

OUTLINE OF THOMISTIC PRINCIPLES ON CREATION THAT PROVE THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THEISTIC EVOLUTION

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The Church has taught in ancient, medieval, and modern times that God and God alone has created. Some examples of that teaching are the following.

If anyone does not say that the Father made all things through the Son and His Holy Spirit, that is, the visible and the invisible; he is a heretic.¹

If anyone does not confess 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 . . . let him be anathema.²

It was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who most fully elaborated the theological and metaphysical principles that support the above doctrinal pronouncements of the Church. It is no exaggeration to assert that every explanation of Creation by God that is not in agreement with these Thomistic principles, is in error. The fact can be seen clearly when certain basic ideas are grasped.

First of all, it is well to understand what St. Thomas means by the analogy of being. Being, or existence, is what God *is*, absolutely, but what all creatures only *have* from Him. St. Thomas says that to exist is God's very essence or nature. We creatures possess an *essence*, which is expressed logically in a definition. Thus, man is a rational animal. But our *existence* is what makes us to be *actual*, what makes us to *be* and to be *this specific* individual person or thing. God is all Act, all actuality, all being; but we and all creatures *have* our existence *from* God and it is an essence or nature that is thus *given* existence. All creatures are thus a *mixture or composite* of essence and existence whereas God is all Being and admits of no such imperfect mixture. The mixture of essence or potency and act is by its nature limiting and limited, imperfect. But there can be no such imperfection in God.

The fact that we have our existence from God constitutes the relation of creation. This relation of creation is only in us, the creature, and is not in God the Creator because He is absolutely self-sufficient, self-existing, and depends on nothing. Thus God as Creator is utterly transcendent. The relation of creation or *our* absolute dependence upon God for existence is confused by many philosophers today (most notably Paul Tillich) with Creation itself, with the Creation of the universe that took place "In the Beginning". Thus it is necessary to have a very clear appreciation of what it means for God to *create*.

Only God can create because to create is to bring into *total being*, that is, to bring into being the whole substance, the entire creature,—from nothing, *ex nihilo*. *Ex nihilo* simply means from *no pre-existing being*. The best possible expression of God's Creative Action is to be found in the First Chapter of Genesis. Here the Creation

of the universe is reduced to certain specific Acts on God's part that correspond to the kinds of creatures brought into being, in the first six days of the world. It is to be noted, too, that *time* itself is a creature, having come into existence—or begun—with the first material or corporeal being. This is indeed, as Aristotle defined it, *the measure of motion* and cannot exist apart from some corporeal being in space and in motion. It is thus impossible, in a true cosmology, to conceive of a separation of time from beings in motion or from the space in which they live and move. Einstein's system is fantasy and was made to order for the literature of science *fiction* which builds its other worlds upon this false cosmology.

God's Act of Creation, or as in Genesis I, His multiple Acts of Creation according to the creatures brought into existence on different successive days of the first week of the world, is an *Act* and not a *process*. It is most important to distinguish carefully between God's Act of Creation or His Creative Activity and any kind of process, because all processes, as Dr. Henry Morris has pointed out, are decayings and un-doings, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Even the process of cell division by which the animal or human zygote grows into an embryo and is finally born as an individual, even this process of becoming or coming to a certain state is ruled by the Second Law written into the DNA code, and biologically all corporeal beings begin to die as soon as they are conceived.

The difference between the human zygote and the animal zygote is worth noting in this context of Creation. The life principle of plants and animals inheres in the material of the DNA code and is passed on by generation, not requiring a special act of creation by God. But the human soul is a spiritual immortal substance and as such can only be created directly and immediately for each human person by God Himself. This creation of the human soul which immediately informs the zygote and causes it to be a human being, is well illustrative of God's *Act* of Creation over and against the *process* of growth, development, aging and dying that leads to biological extinction. The generative and degenerative processes of growth and dying constitute what St. Thomas terms *the order of generation as opposed to the order of creation*. The entire order of creation or the universe, the whole natural order which was brought into existence "In the Beginning" came to be *not* by any kind of process but by God's atemporal *Fiat*.

God did not create from all eternity, however, nor is He creating now, except for human souls. Even though His Act of Creation is identical with Himself because He is absolutely simple and contains no potencies (this is the Platonic error from which stem all other errors about Creation) still His Act of Creation, this Act of God's Will, resulted in creatures. The *effect* of God's

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Creating Will must not be confused or identified in any way with God's nature. God infinitely transcends all of His creatures and the relation of creation is not in God but in the creatures only. This distinction, which is a most real one, is necessary to grasp in order to avoid pantheism.

The immanence which modern philosophers and theologians so ardently desire is to be found in the relation of creation, in the fact of our *absolute* dependence upon God for our existence every moment of time. Our being is from Him alone and thus St. Paul said: "In Him we live and move and *have our being*." This is in the purely natural order. In the order of Grace, the Divine Intimacy is even more marvelous, and beyond our power to understand. The Grace of God can only be answered with love.

Essence or nature is the area of secondary or instrumental causality. In the order of generation, creatures give rise to creatures of their own nature and essence, like produces like, in obedience to God's command in Genesis I that every creature reproduce "according to its kind." St. Thomas says that each creature causes or effects "what is proper to itself." But that any creature should actually create something out of nothing, that is, from no pre-existing materials, or that any creature should produce something greater, of a higher order of being than itself, which would amount to creating, such hypotheses are absurd and against all the observed laws of nature, logic, and Grace. Even Grace only perfects human nature, it does not elevate it to something higher than human nature. Man will never become an angel nor even a "super-man". Should he aspire to be such, he will fulfill the promises of Satan (Genesis 3) rather than the Promises of Our Divine Lord Jesus Christ. The "new man" is man con-formed to Christ, through His Grace.

And yet, this is what the theistic evolutionists are telling us to believe and to do! St. Thomas says that matter cannot exist without form, and the form of every creature, of every being, *limits* and defines its created nature or essence, essence being the principle of potency and limitation as well as of individuation. But if each creature is limited, as it is, by its created essence or nature, according to Genesis I, then no creature can produce something of which it is incapable, something the potency for which it simply does not possess within itself. It is thus metaphysically, which is to say, philosophically impossible for a sea-creature to give rise to a land-creature, no matter how much time it be allowed, or for an animal to issue in a human being. The question of time is somewhat irrelevant here, for if the potency were within the creature to evolve into something higher, then it could be done in six or six hundred as well as in six hundred million, or in billions of years. Nor is the question of life from non-life of any greater import than that of the bird from the dinosaur or that of the man from the ape, or that of the amphibian from the lung-fish. The question that must be asked first of all is this: on the side of *reason*, is the nature of the being capable of producing something that is not in its nature; and from the side of *Biblical Faith*, is evolution of any kind, theistic or otherwise, in accordance with Scripture and the teachings of the Church?

In both cases, of course, the answer is a definite NO. Evolution makes of creation a *process*, it reduces the *order of creation* by God to the *order of generation* by secondary causes, thus placing the *creative power* itself *within nature*. And this is pantheism. This heresy—of pantheism—militates against or is destructive of the truth.

The words of St. Thomas about instrumental causes are this:

The proper effect of God creating is what is presupposed to all other effects, and that is absolute being (existence).

In other words, the entire natural order is presupposed to all other talk of "creating" and/or producing. 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 or secondary agent.

So therefore, it is impossible for any creature to create, either by its own power, or instrumentally, that is, ministerially.

No created being can cause anything unless something is presupposed; which is against the very idea of creation.³

References

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- ²Lateran Council IV, in 1215; and Vatican Council I, in 1870. See Deferrari, *op. cit.*, items 428 and 1,805.
- ³St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, Part I, Question 45, Article 5. The topic of Creation is discussed also in Questions 45 to 47 and 65 to 74, inclusive. Related Questions include 92, on the production of woman; and 95 to 102, on the state of innocence, including Paradise.

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writers refer to an Edenic period of mild climate. It isn't very effective to quote scripture to geologists these days, but the "geologic book" of sedimentary layers says the same thing (or so Vail suggested): "... the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth... But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." Genesis 2:4-5.

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