

Evolution

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The unqualified word, evolution, immediately arouses in the mind a somewhat confused concept of the development of the various existing types of plants and animals, by generation, from other preexisting types. The concept formed is a confused one, because evolution, as an explanation of life in its various forms, is merely an hypothesis, as yet without any adequate proof, and also because the word may be taken in a number of different senses with a broader or more restricted meaning.

In its broadest sense, the theory of evolution is used by extreme evolutionists as a proof for the denial of the existence of a personal Creator. They argue that the first living organism was generated spontaneously from non-living matter, that is, that non-living matter in some way changed into living matter without the interference of any divine power. This living matter then gave rise to other forms of plant and animal life. Hence the advocates of this atheistic theory of evolution hold that everything, including living organisms, was generated spontaneously from preexisting matter, and the idea of God the Creator has no place in their explanation.

This theory is obviously unreasonable as well as contrary to Christian teaching. It does not dispense with the necessity of a God because, without Him, the origin of the preexisting matter could not be explained, nor could the manner in which life was infused into this matter. Furthermore, natural science has proven that spontaneous generation contradicts the facts of observation. Throughout the ages, science has never been able to change non-living matter into a living organism.

Thus, the theory of evolution in this, its broadest sense, is both atheistic and unreasonable.

Evolution in a more restricted sense, as a scientific hypothesis, holds that the various species of plants and animals on the earth were evolved by natural causes from one or several other species which existed in an earlier geological period. Thus, it does not concern itself with the origin of life, and does not dispense with the necessity of a Creator. This explanation is still only an hypothesis,

but it in no way conflicts with the teaching of the Church on this matter.

In yet another sense, the theory of evolution is broadened to include man along with other animals and plants in its explanation. How far is this theory applicable to man? At the outset it must be understood that evolution can in no way be connected with man's soul. The human soul is of a spiritual nature, independent of matter, and therefore cannot be generated. Every human soul is created directly by God. The theory of evolution, however, may be applied to man's body.

There is no proof either from reason or from revelation that God did not produce man's body from some early form of animal life. This does not imply that the human body has evolved from the monkey, but rather that the human body and the monkey along with various other forms of animal life have evolved from some other form of life of a very early geological period.

This explanation of the origin of the human body, although purely hypothetical, is backed up by some rather convincing evidence. On the other hand there are many arguments to support the theory of special creation as opposed to evolution. Owing to the rather repulsive nature of the latter theory, a great many people tend to favour the theory of special creation which holds that God created each species directly. However, no adequate proof has ever been given for either evolution or special creation.

Contrary to the prevalent opinion of the uninformed the theory of evolution as applied to man's body has never been officially condemned by the Church. On the contrary it has been propounded by St. Augustine and several other Catholic theologians. Until this theory has been proved, however, the Church tends to favor special creation as the more likely explanation of the origin of the numerous species of plants and animals in the world today.



He that cannot think is a fool;
He that will not is a bigot;
He that dare not is a slave.

—Inscription on the wall of Andrew Carnegie's Library.