

EVOLUTION OFFICIALLY BY VATICAN ACCEPTED

On October 23, 1996, the most astounding religious creationist news of the decade was released: The Vatican published a paper by Pope John Paul II, that the Catholic Church now accepts all aspects of evolutionary theory!

Just as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is evolving in its thinking about evolutionary theory, the papacy is also. Here are a few statements and comments made at the time.

Reuter's:

"Pope John Paul has lent his support to the theory of evolution, proclaiming it compatible with Christian faith."—*Reuter's News Service, October 24, 1996.*

CNN Interactive (via internet):

"Pope John Paul II has lent his support to the theory of evolution, proclaiming it compatible with Christian faith in a statement welcomed by scientists but likely to raise criticism from the religious right.

"The pope's recognition that evolution is 'more than just a theory' came in a written message he sent on Wednesday to a meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, a body of experts that advises the Roman Catholic Church on scientific issues.

"It broke new ground by acknowledging that the theory of the physical evolution of man and other species through natural selection and hereditary adaptation appeared to be valid. But the pope made clear he regarded the human soul as of immediate divine creation, and not subject to the process of evolution.

"The theory of evolution, most notably expounded by 19th century English naturalist Charles Darwin, had until now been viewed by the Catholic Church as serious and worthy of discussion but still an open question."—*CNN Interactive, October 24, 1996.*

On the Catholic Information Center web site, the following note was posted before John Paul II's pronouncement:

"The Book of Genesis does not teach astro-physics, it does not teach biology, it does not teach geology. Leo XIII said this (in so many words) in *Providentissimus Deus* (1893). Further, both Pope

Pius XII and John Paul II have said that evolution per se is not a philosophical problem for Catholics, so long as divine causality is not excluded . . .

"Also, regarding Adam and Original Sin, please read Pius XII's *Humanae Generis* (1950). We must believe that God created a soul in the first man; we are not obliged to believe that the biological formation of the first man could not include some kind of antecedents. Why Athiests insist on reading the Bible like Protestant fundamentalists is beyond me."—*Note preceding John Paul II's statement, Catholic Information Center web site.*

What was that earlier statement, *Humanae Generis*, by Pope Pius XII? Here it is:

"The Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussion, on the part of men experienced in both fields, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter—for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God."—*Humanae Generis, as released by the Catholic Information Center, quoted in Vance Ferrell, Evolution and Society, 39 [1029].*

Commenting on Pius XII's statement, John Paul II said this:

" '*Humanae Generis*, ' considered the doctrine of 'evolutionism' as a serious hypothesis, is worthy of a more deeply studied investigation and reflection on a par with the opposite hypothesis . . . Today, more than a half century after this encyclical, new knowledge leads us to recognize in the theory of evolution more than a hypothesis . . . The convergence, neither sought nor induced, of results of work done independently one from the other, constitutes in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory."—*John Paul II, Vatican Information Service Press Release.*

This official Vatican statement went farther than evolutionists! It said that evolutionary theory was *more than a hypothesis*. That is equivalent to saying it is a fact.

"According to Owen Gingerich, an evangelical professor at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, understanding the significance of the

Please pardon the delay in releasing this report. I had planned to reprint it elsewhere, but its historical significance demands a tract.

pope's words requires a look at the early sixteenth century, when the Catholic church initially viewed as hypothetical the Copernican view that the Earth revolves around the sun.

“The public generally associates ‘hypothetical’ with the word *mere*,” Gingerich says. “The pope is essentially saying that evolution is not a mere hypothesis. To the scientists, evolution has for some time functioned as [only] a working hypothesis. To the creationist, it is . . . something deserving of scorn.”—*Christianity Today*, December 9, 1996 [italics theirs].

Here is another portion of John Paul's official statement, as quoted by *Time*.

“Pope John Paul II last week . . . made a statement on evolution: ‘Consideration of the method used in diverse orders of knowledge allows for the concordance of two points of view which seem irreconcilable,’ he wrote. ‘The sciences of observation describe and measure with ever greater precision the multiple manifestations of life . . . while theology extracts . . . the final meaning according to the Creator's designs.’”—*Time*, November 4, 1996.

Whereas Pius XII maintained that Adam had to be the first human being, John Paul, by avoiding a statement on that point, essentially negated it.

“John Paul stopped short of addressing a point on which Pius was emphatic: that a particular man named Adam must have been our ancestor. Any other theory, Pius maintained, was inconsistent with the doctrine of original sin. But here the teaching about Adam has also been superseded, says Richard P. McBrien, a liberal theologian at the University of Notre Dame. ‘No Scripture scholar today would say we are literally descended from two people.’”—*Ibid*.

Such a view accords with the Catholic position that the Bible is poetic, not scientific.

“The [October 23, 1996 papal] statement is unlikely to influence the curriculum of Catholic schools, where evolution has been taught since the 1950s. Indeed, reading the entire Bible literally has not been a dominant practice among Catholics through much of the 20th century. Asked about the Pope's statement, Peter Strvinska, said, ‘It's essentially what Augustine was writing. He tells us that we should not interpret Genesis literally, and that it is poetic and theological language.’”—*Ibid*.

So, officially, Roman Catholicism is now officially in the evolutionists' camp. We close with this headline from a conservative leading newspaper in Rome:

“POPE SAYS WE MAY DESCEND FROM MONKEYS—*Il Giornale*, front page headline.

Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus*, in 1893, led to Pius XII's *Humanae Generis* in 1950, which evolved into John Paul II's 1996 statement. (That statement, by the way, presented at a meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 24, 1996, was apparently not given a Latin name. It was a statement, not a decretal.)

— *The above report by Pastor Ferrell is reprinted from a book, soon to be released.*

In the various news reports reprinted in this tract, notice the comments by various Protestant spokesmen. For example, Keith Fournier, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice, is part of Pat Robertson's Virginia-based organization (see top right on this page),—yet they are defending the pope's statement favoring evolutionary theory!