

Creation / Evolution and the Catholic Church

By Gearóid Spáinneach

I'm going to talk about a contentious issue, which perhaps mystifies many people around the world. Tonight, I'm going to discuss evolution and the Catholic Faith in the context of the ongoing creation evolution debate.

So what is creation and what is evolution to begin with?

Well for this discussion, creation or creationism is the belief that God made the world under 10,000 years ago and that the first book of the Bible, Genesis is a historical account of the earth, the universe, as well as the animal kingdom along with Human beginnings.

Evolution is the belief that the universe, began from a cosmic big bang over billions of years ago and over millions and millions of years galaxies formed with stars and planets including this planet Earth. Once the planet Earth had been established then came water, vegetation, fish and birds along with the animal kingdom and last of all us Humans began to appear. Some believe that God evidently directed this naturalistic process, others believe it happened by pure random chance.

Can creationism be taken seriously?

At first glance the generally accepted answer is no! However this issue would not be an issue, if it were not for the fact that certain people, mainly of an evangelical protestant outlook feel that today's science, as technologically advanced that it has become is being used rather effectively to deny the existence of a personal God. Furthermore on closer inspection of the science of evolution, it appears that there are certain problems with the generally accepted theory which is not being made known to the public. The overwhelming majority of people and the bulk of scientist support the view that the theory of evolution is a scientific fact.

What is evolution?

Evolution or the theory of evolution is the idea that living cells change from one form to another, from a simple state of being to a complex state of being through a process known as natural selection and gene mutation. Natural selection is used for the breeding of dogs using a selection of existing dogs and their genetic code to produce a new breed of dog. This happens slowly over generations to achieve the perfect dog for a particular purpose. For example, a greyhound dog a sheep dog or a St. Bernard. The same natural selection processes can be used on horses, in fact all animals as well as plants.

So what are the problems with the theory of evolution that are not being made known to the public?

First things first, evolution is indeed a fact! However, there are many kinds of evolution. For the purpose of this talk I'll discuss two types. There is micro evolution and then there is a similar sounding macro evolution. One is a fact and the other has never been conclusively proven.

What is micro evolution?

Well, micro is small, like looking through a microscope at tiny insects for example. So, evolution as we discussed earlier is a change or a series of changes using natural selection methods. These are small changes within the animal kind. The key thing to realise here is that a dog remains a dog despite all the changes through the generations. It never becomes a horse for example and a horse never becomes a dog. Another key point to remember is that the animal that goes through the process of natural selection suffers from genetic loss, that is the wolf can eventually over generations and with a selection process become a greyhound, but the greyhound cannot become a wolf because of genetic loss.

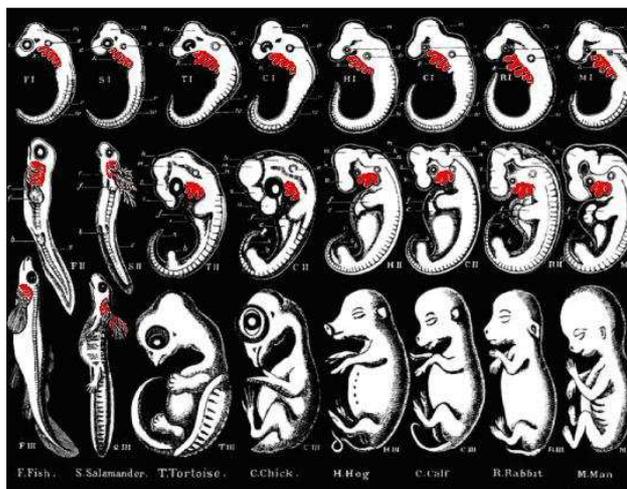
I'm sorry to say that although the words sound very alike, almost too alike, there is a big difference between the two. Well macro evolution is the idea that one animal changes into a more complex animal over millions of years. It is said to achieve this through genetic mutations, natural selection and survival of the fittest parameter. We learn a lot about this kind of evolution in our schools and in our universities.

Basically, a simple living cell mutates and becomes a more complex cell over time. This process repeats itself and eventually you've got a sophisticated living organism that through natural selection processes adapts itself to its environment. The more successful the adaptation, the better it's chances of survival and thus the term survival of the fittest. Over more time and through genetic mutations, natural selection and survival methods, the organism becomes an animal and so on until it becomes a human being. The fact that man looks very similar to a monkey or guerrilla, makes this idea very possible indeed. Remember, a key feature of macro evolution is genetic mutations.

So what are the problems with the theory of evolution then?

Evolution is taught as fact in schools, through the media, and by main stream scientist. But some of the school education is known by mainstream science to be false. I'll provide one example here; this example is Haeckel's embryonic diagram.

What is Haeckel's embryonic diagram?



Haeckel's embryonic diagram is on the left.

Haeckel's drawings of embryos at three different stages for (from left to right): fish, salamander, tortoise, chick, hog, calf, rabbit and man (from 1876, Plates VI-VII). The supposed "gill-slits" are shown in grey.

Please look at my illustration provided, Haeckel had proposed the concept that all life from inception, i.e. the embryonic stage looked the same. Basically he proposed that

human life, animal life and fish life all looked almost identical as an embryo in its early stages of development. He allegedly did a series of test in his laboratory, but in fact falsified some pictures of the embryo developments from various fish, animals and humans at the early stage of life. He compiled these pictures and published his findings to the scientific community. All the embryos look the same along the top, as you can see if you have the illustration at hand. This falsified evidence was accepted for many years as a fact and was used to promote macro evolution.

Now philosophically speaking, the idea that people got into their head was that we humans from conception went through the various evolutionary stages from our conception, as a simple cell, to a tadpole, to a fish, to an amphibian, to a pig, to a monkey, to full human being. Well that's a general gist of Haeckel's theory. I have not the time to go into anything further about it except to say that the idea of Haeckel's embryonic diagram has been dis-proven by today's science. In fact there is little in common between an embryo of a Human and that of a fish.

What was the negative effect of Haeckel's embryonic diagram?

For the Catholic Church, this is plain and simple. Contraception got a foothold on the world through this seemingly harmless idea. It seemed nonsensical to advocate a non-contraceptive stance in the 1960's especially if at the early stages after conception, you are only a tadpole or a fish for example. After all you are not exactly killing a human being are you? As some forms of contraception inadvertently do? So it is clear from what I've just said, Haeckel's embryonic diagram, which is in fact a hoax, owned up by the scientific community is a deadly dangerous idea. Worse again, it is still used as evidence for macro evolution in school text books today.

Back to Creationism

Would you believe it if I demonstrated to you, a quick geological lab test that rocks and geological strata can be produced rapidly and does not need millions of years to form. I will now provide a simple and quick test. What do we need for this test. One empty glass, cooking oil, rock salts and water. Pour all three elements into the empty glass, then let it all settle. Now, look at the rock salts make their way to the bottom while the cooking oil fights its way to the top, notice too the water finds its home in the middle. When all is settled, you get a geological strata. Now the rock salt is heaviest and falls to the bottom and the cooking oil is the lightest and goes to the top. Gravity determines what goes where and not time in this instance.

What does this test mean?

Well, rock formation can easily be explained with the use of water, earth and lava flow. Now imagine the world was a giant empty container and God filled it with three elements, lava, water and earth. The water would carry the other two elements for awhile, but eventually everything would settle down at a rapid pace if the water was still. The heavier material would go to the bottom and the lighter would go to the top. In the given demonstration case, water. On top of this, the weight of the water now above would then compact the lava and earth below, and finally if the water was separated from the remaining elements by strong heat rays from the Sun, these elements would harden and become rock like.

You can try another simple test every morning on your way to work with a bowl of micro waved porridge. Eat as much porridge as you like, but leave a small bit of scrap. Now don't clean up after you, go to work and leave the central heating on as that is important (You may need the consent of the bill payer to do this). After work, come home to your snug house and take a look at your neglected scrap of porridge. The water has dried up and the porridge has become rock like. This symbolically demonstrates that water can mould a lot of rock very rapidly and when the water dries up, well, do you see where I'm going with all this? I'm basically saying that rock can be formed rapidly.

Ok, so what is the position of the Catholic Church on the creation evolution debate?

The position is, the Catholic Church has no problem with the theory of evolution, so long as it does not affect your faith in God (emphasis mine). Now my reading from this is that if evolution has inadvertently affected your faith in God, then it naturally has a problem with the kind of evolution you've been indoctrinated with. You must believe as a catholic that there was two original parents according to the catechism. At present genesis is considered a story with a certain truth by many within the church. On saying that, Polygamy is not an acceptable teaching from the churches point of view as this would mean we had many first parents...

What did Pope John Paul II say in 1996 about evolution?

Pope John Paul stated that "evolution is now more than a hypothesis", end of quote.

What did he mean?

It appears that he is approving of the theory of evolution here. However it is open to interpretation and Pope John Paul II was not making a public statement on this issue, he was addressing the 'Pontifical Academy of Science' which is an institution funded by the Catholic Church.

What did Pope Benedict say in 2006 in his opening address as Pope?

He stated "We are not simply a product of evolution", end of Quote. This was a very notable statement, especially from the most prominent man in the Catholic Church.

What did he mean?

Pope Benedict did not clarify this statement scientifically.¹ However, we are all aware of the decline in numbers in the church and the culture of relativism that permeates the once Christian west, particularly Europe. He did go on to say "each of us is a thought of God". It appears here that he recognises that young people have lost their sense of the supernatural.

¹ The Irish Times printed an Article with regards Pope Benedicts views on evolution; Published on the 12th April 2007, p. 11

What did Pope Pius XII say about evolution in 1950?

In *Humani Generis*, an Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, he states in paragraph 5 and 6

5. If anyone examines the state of affairs outside the Christian fold, he will easily discover the principle trends that not a few learned men are following. Some imprudently and indiscreetly hold that evolution, which has not been fully proved even in the domain of natural sciences, explains the origin of all things, and audaciously support the monistic and pantheistic opinion that the world is in continual evolution. Communists gladly subscribe to this opinion so that, when the souls of men have been deprived of every idea of a personal God, they may the more efficaciously defend and propagate their dialectical materialism.

6. Such fictitious tenets of evolution which repudiate all that is absolute, firm and immutable, have paved the way for the new erroneous philosophy which, rivalling idealism, immanentism and pragmatism, has assumed the name of existentialism, since it concerns itself only with existence of individual things and neglects all consideration of their immutable essences.

It appears quite strongly here that Pope Pius XII had serious reservations about the theory of evolution. For a view the full [Humani Generis document](#)

What did the Polish member of European Parliament deputy and biology Professor Maciej Giertych call for in October 2006 at the European Parliament?

Maciej Giertych (a Catholic family man), called for an end to the monopoly of Darwinian theory in the teaching of evolution in schools.

Why?

Maciej stated, 'I am a scientist, I am a geneticist, my specialty is population genetics and I reject the theory of evolution on the basis of the field of science I represent. I find that in many fields of science there are scientists who reject the theory of evolution because in their fields they also find evidence against the theory.' End of quote.

For past decades, biology classes in Poland and around the world have focused practically exclusively on Darwinian theory when tackling the subject of evolution. Prof. Giertych and his colleagues see room for reform in this respect. Notice here, he is not fully against evolution, he just sees room for reform in this area with regards how it is thought.

In conclusion...

In conclusion to this discussion, I see that, although the Catholic Church does not see any problems with the belief in the theory of evolution so long as it does not affect ones faith in God. It is worth noting that much discussion will have to take place among Catholic theologians with regards this theory as it most certainly has affected many of those of the Christian faith especially here in Europe.

This discussion was given at a Legion of Mary Presidium in the 'The Holy Family Centre' in Prussia Street, Dublin 7, Ireland by Catholic layman and 'Daylight Origins' webmaster Gearóid Spáinneach on the 20/11/2006