

On Evolution.

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Question 70 selected for answer on the Bulletin reads: "What may a Catholic believe regarding Evolution?" Father Wenninger has prepared the following answer for the Bulletin:

The theory of evolution, in the form in which it is at present before the public, is a scientific hypothesis which seeks to determine the historical succession of the various species of animals and plants that have lived or are at present living on the earth. That the present flora and fauna represent but a very small and insignificant fraction of the forms that have lived on the earth is evident to anyone who has ever been into a museum of extinct forms of animal and plant life. The theory of evolution considers these fossil forms as the progenitors of forms now living. The species of plants and animals now living are; therefore, in no wise to be considered as having been directly created by God but as the final result of an evolution from species existing in former geological epochs. Let it be clearly understood that the theory of evolution does not attempt to explain the origin of life. It merely inquires into the genetic relations of systematic species, genera and families.

How far is the theory of evolution based on observed facts? The formation of new species is directly observed only in a few cases of very closely related forms. At least one of these cases has recently been disproved entirely by experimental methods. The scientific proofs for the probability of the theory become weaker and weaker as a greater number of forms is included. At present, it is pretty generally admitted that there is no evidence at all for a common genetic descent of all plants and animals from a single organism. A few or even many genetic series may be assumed in the vegetable and animal kingdoms. Just how numerous these assumptions shall be is left to individual judgment and discretion.

Absolute evolution must be entirely rejected because it postulates the eternity of matter, the spontaneous generation of life and the chance evolution of species. It rests on a materialistic and atheistic basis, the first principle of which is the denial of a personal Creator. Since it acknowledges neither Creator nor Lawgiver, it cannot account for the first beginning of the cosmos. It also rejects the assumption of a soul separate from matter, and becomes, therefore, materialistic.

There is, however, a Theistic Evolution. This postulates the intervention of a Creator in the production of the first organisms. It demands also a creative act for the origin of the human soul, since the soul cannot have its origin in matter.

Is the theory of evolution applicable to man? That God could have used natural evolutionary causes in the creation of man's body, is, in itself, not improbably. But there is no evidence that this happened as there is none that it did not happen. Science knows no animal ancestor of man, and her most searching inquiries have not found the slightest evidence for the animal origin of the human body.

The Catholic might very well suspend judgment on the evolution theory considered as a purely scientific hypothesis; for while this theory affords a good working basis for the explanation of not a few phenomena which other theories either do not explain at all or at best explain but partially, there is no certainty that the evolution theory is correct. The important thing to remember is that the Church has nothing to fear from any theory, least of all from the theory of evolution, for if the theory of evolution were absolutely and finally established tomorrow it would still be true that "in the beginning, God created."

Poor Father.

Those who failed to start the Novena for Fathers this morning may start tomorrow and end the day after the feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph. It won't look so good when your father compares notes with other fathers at the K.C. meeting and finds that his son didn't come across.

Prayers: Jim Quinn's brother is very sick. Two urgent special intentions are received.