

Through Chantal, the author puts the world of the novel under some sort of question. *Joy* amounts to an invitation to enter into an alternative frame of reference; it creates the conditions that make it possible for the reader to inhabit a different reality.

Art & Freedom

Flannery O'Connor once reflected, "When people have told me that because I am a Catholic, I cannot be an artist, I have had to reply, ruefully, that because I am a Catholic, I can-

not afford to be less than an artist" (*Mystery and Manners* [1972], 146). O'Connor implies that artistry entails freedom. The Catholic novelist cannot attempt to prove the existence of God or the meaningfulness of sanctity. He or she can only invite the reader to inhabit a world, one that has more veridicality the more the characters themselves indwell it freely.

Part of Bernanos's achievement is his capacity, which grew as his mastery of novel-writing grew, to afford the reader and his characters freedom. The Christian artist pursues the imitation of a God who creates in

freedom, and in so doing contributes to the meaning and the possibility of what art can be. ♦

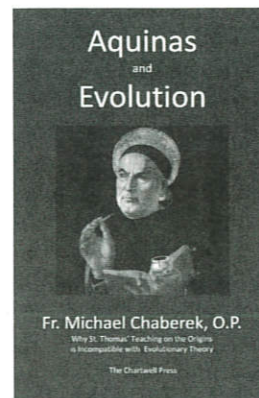
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Survival of the Thomist

Aquinas and Evolution: Why St. Thomas' Teaching on the Origins Is Incompatible with Evolutionary Theory by Michael Chaberek, O.P.

The Chartwell Press, 2017
(272 pages, \$16.95, paperback)

reviewed by D. Q. McInerny



FATHER MICHAEL CHABEREK, having given us, in his *Catholicism and Evolution* (2015), a richly informative history of the Church's response to evolutionary theory from the late nineteenth century to the present, now gives us *Aquinas and Evolution*, which can be regarded as an appropriate sequel to the earlier volume. Together, these books can be fittingly regarded as the two most important philosophical works on evolution to date, written from a deeply learned and engagingly expressed Thomistic point of view.

Aquinas and Evolution is a direct response to the position taken by a number of self-identified Thomist philosophers and theologians who are committed to what they regard as the soundness of theistic evolution, and

who maintain that they have support for their commitment in the thought of the Angelic Doctor. It is Fr. Chaberek's contention, which he convincingly supports, that in this they are egregiously mistaken. He informs us that his intention in this work is to "show that the teachings of Thomas Aquinas—and indeed of any sound philosophy (*sana philosophia* or *philosophia perennis*)—are not just incompatible with the Darwinian theory, but exclude it in principle" (12). His success in fulfilling this intention is complete and unmitigated.

Issues & Arguments

The book is composed of six chapters, the first of which, *Status Quaestionis*, introduces the various issues to be

dealt with and the arguments to be made in the subsequent pages.

The argument to which Chapter II is devoted is presented in an especially effective way: it is cast in the form of an article in the *Summa Theologiae*. Accordingly, it begins by stating a thesis that is going to be contested rather than defended: "It seems that Aquinas's teaching does not exclude theistic evolution." This is followed by eighteen "objections" supporting that assertion, taking up thirteen pages; then comes the *sed contra*, contesting the thesis (three pages), followed by the "reply," which argues for the contrary of the stated thesis (twelve pages). Finally, there are the responses to the objections, effectively continuing that argument, which cover no fewer than 38 pages. The entire text of the chapter is accompanied by ample and informative footnotes.

I provide these details of the structure of this chapter because they serve to illustrate the meticulous thoroughness with which Fr. Chaberek treats the issues he broaches, not only in this chapter, but throughout the rest of the book as well. One is hard-pressed to come up with any pertinent aspect of any issue he deals with that he has not taken into account and addressed in a satisfactory if not definitive fashion.

Chapter III compares and contrasts the thought of Aquinas with

that of Augustine regarding the interpretation of Genesis. Here he shows that the Augustinian position, however much it may differ from that of the majority of the saints (St. Ambrose, for example), is, for all that, in no wise compatible with modern evolutionary theory, a point that Étienne Gilson was among the first to call attention to.

Chapter IV, entitled "Aquinas and the Origin of Man," argues compellingly that, contrary to the position entertained by theistic evolutionists, Aquinas unequivocally teaches that the human body was created directly by God; it was not the end-product of an eons-long process of gradual transformative development.

Chapter V, which follows the same format as Chapter II, and just as effectively, introduces the subject of intelligent design (ID). The thesis to be contested here is stated thus: "It seems that Aquinas's teaching excludes intelligent design." In its lucidity and comprehensiveness, this chapter provides one of the best accounts of the intelligent design position that I have come across, as well as one of the best defenses of that position. If something bears all the marks of having been designed, the attempt to cite chance as the explanation for its genesis is a sign of desperation. Particularly arresting is Fr. Chaberek's view that "intelligent design may be seen as the preamble to the preambles of

faith. ID relates to the preambles of faith as the preambles of faith relate to the articles of faith" (180).

Formidable & Scintillating

The book's final chapter, "Thomists Versus Thomas," presents a sensitive and illuminating analysis of the anomaly designated in its title. What is to be made of the paradoxical fact that there are a good number of Thomists who, by their advocacy of evolutionary theory, put themselves squarely at odds with the thought of the man whom they presumably regard as their guide and mentor? Fr. Chaberek cites three likely explanations for this state of affairs, namely: (1) that these Thomists have effectively adopted the naturalistic paradigm; (2) that they are hobbled by a deficiency of scientific knowledge; and (3) that they assume an uncritically docile, even fearful, attitude toward the "scientific community." "Unfortunately, not being well-versed in science, theologians have difficulty in distinguishing science from what is just a materialistic philosophy presented as a scientific theory," he writes (233). In the name of St. Thomas they reject his "method of synthesis and incorporating new and powerful ideas" (236). Accordingly, they end by

claiming that Aquinas supports ideas that are in fact utterly foreign to him.

The consequences of their careless misappropriation of misinterpreted Thomistic thought are most serious. "In fact," writes Fr. Chaberek, "their belief in evolution, which they project onto Aquinas, leads them to a distortion of the teaching of the Angelic Doctor to a degree unprecedented in the history of Thomistic thought. Never before has Aquinas's philosophy been abused so blatantly as happens in theistic evolution" (236).

The elemental force of this book derives from the formidable erudition that stands behind it and the commanding way in which that erudition is consistently articulated. Unlike those whose position he challenges, Fr. Chaberek is manifestly well-versed in modern science and thoroughly conversant with the ins and outs of evolutionary theory. Likewise, the extent and depth of his knowledge of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas is everywhere on scintillating display. For the style of its composition, the clarity and forthrightness of its exposition, and the strength, cogency, and relevance of its arguments, *Aquinas and Evolution* is a veritable masterwork of philosophic discourse. ♦

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From the Pages of *Touchstone*

Creed & Culture

contains essays from the magazine's pages published between 1990 and 1997. *National Review* says this collection "serves as a standard by which the reader can judge the quality of contemporary Christian polemic. If this book is any indication, it thrives."

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