

A Theological Fittingness Argument for the Historicity of the Fall of *Homo Sapiens*¹

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Introduction

IN HIS BOOK, *Christianity in Evolution: An Exploration*, Jesuit theologian Jack Mahoney, S.J., responds to Pope John Paul II's challenge for theologians to bring an evolutionary perspective into conversation with theology by proposing that the truths of evolutionary biology have made the Catholic Church's traditional teachings on human origins obsolete: "I argue that with the acceptance of the evolutionary origin of humanity there is no longer a need or a place in Christian beliefs for the traditional doctrines of original sin, the Fall, and human concupiscence resulting from that sin."² Mahoney is not alone in holding this view. Fellow Catholic theologian, John Haught, has written, "Evolutionary science . . . has rendered the original cosmic perfection, one allegedly debauched by a temporally 'original' sin, obsolete and unbelievable."³ Protestant author Karl Giberson, too, thinks that a Christian can only believe in evolution

¹ I am grateful to Basil Cole, O.P., John Baptist Ku, O.P., and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay, and to the participants at the BioLogos Workshop held at Gordon College from June 24–27, 2013, for stimulating discussion. My scholarship on the theological implications of evolution in light of the theological synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas is supported in part by an Evolution and Christian Faith (E&CF) grant from the BioLogos Foundation.

² Jack Mahoney, *Christianity in Evolution: An Exploration* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 71.

³ John Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 149.

if he or she is willing to jettison numerous traditional beliefs, which in Giberson's view are "secondary" doctrines of the Christian creed: "Clearly, the historicity of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace are hard to reconcile with natural history. The geological and fossil records make this case compellingly."⁴ For these Christian authors, evolution is truly, in the memorable words of Daniel Dennett, the universal acid that has eaten away and dissolved⁵, in this instance, the foundations of Christianity's traditional account of human origins.

In this essay, I respond to these authors by describing an alternative account that proposes that theological reflection on the fittingness of evolution, especially of human evolution, in light of Christian revelation and the theological synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas, actually points to the historicity of the fall and the reality of original sin. I posit that it would have been fitting for God to have given the original human beings, as creatures who are persons evolved from non-persons, preternatural gifts, to perfect the evolved adaptations they needed to attain their eternal destiny in the beatific vision of the Triune God. The obvious absence of any of these gifts today, made even more evident by recent discoveries in evolutionary psychology, points to the historicity of the fall and the reality of original sin.

Theological Arguments from Fittingness According to St. Thomas

Theological arguments from fittingness have been utilized by Christian theologians throughout the history of the Church to illustrate the coherence, the intelligibility, and the beauty of the Christian faith. St. Thomas Aquinas, too, used these arguments in his work. Often indicated with his use of the Latin words *convenienter* or *conveniens*, these fittingness arguments seek to reveal the meaning, beauty, and wisdom of God's actions in the world. As Joseph Wawrykow observes, for St. Thomas, arguing from fittingness involves understanding why an end is attained better and more conveniently with the choice of a particular means rather than another.⁶ In this sense, and as St. Thomas himself explains, choosing

⁴ Karl W. Giberson, *How to Be a Christian and Believe in Evolution: Saving Darwin* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 11.

⁵ Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 63.

⁶ Joseph Wawrykow, *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 58. In his magisterial examination of theological fittingness and beauty the Dominican scholar, Gilbert Narcisse,

to ride a horse is more fitting than walking if one seeks to reach one's destination on a journey.⁷

To illustrate his use of this form of argumentation, take St. Thomas's reflections on the fittingness of the incarnation. In a relatively long article in his *Summa Theologiae*, he proposes ten reasons for why it was fitting that God had become a human being in order to save us.⁸ Among these ten reasons, St. Thomas suggests five that challenge human beings to pursue the good, and five that challenge human beings to withdraw from evil. In the first set of reasons, for example, St. Thomas explains that in choosing to become incarnate, God was better able to establish faith, strengthen hope, and arouse love in the Christian believer. Each reason is an attempt to reveal why God chose this particular means—the Incarnation—rather than another, to attain His end of human salvation. As this single example amply illustrates, for St. Thomas theological arguments for fittingness attempt to disclose the logic and the wisdom of God's providence.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge at the outset that theological arguments from fittingness are not demonstrative. In other words, they cannot prove that a certain conclusion necessarily has to be the way that it is. They cannot prove that the conclusion is true. It may be fitting for someone to ride a horse to reach his destination, but he may in fact have chosen to walk instead. As Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., points out, “that God created the world, that in the world he placed a creature made in his own image and that in order to restore that image in mankind, he took the way of incarnation—these facts can never be rationally demonstrated. They spring from love, and from love's irrationality. The best that reason can do with this divine revelation is to contemplate and admire the harmony of the design so revealed.”⁹ Theological arguments

O.P., describes fittingness arguments this way: “Theological fittingness displays the significance of the chosen means among the alternative possibilities, and the best reasons for which God in his wisdom effectively realized and revealed, freely and through his love, the mystery of salvation and the glorification of mankind.” See his *Les Raisons de Dieu* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1997), 572 [my translation from the French].

⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 1, a. 2. English translations from the *Summa* are taken from the work of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province: *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger, 1947).

⁸ Ibid. For a clear exposition of this article, see Wawrykow, *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas*, 58–60.

⁹ Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Is Theology a Science?*, trans. A.H.N. Green-Armytage (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), 78.

from fittingness do not prove doctrine. They attempt to reveal the inner coherence and the wisdom of the divine design, the theo-drama that has been revealed by a God who is true, good, and beautiful.¹⁰

The Fittingness of the Preteradaptive Gifts in Human Evolution

Early in his discussion of the creation of the first human beings, St. Thomas begins by noting that God perfects His creatures according to His purposes: “As God is perfect in His works, He bestowed perfection on all of them according to their capacity: ‘God’s works are perfect’ (Deuteronomy 32:4).”¹¹ Applying this principle to the creation of the Adam and Eve, and reflecting upon the passage in Genesis that reveals that before the fall, “the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25, *NRSV*), St. Thomas explains that it was fitting for God to have given these original humans what the Christian tradition has called the four preternatural gifts of immortality, integrity, knowledge, and impassibility to remedy their natural weaknesses and to perfect them as spiritual-material composites.¹²

First, because human beings are composite creatures of both spirit—which is inherently incorruptible because spirit is radically simple—and matter—which is inherently corruptible because matter, understood here not as primary but as secondary matter, is composed of more basic parts—they are inherently corruptible and therefore mortal. Hence, for St. Thomas, it was fitting for God to have given Adam and Eve the gift of immortality to perfect this limitation in their nature so that both soul and body are incorruptible.¹³ In this way, the original human pair would

¹⁰ For an insightful discussion on the link between theological fittingness arguments and truth, goodness, and beauty, see Michael M. Waddell, “Wisdom, Fittingness and the Relational Transcendentals,” in *Miscellanea Mediaevalia 26: What is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 538–42.

¹¹ *ST I*, q. 91, a. 1.

¹² In the Catholic theological tradition, the first human beings are conceived as being endowed with natural, preternatural, and supernatural gifts. The natural gifts are those gifts that make human beings human, the preternatural gifts are those gifts that surpass human nature and perfect human beings against the natural weaknesses of human beings as spiritual-material composites, and the supernatural gifts—including sanctifying or justifying grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit—that elevate human beings so that they may share in the divine nature.

¹³ *ST I*, q. 97, a. 1: “For man’s body was indissoluble not by reason of any intrinsic vigor of immortality, but by reason of a supernatural force given by God to the

have been immortal, which is fitting for creatures ordained to eternal friendship with the God who is Life Himself.

Next, because human beings are composite creatures with spiritual and material appetites that are inherently ordered to different objects (inclinations the Western philosophical tradition has called the intellect, the will, and the sensitive appetites), they are prone to interior disarray. The sense powers, too, naturally tend towards objects that cause pleasure in the sense, even when, as often happens, delights of this sort are at odds with reason.¹⁴ Therefore, for St. Thomas, it was fitting for God to have given the original human pair the gift of integrity to order these appetites and powers and to perfect these first humans against this limitation in their natures.¹⁵ This gift orders persons so that their intellects are subject to God, their lower appetites and their senses are subject to their intellects, and their bodies are subject to their souls. In this way, the original human beings were more apt to act well in grace to attain their beatitude. Again, they would have been more perfect creatures, fittingly equipped to be the *imago Dei*.

Third, because human beings are composite creatures created to know spiritual truths by analogy to truths about the material world, a world that they can know only through the bodily senses, they are inherently limited in their capacity to know. Therefore, for St. Thomas, it was fitting for God to have given the original human beings the gift of infused knowledge to perfect this limitation in their natures.¹⁶ This gift

soul, whereby it was enabled to preserve the body from all corruption so as it remained itself subject to God.”

¹⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae*, §186.

¹⁵ ST I, q. 95, a. 1: “But the very rectitude of the primitive state, wherewith man was endowed by God, seems to require that, as others say, he was created in grace, according to Ecclesiastes 7:30, ‘God made man right.’ For this rectitude consisted in his reason being subject to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul: and the first subjection was the cause of both the second and the third; since while reason was subject to God, the lower powers remained subject to reason.” For discussion on the gift of integrity and the state of original justice, see the following articles: P. DeLetter, “If Adam Had Not Sinned....,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 28 (1961): 115–125; C. Vollert, “The Two Senses of Original Justice in Medieval Theology,” *Theological Studies* 5 (1944): 3–23; and Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., “Nature and Grace in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth Century Thomistic Thought*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009), 155–188.

¹⁶ ST I, q. 94, a. 3: “So the first man was established by God in such a manner as to have knowledge of all those things for which man has a natural aptitude.... Moreover, in order to direct his own life and that of others, man needs to know

would have included all truths, both natural and supernatural, necessary for human beings to direct their lives and the lives of others. In this way, according to St. Thomas, the original human beings could have fulfilled their natures as creatures made to govern not only themselves but also other human persons and the animals that had been entrusted to them.

Finally, because they had gifts of immortality, integrity, and knowledge, for St. Thomas, the original human beings were also impassible in that they were not able to experience bodily or spiritual suffering.¹⁷

In the end, according to St. Thomas, these four preternatural gifts were given to the original human beings because these gifts remedied their natural limitations and perfected them as spiritual-material composites. These gifts together along with the sanctifying grace that is their principle constituted the original human pair in the state of original justice. Fittingly, in St. Thomas's view, because of His boundless generosity, God had intended to transmit these gifts to all of the descendants of the original human pair.¹⁸

Building upon this Thomistic theological account, I propose that it would have been fitting for God to have given the first human beings specific preternatural gifts as soon as they had evolved, to perfect them not only as spiritual-material composites, as St. Thomas had thought, but also as personal creatures who had evolved from non-personal primate ancestors. To grasp the logic of my argument, we need to begin by identifying the end for God's creative act. Why did God specifically create human beings?

not only those things which can be naturally known, but also things surpassing natural knowledge; because the life of man is directed to a supernatural end: just as it is necessary for us to know the truths of faith in order to direct our own lives. Wherefore the first man was endowed with such a knowledge of these supernatural truths as was necessary for the direction of human life in that state. But those things which cannot be known by merely human effort, and which are not necessary for the direction of human life, were not known by the first man; such as the thoughts of men, future contingent events, and some individual facts, as for instance the number of pebbles in a stream; and the like."

¹⁷ ST I, q. 97, a. 2: "In the first sense, man was impassible, both in soul and body, as he was likewise immortal; for he could curb his passion, as he could avoid death, so long as he refrained from sin."

¹⁸ ST I, q. 100, a. 1: "Man naturally begets a specific likeness to himself...Now original righteousness, in which the first man was created, was an accident pertaining to the nature of the species, not as caused by the principles of the species, but as a gift conferred by God on the entire human nature...wherefore it is transmitted from the parent to the offspring; and for this reason also, the children would have been assimilated to their parents as regards original righteousness."

For the Catholic theological tradition, the answer to this question is clear: God chose to create human beings not only to reveal his glory, but also to invite them into his own beatitude. The opening statement of the *Catechism* proclaims:

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life . . . He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children, and thus heirs of his blessed life.¹⁹

Elsewhere, citing sources from both the Eastern and Western theological traditions, the *Catechism* will formulate this truth as follows:

“For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.” “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.” “The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.”²⁰

More recently, during his General Audience on December 2, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI explained that the ultimate purpose of the divine plan involves the deification of all human persons: “God does not only say something, but communicates himself, draws us into his divine nature so that we may be integrated into it or divinized.”²¹ In describing this communion with God in Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit, the Pope continues, “[I]t is the fulfillment of our deepest aspirations, of that longing for the infinite and for fullness, which dwells in the depths of the human being and opens him or her to a happiness

¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, §1.

²⁰ Ibid., §460. Citing St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939; St. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 54, 3: PG 25, 192B; and St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusculum*, 57, 1–4.

²¹ Benedict XVI, “General Audience of Pope Benedict XVI, 5 December 2012.”

that is not fleeting or limited but eternal.”²² For the Catholic theological traditions, both Western and Eastern, the creation and salvation of the human being is all about his deification.²³

As we saw above, for St. Thomas, it was fitting for God to have given the first human beings the preternatural gifts to perfect their natural weaknesses as spiritual-material composites. In my view and for the same reason that God perfects His creatures, it would also have been fitting for God to give the original human beings what I am calling the preteradaptive gifts to remedy and perfect those evolved adaptations that in themselves would have hindered human persons from attaining their beatitude in God. Note that I am not necessarily proposing that the preteradaptive gifts are gifts distinct from and unrelated to the traditional preternatural gifts. One could argue for instance that each of the preteradaptive gifts is a subjective part of the preternatural gift of integrity, as the virtue of abstinence is a subjective part of the virtue of temperance.²⁴ What I would like to stress instead is that the preteradaptive gifts are gifts given to remedy defects that arise, not from metaphysical imperfections in the matter-soul composite that are incompatible with the destiny of the human person—which is presupposed by St. Thomas in his account of the preternatural gifts—but from inherited evolutionary adaptations that are not fitting for a creature with that eternal destiny in Christ.

Here, I describe three examples of preteradaptive gifts that remedy and perfect adaptive limitations in human nature. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. First, take the evolved limitation of our promiscuous human mate choice. Holy Scripture reveals that man and woman were created for one another: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (Gen 2:18, *NRSV*). Moreover, as the *Catechism* affirms, this pair bond uniquely reveals God’s love: “Since

²² Ibid.

²³ For recent studies on deification as it is understood in both the East and the West, see the following: A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Daniel Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007); Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009); Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, eds., *Theosis Deification in Christian Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006); and Vladimir Kharlamov, ed., *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

²⁴ Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 48, a. 1: “The subjective parts of a virtue are its various species.”

God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man.”²⁵ It also signifies the fidelity between Christ and His Church:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church. (Eph 5:25–29, *NRSV*).

Therefore, as the Lord Jesus Himself teaches, the human pair bond, in the original plan of the Creator, is meant to be a unbreakable and lifelong union: “So they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Matt 19:6, *NRSV*).²⁶ Human beings were created and perfected to the image of God as creatures ordered to covenantal faithfulness.

However, it is clear from the high rates of divorce and adultery that human beings struggle to remain faithful to their mates. Our preferred mating strategy is either lifelong or serial monogamy, coupled, however, with clandestine adultery.²⁷ Evolutionary psychologists have proposed that this infidelity is an evolved adaptation that human beings inherited from their primate ancestors, because its contrary, life-long fidelity within exclusive pair bonds, is not evolutionarily adaptive. For males, extra-pair mating allows individuals to sire additional offspring, while for females, promiscuity increases the lifetime fitness of offspring produced in the extra-pair matings.²⁸ This would explain why promiscuity has been observed in most species, including apparently monogamous ones.²⁹ Strikingly, too, no extant primate species has a life-long monog-

²⁵ CCC, §1604.

²⁶ Ibid., §1605.

²⁷ Helen E. Fisher, “Serial monogamy and clandestine adultery: evolution and consequences of the dual human reproductive strategy,” in *Applied Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. S. Craig Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93–112.

²⁸ Gerlach et al., “Promiscuous mating produces offspring with higher lifetime fitness,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 279 (2012): 860–66.

²⁹ For discussion, see the following articles: D. Lukas and T. Clutton-Brock, “Cooperative breeding and monogamy in mammalian societies,” *Proceedings of*

amous mating system. Chimps live in multi-male promiscuous groups, orangutans engage in single-male temporary liaisons, and gorillas have single-male polygynous harems.³⁰ Hence, it is likely that the first human beings would have inherited adaptive instincts from their primate ancestors that would not have favored the formation of life-long exclusive pair bonds. I therefore propose that it would have been fitting for God to have given the original human beings a preteradaptive gift that would have remedied this weakness in their evolved natures so that they could have formed the Christ-like pair bonds that God had intended for them.

As another example, take the evolved limitation of our biased human cognition. As the *Catechism* teaches, human beings were created to come to know truth, especially the truth who is God: "Created in God's image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him."³¹ In fact, according to the *Catechism*, it is precisely their ability to reason that makes human beings like God: "God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions.... Man is rational and therefore like God."³² It should not be surprising, therefore, that St. Thomas makes a fittingness argument for the intellectual perfection of the first human couple:

Such an opinion, however [that the first human beings could have been deceived] is not fitting as regards the integrity of the primitive state of life; because, as Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei* xiv, 10), in that state of life "sin was avoided without struggle, and while it remained so, no evil could exist." Now it is clear that as truth is the good of the intellect, so falsehood is its evil, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* vi, 2). So that, as long as the state of innocence continued, it was impossible for the human intellect to assent to falsehood as if it were truth.³³

the Royal Society B 279 (2012): 2151–56; A. Cohas and D. Allaine, "Social structure influences extra-pair paternity in socially monogamous mammals," *Biology Letters* 5 (2009): 313–16; Griffith et al., "Extra pair paternity in birds: review of interspecific variation and adaptive function," *Molecular Ecology* 11 (2002): 2195–2212.

³⁰ Harcourt et al., "Testis weight, body weight, and breeding system in primates," *Nature* 293 (1981): 55–7.

³¹ CCC, §30.

³² *Ibid.*, §1730.

³³ *ST I*, q. 94, a. 4.

Human beings were created and perfected to the image of God as rational creatures ordered to truth.

However, it is clear from common experience that human beings often draw conclusions that are at odds with basic probability theory or simple logic. We have inherent cognitive biases, including false consensus, intergroup bias, confirmation bias, overconfidence bias, and the sinister attribution error, just to name a few, that lead to perceptual distortion, inaccurate judgment, and illogical interpretation.³⁴ Evolutionary psychologists have proposed that these cognitive “defects” are actually evolved adaptations that the first human beings inherited from their primate ancestors because the biases favored the generation and survival of offspring.³⁵ For example, intergroup bias causes us to overestimate the ability, the value, and the judgment of members of our immediate group at the expense of individuals we do not know.³⁶ Though it can skew reasoning, leading to false and irrational conclusions, this cognitive bias would also have been evolutionarily adaptive because it facilitates social cohesion and the formation of coalitional alliances.³⁷ This is probably why intergroup bias has also been found in another primate species, the rhesus macaque.³⁸ Hence, it is likely that the first human beings would have inherited adaptive instincts from their primate ancestors that would have made it difficult for them to make sound and valid arguments. I therefore propose that it would have been fitting for God to have given these original human persons a preteradaptive gift that would have remedied this weakness in their cognitive powers, allowing them to think clearly and truly, so that they could be the rational creatures that God intended them to be.

Finally, take the evolved limitation of our human proclivity to aggression. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus Christ gave

³⁴ J.I. Krueger and D.C. Funder, “Towards a balanced social psychology: Causes, consequences, and cures for the problem-seeking approach to social behavior and cognition,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 27 (2004): 313–27.

³⁵ Haselton et al., “Adaptive Rationality: An Evolutionary Perspective on Cognitive Bias,” *Social Cognition* 27 (2009): 733–63.

³⁶ For a review of the literature, see Hewstone et al., “Intergroup Bias,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 53 (2002): 575–604.

³⁷ McDonald et al., “Evolution and the psychology of intergroup conflict: the male warrior hypothesis,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society London B: Biological Sciences* 367 (2012): 670–79.

³⁸ Mahajan et al., “The Evolution of Intergroup Bias: Perceptions and Attitudes in Rhesus Macaques,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100 (2011): 387–405.

His disciples a new commandment: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:12–13). This commandment to love has been *the* guiding principle of the Christian life, whereby the believer is called to love God above all things for God's sake, and his neighbor as himself for the love of God.³⁹ This love for one's neighbor is to be selfless and hidden, directed towards the stranger and done for God alone. It is to mirror the love of Christ, who loved his own even unto death: "By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.'"⁴⁰ Finally, this love is a radical love wherein the Christian is called to love his enemies, to turn the other cheek, and to walk the extra mile. Human beings were created and perfected to the image of God as rational creatures ordered to love of God and love of neighbor.

However, as the front pages of daily newspapers make clear, human beings struggle to like—let alone love—their neighbors. In fact, they are inclined to aggression and to violence against the other. Evolutionary psychologists have posited that this proclivity to violence in some of its forms is an evolutionary adaptation. They note its ancient roots, its prevalence among primitive human societies, and its existence among the other great apes as evidence for this claim.⁴¹ There is mounting evidence that an evolved psychology of violence can be linked to adaptations that maintain and defend an individual's status within a social hierarchy, to adaptations that monitor resource availability and distribution, to adaptations that track the motivational state of individuals, and to adaptations that deter the targeted individual from repeating behaviors that are in conflict with the interests of the aggressor.⁴² Hence, it is likely that the

³⁹ CCC, §1822.

⁴⁰ CCC, §1823.

⁴¹ For reviews, see Aaron T. Goetz, "The evolutionary psychology of violence," *Psicothema* 22 (2010): 15–21; P. Lindenfors and B.S. Tullberg, "Evolutionary aspects of aggression: The Importance of Sexual Selection," *Advances in Genetics* 75 (2011): 7–22; and C. Boehm, "Ancestral hierarchy and conflict," *Science* 336 (2012): 844–47. The paragraph that follows is heavily indebted to these reviews.

⁴² For representative studies, see the following articles: T.H. Clutton-Brock and G.A. Parker, "Punishment in animal societies," *Nature* 373 (1995): 209–16; Goetz et al., "Punishment, proprietariness and paternity: Men's violence against women from an evolutionary perspective," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 13 (2008): 481–89; Griskevicius et al., "Aggress to impress: Hostility as an evolved context-dependent strategy," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96 (2009):

first human beings would have inherited adaptive instincts from their primate ancestors that would have made it difficult for them to fulfill the new commandment to love. Once again, therefore, I propose that it would have been fitting for God to have given these original human persons a preadaptive gift that would have remedied this weakness in their evolved natures so that they could be the charitable creatures that he had intended them to be.

To conclude, promiscuous human mate choice, biased human cognitive powers, and aggressive human inclinations are only three instances of the many instinctual adaptations that emerged after millennia of non-personal evolution, which are not ultimately perfective of persons. In my view, the preadaptive gifts would have ordered these inherited evolutionary adaptations so that they would have been compatible with the human vocation as personal creatures made to the image and likeness of God. Moreover, as I have proposed elsewhere, one can make a cogent argument that it was fitting for God to have created the original human beings via evolution rather than via special creation because the former better reveals his glory than the latter.⁴³ With this claim in mind, the preadaptive gifts would also have been fitting because they would have reconciled the apparently conflicting consequences arising from God's desire to create using instrumental non-personal creaturely causality to reveal His glory on the one hand, and His desire to create personal creatures destined to beatitude and divinization on the other. Given their fittingness, however, the absence of these gifts today demands an explanation for why they were lost in human history.

The Reality of Original Sin and the Historicity of the Fall in Light of Evolution

For St. Thomas, the historicity of the fall and the reality of original sin are not only revealed by Holy Scripture but also are seen in human death and in the wounds inflicted upon human nature: "Original justice was forfeited through the sin of our first parent; so that all the powers of the

980–94; M. Wilson and M. Daly, "Competitiveness, risk taking and violence: The young male syndrome," *Ethology and Sociobiology* 6 (1985): 59–63; M. Wilson and M. Daly, "An evolutionary psychological perspective on male sexual proprietariness and violence against wives," *Violence and Victims* 8 (1993): 271–94; and M. Wilson and M. Daly, "Life expectancy, economic inequality, homicide and reproductive timing in Chicago neighborhoods," *British Medical Journal* 314 (1997): 1271–74.

⁴³ For details, see my essay, "A Theological Fittingness Argument for the Evolution of *Homo sapiens*," *Theology and Science*.

soul are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue; which destitution is called a wounding of nature.”⁴⁴ Death and these wounds—St. Thomas enumerates four wounds in his *Summa theologiae*, ignorance, malice, weakness, and concupiscence—result from the loss of the preternatural gifts that was occasioned by the sin of our original parents.⁴⁵ They incline fallen human beings to vice and can only be remedied with the practice of the natural virtues and with the gift of the supernatural virtues and of grace. As St. Thomas will explain elsewhere in the *Summa theologiae*, the wounds prevent human beings in the state of corrupt nature from doing even the good that is connatural to them.⁴⁶

In my view, and in contrast to the views of the Christian theologians described in the introductory paragraphs of this essay, an evolutionary perspective does not undermine this traditional account of human origins and original sin. In fact, I propose that reflecting upon both our evolutionary origins and our present psychological constitution in light of divine revelation reveals that the wounds of fallen human nature are still very real. One manifestation of them is revealed when a human being’s inherited evolutionary adaptations hinder him from attaining his beatitude in God by inclining him to vicious activities that diminish his happiness as a person destined for the beatific vision. These wounds

⁴⁴ ST I-II, q. 85, a. 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid.: “Again, there are four of the soul’s powers that can be subject of virtue, as stated above (Question 61, Article 2), viz. the reason, where prudence resides, the will, where justice is, the irascible, the subject of fortitude, and the concupiscible, the subject of temperance. Therefore in so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance; in so far as the will is deprived of its order of good, there is the wound of malice; in so far as the irascible is deprived of its order to the arduous, there is the wound of weakness; and in so far as the concupiscible is deprived of its order to the delectable, moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence.”

⁴⁶ ST I-II, q. 109, a. 2: “But in the state of corrupt nature, man falls short of what he could do by his nature, so that he is unable to fulfill it by his own natural powers. Yet because human nature is not altogether corrupted by sin, so as to be shorn of every natural good, even in the state of corrupted nature it can, by virtue of its natural endowments, work some particular good, as to build dwellings, plant vineyards, and the like; yet it cannot do all the good natural to it, so as to fall short in nothing; just as a sick man can of himself make some movements, yet he cannot be perfectly moved with the movements of one in health, unless by the help of medicine he be cured.” For a recent discussion on the state of corrupt human nature according to Aquinas, see Reinhard Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 102–126.

exist today because, somewhere in time, the original human beings lost the preadapted gifts that would have remedied the evolved defects they had inherited from their non-personal ancestors. Therefore, these wounds point to the historicity of a fall in the recent evolutionary history of *Homo sapiens*.

Objections to Revisionist Accounts for the Origins of *Homo sapiens*

As we have seen, there are Christian theologians who would like to jettison and revise Christianity's traditional doctrines on the historicity of the fall and the reality of original sin because of evolutionary theory. They are convinced that this approach is the only way that we can maintain the intelligibility and coherence of Christian theology in light of contemporary science. They begin their reflections with the brute fact of evolution and move from there to a revisionist theological account that is at odds with the received tradition. Their assumption is that scientific knowledge is more certain than theological doctrine.

This revisionist project is objectionable for at least three reasons. First, and most significantly, their theological proposals lead to contradictions within the Christian worldview. Take the denial of the doctrines of original sin and of original justice. This would necessarily entail the theological opinion that sin flows from human nature as God had intentionally created it: God made human beings naturally prone to sin. However, this would then require that one hold that God deliberately willed to create human beings in a defective and an imperfect state that predisposed them to failure as they tried to become the God-like persons He had willed them to become. But this malicious deity is not the God whom Jesus Christ revealed to be the God who is Love! Why would a good and gracious Father who would not give his sons and daughters a snake if they asked for a fish (Lk 11:11) handicap his children from the start so that they would struggle and suffer to attain the beatitude that he had intended to freely give them? Revisionist theologians who alter our understanding of human origins, whether they explicitly acknowledge it or not, are also altering our understanding of God.

The revisionist narrative would also be problematic for churches and ecclesial communions that take the truth claims of doctrine seriously. In the Catholic Church, for instance, it is settled doctrine defined *de fide* that there was an original sin that led to the loss of original justice not

only in the original humans but also in their descendants.⁴⁷ Revisionist accounts that radically reject the settled doctrine of original sin would undermine the epistemological foundations for every other doctrinal claim made by a theological tradition that has affirmed:

The Roman Pontiff and the bishops are “authentic teachers... who preach the faith to the people entrusted to them, the faith to be believed and put into practice.” ... The supreme degree of participation in the authority of Christ is ensured by the charism of infallibility. This infallibility extends as far as does the deposit of divine Revelation; it also extends to all those elements of doctrine, including morals, without which the saving truths of the faith cannot be preserved, explained, or observed.⁴⁸

Revisionist theologians who alter our understanding of human origins—again, whether they explicitly acknowledge it or not—are also altering our self-understanding of how God guides and governs his holy people.

Finally, the revisionist approach is particularly troubling because it is not warranted. As the theological narrative proposed in this essay demonstrates, one can bring an evolutionary perspective into conversation with theology without jettisoning essential dogmatic truths. To do this successfully, one must believe that what God has told us about himself and his work in the world is sure knowledge that is more certain than any scientific claim.⁴⁹ Only after this affirmation of faith can one

⁴⁷ “If anyone asserts that Adam’s sin harmed only him and not his descendants and that the holiness and justice received from God that he lost only for him and not for us also..., let him be anathema.” Council of Trent, *Decree on Original Sin*, June 17, 1546. Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum. Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. Peter Hünermann, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash, 43rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), no. 1511.

⁴⁸ CCC, §2034–2035.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ST* I, q. 1, a. 5: “Since this [sacred] science is partly speculative and partly practical, it transcends all others speculative and practical. Now one speculative science is said to be nobler than another, either by reason of its greater certitude, or by reason of the higher worth of its subject-matter. In both these respects this science surpasses other speculative sciences; in point of greater certitude, because other sciences derive their certitude from the natural light of human reason, which can err; whereas this derives its certitude from the light of divine knowledge, which cannot be misled: in point of the higher worth of its subject-matter because this science treats chiefly of those things which by their sublimity tran-

move to incorporate the findings of science into a novel yet traditional theological synthesis that faithfully reflects upon our evolutionary past from the horizon of salvation history. A theological engagement with evolutionary theory is not faith seeking after science. Rather it should be about faith seeking understanding.

Conclusion

It has not escaped my attention that my theological fittingness argument for the historicity of the fall of *Homo sapiens* raises additional questions that need to be answered by theologians who are responding to Pope John Paul II's challenge to bring evolutionary theory into conversation with the Christian faith. For instance, how are we to speak about an Adam and an Eve in the context of what we know about recent hominin evolution and the dispersion of *Homo sapiens* out of Africa? Or, how should the discovery of a Y-chromosome Adam and a mitochondrial Eve, the last common male and female ancestor for all living human beings respectively, alter, if it should, our theological understanding of the original human beings? And for the Catholic theological tradition, especially, how are we to grapple with the monogenism vs. polygenism debate that was addressed in the papal encyclical *Humani generis*? These are only three of many disputed questions in systematic theology that have been raised by evolutionary theory. For now, I can say that I think that reasonable and faith-filled answers can be proposed to these questions, but these will have to be the subject of another essay.

N V

