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The Feud Between Science and the Church

I believe many have experienced the “battle” between religion and science at some point in college or else. One of the main fronts in this war is the one between evolution and faith in the Creator. As an All-Science education major here at the University, I have had many a conversation with my peers, with everyone assuming we’re all on the same page about degrading church and faith, disbelieving science and religion could be anything more than enemies. There is always that awkward pause when I throw out a question or two after stating my beliefs, and the confusion of breaking the assumptions that follow. It is quite unbelievable to them that I can pursue both science and God. In the following paper, I hope to discuss what evolution is, why there is this separation of religion and science in the time of Darwin and now, and what prominent figures of the Church have to say.

Darwin has had many fans and many detesters in the years following his work, but I want to focus on where his hypothesis (now a law) agrees or not with that of the Church. I will endeavor to avoid any other detail that may derail me, as oft happens in my writings. I would like it to be known that Charles Darwin was a man of faith himself, and, I rather doubt, someone who would have wanted the result of his work to lead to this. “This” being the conflict between science and religion. In the world and culture of his time, many diverging ideas were developing. During the previous and continuing

Age of Enlightenment, man thought they could explain everything. For a deeper look into the stances of the Christian people in this era, I recommend reading the previous posts by Ahlers and Rossi. The inherent cockiness of humanity showed its face in the idea that we could figure out and therefore manipulate everything in the world. Another circulating opinion was that miracles do not exist, either. Many of these ideas arose from the protestant reformation and it devolved into the attitude of believing: God is impersonal and you cannot know him except through creation. Therefore, the sacraments became void and Natural Law became its own god. The need for intercession, too, was tossed to the wayside.

Perforce, Darwin's time and the following was a period of separation between church and state, where the attempt was made to put religion in a box and keep it there. Even today, one of the authors of the research material I read in preparation wrote of how religion and education-- including the sciences as well--should stay in their lanes. Though it was argued that science and scripture are not nemeses, they should not be bedfellows, either, the author conjectured (Kover). The intention here, one hopes, is good, but this perspective is at fault as well. The political and social leaders of this time, pursue the attitude of putting God in a box where you just let Him out sometimes on Sundays, and removes the relationship, the permeation of God, who is all-present out of the picture. We have taken a look at the basis of where the enmity between scientist and saint arose; let's take a step into the battle raging today.

So, what is the theory of evolution? Let's start with what science is. From the Oxford Dictionary, "*the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.*" It studies the *physical and natural world*. Science and the Scientific Method are not a practice that will allow you to study the *spiritual* realm. It is a law, created by God, that orders the world and is meant to describe the world and all in the physical plane, but not the spiritual. I would like you to think on the word *orders* a bit. For clarity, take a look into the Second Law of Thermodynamics. To summarize, entropy is always increasing in the universe. From *LiveScience*: "It states that as energy is transferred or transformed, more and more of it is wasted. The Second Law also states that there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state" (Lucas). To refresh, entropy is the degree of a system's disorder, the chaos of a system. The point being made is that science itself is an attempt to order what is tending toward disorder- but where did we humans get this desire for order? Before I jump down any further into this voluminous philosophical rabbit-hole, let's return to the subject of evolution.

Now, evolution is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "the process by which different kinds of living organisms are thought to have developed and diversified from earlier forms during the history of the earth." Also, expounded further by BMC Research: "The fact of evolution—that is, that organisms are related by common descent" (Gregory). Evolution is the theory that the living of the earth, creation, came

from one source. They developed from generation to generation into what we have today. The difficulty with the scientific law arises when one extrapolates from it:

1. God is unnecessary and impersonal (a Watchmaker God).
2. Humans are just like any other animals, don't have souls, and are not made in the image and likeness of God.
3. Scripture is therefore null--the book of Genesis is obsolete.
4. There is no Divine Plan in the world.

To riposte these statements, we shall look to greater minds. Before doing so, I want to reiterate; evolution is only a biological process of how organisms change, not an argument about the origin of life.

First and foremost, I recommend reading Pope Pius XII's *Humani generis* and reflections and writings by St. Augustine and Pope St. John Paul II, *De Genesi ad litteram* and his address(es) to the Pontifical Academy of Science respectively. There are many other resources at your disposal on this topic. They speak of Biblical interpretation, the danger of fundamentalism, and more. From JP II:

"The Bible itself speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its make-up, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise but in order to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe. Sacred scripture wishes simply to declare that the world was created by God, and in order to teach this truth it expresses itself in the terms of the cosmology in use at the time of the writer. Any other teaching about the origin and

make-up of the universe is alien to the intentions of the Bible, which does not wish to teach how the heavens were made but how one goes to heaven.”

Some of the points being presented speak to the fact that the Bible is not a science book. More accurately, not a collection of science books. It is a collection of books on the building of relationship between us and the Lord, the story of God and His people, the path of salvation of souls (I could go on for a while).

Now that we've explored science and evolution a bit and how Church leaders have navigated the “problem,” let's end with a look into a few last notes. As Grace eloquently wrote in an earlier piece, church and state are not at odds, but rather: “Science and religion, when properly understood, are not actually in conflict, but are complementary.” Evolution broadened the gap between them, and society and others tried and continue to try to force you onto one side to propagate more disunity. Why is there such dysphoria regarding this topic then, if there is little actual dissension? Both of these sides are, purportedly, on the side of “Truth,” and both are quite fearful of being wrong (Kover). For either side, if they are wrong, they believe their world will fall apart. For one side, if they “lost,” God might actually exist, but for the other side, God will be “proved” gone, or in some way not what they thought.

In conclusion, I endeavored to lay out the situation surrounding this topic, and I strived to reveal why the conflict is needless. I entreat you to look further yourself and

examine the issue with eyes of clarity. We only briefly touched on a few points, but a short list of resources can be found below for your convenience, as well as the ones provided in the piece. Please do not be afraid to dig deeper into contemporary church “issues” like this one, but instead search for the truth in everything.

Works Cited

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More Resources on the Topic

http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html

<https://catholicreview.org/catholic-church-has-evolving-answer-on-reality-of-adam-and-eve/>

https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a1.htm