

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

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Traditionally Speaking by S. Casarotto 10/25/09

Galileo Revisited

At the end of his last edition of *"On the Origin of the Species"*, Charles Darwin said that the process of evolution he described *"does not exclude the breath of God."* In the often misquoted Galileo case, to the commission that investigated him, the great scientist replied: *"God of science can not be against God of the Bible. Either we don't understand one or we don't understand the other."* Card. Roberto Bellarmino, who presided over that commission, sided with Galileo. It should be remembered that Galileo never protested, *"Eppur si muove!"* (still, the earth moves). This statement was attributed to him 125 years later by Protestant anti-papal writers. In addition, Galileo's "proofs" of the earth movements around the sun, like the tides, were actually non-scientific. And Galileo was not the first to claim that the earth rotates around the sun. Copernicus announced it 20 years earlier without ever being condemned by the Church.

Religion does not replace science. On the other hand, science will never have all the answers and has its own limitations. It can only try to explain the laws of the material world but it can not exclude the laws of God who made the material and spiritual world. The Revelation tells us *"In the beginning God..."* Everything there is was willed into being by God.

How did the material world, and especially man, actually come to be? The Bible tells of the origin of a beautiful and orderly world: the heavens, the earth and the sea with all their creatures. The Bible often speaks through popular allegories and stories known in the Syrian and Greek world. It says that God used "clay" to fashion Adam and used his rib to fashion Eve, the mother of all living humans. However, the Bible makes it clear that God "breathed" in them the spirit of life and they were made "in the image of God." According to God's revelation, the human being is not the end result of a natural and chemical process of evolution from inferior beings, but the final masterpiece of a loving God.

Whether the human body was created (= made out of nothing) or prepared from an inferior being to receive the soul (something which science can never prove nor disprove, nor is part of the Revelation), the Bible teaches us that the human being is God's special creation, endowed like no other living creature with mind and will, and capable of intelligent choices and therefore morally responsible.

Equally important is the fact that even the evolution of inferior beings could happen only if Someone directed the process. The theory of absolute relativism (i.e. everything evolves by itself without a divine intervention) is like saying that the Coliseum is a pile of stones which just happened to end up one on top of the other with no intelligent design.

Commenting on the relation between faith and science, a century ago, Italian scientist and philosopher Antonio Stoppani condemned the *"opposition between faith and modern science caused by ill faith and ignorance but also by undue fear of good people who should find support in study and stronger faith."*