

MIDLAND DAILY NEWS

Friday reader's view: Unsubstantiated

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To the editor:

In a recent letter, Barbara Phillips cites Michael Houts, a nuclear engineer who claimed in a creationist website that there were numerous scientific problems with evolution. However, his arguments have never been published in any scientific journal and remain unsubstantiated. Likewise for the 3,000 scientists on Jerry Bergman's list of scientists who discount evolution "on scientific grounds." How many of these have actually published their supposed rebuttals of evolution in scientific journals? Zero. No doubt these scientists have published on other topics in their professional specialties, but none have published in bona fide scientific journals any data contradicting evolution or supporting creation.

Creationist websites are chock full of opinions, arguments and suppositions about how evolution can't possibly be real, but these are never backed up in reputable scientific journals. Creationist literature is always self-published or published in non-scientific outlets not subject to review for scientific rigor. The world is still waiting for the first scientific article documenting evidence for creation. Meanwhile, many thousands of scientific articles documenting evolution are piling up, a few of which I provided in my letter of 2-11-15.

Ms. Philips claims that accepting evolution is immoral and atheistic. Are Popes and Cardinals atheists? Pope Benedict XVI addressed evolution in his speech of July 26, 2007, printed in the New York Post. He said he found the debate over creationism and evolution in the United States puzzling. He pointed out that evolution and religion are wrongly presented "as if they were alternatives that are exclusive — whoever believes in the creator could not believe in evolution, and whoever asserts belief in evolution would have to disbelieve in God." He said that "this contrast is an absurdity" and described evolution as a reality that enriches our understanding of life and being. In an October 2005 speech, Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn called the theory of evolution "one of the very great works of intellectual history," and said he sees "no problem combining belief in the Creator with the theory of evolution." In his 1996 Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Pope John Paul II noted that humans evolved biologically but that the spiritual nature of humans is unexplained by science. In a 1981 address to this Academy he said the Bible does not "teach how heaven was made, but how one goes to heaven." Pope Pius XII in his 1950 Encyclical *Humani generis* stated that there was no opposition between evolution and the doctrine of faith, given the understanding that while the human body takes its origin from pre-existing living matter, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God.

As explained by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and science historian Dr. Edward J. Larson, the Catholic Church teaches that the human soul was created, and could have been imparted into an evolved human body. Larson stated "The Catholic Church has held the line and maintained the

position that the human soul is separate, and that which creates humans as special, that which creates humans in the image of God, that that was a divine act.” I concur that there is no conflict between science and a religious belief that at some point in evolution, humans acquired an immortal soul. Science takes no position on the existence or non-existence of the soul, hence there is no conflict.

The Catholic Church is not alone in its stance supporting the compatibility of evolution and belief in a Creator. The Clergy Letter Project is a letter signed so far by almost 13,000 Christian clergy plus hundreds of rabbis and other spiritual leaders. The Christian clergy represent the Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian faiths, among others. The Letter states in part: “We believe that the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth, one that has stood up to rigorous scrutiny and upon which much of human knowledge and achievement rests. To reject this truth or to treat it as ‘one theory among others’ is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and transmit such ignorance to our children.” The entire Letter can be read online by doing a Google search. The letter also provides the names of clergy who have signed it, including hundreds from Michigan who could provide spiritual counsel on this issue.

As a child in the 1960s, I was introduced to the wonders of evolution by the nuns who taught at the Catholic grade school I attended. Therefore I never saw any incongruity between evolution and religion. But I know that people from other backgrounds may find the notion of Christians accepting evolution jolting and may benefit from talking to these clergy. I also urge any local clergy who were unaware of the project to sign the letter.

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Midland