it gets only united profoundly to the Creator himself through the (*Omega*), Jesus Christ, by redemption. That is, in our Christian faith and perspective, God's creative activity and saving activity become both graces; of calling creation into being and saving creation into the eternal Kingdom respectively. Though they are distinct activities but at the same time they are not only inseparable in the present evolutionary worldview but also in the whole expanse of creation from the vastness of galaxies known and yet to be known, to the

⁶⁸ L. Richard, *Christ the Self-emptying of God*, Op.cit., 136.

⁶⁹ Karl, Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Understanding to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. by William V. Dych, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978), 181.

⁷⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no.45, Op.cit.

elusive infinitesimal matter.⁷¹ Therefore, God's creative activity grounds creation into being and his saving activity brings it into perfection and fulfilment-communion with the Creator. As human beings, though imperfectly integrated in this world, spiritually tend to the Spirit of God; then what these graces do is not something supernatural, but give a new, active powers-*life in the Spirit*, (Rom 8) for attaining that very end that is naturally desired, the Absolute Being.⁷²

Therefore, on an evolutionary scale, science finds a spiritualised 'sphere'. A species full of knowledge, and consciousness⁷³ that recognises its self-transcendence in freedom, but this recognition is not perfect; that is why for the Church, it is only through God's revelation responded to in faith that humanity becomes reflexively aware of this ultimate desire.⁷⁴ So we can see that as believers who exist in this evolving universe, we are not left to trust in the power of evolution itself (scientism), but to trust in the Creator who allows a cosmos to emerge with its autonomy characterised by open-endedness, flexibility and possibilities of growing to perfection.

It is in this regard to a theology of evolution that, recaptured, is the awareness that there are truths in our human experience that cannot be rejected in practical living, (*imperfect knowledge and moral inability*) and that there are truths which it would be unreasonable to reject outright, (*human self-transcendence*) but also there are truths that merit attention and consideration, (*creation in evolution*). All these, given proper approach (not materialistic philosophy and scientism) make us talk meaningfully about

⁷¹ D. Edwards, *The God of Evolution*, Op.cit., 10-11.

⁷² Stephen. J. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon, Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought, Theology and Life Series, Vol.37*, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), 7-15,25.

⁷³ D. O'Murchu, *Evolutionary Faith*, Op.cit., 169-181.

⁷⁴ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 41. Op.cit.

God in this evolving universe. That is why after Darwin, (it doesn't mean that I agree with his entire theory); the whole creation and the entire story of life look different.

So too, do a lot of other things: human existence, morality, culture, and above all our perception of God. With such awareness, as Christians in this concrete world of evolution, human beings can no longer separate their private human aspirations from the fate of the entire creation, as nature is not a perfected plan but a promise of perfection.⁷⁵ Therefore as creation is a call into existence and a promise (given possibility) to perfection, there is that gift, the power of the Holy Spirit that empowers and renews creation in order to grow to perfection.

3.4 The Presence of the Holy Spirit in God's Continuous Creative Activity

As already indicated above, today, from the Christian point of view, we can only talk about God in the evolving universe meaningfully within the conception of Trinitarian theology. As creation is not yet perfect, already pointed out is that, it waits in eager to be transformed in the new creation, according to Christian faith. The focus here now, is how the Holy Spirit in a Trinitarian perspective, is related to the notion of organic and non-organic evolution in the very creation of God. I am not looking here at the historical debate about how the Holy Spirit's status came to be understood in the Trinity in the Early Church.

From the very early Christian conception, the Holy Spirit has been associated with the work of life-giving and perfecting. In Jesus' own earthly life, the Holy Spirit permeated his entire life, (Acts 10:38ff). For Edwards, the Holy Spirit became the

⁷⁵ J. F. Haught, *Responses to 101 Questions*, Op.cit., 113.

'forerunner' in all the saving works of Jesus Christ.⁷⁶ In Karl Rahner's understanding of Christology in an evolutionary worldview, he maintained that creation and salvation are not to be understood as separate and unrelated acts of God, but as two distinct dimensions of the Trinitarian God's one act of self-giving to the world.⁷⁷ Now, in St. John's gospel (6:63) the Holy Spirit is described as the life-giver (*Zoopoion*), and in St. Paul's understanding, the Holy Spirit not only brings new life of grace (Rom 5:5) but also a new life of bodily resurrection (Rom 8:10-11).

Deriving such conception from scriptures, some contemporary theologians like Yves Congar and Denis Edwards, going to the extremes probably, they see the *brooding 'wind'* that is expressed in the first account of the creation narratives (Gen 1:2), as the sign and the 'forerunner' of God's creative activity, which is initiated by God's very words 'let there be...' (Gen 1:24-25; Ps 33:9). For Congar, the Spirit of God prepared the nature of the waters to produce living things-creatures.⁷⁸ While for Edwards, the biological life itself is a gift of the life-giving Spirit, if only well understood from the evolutionary perspective.⁷⁹

Besides this understanding, in the Old Testament biblical tradition, the 'breath' of God is what keeps creatures alive, (Gen 2:7; 6:3,17; 7:15; Job 33:4; 34:14-15; Eccl 12:7; Ps 33:6; Ez 37:9; Judt 16:14; Wis 1:7; 12:1). Therefore, as creation is entirely the work of God, renewal of this creation is the work of the life-giving Spirit that comes from God himself, through Jesus Christ. Hence, the question arises: what is this 'renewal' all about, from the evolutionary point of view, of creation? Indeed, renewal of creation, for

⁷⁶ D. Edwards, *The God of Evolution*, Op.cit., 81.

⁷⁷ Karl, Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Op.cit., 197.

⁷⁸ Yves, Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. III, (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 161.

⁷⁹ D. Edwards, *The God of Evolution*, Op.cit., 85.

evolutionists is nothing but the very power of becoming more, from less, and from an undifferentiated state of being a more differentiated mode of existence. In other words, as God the creator conserves his creation into being, his own Spirit directs what he has created to their gradual perfection; bearing in mind that contingent events, that is, evolutionary events/occurrences spring from the inner worldly causes and dynamism, which is the work of science to explain. This amounts to saying that our God is not a God of 'occasionalism' that is, a God who at certain points intervenes as one cause amongst others to bring about a new direction or the emergence of new reality.⁸⁰ This is not the case.

A case in point is that, in an evolutionary point of view, human beings as the self-transcendence of matter into self-consciousness before God, sees Jesus Christ as the one in whom the self-transcendence of God's creation toward God reaches its final and irrevocable stage, in which as Jesus Christ who becomes both the self-transcendence of creation to God and God's absolute self-giving to his creation permeated by God's Spirit; his Spirit is the very Spirit that permeates and animates creation now, to bring it to its possible future fulfilment. But one thing that should be clear here is that, this Spirit as it renews and empowers creation in becoming more, is not a power that can be discovered empirically in the natural forces of the universe. And that is why for Cardinal Walter Kasper, he argues that, the laws and forces of nature have their own integrity but the action of the Holy Spirit as the life-giver that renews creation is at another level of understanding as the source of novelty in creation.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Karl Rahner, "Evolution: II. Theological." in *An Encyclopedia of Theology: Sacramentum Mundi*. Vol. 2. editors Karl Rahner & et.al. (London: Burns & Oates, 1968): 289-294.

⁸¹ Walter, Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 227.

However, one would also not fail to question that does not this renewal of creatures by the Holy Spirit presuppose the immanence and interiority of God's presence to all creatures? For Christians, they believe that the God who transcends creation is also intimately present to every creature⁸²but he is present to human beings in an interpersonal way through the gift of grace, while interiorly present to every creature by his on-going creative relationship to empower creatures to act and become more.⁸³ Therefore, for evolutionary theology, the Holy Spirit becomes the source of dynamism of the self-transcendence within creatures themselves hence more interior to creation; as it moves from the divine communion and reaches to what is not divine to bring what is not divine into relationship with the divine.

On the same note, Jurgen Moltmann, has emphatically maintained that the experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church parameters leads the '*Church Community*' to rediscovering the same Spirit of God in nature-ecosystems of the earth.⁸⁴ For him, the Spirit is the principle of unity and integration, uniting creation to Christ and in communion with the One who is the fountain fullness from which all things come and exist. And as a principle of diversity, the Spirit individuates the dynamic development or process of evolution; characterized by its open-ended systems in the universe towards their final consummation. In other words, the Holy Spirit not only differentiates or individuates, but it also binds together (unites) and directs creation to the truth-God's Kingdom, despite that creation experiences the evolutionary natural selection as '*victims of evolution*'.

⁸² See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 300.

⁸³ Michael, Schmaus, *Dogman 2: God and Creation*. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969), 553.

⁸⁴ J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 10, 228.

Here Moltmann likens evolution to the *Cross* of Jesus Christ.⁸⁵ Therefore, in the approach to evolutionary theology, there must be room to allow for surprises, defective development, dead-ends, a partial or total halt to development as such. But our faith is not to be based here, but on God's action in the Trinity. In this sense, God's Spirit through Jesus Christ reaches creatures and brings or directs them into communion with their creator-God.

In this case, Moltmann has also pointed out some vivid signs that express the presence of the Holy Spirit in our human evolutionary awareness of God's continuous creative activity. For him, every expression of truth, love, justice and yearning for the good which leads to peace and harmony in creation and the acts/deeds that lead to the dignity of every creature and to its proper end/place it deserves in creation; manifests God's Spirit at work in creation. Above all, discerning God's plan in creation, in a genuine freedom and affirming the truth about humanity's proper role in creation, hence conversion to fundamental values of life and environment, as free gifts of the creator, is already the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in creation.

In précis, therefore, the Holy Spirit acting as the agent for the new life in Christ empowers and renews creation to become more and directs it to perfection, which is to come. Hence, as God's creative activity is an event beyond human comprehension, its dynamism of becoming more, is the self-movement of the divine Spirit present in creation; in forces and rhythms of nature, drawing all creatures into a common destiny, into a companionship of suffering and growing to perfection in God.

⁸⁵ Jurgen, Moltmann, *God in Creation, An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans.by Margaret Kohl, (London: SCM Press, 1983), 103. Also see his book *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, (London: SCM Press, 1990), 274-341.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

All along, there have been two basic questions before me when I conceived of writing this essay on "*Creation and Evolution. A Case in Christian Anthropology*". Triggered not only by my Philosophical Anthropology studies five years ago, but also, these questions were awakened more consciously in my Christian Anthropology course, a year ago. Firstly, was, how do I hold onto my faith in this evolving world? Secondly, what significance does evolution have in the formative theology I have received in this college? Given the fact that a systematic treatise on the theology of evolution is not/or is not yet offered in this college.

In this case, the intention of my work, in this essay, was to understand how the theology of Creation from the perspective of Christian Anthropology relates proportionately with scientific findings of evolution and how these two fields of knowledge can be faithfully integrated to both the truths they claim which merit attention and consideration. Generally it has been observed that God's creative activity is not something that occurred once and for all, whereby, each species was created separately in a fixed way 'in the beginning'. That is, creation is a continuous divine activity, whereby the Creator has a purpose for it. In other words, the entire creation has a purpose, a direction and a goal, which is fully known by the Creator-God. Now, given this awareness, from the scientific point of view that things change cumulatively over time, and that new forms of life emerge, the theology of evolution to me, becomes a process of disclosure of how God's creative activity maintains creation in its created structures with

a possible dynamism to grow to their full perfection. In other words, it is God's continuous creative activity that gives novelty that was not there before.

Now, in no conceivable sense, inasmuch as creation cannot be adequately described in terms of its origins by the human mind, evolution too, cannot be adequately described in terms of how and when it started. The question about dates or its exact origins escapes human comprehension. But presently as they are both factual, creation as an exclusive activity of God and evolution as a dynamic process in creation, can only be described meaningfully by a Trinitarian theology; in terms of their direction, their inherent relationality and above all, by their possible future. This possible future from the Christian perspective is entirely united to Jesus Christ at the end of time. But up to now, creation, awaits this glorious destiny at the second coming of Christ- *the final consummation*. Therefore, creation is a call into existence by God the Creator and at the same time it is a promise to '*grow*' from these imperfections we experience, as creation did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator, to the perfection, which is to come, i.e. communion with the One that created, and allows co-creation; who is immanent in creation but at the same time transcends creation.

In this essay I have indicated that the world is God's creative activity and is evolving. Our God is a God who creates out of nothing and his entire creation utterly depends on him at all times. He is that by which creatures live, move and have their being. Therefore, how the world is evolving remains a scientific matter but why it ultimately does that remains no one's guess but a mystery even in scientific circles. Our God as the Creator, remains a cause from which pours forth everything that exists in all their variant forms. And such a cause cannot stand to us as an explanatory reality in the

human ordinary sense. That is why from evolutionary theological context, to conceive creation in an evolving perspective, calls for an effort to seek to bring together and about the many levels or dimensions of a truly Christian approach to the mystery of Creation. One approach could be that the participants in biblical studies ought to focus now, more than ever before, on the continuing dynamic relationship between natural processes of occurrences in creation and the human journey in the entire creation. The other one is by attending not only to the goodness of creation but also to the tragic and significance of the suffering creation in our natural evolution and cultural history.

In an obvious sense, there have been, and are various objections raised against evolution as a theory but it remains the effort of theological vision today to face the facts of evolution as a whole without false modesty in order to realize more explicitly its possible future dimensions of beings. Besides that, it has come out clearly that the traditional biblical scholarship on nature and its human relationship to it (anthropic principle) is found wanting in the 21st century theological models, alongside scientific worldview. Inasmuch as we understand up to now, creation is a Christian dogma but evolution is not. Then, each of these two terms has meaning and concerns each other insofar as creation occupies the attention of a theologian and a scientist too. And that is why interdisciplinary theology is required now, more than ever; to see also what evolution tells us about our God in an evolving universe. Strictly speaking, evolution has its place in theology where theology talks about God's continuous creation (creatio-continua). Creation, as it is, is not yet finished and has not yet reached its possible end.

Looking at the Catholic evolutionist theologians, like Fr. Teilhard de Chardin and partly Fr. Karl Rahner, for them, it is impossible that there not be some disorder or lack of organisation or imperfection in creation that is moving progressively towards a higher degree of unification. And for contemporary theologians like Fr. Stephen Duffy, any talk of an evolutionary perspective is one thing, but detailing its ramifications for theology and vice versa is another matter. Therefore, our universe far from manifesting a clear unity of purpose, it seems to be a plurality of purpose, some of which are at loggerheads: utilitarian theology that enhances in some way 'anthropic principle' and also ecological theology that puts surveillance to this 'anthropic principle'. As it can be observed today, positive knowledge of things is only identified with the study of their development and this entails being pre-occupied with the pre-historical facts, **not myths**, that can enlighten humanity to fathom the possible future of the universe; a direction that is complex, given the fact that what is called into existence, exists in accordance with its own laws of nature.

Finally my concluding remarks and annotations go to our present schools of theology. Given the fact that the Church up to now has not taken up universal evolution as a subject for teaching, nor does it offer detailed guidelines on how this process operates and how it can be simply transmitted to Christians. There is need to do much more, by way of educating students, who, some become religious educators, pastors and even preachers in this world. In order for them, to connect in a balanced form their worlds of religion and science, in order not to impoverish theology and religious life in the future. Many theologians think well and sufficiently on human: moral, social, political, and historical issues in relation to salvation history, but there is little consideration of

God's creation in scientific viewpoint and its implications to redemption. For me, teaching evolution and the nature of sciences in relation to our faith (beliefs) or rather human religious experience, is an opportunity to learn from science about creation and the immensity of the universe, and proportionately appropriate and enlarge my sense of God, and my faith in God the Creator and Redeemer who remains a transcendental reality.

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