

CREATION AND TIME



Contents

Church Teaching	5
Authority of the Church Fathers	5
Lateran IV– The Church’s Key Dogmatic Teaching on Creation	7
“The Beginning of Time” or “In the Beginning”	12
Post-Lateran IV Magisterial Teaching on Creation	13
The Influence of Geology on Theology	16
Faulty Translation Accommodates Long Ages.....	17
Vatican I continues Church teaching on Creation	19
A Misunderstanding Explained.....	20
Evolutionary Anthropology	23
St Augustine’s <i>Rationes Seminales</i>	24
The Testimony of the Magisterium from the 1909 Pontifical Biblical Commission	26
Grasping the Nettle	27
Conclusion	32
EPILOGUE	33

Some Testimonials

While much needed work has been done to show the deficiencies of evolution from a scientific perspective, very little has been done to question it on theological grounds. This short work provides a much needed contribution in that area.

Fr. Chad Ripperger, F.S.S.P., Ph.D., Philosophy, MA, Theology.

***Creation and Time** is an important work. It shows how alien the modern belief in evolution, even 'theistic evolution', is to Catholic tradition. Of particular interest is the authors' careful analysis of the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council. Appealing to authoritative commentaries on this Council, they make a powerful case that, centuries before Darwin, the Church had already definitively ruled out the gradual formation of truly distinct species over long periods of time.*

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***Creation and Time** is interesting, alarming, and thought-provoking. Its presentation of the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council and Vatican I raises very strong objections even to the theistic version of evolutionary faith. The distinctions that it makes in regard to the interpretation of the terms of the conciliar decrees make all the difference in the world for one's theological understanding of creation and providence. Lyell and Darwin and their disciples have stolen man's sense of wonder and divine beauty and ushered in a "Culture of Death." By overturning their evolutionary assumptions, **Creation and Time** will help to establish a culture of life in which God is once again revered as Creator and Redeemer.*

Fr. Daniel Kassis, BA, Philosophy; STB from the Angelicum; STL in fundamental theology from the Gregorian University in Rome.

***Creation and Time** resurrects, elucidates, and showcases a misconstrued and long-forgotten doctrine of the Faith on creation. This doctrine—correctly understood—establishes and protects the Church's teaching and theology of creation in an era mired in pedagogical and theological confusion and error concerning creation and its implications. In crafting this paper, its authors proffer what may become one of this century's most radical and significant contributions in historical and dogmatic theology.*

Dr. Mark Koehne, Ph.D., Religious Studies; M.A., Systematic Theology.

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CREATION AND TIME

The object of this paper is to show that the *meaning* of the Church's original teaching on creation has been changed by the introduction of long ages. It will show that belief in "progressive creation" and "theistic evolution" was induced by the attribution of enormous ages to the formation of rock strata. It will explain the original meaning of creation taught by the Church Fathers and Councils. It will present the experimental data invalidating the long ages assigned to rock formations. It will conclude that, properly expounded, the Church's magisterial teaching on creation set forth by Lateran IV and Vatican I precludes any possibility of belief in theistic evolution.

Definitions:

1. Naturalistic evolution

Evolution is a general term including both cosmological and biological evolution. It teaches that a primeval explosion (big bang) of elementary particles caused the formation of gases which developed into stars and planets. At least one planet developed the conditions for life, and by a process of chemical and molecular evolution single-celled living matter transformed into multi-celled plants and animals and eventually man. The mechanisms for this transformation are random chance, natural selection and mutation

2. Theistic evolution

Theistic evolution adheres to the same process as natural evolution, the only difference being that the process is held to be programmed by God.

3. Progressive creation

Progressive creation holds that the fossil record displays the development envisioned by all forms of evolution, but instead of God having given matter the ability to produce new and more complex types of species at the beginning, God intervenes to produce them when the conditions are right.

All three systems require enormous periods of time. Systems 2 and 3 are compatible with system 1 because they respect the big bang, the geological time-scale and the fossil record as a relic of long ages. For this reason students holding to one of these two systems can be assimilated into the earth science classes at school without disclosing their belief in divine causality. They therefore have much in common with naturalistic or atheistic evolutionists. Those who believe in special creation and a short earth history have nothing in common with any of the three systems.

Church Teaching

First, it is part of the Church's extraordinary magisterial teaching that God:

...creator of all visible and invisible things of the spiritual and of the corporal . . . by his own omnipotent power **at once** (*simul*) from the beginning of time created **each** (*utramque*) creature from nothing, spiritual and corporal namely angelic and mundane and finally the human, constituted as it were, alike of the spirit and the body (*DZ 428*)

These words were formulated in 1215 as infallible teaching on Creation by the Fourth Lateran Council, many centuries before the multi-million year hypothesis of the earth's age was advanced by geologists. There can be no doubt that the authors of the Council declaration were not expecting their words to be interpreted other than in a context of creation in no more than the six days as taught by Sacred Scripture, and by the Fathers of the Church to whom they turned as authority. The significance of the expressions "at once" and "each" (*simul* and *utramque* respectively in Latin) in this regard are discussed further on.

Authority of the Church Fathers

To make the Council's formula compatible with the modern geological time-scale requires modification of its intended meaning. Changing its meaning, however, runs counter to the magisterial teaching of Vatican I. This teaching anathematizes those who say: *that it is possible that to the dogmas declared by the Church a meaning must sometimes be attributed according to the progress of science, different from that which the Church has understood and understands* (Faith and reason – canon 3).¹

To know whether the meaning of the Lateran IV formula read in terms of "long ages" corresponds with that intended by the Council fathers, other sources must be taken into account. Apart from the scientific reasons for disputing long ages examined below, those touching upon Church teaching are more important for Catholics. These are as follows:

1. The teaching of the Church Fathers is invariably taken into account in the definition of Council doctrines, and in professions of faith such as the *Credos*. This being so, it should be recalled that all the formal declarations on creation were made in the context of the Fathers' unanimous teaching that all things were created instantaneously in a period not longer than six days.

...no one is permitted to interpret Sacred Scripture...contrary to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers" (Vatican I, session III, *Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith*)

The question before us, therefore, is "Can the 'six days' of Genesis 1 be inserted into a several million year period?" (The question is posed assuming lack of knowledge regarding the recent experimental invalidation of the geological principles upon

¹ By the phrase "progress of science," the canon means the development of science, which may be good or bad from a Catholic perspective. The Church welcomes genuine growth in scientific understanding, which can never contradict Catholic doctrine.

which the supposed multi-million year ages of rocks are based. This will be discussed later). To answer the question the following points should be considered.

2. Adam was the first man (Councils of Carthage, 418; Trent, 1546). He was created in the state of immortality (Trent, Pontifical Biblical Commission 1909). The first woman was created from the rib of the first man (Encyclical *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, 1880). Death didn't enter into the world before the original sin of Adam (Romans 5:12; Council of Orange, 539; and Council of Trent). The historicity of these matters cannot be called into question (PBC 1909)

As an historical sequence of events, therefore, Adam was specially created by God (PBC 1909); then Eve was formed from his side (*Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* 1880). They were not subject to death or suffering until after they had disobeyed God's command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Evolutionary palaeontology asserts that animals, known as hominids, having developed the ability to form conceptual thought, evolved over three or four million years into early man. According to the fossil record these "men," albeit brutish, supposedly reached the *homo sapiens* stage around a half a million years ago and, in evolutionary terms, are referred to as our original ancestors. Anthropology attributes signs of culture such as language, art and religion to a much later stage of evolution around 80 to 120 thousand years ago. So the early men who lived in groups, hunted and used fire would have had none of the rudiments of a primitive culture defined above. Their origin was a slow natural development from non-rational to rational being. At some point in the process these pre-humans would have been endowed with a human soul. As noted above, this scenario is opposed to the Church's teaching for the following reasons. The first man, Adam, was specially, directly and instantaneously created by God. His body and soul were created together. This is implicit in the teaching of the ecumenical Council of Vienne that *the rational or intellective soul is the form of the human body* (Dz. 481). He was created:

- (i) with a fully rational soul, and not on the road to complete rationality (CCC 365); St Paul compares his perfection with that of Christ: *he was a type of the one who was to come* (Rom. 5:14); Sirach 49:16 accounts him to be: *above every living being in creation*
- (ii) as a fully mature man with the graces of justice, sanctity, integrity and immortality (CCC 376) allowing knowledge of God and his creation, and not without religious understanding;
- (iii) with conceptual thought sufficient to name the animals;
- (iv) he had the ability to discuss with his wife Eve the problem of good and evil regarding the command not to eat the forbidden fruit, rather than the lack of language attributed to early man by evolutionary anthropology;
- (v) and, therefore, lacked ancestors whether partly rational or otherwise, notwithstanding the supposed fossil evidence of pre-Adamites;
- (vi) and had children who farmed the land and tended cattle, rather than nomadic hunters who had not reached the stage of planting and domesticating animals;
- (vii) and was placed into a world where all things had been created by God from nothing (Lateran IV), i.e. instantaneously, and not by millions of years of non-living matter slowly transforming into "simple" living matter, which further changed by degrees into more complex matter and finally into man.

Lateran IV– The Church’s Key Dogmatic Teaching on Creation

Deus...creator omnium visibilium et invisibilium, spiritualium et corporalium: qui sua omnipotenti virtute simul ab initio temporis utramque de nihilo condidit creaturam, spiritualem et corporalem, angelicam videlicet et mundanam: ac deinde humanam, quasi communem ex spiritu et corpore constitutam.

God...creator of all visible and invisible things, of the spiritual and of the corporal; who by His own omnipotent power at once from the beginning of time created each creature from nothing, spiritual and corporal, namely, angelic and mundane, and finally the human, constituted as it were, alike of the spirit and the body (D.428).

Lateran IV opposed the belief:

1. of the world being eternal, as proposed by many Aristotelians - thus the definition states the world was created in the beginning of time to make clear the exact meaning of finitude.
2. by the Manichees of the visible material world not being within God’s power, by declaring that “all visible...things...were created from nothing” *de nihilo* (i.e. instantly).
3. that the world was not created solely (*unum*) by God’s omnipotent power *omnipotenti virtute* (i.e. without cooperation of instruments) as believed by the medieval Neo-Platonists.

These beliefs are precisely those advanced either severally or individually by the theory of evolution or progressive creation. According to dogmatic theologian Fr. Peter Fehlner:

The roots of the "modern" theory of evolution, in so far as "modern" indicates a relatively novel form for a very hoary theory, are to be discovered, not in the 18th and 19th centuries, but in the 13th century with the appearance of "Latin Aristotelianism", a mode of interpreting Aristotle so as to make of Aristotelian thought an apt instrument for a radical repudiation of the entire Catholic faith and tradition. As St. Bonaventure saw so clearly, the cornerstone of this position was the denial of the dogma of creation as incompatible with an intellectual affirmation of the eternity of the world, in effect a thoroughgoing secularism.²

It is, therefore, important to establish the original meaning intended by the Lateran IV Council Fathers regarding their dogmatic statement on creation. The argument that the Council wording does not exclude long ages, and therefore allows time for evolution to take place, is based principally on a misinterpretation of two words in the text, *simul* and *utramque*. These two terms will now be examined.

SIMUL – Creation by God of all things together, or to a common plan?

The *Catholic Theological Dictionary* of 1903, [still] under the direction of Fr. Vacant, taught that the simultaneity of the creation of all things spiritual and corporeal was considered so well-established by Lateran IV that leading commentators on the Council like Cardinal

² Fr. Peter D. Fehlner, O.F.M., Conv., STD, *In the Beginning*, 1987, p. 19.

Mazzella regarded those who contested this meaning as “temerarious.” The *Dictionary* stated:

It seems clear that the text [of Lateran IV] affirms the simultaneity of the two creations—[those of the spiritual and corporeal creatures]—and most theologians interpret it that way. Indeed, many of them, like Suarez in *De Angelis* and also it would seem Cardinal Mazzella in *De Deo Creante* regard those who contest this simultaneity of creation as “temerarious.”³

Besides the commentators named by Fr. Vacant, there were others of even greater stature who taught that Lateran IV had defined the relative simultaneity of the creation of all things. Perhaps the most authoritative was St. Lawrence of Brindisi (1559-1619), a Doctor of the Church, and the foremost post-Lateran IV commentator on Genesis. In his commentary on Genesis 1, St. Lawrence rejects the opinion that the angels might have been created before the material universe and all of “the creatures of the world” and writes:

the Holy Roman Church determined in the Fourth Lateran Council that the angels along with the creatures of the world were at once created *ex nihilo* from the beginning of time. (St. Lawrence of Brindisi, commentary on Genesis 1:1.)

A contemporary of St. Lawrence, the highly esteemed Flemish Jesuit and exegete Cornelius a Lapide (1537-1637), also taught that Lateran IV taught *de fide* that the angels were not created long before the corporeal creatures of the earth—as some Church Fathers had speculated—but at the same time. He writes:

To be sure, the Lateran Council under Innocent III declared: One must believe with firm faith that *from the beginning of time God created from nothing both spiritual and corporeal creatures, viz., the angelic and the mundane . . .*

After answering a possible objection to this judgment, he adds:

the Council’s words seem too well expressed and clear to be twisted into another meaning. Wherefore, my opinion is no longer just probable, but is both certain and *de fide*, for this is what the Council itself declares and defines.⁴

UTRAMQUE

In the Lateran IV Latin text *utramque* is used as follows:

Deus...simul ab initio temporis utramque de nihilo condidit creaturam, spiritualem et corporalem, angelicam videlicet et mundanam ac deinde humanam quasi communem ex spiritu et corpore constitutam.

The English equivalent is:

³ *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique (DTC)* (sous la direction de A. Vacant et E. Mangenot, Paris, Letouzey, 1903, Art. Ange, col 1269, 1270). “Temerarious” was a theological note signifying opposition to “a truth authentically taught by the Ordinary Magisterium but not as revealed or intimately connected with revelation” or “a truth unanimously held by all schools of theologians which is derived from revealed truth, but by more than one step of reasoning.” Such temerity was considered a “mortal sin indirectly against the faith” – or – “usually a mortal sin” according to the work *On the Value of Theological Notes and the Criteria for Discerning Them* by Father Sixtus Cartechini S.J. (Rome, 1951), a work which was drafted for use by auditors of the Roman Congregations.

⁴ Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentary on Genesis* 1:1.

God...at once from the beginning of time created each creature from nothing, spiritual and corporal namely angelic and mundane (“earthly” CCC 327) finally the human, constituted as it were, alike of the spirit and the body (DZ, 428).

Those who disagree that Lateran IV excludes theistic evolution point to the dictionary meaning of *utramque* as meaning “each of two.” Their argument is that the word each “creature” refers to each of the angelic and mundane “orders,” and does not mean the angels on one hand and each of the individual species of animals on the other. The term “creature,” they quite correctly point out, does not necessarily refer to living things. It can just as well refer to inanimate things. In consequence they argue that Lateran IV is not declaring that all things were created from nothing, but only the heavens and the unadorned earth, created on Day One. This argument is invalid for several reasons:

- (a) Lateran IV is most certainly referring to the spiritual and corporal as two “creatures,” (Vatican I, Session III, chapter I, uses the expression “the twofold created order”)⁵ but the corporal (or mundane) “creature”⁶ according to the *Catholic Catechism* (CCC, 327) includes **all** the “earthly” world. Hence the first words of the Lateran text “creator of **all** visible and invisible things” refers to all things created from nothing at the beginning. This fact is confirmed by the Vatican I text which states:

...the world and all things which are contained in it both spiritual and material as regards their whole substance, have been produced by God from nothing (canon 5).

The CCC’s use of “earthly” (meaning mundane or corporal—those things with bodies) is the equivalent of *mundanam* or *corporalem* in the original Latin text of Lateran IV. It is the opposite of spiritual and angelic things without a body (*spiritualem* and *angelicam*).

According to dogmatic theologian Fr. Fehlner’s essay *In the Beginning* (unabridged version, 1987) this canon teaches that:

The essences of finite species, and the essential structure of world order are not the fruit of the activity of those species, but their necessary prerequisite, only possible in virtue of a distinctive, divine productive action.

St. Augustine of Hippo had said the same thing centuries before Lateran IV:

...He (God) made and created all things that exist, insofar as they do exist. This means that every creature, whether intellectual or corporeal, - or to say it more briefly in the words themselves of the divine Scriptures: whether invisible or visible, - is not born of God but is made out of nothing by God *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 4.33, 52-53 (*De Genesis ad Litteram*).

- (b) In his 1895 commentary on the Vatican I text, Fr. Vacant makes it clear that the Council is not using the word *utramque* in reference to the two “creatures” heaven and earth of Genesis I, but to the “mundane” (as opposed to the angelic), i.e. all things created other than man. He writes:

⁵ This translation of “creaturam” is found in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Volume Two, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Georgetown University Press, 1990).

⁶ Fr. Vacant explains that the term “creature” is attributed to man, as it is to the angels and bodies (corps), and (the text) declares that man was made from nothing LIKE the other creatures – *de nihilo condidit* (Art. 208).

Vatican I affirms the creation and consequently the existence and distinct nature of three classes of creatures. It also indicates the time of creation. The three classes mentioned are the angels, material bodies, and men whose existence and nature are defined in chapter 1 and the fifth canon... Our text calls angels spirits, as opposed to bodies being of quite different species; thus it shows the spirits are not bodies. Moreover it compares angels to men composed of body and spirit... The second class of creatures is composed of corporal or material beings which form the world. The Council mentions they are distinct from pure spirits and men... **Note here that the words “corporalem” and “materiales” designate not only “raw” matter but also organised matter, even the “sensible” beings deprived of intelligence and endowed with sensitive faculties. It is clear here that the term must extend to all creatures inferior to angels and men...** The context of the chapter (Chapter 1 – *Dei Filius Vat. I*) shows the word “*mundanam*” only applies to material creatures, whilst the word “*mundus*” in the Canon corresponds to all creatures both spiritual and material... The Council defines the three classes of creatures as having been produced from nothing in the totality of their substance. Without defining it as such, the Council says indirectly that the three classes are substances as opposed to simple accidents (bold added).⁷

The above excerpts from Fr. Vacant’s study on Vatican I, prove that he has no doubt that the expression *utramque de nihilo* (each creature from nothing) in the two Council texts refers to the prototypes of living kinds being specially created by God from nothing. Theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists assert that the only things not created from pre-existing matter were the heavens and earth, created on the first day of the *hexameron*. They conclude therefore that the **living** matter produced subsequently was not created. Genesis 1, they rightly say, states that each species or kind was created from pre-existing matter. The plants and animals, for instance, were summoned into existence from the ground, Adam from the dust of the earth, and Eve from Adam’s rib. To say that the things they came from were not part of or included in their substance seems to them illogical. This thinking comes from human experience that all living things come from other living things. Dogs come from dogs, cats from cats, and elephants from elephants. The concept of a living thing coming from a non-living thing is contrary to experience. All the living productions in Genesis 1, however, are reported as coming from non-living matter, i.e. water, earth or dust. To say that the water and earth contained atoms which could be used by God to produce living beings is like saying that an artist used a canvas to create a picture. The picture was not in the canvas it was a concept in the artist’s mind. It was immaterial until the concept was transmitted by oils and paint to the canvas. God conceived the various species before giving them existence. They were conceptually in His mind until the concept was transmitted to the water, earth or dust; they were given materiality through God’s word. Thus the dust, water, and earth contributed nothing to the creation of man, fish or trees; the latter were **created** immediately in their entire substance. According to St. Thomas Aquinas:

...the corporeal forms that bodies had when first produced came immediately from God, whose bidding alone matter obeys, as its own proper cause. To

⁷ Fr. A. Vacant, *Etudes Théologiques sur les Constitutions du Vatican d’après les actes du Concile*, Art. 199-202.

signify this, Moses prefaces each work with the words God said, Let this thing be, or that, to denote the formation of all things by the Word of God . . .⁸

Writing in 1845, the translator of an authoritative French edition of the *Summa Theologica*, F. Lachat comments as follows on the creation of corporeal creatures:

Things are said to be composed in two cases: first when they enclose different entities or multiple parts, like bodies; second when they are constituted definitively, completely, by the unity of their principles. It is in the latter case that the article under discussion should be taken (*ST*, I, q. 45, a. 4). On the other hand, things can, either subsist by themselves, and according to this hypothesis they are substances; or exist in the subject by adhesion, and then they are accidents. What should be understood by *composed or subsisting things*? They should be understood as substances which are complete, finished, perfect which enclose all of their elements, matter, form and accidents.

So what did God create? Some teachers reply that he created primary matter, with the elements mixed up, the poets call this unformed mass *chaos* . . . then they say he drew from it the stars, the planets, the earth, the plants, the substances, the forms and accidents which make up the universe. In this system, the supreme Worker operates from the simple to the complex, moving by degrees in the accomplishment of his task, doing it in several successive operations, carefully underpinning it; obtaining the satisfaction of demonstrating the plagiarism of modern industrialists who claim to have invented division of labor, because they are not powerful enough to do the work in one go, nor wise enough to avoid useless detours.

Such is not the case with the prince of the school. He says God created the substances and concreated the primary matter: he created the substances complete, as they exist in nature, together with their accidents, forms, principles, and the elements of which they are composed; he concreated the prime matter, for it is necessarily contained in the substances. It is in this way that Holy Scripture recounts creation. We read in Genesis 1:1 “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The Mother of the Maccabees says to her son (2 Mac. 7:28) “I beseech you my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God created them from nothing. Thus also mankind came into being”. And the [Fourth Lateran] Council . . . states: “The Creator of all things visible and invisible, spiritual and corporal, drew from nothing the spiritual and corporal creatures, the angels, the world, then man composed of a body and soul.” Try to show that these words only refer to prime matter; all we can see are substances in their final completeness (*italics in original*).⁹

This passage from an authoritative commentator on St. Thomas from the pre-Darwinian period shows how the statements of Lateran IV on creation, in conjunction with 2 Maccabees 7:28, were understood as teaching the creation by God alone of the complete substances of all kinds of corporal and spiritual beings, just as one would expect from a straightforward reading of Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2.¹⁰ The same commentary helps to

⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I Q.65 a.4.

⁹ F. Lachat, *Commentary on ST*, I, q. 45, a. 4. Lachat inadvertently attributes this quotation from Lateran IV to the Council of Florence.

¹⁰ Commentary by F. Lachat who translated St Thomas's *Summa* from Latin into French (Paris, Vivier, 1855)

explain the radical distinction between the transformation of, say, uranium into lead and the (imagined) transformation of a reptile into bird. In the former case, the transformation merely involves a rearrangement of the atomic building blocks of matter—a rearrangement that can occur naturally, without generation. In the latter case, the transformation of one organic unity into another distinct organic unity involves the transformation of one irreducibly complex organic unity into another, totally distinct, irreducibly complex organic unity, and—and this is an essential point—without generation! According to Lachat, substances that possess this irreducibly complex organic unity are “complete, finished, perfect substances, which enclose all of their elements, matter, form and accidents.” Such substances cannot come into existence through non-generative natural processes, nor could they ever be generated unless their prototypes were first divinely created. Indeed, even if the matter for the first birds, reptiles, mammals and other living things was not “concreated,” the formation of these creatures would still be a divine act. As St. Thomas teaches, God alone could create, *ex nihilo*, the form of a bird or a whale and shape matter according to that form by his fiat. No natural process would result in the production of a whale from water or of a lion from the dust of the earth. The statements of Lateran IV and Vatican I on creation are entirely consistent with the constant teaching of the Church that the formation of the prototypes of all kinds of living things was part of the creative work of God that ended with the creation of Adam and Eve.

Similarly, Adam, a concept of the Creator’s mind, was produced from dust. But the first man’s body and soul were neither in the dust nor caused by it. Aphraates (c. 280-345), one of the Church Fathers explains:

In regard, then, to this resurrection of the dead, my beloved, I will instruct you as well as I can. For from the beginning God created Adam. From the dust He shaped Him and raised him up. And if, when Adam did not exist, He made him from nothing, how much easier will it now be for Him to raise him up; for he has been sown like a seed in the earth.¹¹

“The Beginning of Time” or “In the Beginning”

The expression “from (or at) the beginning of time” *ab initio temporis* is the hinge upon which the time element of the Lateran IV doctrine on creation turns. The context reads:

God...creator of all visible and invisible things, of the spiritual and of the corporal, who by his own omnipotent power at once **from the beginning of time** created each creature from nothing...

One sees an echo of this in Christ’s words to the Pharisees: “Have you not read that he who made them **from the beginning** made them male and female...?” (Matt. 19:4)

Can “the beginning” of which Our Lord speaks possibly refer to the 15 thousand million years ago of the present “big bang” estimated date of the initial explosion, which supposedly began the evolution of the cosmos? In the light of the fact that the Council fathers defined the doctrine at a period when the “beginning of time” was understood to be “day one” of the first six days of creation or the *hexameron* as a whole, the question can safely be answered in the

¹¹ Aphraates, *Treatises* (8,6), quoted in W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*. Vol. I, p. 304.

negative. This position is confirmed by St. Bonaventure, a 13th century commentator on the Lateran IV Council. He wrote in his *Breviloquium* (Part II): "...we must specifically hold that physical nature was brought into existence in six days."

At that time, the term "beginning" was also used to denote the entire "Six Days" as it had been by the Fathers of the Church from the time of the Apostles. Pope Innocent III, who convoked the Fourth Lateran Council, wrote:

In the beginning one rib was changed into one woman.¹²

Petavius, in his *De Opificio Sex Dierum* (Paris, ed. 1866) writes that the word *beginning* can be understood to include all the six days.

The theistic evolutionist's belief regarding divine causality, based on the general theory of evolution, follows the big bang model whereby the celestial bodies were formed over thousands of millions of years before the earth. But his "beginning" is inevitably quite different from that of the Popes, Councils, Church Fathers and Sacred Scriptures.

Post-Lateran IV Magisterial Teaching on Creation

In its commentary on the Nicene Creed, the Council of Trent provided an authoritative basis upon which to understand the Lateran IV text on creation, especially in relation to the words, "I believe in one God the Father the Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." According to the introduction to the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, the Council Fathers:

deemed it of the first importance that a work should appear, sanctioned by the authority of the Council, from which pastors and all others on whom the duty of imparting instruction devolves, may be able to seek and find reliable matter for the edification of the faithful; that, **as there is one Lord, one faith, there may also be one standard and prescribed form of propounding the dogmas of faith** (emphasis added).

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, in defining terms in the Nicene Creed, explained that the creation of "all things seen and unseen" ("*visibilium omnium et invisibilium*") was instant and immediate by God. This brings into focus the meaning of virtually the same expression "*creator omnium visibilium et invisibilium*" used in the Lateran Council of 1215.

As it was His own goodness that influenced Him when He did all things whatsoever He would, so in the work of creation He followed no external form or model; but contemplating, and as it were imitating, the universal model contained in the divine intelligence, the supreme Architect, with infinite wisdom and power, attributes peculiar to the Divinity, created all things in the beginning. ***He spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created*** (Ps 148:5) (emphasis added).

Contrary to the popular interpretation widely circulating today that the phrase "all things visible and invisible" of Lateran IV in the beginning of creation refers only to the creation of

12. Pope Innocent III, "Gaudemus in Domino" (DZ 408).

angels and primitive matter, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* taught that “the heavens and the earth” created **“in the beginning”** (emphasis added) included the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the earth and all it contains, including plants and every kind of creature of the air, land, and sea.

The words *heavens and earth* include all things which the heavens and the earth contain; for besides the heavens, which the Prophet has called *the works of his fingers* (Ps 8:4), He also gave to the sun its brilliancy, and to the moon and stars their beauty; and that they might be *for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years* (Gn.1:14). He so ordered the celestial bodies in a certain and uniform course, that nothing varies more than their continual revolution, while nothing is more fixed than their variety . . .

The earth also God commanded to stand in the midst of the world, rooted in its own foundation, and made the mountains ascend, and the plains descend into the place which he had founded for them. That the waters should not inundate the earth, He set a bound which they shall not pass over; neither shall they return to cover the earth. **He next not only clothed and adorned it with trees and every variety of plant and flower, but filled it, as He had already filled the air and water, with innumerable kinds of living creatures . . .** (emphasis added)

Lastly, He formed man from the slime of the earth, so created and constituted in body as to be immortal and impassible, not, however, by the strength of nature, but by the bounty of God. Man's soul He created *to His own image and likeness* (Gn. 1:26); gifted him with free will, and tempered all his motions and appetites so as to subject them, at all times, to the dictates of reason. He then added the admirable gift of original righteousness, and next gave him dominion over all other animals. By referring to the sacred history of Genesis the pastor will easily make himself familiar with these things for the instruction of the faithful.

It is noteworthy that according to the Council Fathers, the plain sense of the “sacred history” of Genesis is so sure a guide to the truth of the creation and early history of the world and of man that the Council Fathers directed pastors to read the sacred history so that they could “easily” make themselves familiar with the facts. It is also significant that the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* elaborates on the teaching of Lateran IV that God created man “finally” (“*deinde*”) at the end of the creation period. In their discussion of the Third Commandment, the Council Fathers teach explicitly that the sixth day—the day on which God created Adam and Eve—was the last day of the creation week:

The seventh day was called the Sabbath, because God, having finished the creation of the world, rested on that day from all the work which He had done. Thus it is called by the Lord in Exodus.

It is no exaggeration to state that every authoritative magisterial teaching on creation from Lateran IV until Vatican I held that the work of creating new kinds of creatures occurred rapidly and ceased with the creation of Adam and Eve. This is witnessed by the Church Fathers whose unanimous teaching on instant creation was taken into account in the Lateran

IV dogma by the word “simul” (“at the same time”). According to the Fathers, “...every act of creation was instantaneous and simultaneous.”¹³ Here are some examples:

Regarding the First Day of creation St. Ephraim the Syrian wrote:

Although both the light and the clouds were created in the twinkling of an eye, still both the day and the night of the First Day continued for twelve hours each.¹⁴

St Basil, regarding the Third Day of God’s creation, wrote:

At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up...Likewise, all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy; and the so-called garden plants...all came into existence in a moment of time, although they were not previously upon the earth . . . *Let the earth bring forth*. This brief command was immediately a mighty nature and an elaborate system which brought to perfection more swiftly than our thought the countless properties of plants.¹⁵

St. Ambrose of Milan wrote of the Fifth Day:

At this command the waters immediately poured forth their offspring. The rivers were in labor. The lakes produced their quota of life. The sea itself began to bear all manner of reptiles...We are unable to record the multiplicity of the names of all those species which by Divine command were brought to life in a moment of time. At the same instant substantial form and the principle of life were brought into existence...The whale, as well as the frog, came into existence at the same time by the same creative power.¹⁶

He (Moses) did not look forward to a late and leisurely creation of the word out of a concourse of atom¹⁷ . . . And fittingly (Moses) added: *He created*, lest it be thought there was a delay in creation. Furthermore, men would see also how incomparable the Creator was Who completed such a work in the briefest moment of His creative act, so much so that the effect of His will anticipated the perception of time.¹⁸

None of the Church Fathers expressed doubt that the things created on *each* of the Six Days were created **instantaneously**. St. Athanasius the Great, in his *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, wrote:

As to the separate stars or the great lights, not this appeared first, and that second, but in one day and by the same command, they were all called into being. And such was the original formation of the quadrupeds, and of birds, and fishes, and cattle and plants...No one creature was made before another, but all things originally subsisted at once together upon one and the same command.¹⁹

¹³ Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000), p. 102.

¹⁴ St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis I*.

¹⁵ St. Basil the Great, *Hexameron*, 5-10.

¹⁶ St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexameron*, 5:1-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, I:2.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1:5.

¹⁹ St. Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*,

The Fathers held that the period of creation was completed on the sixth day and that the period of Providence began on the Seventh day. They based their teaching on Genesis 2:3: “The seventh day was called the Sabbath, because God, having finished the creation of the world, rested” and on Hebrews 4:3: “God’s works from the foundation of the world were finished.” Summarizing the patristic teaching on these two points, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote:

...the completion of the universe as to the completeness of its parts belongs to the Sixth day, but its completion as regards their operation, to the Seventh (ST.1. Q.73 r. 3) . . .Nothing new was afterwards made by God, but all things subsequently made had in a sense been made before, in the work of the Six Days ...those individual creatures that are now generated existed in the first of their kind (ST.1 Q.73 r.3)

For more than six hundred years, the Church authorities guided by the dogmatic teaching of Lateran IV held that organisms procreated descend from the original created prototypes in whose likeness they are reproduced.²⁰

Today, representatives of the same authorities have been led to believe in a continuous transformation of life-forms from unicellular to multicellular, from fish, to amphibians, to reptiles, to birds and mammals. This, of course, conflicts with the unanimous teaching of the Church Fathers and Doctors, who held that *all* of the different kinds of corporeal creatures were created *ex nihilo* from the beginning—then man as the final work of creation.

The Influence of Geology on Theology

As a result of new interpretations of geological data, particularly Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1831) which so influenced Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century, the scientific community became convinced that evolution theory should be taught as a scientific theory. Not surprisingly, theologians started to question Lateran IV’s definition of creation. The net result was that in the remarkably short period of two or three decades from around 1890, a sufficient number of theologians agreed with the current scientific paradigm so that long geological ages began to be taught in Catholic seminaries and schools. Within a little more than fifty years, belief in an ancient earth and paleontologists’ theories of evolution led inevitably to speculations about the origin of species by other means than *ex nihilo* creation as taught by Lateran IV.²¹

²⁰ Commenting on the teaching of Vatican I and Lateran IV on creation, Matthias Scheeben taught: “Organic beings, which now propagate themselves by generation, owe their existence neither to spontaneous generation nor to unconscious evolution of inorganic matter and forces; **each species has been created to represent a Divine exemplar, and has received the power to perpetuate itself by producing individuals of the same species**. This doctrine is most expressly contained in the narrative of creation in Genesis” (emphasis added) in *A Manual of Catholic Theology Based on Scheeben’s Dogmatik*, Joseph Wilhelm and Thomas B. Scannell, Vol I, Chap. IV, Sect. 122 (London: Kegan Paul, 1890), p. 383.

²¹ Mention should be made of the latest geological experimental data which disproves the hypotheses that the rocks and the fossils in them are ancient (G. Berthault - Russian Academy of sciences Institute of Geology journal *Lithology and Mineral Resources* 2002 and 2004). The geological formations to which it has been applied are shown to be a few thousand years old and not millions. In these circumstances the geological column and the interpretation of the fossil record that it supports are completely invalidated (cf. www.sedimentology.fr)

It should be emphasised that an attempt was made by late nineteenth century theologians to reconcile the concept of a very old earth with the six days of creation taught in the first chapter of the Bible (Genesis 1). A “day age” theory was developed which allocated a long time span to the formation of the heavens and the earth (Day 1) and similar periods of time to the subsequent five days. Thus the waters appeared on Day 2, the plants on day 3 and eventually man on Day 6. This concordance was the first step in establishing a departure from traditional doctrine of creation. Indeed, at this stage it was the age of the earth that clashed with the Council teaching on creation; evolution was not the immediate problem.

By 1900 Fr. Lagrange, founder of the Jerusalem Bible School, who had quickly grasped the inadequacy of the “day-age” hypothesis, propagated an “acceptable” version of evolutionary theory amongst the intellectuals of the Church, despite opposition from Pope St. Pius X to his interpretation of Genesis. Even those who failed to distinguish between the order of creation and the order of providence soon realized that the theorised evolutionary progression of life based on interpretation of fossils did not tally with the biblical record. Quite obviously, they argued, the laws of biology precluded creation of plants on the third day before the sun on the fourth day. The photosynthesis apparatus of foliage depended upon sunlight. Similar anomalies between the Genesis account of creation and the evolutionary account of the origin of life soon brought the day age theory to an end, not, however, before evolution theory had become an accepted belief among scientists and theologians.

To justify the apparent radical break with past teaching, belief in long ages had to be reconciled with the magisterial teaching of Lateran IV. To accomplish this, the words of the dogmatic teaching on creation needed some form of reinterpretation. Research into the Church archives seemed to produce a solution. It rested upon the translation of a single word from Greek into Latin. The Greek word was *koinè*; the Latin word, *simul*.

To say that the translation of the Greek word *koinè* from the Septuagint in the 4th century into the Latin word *simul* led to a major attack on the foundations of the Catholic Faith is no exaggeration. Yet the revolutionary potential of this translation lay dormant with little effect upon Catholic teaching for many centuries. It was not until the eighteen sixties that the translation of *koinè* into *simul* seemed to resolve the irreconcilable opposition between the long ages of evolutionary theory and the magisterial teaching of Lateran IV.

Faulty Translation Accommodates Long Ages

In the nineteenth century Catholic theologians were being told that the science of geology had proved that the earth was enormously old and that fossils in the rocks proved that humans had existed for a much longer time than was recorded in the biblical genealogies. These theologians, therefore, looked again at the Church’s teaching on the subject. In particular they examined the key infallible definition of creation from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. In his 1893 report on Vatican I (*Etudes Théologique sur les Constitutions du Vatican*), Fr. Vacant, also editor of the prestigious and comprehensive theological dictionary the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, examined the problem of reconciling the Council definition with geology. He wrote:

The same text [Lateran IV] says that God created together (*simul*), at the beginning of time, the angels and corporeal creatures, and afterwards man.

The meaning of the word *simul* presents a real difficulty and has been translated in several ways. Some see the word as a simultaneousness of time as with the verse: “for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them” (Exod. 20:11). Others give it the meaning of “in common” or “equally,” indicating that God had made all things equally or according to a single overall plan. **It is this latter interpretation which is widely held today because it allows for long periods of time between the creation of the heavens and the earth and man** (emphasis added).²²

The bolded words above clearly indicate that two meanings had been attached to the word *simul* in the Lateran IV text. Fr. Vacant’s report goes on to say:

In the texts of Lateran IV and Vatican I, however, the word *simul* hardly seems to lend itself to the second meaning. Indeed, it is followed by the words *ab initio temporis* and *deinde* which seem clearly to indicate that *simul* should be understood as simultaneousness of time. On the face of it, this is what Lateran IV would have declared, that is, that the creation of the angels and corporeal creatures took place simultaneously at the beginning, and that the creation of man followed afterwards.²³

The report continues:

However, some contemporary authors of real authority such as P. Hurter (*Compendium of Dogmatic Theology*, 6th edit. t. II, n.425/6) and M. Jungmann (*De Deo Creatore*, 4th edit. n.77) admit that *simul* could be understood from the text of the two councils, in the sense, not of simultaneity of time for the creation, but a unity of plan and a community of origin for the creatures. They allow the word here to have **the second interpretation which is given in the text: *Creavit omnia simul* of Sirach 18:1** (emphasis added).²⁴

The “second interpretation,” which will be shown to be incorrect, was selected because it allowed for long periods of time between the creations attributed to each of the Genesis “days.” Fr Vacant cites two authoritative theologians who opted for a different meaning of *simul*, and indicates that because of the introduction of long ages the traditional meaning presented “a real difficulty.” He is referring, of course, to a difficulty for “**contemporary**” theologians. These subscribed to the conventional wisdom of the theological community in the years immediately following the First Vatican Council. As practicing theologians of the day they would have been conversant with the then-recent dogmatic pronouncements of Vatican I on creation reproducing the Lateran IV definition of creation. These theologians would have examined the dogmas in detail to find some other way of resolving their “difficulty,” some indication that they could accommodate an old earth and evolution. Having found none, they turned their attention to *simul*.

If no “second meaning” of *simul* had been suggested, the theologians would have been bound by the context of the *firmiter* and by the infallible nature of the Lateran IV dogma to accept the meaning of “simultaneous” “at once” or “all together” which excluded long ages and therefore evolution. As Fr. Vacant admits:

²² Abbé Vacant, *Études Théologiques sur les Constitutions du Concile du Vatican*, Paris-Lyon, Delhomme et Briguët, 1895.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

... the word *simul* hardly seems to lend itself to the second meaning...On the face of it, Lateran IV and Vatican I would have declared, that the creation of the angels and corporeal creatures took place simultaneously at the beginning, and that the creation of man followed afterwards.²⁵

However, the belief that *simul* could have the second meaning of “in common” (*koinè* in Greek)—**without a temporal significance**—won the day. Consequently, the evolutionary speculations emanating from the new sciences of stratigraphy, paleontology and evolutionary biology, which conflicted with the biblical genealogies and the traditional teaching of the Fathers, were allowed to be taught in all places of learning within the Church.

Vatican I continues Church teaching on Creation

Since the 13th century Lateran IV teaching on creation was assimilated into the Vatican I Council, it is sufficient to examine the wording of the 1215 dogma to understand the significance of the term *simul* for the Vatican I fathers:

Deus...creator omnium visibilium et invisibilium, spiritualium et corporalium: qui sua omnipotenti virtute simul ab initio temporis utramque de nihilo condidit creaturam, spiritualem et corporalem, angelicam videlicet et mundanam: ac deinde humanam, quasi communem ex spiritu et corpore constitutam.

In the following *Denzinger* English translation, the underlined word *simul* in Latin is translated as “at once” connoting direct creation (from nothing):

God...creator of all visible and invisible things, of the spiritual and of the corporal; who by His own omnipotent power at once from the beginning of time created each creature from nothing, spiritual and corporal, namely, angelic and mundane, and finally the human, constituted as it were, alike of the spirit and the body (D.428).

A reference in the French text of the CCC (327) should be taken as definitive since it translates *simul* as “*tout ensemble*,” i.e. all things were created together. It reads:

La profession de foi du quatrième Concile du Latran affirme que Dieu « a tout ensemble », dès le commencement du temps, créé de rien l’une et l’autre créature, la spirituelle et la corporelle, c’est-à-dire les anges et le monde terrestre ; puis la créature humaine qui tient des deux, composée qu’elle est d’esprit et de corps.

Yet despite the identical meaning of these translations a second diametrically opposed meaning was introduced in the latter part of the nineteenth century allowing for things to be created at intervals over millions of years. As the Council’s dogma says that “all things” were created “**at once from the beginning of time,**” the conflict between the two meanings is more than transparent.

²⁵ Ibid.

A Misunderstanding Explained

Taken literally, the Lateran IV definition of creation teaches that the proto-types of “all things” were created at the same time and directly by God from nothing previously existing.²⁶ The evolution postulate affirms the contrary, i.e. that all things took much time to be produced and always from some preceding substance. The adverb *simul* in the creation definition meaning “all together” or “at the same time” excludes the idea of God spreading out creation of the various kinds over millions of years or having used evolution as a means of creating them. The concept of living beings gradually developing into other kinds of beings has no support from Holy Scripture, Tradition or the magisterial teaching of Lateran IV. Supporters of evolution felt obliged, therefore, to find some way of interpreting the Lateran definition to allow for long periods. They believed this was possible by going back to St. Augustine’s use of a word from the Latin translation of the Greek text of Sirach 18:1: Ὁ ζῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἔκτισεν τὰ πάντα κοινῇ. *He who lives forever created all things in common* (RSV). The Greek word *koinè* meaning “in common” had been translated into Latin as *simul* in a pre-Vulgate Latin text which was later incorporated into the Vulgate: *Qui vivit in aeternum creavit omnia simul*. To understand how this extraordinary situation arose and why there was no theological reason to change the meaning of the Latin word *simul* in a thirteenth century conciliar text, one has to go back to the fifth century when St. Augustine wrote *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. Commenting on the text of Sirach 18:1, St. Augustine wrote:

In this narrative of creation Holy Scripture has said of the Creator that He completed His works in six days, and elsewhere, without contradicting this, it has been written of the same Creator that **He created all things together . . .** Why then was there any need for six distinct days to be set forth in the narrative one after the other? The reason is that those who cannot understand the meaning of the text, **He created all things together**, cannot understand the meaning of the Scripture unless the narrative proceeds slowly step by step . . . For this Scripture text that narrates the works of God according to the days mentioned above, and that Scripture text that says **God created all things together**, are both true (emphasis added).²⁷

The bolded words in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* text refer to Sirach 18:1. St. Augustine used this verse to defend his thesis that everything recorded in Genesis 1 and 2 had been created all together at the same moment. He chose it deliberately because the word used to translate the Greek *koinè* was the Latin *simul* (“at once” or “all together”) which corresponded with his belief in simultaneous creation.²⁸

²⁶ According to the editor of the *Catholic Theological Dictionary*, Fr. A. Vacant, “This meaning of simultaneity of date had been adopted, without any hesitation, by almost all the earlier theologians of our century. Some, such as Sylvestre de Ferrare, claimed it should be held as *de fide* since Lat. 4” (*Etudes Théologiques sur les Constitutions du Vatican d’après les actes du Concile*, Fr. A. Vacant, Art. 224). As an example of *simul* meaning a relative simultaneity of time, Fr. Vacant (Art. 205) referred to the verse *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and all that is in them* (Exod. 20:11).

²⁷ St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (4.33-34, 52-53).

²⁸ More recently John H. Taylor, S.J., who wrote the notes to the English translation of *De Genesi* (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*) amongst other information about St. Augustine, said that he apparently took his idea of the

The original Hebrew text is now lost. The Greek Septuagint version of Sirach 18:1 is:

Ὁ ζῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἔκτισεν τὰ πάντα κοινῇ.

The final Greek word *koinè*, which in English means “without exception” or “in common,” had been translated into Latin as *simul* which has the meaning of “simultaneously” or “all together.”

The Latin translation reads:

Qui vivit in aeternum creavit omnia simul.

By using this particular translation Augustine confirmed his belief that God created all things at the same moment.

Today, the Latin version of Sirach 18:1 remains unchanged.

According to the dictionary meaning of the Greek *koinè*, the verse in English should be:

He who lives forever created all things in common.

The translation of “koine” into “simul” continued. It entered into biblical usage when the Old Latin text of Sirach used by Augustine was incorporated into the Vulgate with the Greek adverb *koine* (in common) being translated into Latin as *simul* (simultaneously). At the time that nineteenth century Catholic theologians were turning to the second meaning attributed to “simul,” Protestant Charles Hodge of Princeton University was propagating it in his *Systematic Theology* to support his acceptance of long ages.²⁹

Fr. Vacant explained in his commentary on Vatican I how the meaning of *simul* as “in common” had been introduced by theologians of the day to justify reading the Lateran IV (and Vatican I) dogmatic texts to include long geological ages. The following text from Fr. Vacant’s commentary does not suggest that the Lateran IV definition of creation was ambiguous, or that there was any doubt that it would have precluded long ages and *ipso facto* evolution theory if *simul* had only one meaning. He simply explains that unless the meaning was changed from “all together” to “in common” long ages would have been excluded.

Others give it the meaning of “in common” or “equally.” It is this latter interpretation which is widely held today because it allows for long periods of time between the creation of the heavens and the earth and man.³⁰

In view of the way that St. Augustine’s exegesis of Sirach 18:1 was used to reinterpret Lateran IV’s teaching on creation, it will be worthwhile to summarize the argument presented in this section. In the first place, St. Augustine was looking for biblical justification for his

simultaneity of Creation from Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 18:1 where it is said that “He who lives forever created all things together.” According to Taylor, *koinè* in Sirach 18:1 means “without exception,” so it should not have been translated as *simul*. [A. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, New York: Newman Press, 1982), bk. 4, ch. 33, footnote 69, p. 142.]]

²⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*²⁹ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1871-1873], 1557-558).

³⁰ Vacant, 205.

thesis of instant creation. Believing he had found what he was looking for, and not being a Greek scholar, he accepted *koinè* as meaning “at the same time.”³¹ Obviously, if he had realised that *koinè* correctly translated meant “in common,” he would not have used it to support his thesis of instantaneous creation. Although there is no hermeneutical connection between the Greek text of Sirach 18:1 and the original Latin text of the Lateran IV dogma, the translation of “*koinè*” in *Sirach* happened to be the same as the correct meaning of “*simul*” in Lateran IV. It was this **apparent** coincidence of meanings that in fact confirms the sense intended by the Lateran Council.

The reasoning behind this statement can be set forth in three parts, as follows:

1. St. Augustine believed that Sirach 18:1 *koinè* (Greek) translated into *simul* (Latin). If it did, he was faced with an apparent contradiction.

a) Genesis states that the world was created in six days.

b) The oldest Latin translation of Sirach 18:1 (the *vetus Latina*) states that all things were created “together” (*simul*). According to the *Vetus Latina* translation of *koinè* used in St. Augustine’s day, Sirach states that all things were created together and not over six days. It was because of this apparent contradiction between the creation of all things “together” or “at the same time” (*Sirach*) and “in six days” (*Genesis*) that St. Augustine wrote the passage from *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (given above) which shows clearly that the meaning he gives to *simul* is “all things together.” Had he wanted to extend the meaning of *simul* to “in common,” (*koinè*) there would no longer have been a contradiction, and he would not have written the passage.

This first part of our argument shows that St. Augustine’s Latin text of Sirach 18:1 gave *koinè* in the underlying Greek text the same meaning as *simul* narrowly defined as “instantaneous.”

2. Lateran IV uses the word *simul* according to its medieval and current dictionary meaning, i.e. *simul* = “together” or “at the same time”—both of which denote simultaneity, as will be shown in more detail below. St. Augustine’s writings show that this is the very meaning he gave to *simul* in the fifth century.

3. In the 19th century, by referring to the translation of Sirach 18:1 used by St. Augustine, some theologians argued that because *koinè* had been translated as *simul* St. Augustine had meant to extend the meaning of the word *simul* (“all together”) to that of *koinè* (“in common”) **thus stripping *simul* of any temporal significance**. They deduced that Lateran IV could have used *simul* with this extended meaning.

³¹ Commenting on St. Augustine as a Scripture scholar, Gerald Bonner writes that „since Augustine lacked the easy familiarity with the Greek language of an Ambrose or a Jerome, any attempt to control his exegesis by reference to the original was a considerable effort, which he was not always prepared to make. Secondly, and more important, the exegetical principles upon which he worked did not impose upon him any necessity of constructing a critical text in the modern sense. For Augustine, it is not so much the words of the Bible themselves as the doctrine underlying the words which is important. The words express doctrine, and if they declare it in various ways, there is no necessity to set one version against another” (Gerald Bonner, “Augustine as a Biblical Scholar,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible, Volume I, From the Beginnings to Jerome*, edited by P. R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

However, St. Augustine never intended to extend the meaning of the word *simul* in this way. If he had, he would never have written the passage quoted above from *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. Nor does the context of the Lateran IV statement on creation offer any reason to extend the meaning of the word in this manner. Therefore the 19th century reasoning is incorrect and the Lateran IV text should be understood with *simul* meaning “at once,” “together,” or “at the same time.”

Evolutionary Anthropology

The desire to accommodate long ages was undoubtedly the driving factor behind questioning the meaning of Lateran IV, and the relevance of Council statements to “evolution” was demonstrated by other portions of Fr. Vacant’s study.

The Vatican I Council Fathers...were happy to reproduce the Lateran IV declaration on the distinct creation of man because it responded to other pre-occupations of the 19th century. Studies of our time have drawn the attention of the scientific world to the irreducible difference which places reasoning man above all the animals, and disallowing the thought that he could derive from them.³²

Fr. Vacant’s reference to “other pre-occupations of the 19th century” alluded not just to “pantheism,”—which in any case is evolutionary in nature and was condemned by Vatican I—but to the anthropological position of man *vis-à-vis* the irrational animals and the thought that he could evolve from them. Fr. Vacant recommends examination of the Council’s teaching regarding the creation of man and whether it can be reconciled with the evolutionistic hypothesis of man transforming from a lower species.

...we do not want to distance ourselves from their teachings (Lateran IV/Vatican I), but rather develop them by examining up to what point the creation of man was a distinct operation. Evolutionists of our day have asked if God didn’t create an evolutionary force capable not only of producing the higher animal species by transforming them from lower species, but even giving rise to the human body.³³

Fr. Vacant then makes a statement in the context of Vatican I which from a theologian of his reputation can be taken to be historically certain. He says that **all** ancient theologians (i.e. before long ages and evolution theory were proposed) accepted divine intervention in the formation of man’s body.

All the ancient theologians regarded the intervention of God in the formation of **Adam’s body** as incontestable. It is precisely this divine intervention which puts in doubt contemporary evolutionist claims that natural evolution of living matter could eventually produce the body of the first man (emphasis added).³⁴

³² Vacant, 208.

³³ Vacant, 210.

³⁴ Ibid.

St Augustine's *Rationes Seminales*

To make their argument credible, modern theistic evolutionists turned to St. Augustine's idea of seeds being created from which forms appeared subsequent to the period of creation. For instance, they reasoned that a seed was planted by God which some millions of years later would produce a dinosaur. They went even farther and cited St. Thomas as affirming Augustine's thesis. Apart from the fact that neither Augustine nor Thomas had any interest in accommodating a period of creation longer than a single instant or six days, the theological argument for things being created in their causes or potentially as seeds was shown to be false by Fr. Francesco Suarez, S.J. This Jesuit theologian is considered as one of the greatest the Church has produced. He lived in the seventeenth century when theories of long ages and evolution had not been introduced. His arguments reflect his evident knowledge of the dogma of *ex nihilo* creation pronounced by Lateran IV in 1215. This was his advantage over St. Augustine who taught eight centuries before the Council. He also showed that St. Thomas did not support St. Augustine's argument concerning these seeds. In his second book *On the Works of Each of the Six Days and on the Seventh Day's Rest*, he wrote:

Wherefore, since the former basis has been removed, and a real temporal interval has been established for these days, as other Fathers have taught, and as we maintain, Augustine's explanation is not necessary. And besides if that discussion of his is on firm ground, the same thing might be said about the production of fishes and birds on the fifth day, and of other animals on the sixth day, because all these animals are composite, and therefore they were not made in themselves in the first moment: therefore it will be necessary to say that on the fifth and sixth days they were made only in potentiality or in seed. But this cannot in any way be said. First, because that patently is contrary to the words of Scripture, for it says first: *God created the large great-sea-creatures and every living thing and flying thing* etc. These words are sufficiently explicit in themselves, nevertheless they are more evidently made clear because as soon as the things were so produced, *God blessed [them]*, saying, *Increase and multiply*. These words clearly suppose that the animals had already been created, [animals] that could generate ones like themselves. And in the same way the words of the sixth day can be introduced, in which what is said is most apparent, *And God created man*. Besides a special process (*ratio*) is added in animals because they cannot be produced by seed, because the seed must be separated from the animal itself, and neither can it be naturally preserved outside the animal itself nor [can it] effect its own operation, and therefore it was necessary that each species of animal be immediately made at first by the author of nature in some individual or in some individuals.

. . . Hence therefore we turn to the same method of argumentation with respect to plants. First indeed, because not only has it been said, *Let the earth spring forth* but also *And it was so done* has been added. But what had been done is made clear, since subjoined [are the words]: *And the earth brought forth green vegetation, and [that] making seed according to its own kind, and the tree making fruit, and every one having seeds according to its own kind*. Where in the first place I do not see how that phrase *the earth brought forth* can confirm the authenticity about production in seed. For the earth, if it had seed before plants, did not bring forth the seed but rather received it from God; therefore, if it brought forth vegetation, as Scripture says, it is

necessary that it produced vegetation in act not in seed or in potentiality. Also Scripture immediately declares what kind of vegetation it was, *green vegetation, and [that] making seed, and the tree making fruit and having seeds*, where by distinguishing vegetation and trees from seeds, it is manifestly clear that the earth did not produce vegetation in seed or trees in seeds, but rather produced vegetation or trees: from which the seeds of similar things come forth. Besides, the different process made for animals can analogically (*cum proportione*) be made for plants or for vegetation. For these things are not made without their particular seed, especially those things that are more complete; on the contrary, in some products of the earth, the fruit and the seed are the same thing; therefore they could not be made in seed before [they were made] in fruit, as is manifest in wheat and similar [grasses]. Therefore they could not be made at the first moment of creation in potentiality or in seed rather than in act, since they are of the same nature in either case. Therefore on the third day they were made not as seeds but as fruits, or at least in vegetation, just as the facts are literally narrated. But in woody plants or trees, although the seed is usually distinguished from the fruit, even the seed itself is a somewhat composite thing that cannot be created in the beginning more than other composite things. But after the instant of creation, we must say that such seeds were made from woody plants or trees, as Scripture speaks, rather than the converse. But if by chance someone should say that by potentiality or potency Augustine did not understand the seeds of plants of such kind but that another power was given to the earth for germination, this must be rejected with the same ease by which it was affirmed because it has no basis in Scripture, and Augustine himself makes this clear that the kind of power it is cannot be explained according to the natures of things: but one must not give credence to (*audienda non sunt*) miraculous works, either by extraordinary necessity or with sufficient testimony. This will be confirmed by answering the arguments or the previous opinion.

He alone produced those things by way of first creation, before they could be produced by the earth itself in a natural or ordinary way. We have confirmed that explanation from the context itself and the ensuing words, and St. Thomas teaches it, and it is common and sufficiently plain. Regarding the second, from the phrase *let the earth spring forth*, the first reply is, if that phrase alone, without any further statement had been affirmed, the explanation would have been tolerable; nevertheless, from the words that follow it clearly stands that God not only gave the earth the power of germinating but also made it germinate immediately, or He produced in it by His power vegetation and plants. Whence it can also be added that God gave to the earth on this day the power of springing forth forever through a continuous series of generations, and certainly that was meant in the phrase *let it spring forth*; yet still this power was given to the earth for producing in it plants, trees, etc. from which seeds came forth, whereby the earth became fertile in order to bring forth other similar things. That also seems to be indicated in the words themselves, when it is explained that *the earth produced vegetation making seed, and the tree making fruit, every one having seeds according to its own kind*. Regarding the third, St. Thomas replies best, that the work, insofar as it was done on this day, pertained not to the work of propagation, because it was not done in the ordinary manner of generation from scattered seed, but [it pertained] to the first constitution of the universe, to the extent that it was immediately produced by the Author of all nature not only with respect to simple bodies, but also with respect to extraordinary composites (so I should thus affirm) extended *per se* in the universe. And it especially pertained to the work of

adornment in respect to the earth, for when in the beginning it was void and empty, and also invisible and covered with water. With the removal of the waters it became visible, at least as to the removal of the impediment. In order that it not be void and empty, it was immediately adorned with vegetation and trees. This can be confirmed in Chapter 2 of Genesis, where it is said that in these six days the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. But no one can deny that plants and grasses produced in act and rooted in the earth pertain to its grand adornment, which seeds alone, or the potency of producing them, do not confer (*italics in original, bold added*).³⁵

The Testimony of the Magisterium from the 1909 Pontifical Biblical Commission

The Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) rulings on the interpretation of the book of Genesis are—together with *Humani Generis*, but even more so—some of the last authoritative magisterial statements on the subject. In the *Motu proprio*, “*Praestantia Scripturae*,” on November 18, 1907, Pope St. Pius X declared that no one could contest the rulings of the PBC without “grave sin.”

The PBC’s answers to several questions establish certain truths unequivocally.

Its reply to Question I establishes that the literal historical sense of the first three chapters of Genesis cannot be called into question.

Its reply to Question II establishes that Genesis contains “stories of events which really happened, which correspond with historical reality and objective truth,” **not** “legends, historical in part and fictitious in part.” In short, the PBC definitively excludes the possibility that even a **part** of the Genesis 1-3 narrative could be fictitious and non-historical.

The PBC’s answer to Question III establishes that the literal and historical truth of the following facts cannot be called into question:

- 1) “The creation of all things wrought by God in the beginning of time”

Comment:

This passage upholds the Lateran IV doctrine that all things were created by God “in the beginning of time.”

- 2) “The special creation of man”

Comment: This excludes any process in the formation of man and requires that the creation of man was immediate and instantaneous.

- 3) “The formation of the first woman from the first man”

³⁵ Francisco Suarez, *On the Works of Each of the Six Days and on the Seventh Day’s Rest*, pp. 139-141.

Comment: This, too, excludes any process in the formation of the first woman and requires that the creation of Eve was immediate and instantaneous.

When, in 1948, Cardinal Suhard attempted to get the PBC to renounce its earlier rulings on Genesis, he was rebuffed and told that the PBC did not wish to issue “new decrees on these questions” (Denz, 2302). Consequently, the next magisterial document dealing explicitly with the historical events recounted in Genesis 1-3, *Humani Generis*, must be understood in the context of the 1909 PBC rulings. It is in this context—and ONLY in this context—that Pope Pius XII’s permission to inquire “into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter” can and should be understood. In view of the Vatican’s refusal to change its 1909 decrees on Genesis One, Catholics are still bound by them. Pope Pius XII himself in *Humani Generis* condemned those who transgress legitimate

freedom of discussion, acting as if the origin of the human body from previously existing and living matter, were already certain and demonstrated from certain already discovered indications, and deduced by reasoning, and as if there were nothing in the sources of divine revelation which demands the greatest moderation and caution in this thinking (DZ, 2327)

Although Pope Pius XII charged “exegetes” with the task of determining in **precisely what sense** the first eleven chapters of Genesis **are** history, he insisted that the first eleven chapters of Genesis **are** “a kind of history” and that they contain a popular description of the origins of the human race and of the chosen people. He also upheld the constant teaching of the Church that these chapters are “free from all error” (DZ, 2329).

Grasping the Nettle

Now, if the nineteenth century geologists were right and the age of rock strata sequences could be measured in terms of thousands or millions of years, there would be good reason to re-examine the original understanding of the age of rocks. This understanding was quite simply that the earth’s fossil bearing rocks were formed by the erosion of countless millions of tons of sediments at the time of the Great Flood. All land air-breathing living things were drowned and buried in the sediments. This event calculated from the biblical genealogies would have occurred around 4,500 years before the present, at the latest. If it could be proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that these rock formations built up over enormous epochs of time, the traditional teaching on Creation and the Flood, handed down from Moses to the nineteenth century geologists, would have to be seriously questioned. For such a radical step to be taken, however, very clear proof would have to be provided. It seems that in the rush to accommodate the “long ages” the reliability of the new geological hypothesis was never questioned.

Belief in “day ages” quickly merged with a belief in biological evolution. The latter depended on fossils and Lyell’s interpretation of very “old” rock strata in which they are found. Once again recourse to empirical proof was not thought necessary. The materialists, unopposed, thus found an excellent way of showing the Church’s teaching to be not only fallible, but quite wrong. Intimidated by the practical power of science in an increasingly technical world, instead of challenging the premises of the exegetical revolution, most theologians embraced the new synthesis of creation and evolution. In these conditions naturalism driven by evolution theory began being taught in the classroom. It explained the origin of things by

natural scientific laws. Instant creation of each living essence by divine fiat was replaced by the concept of a gradual process of evolution. Within this paradigm, the omnipotence of God was less in evidence, and little lay in the way for it to be discarded altogether.

One reason for the apparent lack of interest on the part of Churchmen in testing the truth of the great ages attributed to rocks was the widely held belief that the age of the earth had no bearing upon the Church's doctrinal teaching. However, the writings of nineteenth century theologians, like Fr. Vacant, showed that the age of the rocks was the primary factor behind the abandonment of the traditional theology of creation. For instance instead of upholding the traditional doctrine that man was created on the sixth day of the hexameron, Fr. Vacant observes that the rocks show man to have appeared after a long line of previous inhabitants: *Geology has also established that man is the last being to appear on the earth, and that it had been prepared to serve him as domain by a long series of other inhabitants.*³⁶

In geological terms, whether the Earth is young or not depends upon the age of its constituent parts. The age of these parts is determined by the reliability of the dating methods applied to them. This subject will be examined in more detail later in this article. What should really interest human beings, however, is whether the geological date of the origin of biological life, including man, converges with the Church's teaching. In short, a comprehensive evaluation of the complaint can be made under three headings: 1. geological data; 2. implication of belief in long ages upon the Church's teaching; 3. Scriptural evidence.

1. Geological Data.

According to the theory of evolution the first trace of living cells was in the early Cambrian period around 540 million years ago (International Stratigraphic Chart – International Commission of Stratigraphy - January 2013). The progress of single celled life through the various stages of evolution to the living types found on earth today, including man, is claimed to have been documented by means of the fossil record. The fossils are dated directly from the age of the rock strata in which they are found, and indirectly by radiometric dating of lava tuffs in the vicinity of the fossil. In case of conflict between the two dates, it is the stratigraphic date which takes precedence.

On the assumption that the stratigraphic principles proving great ages for rock formations are correct, the case for a slow and relentless biological evolution of living matter is without question. It has been studied by the leading biologists, geneticists, anatomists, paleontologists and geologists of our time and declared foolproof. The evidence is taught in all places of learning including seminaries as virtually established fact. Inevitably, after decades of propaganda by the communications media, the public and the clergy have been convinced. Logically, the evidence leaves no scientific alternative to a long drawn out process of evolution. Those who disagree, yet believe in the great ages of rock strata really have no scientific or intellectual grounds on which to do so. The age of the rocks and the fossils in them provides the unassailable proof. So, when people contend that belief in the long ages of the rocks can be separated from belief in evolution one has to assume they have not studied sufficiently the facts presented by all sectors of the scientific community.

As with most scientific theories, however, in stratigraphy a solidly constructed superstructure is founded upon an infrastructure containing one or more assumptions. Providentially, 20 years or so ago, an experimenter discovered that the basic principles upon which sedimentary

³⁶ Fr. A. Vacant, *Etudes Théologiques sur les Constitutions du Vatican d'après les actes du Concile*, Art, section 208. 1895.

strata are dated had never been tested in the laboratory since their publication in the seventeenth century by a Danish naturalist Nicolas Steno. Over three centuries later, Guy Berthault and colleagues at the Colorado State University undertook flume experiments which showed that in a water current, strata do not form successively and vertically one on top of the other as proposed by Steno. Their report was peer-reviewed and published by the French Geological Society. Subsequent field research confirming and completing the Colorado State experiments was published in 2002 and 2004 by the Russian Academy of Sciences in its journal *Lithology and Mineral Resources*. When applied to geological formations supposed to have taken hundreds of millions of years to form (e.g. the *Tonto Group* in the Grand Canyon in the Cambrian period) experimental data and paleohydraulic analysis set the duration of their formation at a maximum of several weeks. The geological time scale and dating of the fossil record have thus been invalidated by observation tested by meticulous laboratory experiment. The protests from geologists and evolutionists are bitter and *ad hominem* attacks on the experimenter are numerous. However, no experimentally supported argument against the laboratory and field evidence has been produced. In any case the experiments which have been checked by professional referees are the kind of empirical evidence upon which science develops. It can be observed, repeated and remains unchanged for all future generations to ponder.³⁷

Although the method of assigning long ages to rocks was proposed well before radiometric dating methods were introduced, the latter have been used to confirm the stratigraphic dates and the age of fossils found in the rocks. Correspondence between the two has been claimed. However the assumptions upon which dating by radio-isotopes are based invariably include the acceptance of long ages. In fact, some methods, e.g. potassium/argon (the most popular fossil-dating method), are considered unsuitable where the rock samples are known to be of a recent date. They are only applied to rocks assumed to be very old. This is not the place to discuss the physical processes involved in radiometry, but suffice it to say where there is a conflict between the two, stratigraphic dates are considered the more reliable.

2. Implication of Belief in Long ages upon the Church's Teaching

We have seen the Church's teaching on *ex nihilo* creation and its principal tenets were formulated in 1215 by Lateran IV, centuries before geological speculations on long ages. Both Lateran IV and Vatican I, which repeated the same teaching on creation in 1870, were occupied with pantheism in one form or another. The thirteenth century Council was directed against *inter alia* the Albigensians and Waldensians, and Vatican I against materialists and pantheists *per se*. Pantheism **denies** that:

...the world, and all things which are contained in it, both spiritual and material, as regards their whole substance, have been produced by God from nothing
(Vatican I – canon 5)

It is incompatible with the first words of the summary of Catholic belief, the *Credo*, professed at Mass:

I believe in God the Father almighty creator of heaven and earth

The signification of the words “heaven and earth” is given in the 1994 *Catechism* (CCC):

³⁷ Guy Berthault's research can be examined at www.sedimentology.fr

The Apostles Creed professes that God is "Creator of Heaven and earth." The Nicene Creed makes it explicit that this profession includes "all that is seen and unseen." (CCC 325)

The Scriptural expression "heaven and earth" means all that exists in its entirety. (CCC 326)

In the words of theologian Fr. Peter Fehlner:

The creedal formula for creation, seen against its scriptural backdrop, **quite explicitly contains the following points:**

1. The One and only God, utterly incomparable, is the Creator of all else; the entire cosmos for this reason has a beginning in time. It is not eternal-infinite.
2. Not only is the Creator solely responsible for the existence of the world, but it is His distinctive action principally that gives order to the world in **establishing the distinct natures or species in their essence** and in establishing the laws or structures governing the subsequent activities of created agents (emphasis added).³⁸

As, according to Lateran IV, all things were created at the beginning (CCC 327) and the term "created" means instant production of a thing from nothing in all its parts (Vatican I "in its whole substance"), the postulate that God programmed matter from the beginning to transform from one essence to a new one is excluded.

Theistic evolutionists hold that the species found on earth today are the result of a continuous evolutionary process guided by God. In doing so, they contradict the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas who showed that no creature can participate in the creation of another creature. According to St. Thomas:

But such a thing cannot be, because the secondary instrumental cause does not participate in the action of the superior cause, except inasmuch as by something proper to itself it acts dispositively to the effect of the principal agent. If therefore it effects nothing, according to what is proper to itself, it is used to no purpose; nor would there be any need of certain instruments for certain actions . . . Now the proper effect of God creating is what is presupposed to all other effects, and that is absolute being. Hence nothing else can act dispositively and instrumentally to this effect, since creation is not from anything presupposed, which can be disposed by the action of the instrumental agent. So therefore it is impossible for any creature to create, either by its own power or instrumentally--that is, ministerially.³⁹

Theistic evolutionists cannot believe that each kind of living being in its whole substance was created immediately by God quite distinct from other kinds of living beings. They cannot believe that all the kinds of living things were created separately and distinctly from nothing. They believe, *ipso facto*, that living things created originally by God can combine either by the power of God or by the force of nature with other created things to form a different essence from the originally created thing. However, the idea that God endowed created essences with the ability to create new kinds of essences is pure pantheism.

³⁸ Fr. Peter D. Fehlner, op. cit., p. 12.

³⁹ ST, I, Q 45, a 5.

In practical terms, the proposed evolutionary progress of living things is through the agency of genetic mutation. A gene, coding for one or more protein functions, mutates and causes a change in the organism. If the change were beneficial to the organism it could be kept with other beneficial mutations until sufficient new information were available to create a new type of organism. Although experimental research has yet to produce a single example of an information-adding mutation that has led to the production of a new organ or function, theistic evolution claims that God indirectly causes transformation of species by giving mutated genes the power to effect such changes.⁴⁰

The connection between theistic evolution and pantheism was noted by Franciscan dogmatic theologian Fr. Peter Fehlner, former lecturer at the Seraphicum College in Rome, as follows:

The operation of a created agent presupposes the prior existence of the world and of the species and cannot extend beyond these limits. The operation of the Creator does not. Any refusal to recognize the radical inadequacy of natural processes as an explanation for the origin of the world and the distinction of species must logically lead to a failure (Pantheism) to perceive the distinction between God and His creation. Pantheism clothed in the terminology of Christian theology becomes a particularly insidious form of Syncretism.⁴¹

3. Scriptural Evidence

Long ages are not even hinted at in the Bible. The first eleven chapters of Genesis give no suggestion of a million years or so elapsing between the creation of Adam and the mention of Abraham. The genealogies in the early chapters of Genesis show continuity. Why suddenly, during a few years around 1860, should the history of Adam and his descendants, including the Deluge have been jettisoned as an allegory? A history accepted first by the Hebrew people and then by Christians without question describes a period of over several thousand years. Is it possible that the Patriarchs, Apostles, Church Fathers, Doctors and Popes, not having the benefit of the nineteenth century geological hypothesis of long ages, were allowed by God to teach error for centuries? Might it not be more likely that the Church representatives were right and the geologists wrong?

Is it not significant that Jesus Christ Himself taught that the creation account and the Deluge were historical?

From the beginning of creation “God made them male and female” (Mk. 10:6)

As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying...until the day Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away. (Matt. 24-27:39)

⁴⁰ In the words of Pierre-Paul Grassé, former president of the French Academy of Sciences, “No matter how numerous they may be, mutations do not produce any kind of evolution” (Pierre-Paul Grassé, *Evolution of Living Organisms*, Academic Press, New York, 1977), p. 88.

⁴¹ Fr. Peter D. Fehlner, *In the Beginning*, p. 45.

Conclusion

The concept of “long ages,” with the destructive force of a bulldozer, drove into nineteen centuries of carefully constructed Catholic teaching. The first major casualty was the first three chapters of Genesis. The alarm by the custodians of the Faith in seeing these chapters under attack produced a declaration by the Cardinals of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of 1909 that the literal and historical sense of Genesis 1-3 could not be called into question. The decision of the Commission was incorporated into the teaching Magisterium by Pius X (*Motu proprio*, “*Praestantia Scripturae*,” Nov. 18, 1907, which extended to subsequent biblical commission decisions). In the enthusiasm to accommodate geological speculation, this preventative measure was soon no more than a dead letter. The second victim was Genesis 4-11. Higher biblical criticism joined the attack declaring all the chapters contrary to long ages to be allegorical. The Great Flood and the Tower of Babel not fitting the long age scenario fell in the battle. Not that there was a real battle because, in retrospect, it appears that theological thought had put up no resistance whatsoever. It had reconciled itself with the geological massive epochs in an amazingly short time.

Apart from the damage being done to doctrine, the archaeological discoveries from the nineteenth century onwards should have counseled caution. Indeed these discoveries showed that biblical history was being corroborated from unearthed buildings, artifacts and clay tablets that gave chronological data. They indicated the length of recorded biblical history to be no more than a few thousand years. They showed that the sacred texts talk of facts and not just symbols. Since all of Scripture is written as a guide to salvation, it seems legitimate to ask why suddenly the reader should be expected to treat all the texts preceding Genesis 12 as allegorical. Why suddenly instead of a continuum of history over relatively short periods of time is one expected to jump hundreds of thousands of years backwards without solid justification? Why relegate biblical texts (Genesis 1-11) to the mists of inconceivable past time which refer to ancestors of personages mentioned in chapter 12, such as Abraham’s father, brother and wife Sarai already mentioned in chapter 11? If the author thought it necessary for his people to know about its origins, why are the most important salvific doctrines revealed in a part of Sacred Scripture detached from the main body, and attributed to an unimaginable and uncertain distant past? Original Sin, in Genesis 3, was taught as being the reason, since the Fall, for mankind’s inclination to sin and for every difficulty encountered in daily life and for suffering and death. Why should the effect of such teaching, so relevant to man’s existence, go unrecorded for all those hundreds of thousands of years? Why are the roots of redemption, baptism and the Eucharist arising from man’s first sin so obscured by time as to appear irrelevant? Why is the reason for the Immaculate Conception separated by eons of time from the rest of revealed truth? Why do the first eleven chapters in Genesis, without any break in their narrative style, give the impression they should be followed by chapter 12 onwards? Is the author being deceptive? Difficult questions to answer unless those long ages never existed.

For Catholics a *de fide* dogmatic teaching by a Church Council is infallible. This is the case for both Lateran IV and Vatican I regarding the doctrine on creation. Both evolution theory and progressive creation are excluded by the Council’s simple declarations, rightly expounded: (i)...*God creator of all visible and invisible things...simultaneously from the beginning of time* (Lat. IV) and (ii) *the world and all things in it...as regards their whole substance were produced by God from nothing* (Vat. I). **Those in disagreement are closing their eyes to the theological meaning of the terms simultaneously, from the beginning of time, all things, creator and created as understood against their Scriptural background by**

all of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. It is because of this that untenable disputes over translation of these dogmatic decrees by theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists have misled the faithful into doubting God's word authoritatively interpreted by the Councils. The current crisis of faith, which has intensified in recent years, is the direct result of believing and teaching that there is a natural explanation for the origin of all things. Materialism powered by naturalism has replaced belief in the omnipotence of the Creator that produced the world and all that is in it from nothing. Children sheltered from naturalism by the rare parents who still believe in divine creation will eventually succumb once they are absorbed into the scholastic system. Ironically, progressive creationists, those teaching that God introduced new species *ex nihilo* each one separated by long periods of time, are the most responsible. They appear to be teaching orthodoxy by invoking the Church Fathers on *ex nihilo* creation, whilst embracing long ages refuted by the same Fathers.

If the decrees of Lateran IV and Vatican I had a bearing upon evolution theory, why, it is asked, have modern defenders of the traditional doctrine not used them as an argument against theistic evolution? It is even alleged that no theologian has ever used these Council dogmas in the creation/evolution debate. The answer must be that modern day theologians are more than a century removed from the post Vatican I drama mentioned above. Having been taught biological evolution and long ages as “facts” that can be harmonized with Catholic doctrine, modern theologians no longer study Lateran IV in its theological context and consequently do not understand the incompatibility of its statements on creation with these purported “facts.”⁴² Where they have some knowledge, they dismiss the dogma on the basis that it makes no specific mention of evolution theory. This literalist reasoning demonstrates not only a lack of awareness of the historical situation, but the extent to which belief in long ages has become so entrenched that it inhibits objective theological discussion of the subject. The vigorous debate in the context of Lateran IV and Vatican I dogmas which took place among leading theologians towards the end of the nineteenth century regarding long ages and its handmaiden evolution theory has been forgotten, as has the fact that *simul*, rightly expounded, signals a fatal incompatibility between evolutionary theory and Catholic doctrine.

Because modern theologians have allowed natural scientists to go beyond their proper role as investigators of natural phenomena to pontificate on the metaphysics of creation, the important theological debate surrounding Vatican I's statements on creation has been overlooked and forgotten. It should be a great relief to Church leaders to discover that they can trust the traditional understanding of creation expressed by the plain sense of Lateran IV, Vatican I, the Sacred Liturgy, and Sacred Scripture, as expounded by all of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

EPILOGUE

Today, sadly, there is great confusion. Many people are being deluded by those who make Evolution the very foundation of the universe—evolution in one of several forms, all just theories. Evolution is being taught almost as dogma in schools; it is being taken for granted as the origin of the universe by some

⁴² The translation of “simul” as “at once” in some modern translations is a further indication that the late nineteenth century debate over the original meaning of the *firmiter* has been forgotten. When “simul” is translated as “at once” in contemporary documents it is taken to refer only to the creation of the angels and formless matter in the beginning, and not to the creation of all of the corporeal and spiritual creatures, as understood by Fr. Vacant and his contemporaries.

scientists infected by this delusion. Even in the Church, among prominent guardians of the Faith, there seems to be a serious loss of respect for the constant teaching of the Church from its very beginning about Creation.

We can thank God that, as this volume shows, very serious efforts are being made to uphold the teaching of the Church. May the Light of Christ shine upon all who read this booklet, to deliver those of good will from erroneous teachings and to turn their hearts and minds towards Jesus Who is indeed "the Way, the Truth and the Life," for all God's people.

May this work prove of immense value to all who look for true Life in God for all eternity.

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Dominique Tassot
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Index

Ambrose of Milan	15	Lagrange	17
Aphraates	12	Lapide	8
<i>Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae</i>	6	Lateran IV ... 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 32, 33	
Aristotle	7	Lawrence of Brindisi	8
Athanasius the Great	15	<i>Lithology and Mineral Resources</i>	29
Augustine of Hippo	9, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25	Lyell	3, 16, 27
Basil	15	Mazzella	8
Berthault	29	Nicene Creed	13, 30
Bonaventure	7, 13	<i>On the Works of Each of the Six Days and on the Seventh Day's Rest</i>	24
<i>Breviloquium</i>	13	<i>Outlines of Dogmatic Theology</i>	18
Carthage, Council of	6	Petavius	13
<i>Catechism of the Council of Trent</i>	13, 14	Pius X	17, 26, 32
<i>Catholic Catechism</i>	6, 9, 19, 29, 30	Pius XII	27
<i>Catholic Theological Dictionary</i>	7	Pontifical Biblical Commission	6, 26, 32
Darwin	3, 16	<i>Praestantia Scripturae</i>	26, 32
<i>De Angelis</i>	8	<i>Principles of Geology</i>	16
<i>De Deo Creante</i>	8	<i>Rationales Seminales</i>	24
<i>De Deo Creatore</i>	18	Septuagint	17, 21
<i>De Opificio Sex Dierum</i>	13	Steno	29
<i>Denzinger</i>	19	Suarez	8, 24
<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>	17	Suhard	27
<i>Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith</i> ...	5	<i>Summa Theologica</i>	11
Ephraim the Syrian	15	<i>Systematic Theology</i>	3, 21
<i>Etudes Théologique sur les Constitutions du Vatican</i> ...	17	<i>The Literal Meaning of Genesis</i>	20, 22, 23
Fehlner	7, 9, 30, 31	<i>De Genesis ad Litteram</i>	9
<i>Four Discourses Against the Arians</i>	15	Thomas Aquinas	10, 11, 12, 16, 24, 25, 30
Hodge	21	Trent, Council of	6, 13
<i>Humani Generis</i>	26, 27	Vacant	7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 21, 23, 28
Hurter	18	Vatican I . 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 29, 30, 32, 33	
Jungmann	18		
Lachat	11, 12		