

portraying the union of the Mystical Body : the charity that makes this union supernatural, and the fruitfulness of that union in charity which produces offspring who are to be sons of God. But St Paul is content to dwell on that essential aspect : that the sacred character of marriage is due to the part it plays in the great mystery of salvation ; this mystery is centred on the Incarnation, where God and man became one person ; it is continued in Christ's Mystical Body, where God and men become one being ; and it is in marriage that this union is re-enacted and continued.

L. JOHNSTON.

*Ushaw*

## THE BIBLE AND EVOLUTION

The reader who perseveres to the end of this article will probably sympathise with the old lady who did not like Shakespeare because he was full of quotations. This article *is* full of quotations and references, because it is by way of being a review of books and articles which have appeared on the Continent in the past decade or so. The purpose of the authors of these works of *haute vulgarisation* is to reassure those who are troubled by the apparent conflict between science and the Bible as to the manner of creation of living things, and more particularly of the human race. Since God is the author both of reason and revelation, there can be no discrepancy between the proved conclusions of science and the teaching of the Bible. Any apparent conflict is due either to the exaggerated statements of scientists or to a failure to understand the Bible aright. We will, accordingly, try to assess the degree of certainty which the evolutionary hypothesis can command and the present position of Catholic exegesis.

### *The theory of evolution*

According to the theory of evolution, considered strictly as a scientific hypothesis, all living animal species have issued by way of generation and development from more general, simpler and less numerous forms. The diversification of species took place gradually in the course of the vast geological periods, by way of a progress from less complex forms to more differentiated forms. There exists therefore among the various species of all living animals a strict relationship either of descendance or of collateral affinity. According to some evolutionists all life, whether plant or animal, sprang from a single

source, even by way of spontaneous generation ; this theory is called monophyletism. Others think that various forms of life manifested themselves independently in a number of organisms already clearly differentiated, and that these independent organisms were the point of departure for the development of the great groups in the vegetable and animal kingdoms ; this view is called polyphyletism.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately the scientific hypothesis of evolution was early sponsored by anti-religious, materialist and atheist philosophers. According to them this process of the development of species from lower forms of life, and ultimately from inorganic matter, took place by chance, blindly, under the mere accidental pressure of circumstance. And since they include man in the evolutionary process, they say that his emergence is just as fortuitous as that of any other species, and that he enters the scene merely as a more highly developed animal, distinguished from brutes only by his more complicated physical mechanisms.

The materialist view of evolution is inadmissible not only on religious but also on philosophical grounds. The fortuitous nature of materialist evolution is refuted by the metaphysical principles of causality and finality ; its atheism by theodicy, the branch of philosophy which demonstrates the existence of God, the first and uncaused cause of all things ; its debased view of man by psychology. This latter branch of philosophy demonstrates the spiritual nature of man, and proves that, whatever may be said of his body, his soul, being simple and spiritual, could never have been derived from lower forms of life, but must always be the object of immediate creation by God. This is as true for the child born today as for the first man.

When the theory of evolution has been freed from these false philosophical overtones, and from the exaggerations of those who popularise it for the public, it emerges as a serious and indeed attractive scientific hypothesis, worthy of unprejudiced consideration. We have not disposed of it if we have shaken our heads when leaving the monkey house in the zoo ; nor when we have noted that Haeckel in the full flush of materialist evolution faked photographic plates to prove it ; nor when we have had a good laugh at the naïve presentation of evolution contained in some of the radio broadcasts for schools. (In one of these the commentator described how fishes, leaving dried-up water-courses for more congenial surroundings, developed little legs to help them on their journey overland.) The recent discovery that the Piltdown man was a hoax has not in any way weakened the theory of evolution. The hypothesis is supported by an impressive array of

<sup>1</sup> R. Boigelot, *L'homme et l'univers : leur origine, leur destin*, Bruxelles 1946, fasc. 1, p. 62. E. Amman, in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 1946, xv<sup>1</sup>, col. 1368

widely different sciences : comparative anatomy, embryology, histology (the study of organic tissue), physiology, genetics, cytology (the study of protoplasm), geology and paleontology. Evolutionism provides a synthesis of the findings of these various studies.

It is not possible here to investigate the arguments for and against the theory of evolution and in an attempt to assess its standing we must rely on authority. In his assessment of the present position of the theory of evolution as a whole, Professor M. G. Vandebroek, who is responsible for the studies of embryology, comparative anatomy and anthropology in the Catholic university of Louvain, says that the more we know of living things, the more the notion of evolution becomes apparent.<sup>1</sup> He goes on to say that the number of convergent indications for evolution is so great that certain authors have stated that evolution is itself a fact. This he denies, because a fact has to be demonstrated either by observation or by experiment, and both of these methods of scientific proof are impossible in the case of the evolution of species.<sup>2</sup> Evolution remains an hypothesis only, but an eminently probable hypothesis, enjoying the greatest degree of certainty that a mere hypothesis may possess. He admits that the same cannot be said of the theories formed to explain how the evolutionary process is supposed to have taken place. These theories enjoy a much lesser degree of certainty than the evolutionary hypothesis itself.<sup>3</sup>

It may appear that Professor Vandebroek has over-emphasised the degree of certitude which evolutionism itself can command. Others point to difficulties which it has not yet surmounted. M. Remy Collin, the distinguished French biologist, says : ' Transformism is not a fact, but the interpretation of an incomplete collection of historical facts. . . . Transformism, despite its plausibility and even its probability, remains, on the logical plane, a scientific theory which is open to more weaknesses than the theories which concern the inorganic world.'<sup>4</sup> Fr. V. Marcozzi, in an article in which he evaluates the arguments in favour of evolution with special reference to the possible evolution of the human body, sums up by saying : ' The theory of the evolution of the human body possesses, in the present state of research, a certain degree of probability.'<sup>5</sup>

Enough has been said to show that on the one hand evolutionism is by no means a mere matter of monkeys and missing links. On the

<sup>1</sup> G. Vandebroek and L. Renwart, ' L'Encyclique *Humani Generis* et les sciences naturelles ' in *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 1951, p. 337

<sup>2</sup> art. cit., p. 339

<sup>3</sup> art. cit., pp. 340-1

<sup>4</sup> R. Collin, *Mesure de l'homme*, 1948, p. 113

<sup>5</sup> *De hominis creatione atque elevatione et de peccato originali* (collection of articles), Rome 1948, p. 54

other hand it is not a self-evident fact nor is it a proved conclusion of science. Its protagonists who try to represent it as such would do well to note the words of M. Claude Bernard: 'Theories are only hypotheses which are verified by a greater or lesser number of facts. Those which are verified by the greatest number of facts are the best; but even so, they are never definitive, and one should never give them absolute credence.'<sup>1</sup> And so evolutionism remains a fascinating and serious hypothesis, but still an hypothesis.

### *The Catholic position*

The Catholic attitude is lucidly stated by Pope Pius XII: 'Thus, the teaching of the Church leaves the doctrine of evolution an open question, as long as it confines its speculations to the development, from other living matter already in existence, of the human body. (That souls are immediately created by God is a view which the Catholic faith imposes on us.) In the present state of scientific and theological opinion, this question may be legitimately canvassed by research, and by discussion between experts on both sides. At the same time the reasons for and against either view must be weighed and adjudged with all seriousness, fairness and restraint; and there must be a readiness on all sides to accept the arbitrament of the Church, as being entrusted by Christ with the task of interpreting the Scriptures aright, and the duty of safeguarding the doctrines of the faith. (Cf. *Allocut. Pont. ad membra Academiae Scientiarum*, 30 Novembris 1941; A. A. S., xxxiii, p. 506.) There are some who take rash advantage of this liberty of debate, by treating the subject as if the whole matter were closed—as if the discoveries hitherto made, and the arguments based on them, were sufficiently certain to prove, beyond doubt, the development of the human body from other living matter already in existence. They forget, too, that there are certain references to the subject in the sources of divine revelation, which call for the greatest caution and prudence in discussing it.'<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that the teaching of *Humani generis* is confined to evolution as it touches the emergence of the human body. It is not concerned with the evolutionary hypothesis as it touches infra-human forms. There seems to be no reason why the Catholic could not accept the theory of the evolution of infra-human species; it does not conflict with any article of faith, nor with any philosophical or theological principle.<sup>3</sup> Nor does it seem that any objection to this theory can be based on the first chapter of Genesis, as we shall see later.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Collin, *op. cit.*, p. 57

<sup>2</sup> *Humani Generis*, C.T.S. trans. sect. 36

<sup>3</sup> Boigelot, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-86

The Catholic approach to the theory of the evolution of the human body must be made with the prudent reservations insisted on by the Holy Father because of the 'references to the subject in the sources of divine revelation.' The scriptural references to the matter will be examined later. Meanwhile we may note that there does not seem to be anything inherently repugnant in the notion of evolution, even as it concerns the human body. An increasing number of theologians hold that there is nothing intrinsically impossible in the notion that God endowed matter in the beginning with the power to develop under the influence of new circumstances and in accordance with fixed laws, under the ordinary dispensation of Divine Providence. Nor is it impossible for the Creator to use a long series of secondary causes, working through a process of evolution, to produce a body capable of being informed by a soul.<sup>1</sup> Indeed it would seem more in accord with divine Wisdom and Providence for God to use secondary causes to produce the result He desires, rather than to change an existing order by direct intervention,<sup>2</sup> and for Him to use the highest form of matter then existing, namely the organic matter provided by the animal nearest, morphologically, to man, rather than the lowest, namely clay.<sup>3</sup> In such a view, the process of evolution would have been designed by the Creator precisely to lead up to the formation of the human body. In the hypothesis that evolution played its part in providing the organic matter for the human body, some theologians postulate a direct intervention by God to effect the ultimate disposition of that organic matter to make it apt for a soul.<sup>4</sup> This modification of the organic matter could have been slight, and produced in the very moment of the infusion of the soul. Others do not think it necessary to postulate this direct intervention by God in transforming the organic matter. Fr. V. Marcozzi allows that 'it would be sufficient to hold that the evolutionary process which terminated in the formation of the body of man had as its purpose this very formation, God having endowed the primitive organism with a special capacity, directed from the beginning towards the production of a human body through the course of an evolution willed and directed by God.'

So far we have considered the theory of evolution in relation to its term. What of its beginning? Is it possible for the Catholic to accept the idea of spontaneous generation? Sometimes spontaneous generation has a materialist connotation, meaning the accidental, fortuitous development of life from inorganic matter. Spontaneous generation in that sense must of course be rejected for the same reasons that the

<sup>1</sup> Vandebroek and Renwart, art. cit., p. 345

<sup>2</sup> A. van Hove, *Tractatus de Deo Creante et Elevante*, Paris 1944, p. 90

<sup>3</sup> cf. V. Marcozzi, quoted by A. Michel, *L'ami du Clergé*, 1949, p. 453, fn. 10

<sup>4</sup> M. Flick, *De hominis creatione atque elevatione et de peccato originali*, pp. 67 and 71

materialist concept of evolution as a whole must be rejected. But spontaneous generation in the purely scientific sense that life derived originally from non-living matter is not incompatible with Catholic teaching. It seems that there is nothing in philosophy nor in the sources of revelation to exclude this hypothesis. It would not be at variance with Thomistic philosophy,<sup>1</sup> because St Thomas himself, although he had no knowledge of modern scientific data in this matter, accepted it as a fact that the living had sprung from the inert.<sup>2</sup>

In the scientific field biochemists, while admitting that life is more than the sum total of its chemical manifestations, are discovering that the gap between organic and inorganic matter is not as great as was formerly supposed. Their findings and achievements suggest that the transition from inorganic to organic matter is a possibility. For example, viruses seem to be a transitional stage between the most complex non-living matter and the simplest living things, such as bacteria; they have characteristics of inorganic matter, in that they are capable of crystallisation, and of organic matter, in that they are capable of reproduction when introduced into living tissue. The molecular structure of proteins, which are inorganic, is more voluminous and complex than that of some matter which displays organic characteristics; for example, one molecule of hemocyanine contains more atoms than the individual corpuscle of the poliomyelitis virus. Hormones, such as insulin, adrenalin and thyroxine, which are secretions from animal glands, and which until lately could only be produced by living tissue, can now be produced synthetically in the laboratory. This achievement is a significant stage in the attempts of biochemists to produce synthetically the albumens, which are the essential constituents of living cells.<sup>3</sup> If the generation of organic from inorganic matter were proved (if such proof is possible), or if the scientist produced living matter in the laboratory, this would not be a triumph for materialism but a vindication of the power of the Creator to endow matter with these vast potentialities of development, and of His Providence in directing this matter towards the development of higher forms.

### *The interpretation of Genesis*

A strictly literal interpretation of the first two chapters of Genesis excludes any form of evolution, whether of infra-human forms or of the human body. But Catholic exegesis has always recognised that not everything in these chapters must be, or even can be, interpreted literally. In 1909 the Biblical Commission declared that there were

<sup>1</sup> cf. Sertillanges, quoted by C. Hauret, *Origines*, Luçon 1950, p. 66

<sup>2</sup> Boigelot, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-53

<sup>3</sup> Boigelot, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-46

things in the first three chapters of Genesis which need not be interpreted literally, but it forbade the literal historical interpretation to be called in question in the case of those facts which pertained to the foundations of the Christian religion ; and among these facts the Commission enumerated ' the special creation of man ; the formation of the first woman from the first man ; the unity of the human race.' In 1948, in a letter to Cardinal Suhard of Paris, Cardinal Vosté the secretary of the Biblical Commission wrote : ' The Pontifical Biblical Commission is pleased to pay tribute to the filial confidence which inspired this approach, and desires to meet it with a sincere effort to promote Biblical studies, by ensuring to them the greatest possible liberty within the framework of the traditional teaching of the Church. This liberty has been affirmed in explicit terms by the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* of the Sovereign Pontiff now gloriously reigning, in these words : " The Catholic exegete, prompted by a practical and ardent love of his science, and sincerely devoted to Holy Mother Church, must grapple perseveringly with the problems so far unsolved, not only to repel the attacks of opponents, but also in the effort to find an explanation which will be faithfully consonant with the teaching of the Church, particularly with the traditional doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, while being at the same time in due conformity with the certain conclusions of profane sciences. . . ." If the three official replies of the Biblical Commission, (including) that of the 30 June 1909 on the historical character of the first three chapters of Genesis, are understood and interpreted in the light of this recommendation of the Sovereign Pontiff, it will be conceded that these replies are in no way opposed to a further truly scientific investigation of these problems in the light of the knowledge gained in the last forty years. Consequently the Biblical Commission does not think that there is need, at least for the present, to promulgate new decrees on these questions.'

In the light of the recommendations of this letter and encouraged by its exhortations, Catholic exegetes have felt themselves free in the past ten years to suggest interpretations which were not permissible before its publication. Though it is true that in the decrees of the Biblical Commission the Church does not exercise her infallible magisterium, nevertheless these decrees, while they are in full force, command the assent of Catholics, and preclude the dissemination of views which are at variance with them. They are not, however, irrevocable, and Cardinal Vosté implies this when he says that the Commission does not think there is need for new decrees, ' at least for the present.' If it should happen that these decrees were modified, they would still have served a most useful and indeed necessary pur-

pose. At the time of their promulgation materialists were flaunting evolution in the forefront of their campaign against Christianity, and some Catholic scholars, in their endeavours to interpret Genesis in a manner conformable to current scientific theories, were basing their interpretations on exegetical methods which did not sufficiently safeguard the inerrancy of Sacred Scripture. In these circumstances there was need for the limitations imposed by the Biblical Commission. Cardinal Vosté speaks of the progress made during the past forty years. This progress has been made both in the field of science and of exegesis. Progress in the scientific field allows of syntheses in the evolutionary hypothesis that were not possible twenty years ago. Moreover, this hypothesis is no longer, or not so hysterically, urged as an argument against Christianity. In the exegetical field great advances have been made in the understanding of the literary forms used in the Bible, and Catholic exegetes suggest that there are now methods of interpretation which at once safeguard the inerrancy of Scripture and open the way to still further acceptance of the theory of evolution. If they tentatively propose interpretations which exceed the limits imposed by the decrees of the Biblical Commission, they do so because of the latitude extended to them by the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, and its authoritative interpretation in the letter of Cardinal Vosté.

One of the guiding principles of contemporary exegetes in their approach to the early chapters of Genesis is the rejection of concordism. This method of exegesis was based on the assumption that the sacred author had scientific knowledge far in advance of his time, and that the Bible was saying in popular and figurative terms what science is now saying in technical terms. This method is fallacious. Those who followed it were so eager to reconcile the Bible and science that they read into the early chapters of Genesis scientific theories which have since been abandoned. The preoccupation of the sacred author was not with science but with religious truths and facts, the knowledge of which would further man's salvation. Though modern exegetes agree in principle in rejecting concordism, some fall occasionally into it.<sup>1</sup>

Another prominent feature of contemporary Catholic exegesis is a close attention to the literary forms used in the Bible. The Inspiration of Scripture extends to the whole of Scripture and to all its parts. It is not restricted to those parts which deal with doctrine or morals, but extends to parts which deal with profane matters and to *obiter dicta*. The inerrancy of Sacred Scripture, which is a consequence of Inspiration, necessarily has the same extension. Because the Bible is the

<sup>1</sup> For an account of concordism and an exposition of its fallacy, cf. A. Gelin in *L'ami du clergé*, 1951, pp. 290-3



word of God it cannot affirm what is false, or inculcate what is wrong. 'Whatever the hagiographer affirms, states or insinuates must be held to be affirmed, stated or insinuated by the Holy Ghost.'<sup>1</sup> In determining what the hagiographer is affirming, stating or insinuating, we have to take into account the literary form which he is using. Each literary form has its own standards of interpretation, and these criteria have to be recognised and applied before we can determine what the Holy Ghost is affirming, stating or insinuating in a particular book. 'Let the interpreter therefore use every care and take advantage of every indication provided by the most recent research, in an endeavour to discern the distinctive genius of the sacred writer, his condition in life, the age in which he lived, the written or oral sources he may have used and the literary forms he employed. He will thus be able better to discover who the sacred writer was and what he meant by what he wrote. For it is evident that the chief law of interpretation is that which enables us to discover and determine what the writer meant to say. . . .'<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the literary forms of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, Cardinal Vosté in the letter to Cardinal Suhard says: 'The literary forms do not correspond to any of our classical categories, and cannot be judged by the standard of greco-latin or modern literary forms. . . . To declare *a priori* that these accounts do not contain history in the modern sense of the word could easily lead to the supposition that they do not contain history in any sense, whereas in simple and figurative language, adapted to the intelligence of a more simple people, they at one and the same time relate fundamental truths which are presupposed in the economy of salvation, and popular descriptions of the origins of the human race and the chosen people.'<sup>3</sup>

Closely connected with the study of the literary form of Genesis is the examination of contemporary pagan literature, especially the Babylonian, from which it appears that the Biblical author adapted certain popular pagan notions to his own purpose. He made use of current conceptions, stripped them of their false, vicious or immoral trappings and sublimated them to convey the truth and inculcate morality. This comparison of Biblical with pagan accounts of the origins of the world and the human race helps exegetes to determine what the sacred author really wished to convey; it helps them to distil his message from the popular, figurative or anthropomorphic manner in which it is conveyed. 'For to express what they had in

<sup>1</sup> Decree of the Biblical Commission, 18 June 1915

<sup>2</sup> *Divino afflante Spiritu*, C.T.S. trans. sect. 38

<sup>3</sup> The full text of this letter is printed in J. Chaine, *Le livre de la Genèse*, Paris 1948, pp. 519-22.

mind the ancients of the East did not always use the same forms and expressions as we use today; they used those which were current among the people of their own time and place; and what these were the exegete cannot determine *a priori*, but only from a careful study of ancient oriental literature.' 'The Sacred Books need not exclude any of the forms of speech expression which were commonly used in human speech by the ancient peoples, especially of the East, to convey their meaning, so long as they are in no way incompatible with God's sanctity and truth.'<sup>1</sup>

Another guide to the proper understanding of what the sacred author of Genesis wished to convey, is to be found in comparing the various sources which he used. Catholic scholars seem to be agreed that there are three main sources, either documentary or traditional, used in the book of Genesis, and indeed throughout the Pentateuch. They are called the Yahwist, the Elohist and the Priestly accounts. Two of them concern us here, namely the Yahwist, which is couched in vivid, colourful and figurative language, and the Priestly, marked by a more abstract, less detailed, more pedagogic style. The Yahwist represents the older tradition, the Priestly the more recent. The whole of the first chapter of Genesis and the first four and a half verses of the second chapter belong to the Priestly account; the rest of the second chapter to the Yahwist.<sup>2</sup>

### *The creation of infra-human species*

In Gen 1:20-5 is described the creation of the marine monsters, fishes and birds on the fifth day, and of the creeping things, cattle and wild animals on the sixth day. The current Catholic view of the Hexaemeron, the distribution of the work of creation over six days, is that it is a literary device, adopted not for scientific but for pedagogic and liturgical reasons. It provided a popular but adequate framework for the classification of the various constituent elements of the universe as it was then known, and a vehicle for the teaching that the universe in all its parts, and all the creatures that inhabit those parts, came from God.

The artificial, pedagogic nature of the Hexaemeron is indicated by the rhythm of the recurring phrases: 'And God said . . .'; 'And it was so done'; 'And the evening and the morning were the . . . day.'<sup>3</sup> It is also evident from the schematic division of the universe; the first three days are taken up with the creation of the great

<sup>1</sup> *Divino afflante Spiritu*, 39, 41

<sup>2</sup> A. Clamer, *Genèse* (coll. *La sainte Bible*), Paris 1953, pp. 81-7; R. de Vaux, *La Genèse (Bible de Jérusalem)*, Paris 1951, pp. 13-21

<sup>3</sup> C. Hauret, *Origines*, Luçon 1950, p. 46

dichotomous regions; light and darkness on the first day; the waters, and the great void made between them by the firmament on the second day; land and water on the third day. The second group of three days is devoted to the providing of inhabitants for these regions: the sun for the light and the moon and stars for the darkness on the fourth day; fishes for the waters and birds for the air on the fifth day; animals and men for the land on the sixth day. 'And so the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them.'<sup>1</sup>

The liturgical character of the Hexaemeron is apparent from the resting of God on the seventh day. The Hexaemeron provided a vivid and forceful way of inculcating the observance of the Sabbath, and was either the promulgation of this law or an allusion to a law already in force. H. Junker thinks that it was precisely because the Israelites already observed this division of time that the sacred author used it for his schematic presentation of the work of creation. He is quoted by Hauret and Clamer, and says: 'The seven-day division of time, which was confirmed by a long tradition, was for the Israelites a law of the world, established by God, who directed the life and activity of men and, through them, the common course of the universe. Now among the manifestations of the highly symbolic cast of thought of ancient times, we find, among Eastern peoples and; before them, among the Sumerians, a tendency to consider all earthly reality as a reflection of heavenly reality, and vice versa. All that exists or happens on earth corresponds to something that exists or happens in heaven. This conception is clearly manifested even in the fundamental structure of the Sabbath law. Exod. 20:11: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." And yet one cannot say that the week originated in the text of Genesis; it is rather the reverse that is true. It is because the week and the Sabbath were considered to be a universal institution of divine origin that, when it came to staging the creative operation of God, it was represented as being in conformity with this division of time. The writer, who, with this idea as his starting-point, divided the first account of the work of creation into seven days, certainly did not consider this systematic arrangement as being historical in the sense which was required by the old literal interpretation and by which the proponents of the concordist theory felt themselves to be bound. According to the mind of the author, the real meaning and purpose of his account are to be found in the religious truths about the Creator and His relationship to His creatures,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:1. cf. Hauret, op. cit., p. 44; and L. Soubigou, *Récit biblique des origines*, Angers 1951, I, pp. 22-4

and not in the outer framework within which he stated these truths.'<sup>1</sup>

When the Biblical account of creation is compared with the pagan creation-myths which were current at the time, it is seen to have a polemical character. What the sacred author intended to affirm emerges from the contrast, and disengages itself from the literary form which is its vehicle. There were many contemporary creation-myths, all grossly polytheistic. The Babylonian myths are the most important, and they were, apparently, known throughout the Semitic world.<sup>2</sup> The one best known to us is the poem *Enuma Elish*, in which there were two original principles of creation, namely Apsu, the masculine principle, and Tiamat, the feminine principle. Apsu and Tiamat generate all the gods, who revolt against their progenitors and imprison Apsu. One of them, Marduk, slays Tiamat and divides her body, one part to make the firmament and the other to make the earth. He then proceeds to make the stars, plants, animals and men, the latter from the blood of Kingu, one of the monsters created by Tiamat for her protection.

In contrast with this and similar myths Genesis emphasises that there is One God, to whom the whole universe owes its origin, and who manifests His Wisdom, Goodness, Omnipotence and Transcendence by creation out of nothing, and who alone is worthy of worship. That this is what the sacred author affirms is the unanimous interpretation of contemporary Catholic exegetes.<sup>3</sup> They agree that he does not intend to describe the order<sup>4</sup> or the manner of the creation of infra-human species. His account is neither favourable to the evolutionary hypothesis, as the concordists thought, nor is it unfavourable. It is strictly neutral on such matters, and is concerned solely with the fact of creation and not with its mode. 'The author made no pronouncement on scientific theories about the origin and evolution of species; he never even thought of them; there is therefore nothing to favour, nor anything to exclude, the modern hypothesis of the transformation of species.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> cf. Clamer, op. cit., p. 128, and Hauret, op. cit., p. 45

<sup>2</sup> P. F. Ceuppens, *Genèse I-III*, Paris 1945, p. 91

<sup>3</sup> Clamer, op. cit., pp. 127-8; Chaîne, op. cit., pp. 43-6; de Vaux, op. cit., p. 39, fn. (a); Hauret, op. cit., pp. 37-69; Soubigou, op. cit., pp. 28-9; Ceuppens, op. cit., pp. 72-6; J. Renié, *Les origines de l'humanité d'après la Bible*, Paris 1950, pp. 25-7; H. Lusseau, *Précis d'histoire biblique*, Paris 1948, I, p. 50

<sup>4</sup> Lusseau, op. cit., p. 50, says the text seems to suggest that the less perfect beings, as a whole, preceded the more perfect; that the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms appeared successively, and that man appeared on earth comparatively recently. He claims that this view is not concordist, but is based on the appearance of the text, and on 'a concordance of fact, which it is very difficult to deny, just as it would be easy to reject, if the contrary were ever demonstrated, since the sacred author had no intention of making scientific statements.' Surely the author is guilty here of 'Heads I win, tails you lose'—he cannot have it both ways!

<sup>5</sup> Ceuppens, op. cit., p. 34

*The special creation of man*

The texts which recount the creation of man are Gen. 1:26-8 and Gen. 2:7. Gen. 1:26-8 reads: 'God said: Let us make man to our image, according to our resemblance, and let him hold sway over the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the creeping things that creep upon the earth. God created man to his image, to the image of God he created him, man and woman he created them. God blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; rule over the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the animals which move upon the earth' (Priestly).<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:7 reads: 'Then the Lord God moulded man from the clay of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and man became a living being' (Yahwist).<sup>2</sup>

Fr. G. Lambert says that the author of Genesis, by placing the two accounts of the creation of man side by side, wished to warn us that not every detail of these different accounts is to be taken as an affirmation.<sup>3</sup> Fr. A. Gelin, writing in the same sense, says that the sacred author, feeling that the account of creation in Gen. 2:7 was too anthropomorphic, incorporated also the account of Gen. 1:26-8 which, though first in order of chapters, is actually of later origin than the source used in Gen. 2:7.<sup>4</sup> The later tradition describes the creation of man in terms, not of anthropomorphic activity on the part of God, but of His efficacious word, His omnipotent command.

There is further justification for regarding Gen. 2:7 as a popular and figurative representation of the creation of man, in that the word *yašar*, translated above by 'moulded,' is the word used to describe the action of the potter. It was natural in an age of ceramics to represent the creative action of God in such terms and the theme is found in other parts of Scripture. It is an idea found throughout the literature of antiquity, among 'the Sumerians, the Assyro-Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and Latins, and a number of primitive peoples.'<sup>5</sup> It would appear that the author of Genesis, in using this notion current in his day, did not wish to commit himself to its literal meaning, did not wish to convey the actual manner in which the body of man was

<sup>1</sup> Translation adapted from Clamer, op. cit., pp. 112-14, and de Vaux, op. cit., p. 42. The latter says that 'according to our resemblance' was added to 'to our image' to restrict the meaning of the first phrase by excluding parity.

<sup>2</sup> Trans. adapted from de Vaux, p. 44

<sup>3</sup> G. Lambert, 'L'Encyclique *Humani Generis* et l'écriture sainte,' *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 1951, p. 242

<sup>4</sup> A. Gelin, *Problèmes d'ancien testament*, Paris 1952, p. 54

<sup>5</sup> Lambert, art. cit., p. 233. Cf. also Hauret, op. cit., p. 90; Gelin, *L'ami du clergé*, 1956, p. 531

formed. What this figurative speech does convey is man's utter dependence on God. Fr. Lambert says that anyone who has seen the clay take on shape and beauty beneath the deft hands of an Eastern potter will see immediately how apt this imagery is to suggest 'the sovereign liberty of God; His marvellous creative power; His absolute dominion over the work that has issued from His hands; man's total dependence on his Creator; the goodness and mercy of the Creator towards the frailty of His creature.'<sup>1</sup>

It would be wrong to see in the insufflation of the breath of life a direct reference to the infusion of the soul, because Israelites of this time had no explicit conception of the spiritual nature of the soul and no explicit conception of the soul as the form of the body. To them, as to other orientals of the time, life was very naturally connected with breath and with breathing; life could only come from God, and thus, the author wishing to convey that man owed his life to God, pictures God as breathing His Own life into man. Not only had this breath to be received from God, but it had to be maintained by God, so much so that when God withdrew His breath man died.<sup>2</sup> 'No less than the comparison with the potter, this conception of the breath of life, given, maintained and withdrawn by God when it seems good to Him, strongly emphasises the state of total dependence in which man finds himself with regard to his Creator.'<sup>3</sup> 'In this concept is inscribed the condition of man: he depends on God.'<sup>4</sup>

What Gen. 2:7 affirms is that man, as a whole, owes his origin to God and is wholly dependent on God. 'The sacred author, in his popular and non-scientific language, wishes us to understand that man in his entirety owes his origin, his constitution and his life to God. If man exists, he owes that to God; his body has a close affinity with the soil; he receives life from God. . . . All that makes him "a living man" comes from God. Such is the affirmation of the author, though he does not specify, either scientifically or theologically, the constitution of this mysterious being.'<sup>5</sup> 'It is the human being in its ultimate unity which is the object of the creative act.'<sup>6</sup>

This truth is expressed in a current and figurative idiom which does not correspond exactly with, though of course it does not exclude, Thomistic conceptions of soul and body. What a later philosophy does is to make explicit something latent in the Biblical texts. Fr. Lambert asks: 'Although they appear to make life consist in breathing, did not the hagiographers themselves already perceive the

<sup>1</sup> Lambert, art. cit., p. 234

<sup>2</sup> Lambert, art. cit., p. 235; Soubigou, op. cit., II, p. 7; Gelin, art. cit., pp. 531-2

<sup>3</sup> Lambert, art. cit., p. 235

<sup>4</sup> Gelin, art. cit., p. 532

<sup>5</sup> Soubigou, op. cit., pp. 6 and 8

<sup>6</sup> Gelin, *Problèmes d'ancien testament*, p. 54

connection of this phenomenon with a spiritual principle of life, glimpsed more or less clearly?'<sup>1</sup> For, though the author does not refer to the soul directly and explicitly, he does show that man was endowed by God with faculties which are in fact spiritual. In Gen. 2:19-20 he describes how Adam names the animals, thus displaying intelligence and the faculty of speech. For orientals of this epoch the name was of the greatest importance, because it was supposed to express the exact nature of the person or thing which it designated. Knowledge of the name pre-supposed not only an intellectual appreciation of the nature of the thing, but also authority over it. The naming of the animals denotes Adam's superiority to them; a superiority consisting in his possessing the intellectual faculty and in his having dominion over them.<sup>2</sup>

This dominion over the brutes is expressly given to man in Gen. 1:28: 'Rule over the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air . . . etc.' And it is associated immediately with the fact that man is made to the image of God, in Gen. 1:26: 'God said: Let us make man to our image, according to our resemblance, and let him hold sway over the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air . . . etc.' The attributes of intelligence and free will which manifest themselves in the Creator are reflected in the being made to His resemblance. This account of the creation of man in Gen. 1:26-8 has certain features in common with the preceding account of the creation of other things; the command which called him into existence was addressed to all the elements of the universe and to all living things; the injunction to 'be fruitful and multiply' was given to the fishes and birds in Gen. 1:22. What is distinctive and proper in man's creation is the deliberation of the Godhead which preceded it, and the bestowing on man of an intellectual nature similar to the Creator's. Man was a person, with a special relationship to God on the one hand, and to the rest of creation, as its overlord, on the other. 'In this cosmogeny there is no allusion to man's earthly origin. On the contrary, here (in Gen. 1:26-8) it is a question of man's special creation by God.'<sup>3</sup>

None of the authors consulted holds that either of the Biblical accounts of man's creation excludes the evolution hypothesis. They all admit that, as far as Sacred Scripture is concerned, evolution may have played its part, under the ordinary laws of Divine Providence, in the formation of a body into which God infused the soul. They say that Scripture neither teaches nor repudiates such a process. Some of them, however, maintain that if secondary causes played their part

<sup>1</sup> Lambert, art. cit., p. 236

<sup>2</sup> cf. Chaîne, op. cit., p. 39; Clamer, op. cit., p. 123

<sup>3</sup> Soubigou, op. cit., I, p. 24; Gelin, op. cit., p. 54

in producing organic matter for a human body, these causes did not effect those ultimate dispositions which were necessary if that matter were to house a soul. Such dispositions, they say, were produced by a special intervention of God, distinct from the ordinary laws of Providence and accompanying the infusion of the soul. Pirot says that such a view is necessary to safeguard 'the special action of God of which the Bible speaks.'<sup>1</sup> Ceuppens says it is more conformable to the decree of the Biblical Commission which speaks of the special creation of man, and not just of his soul.<sup>2</sup> Renié quotes Pirot with approval,<sup>3</sup> but wilyly suggests that his own insistence on this special intervention may be due to 'a latent tendency to concordism.'<sup>4</sup> Lusseau maintains the necessity for such intervention on philosophical grounds.<sup>5</sup>

It is conceivable that the intervention of which these authors speak can be postulated for philosophical reasons, but it does not seem to be taught by Scripture. Ceuppens's argument from the wording of the decree of the Biblical Commission is not conclusive, as he himself admits. He says that 'special creation' may refer only to the soul of man, because 'the Biblical Commission seems to make a clear distinction between "the special creation" of man on the one hand and "the formation" of the woman on the other. In the second proposition it is certainly a question of the formation of the body of Eve; in the first it is a question of the special creation of man, and not of the formation of his body.'<sup>6</sup> Clamer makes the same point: 'The Biblical Commission . . . does not speak of man's body, but of man, the composite human being,' and he makes a further point, that the Commission 'did not say that the creation of man had been immediate, but special.'<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in determining that the literal historical sense could not be called in question in the matter of the special creation of man, the Commission did not specify any particular verse or phrase which had to be so interpreted; nor did it say that every reference to man's creation in the first three chapters of Genesis had to be interpreted in this sense.<sup>8</sup> It seems that Fr. Renié is right to accuse himself of concordism when he reads into Scripture a reference to a direct and immediate intervention of God in the formation of the human body. Other exegetes make no mention of such an intervention; Soubigou, Lambert and Gelin say nothing of it. Chainé writes: 'An evolution of species, which takes into account the

<sup>1</sup> L. Pirot, *Dictionnaire de la Bible : Supplément*, I, 1926, col. 94

<sup>2</sup> Ceuppens, *op. cit.*, p. 121

<sup>3</sup> J. Renié, *Les origines de l'humanité d'après la Bible*, p. 35; cf. p. 83

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85

<sup>5</sup> Lusseau, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 55, 66

<sup>6</sup> Ceuppens, *op. cit.*, p. 121

<sup>7</sup> Clamer, *op. cit.*, p. 130

<sup>8</sup> cf. article 3 of the decree of 30 June 1909



essential difference between the most perfect animal and man, endowed with the intelligence which gives him his resemblance to God, in no way conflicts with Christian dogma, provided that it allows for the action of God, who in fact created man by giving him a spiritual soul.<sup>1</sup>

The texts which have been examined express, in the figurative language of the time, but with a remarkable economy of words, the eminent dignity of man, his intelligent nature, his special relation to God, in that he is made to God's image, and his special relation to the cosmos in that he dominates it. No explicit reference is made to his soul, but, in default of the precise distinctions and terminology of a later philosophy, no clearer evidence that man has a soul could be presented. What makes him a man, all came from his special creation by God.

(To be continued)

J. O'NEILL

### CHRIST ON DIVORCE<sup>2</sup>

'Why is your Church so strict about divorce? If a marriage has turned out a failure, why not dissolve it? Surely you will do more harm than good otherwise. People are human, and if they have made a mistake they ought to be given a second chance. What right have you to be stricter than Christ, who admitted that unfaithfulness could be a ground for divorce?'

The objection may not be put in so many words, but it is implicit in the minds of many people, who are frankly puzzled and even shocked by the Catholic Church's attitude to divorce, and who cannot see in Christ's words, as St Matthew reports them,<sup>3</sup> anything other than a permission, at least for the innocent party in a divorce, to remarry.

In actual fact the meaning of the phrase *except it be for fornication* is not nearly as obvious as people think. That it should have given rise to a great variety of interpretations is sufficient indication that it is an ambiguous phrase. About the only thing that scholars agree on is that it cannot be taken to mean that Christ gave any sort of permission for divorce and remarriage: it simply will not fit the context or the rest of the New Testament teaching on marriage.

<sup>1</sup> Chaine, *op. cit.*, p. 46

<sup>2</sup> It is understood that this article will shortly be published in pamphlet form by the Catholic Truth Society.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 19:9: 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, *except it be for fornication*, and shall marry another, committeth adultery' (Douay version). The saying is repeated in a slightly different form in Matt. 5:32.