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Do not fear; the pope has not sold out on evolution. Yes, he said that "evolution is more than just an hypothesis," but that does not mean the biblical version is wrong or that nature simply transformed man from apes. Indeed, he also said that Divine intervention into nature was necessary to create the human soul.

For 50 years, the Catholic Church has taught that evolution was a theory worthy of study. During that time, and even before, there has been a Christian view of evolution that has reconciled it to biblical interpretation without conceding any fundamentals. It revolves around the nature of the "days" it took God to create the universe. It maintains that "day" unlikely meant the 24 hours used by modern man. Indeed, the "days" of the Bible started before the sun was created, which is the basis of the Earth day. "Day" in the Bible most probably is simply a division of time. Those days could have lasted hundreds or thousands or millions of Earth days, allowing plenty of time for some type of evolution to take place under God's general plan for mankind reported in the Bible.

It is no coincidence that one of the major Christian evolutionists was Michael Polanyi. Besides being a physical chemist and scientist, he was also one of the leaders in the modern revival of freedom as the central political value, as opposed to socialism and fascism, which put

No sellout on evolution

the state first. As Mr. Polanyi pondered the idea of freedom, he became fascinated with the awfulness of the decision God made to give man freedom — even the freedom to do terrible things. It was this revolt against this God-given power of freedom that led to communism and Nazism trying to control and even eliminate it. But, in doing so, they created worse. It was the irreconcilable difference between these systems and Christian-inspired (render to Caesar) limited government, allowing freedom, that led him to believe that ultimately the latter would triumph. Finally, with a little help from John Paul II, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and many others, his view was confirmed when the Wall fell and communism disappeared.

As Mr. Polanyi contemplated what to him was the irrefutable evidence that some type of evolution was taking place over time, he saw this too as evidence of the freedom God granted even to nature. All nature groaned under God to seek its better form. But there were limits to that freedom as there are to man's. When human nature was stretched too far from God's limits, it revolted and communism and Nazism fell. Likewise, in nature, evolution can only go as far as God planned. Prehuman man apparently existed for millions of years but

could not rise much above modern apes. But when homo sapiens appeared, in a few thousand years, he created agriculture and pretty soon — by evolutionary time — also modern civilization. This is not a refutation of the Bible but a confirmation of it — that it took God to breathe in a soul before man could be man.

There is no evidence at all of science finding one species evolved into a completely different one. So science cannot refute that Divine

intervention was necessary to create — to move to a higher level from a lower one, or to a different species or form — any object or being mentioned in the Bible as the creation of God. Even many atheist scientists (most of the Albach Conference scientists, for example) maintain that survival of the fittest, Darwinian, theories do not explain evolution of new species and admit they cannot understand species and form changes without some outside intervention or inherent plan.



These could be non-divine powers but, as Blaise Pascal so nicely put it, at some level the probabilities of so many different things providing just the right interventions defies probability and rationality. At that point, God becomes the much more reasonable explanation.

The pope, as an extremely well-read intellectual, was aware of these considerations and it was these that led him to the belief that evolution was more than a theory. It was not, as some have feared, that his was a surrender to science. It was a more convincing understanding of the greatness of God and the truths that lie in his Bible, at least for those who will keep searching for his ultimate truth, which will be hidden from us until the last days.

"Where were you when I laid the Earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand," is a rebuke to Christian environmentalists and that is, undoubtedly, why the pope did not make it formal dogma. But it is as much a rebuke to those who will only understand the "day" of the Bible as 24 hours, as it is to those who will defy the logic of probability in the name of rationality and science.

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