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GUEST VIEW: Darwin's theory is true and consistent with religion

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A Sept. 4 letter to the editor denigrating evolution contains numerous errors and misunderstandings which perpetuate the myth that science and religion are incompatible.

Darwin's theory of evolution doesn't contribute to "lawlessness and godlessness." Millions of people here and in other countries who accept the reality of evolution live exemplary lives. (And many "God-fearing" people commit crimes.)

Science, in general, and evolution, in particular, do not deny God's existence. Science deals only with "natural" phenomena involving space, time, matter and energy. God exists outside space and time, so science cannot say anything about God's existence or nonexistence. Science is not an atheist "religion." True, some scientists are atheists — but so are many businessmen, plumbers and farmers.

Like many businessmen, plumbers and farmers, many scientists are religious. One example is Francis Collins, an evangelical Christian who directed the Human Genome Project and is currently director of the National Institutes of Health.

Collins is one of many scientific consultants to The Clergy Letter Project (TheClergyLetterProject.org). The project aims to "demonstrate that religion and science can be compatible and to elevate the quality of the debate of this issue." It contains separate letters signed by more than 17,000 Christian, Jewish, Unitarian and other clergy members.

The Christian Clergy Letter, signed by more than 15,000 clergy, reads in part, "We the undersigned, Christian clergy from many different traditions, believe that the timeless truths of the Bible and the discoveries of modern science may comfortably coexist. 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. We believe that among God's good gifts are human minds capable of critical thought and that the failure to fully employ this gift is a rejection of the will of our Creator."

For the last 15 years, the project has sponsored “Evolution Weekends” near Darwin's Feb. 12 birthday. Congregations address issues on a theme related to science and religion through sermons, discussion groups, conversations and seminars.

This year, 232 congregations in 42 states, D.C., and six countries participated. More than 1,000 scientists from all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, and 31 countries have signed on to serve as technical consultants to congregations.

All of the above demonstrates that the author of the 9/4 letter is clearly out of step with modern scientists and clergy. The supposed incompatibility of science and religion is actually a continuation of the age-old theological debate over whether particular sacred texts should be interpreted literally. For one example, St. Augustine's 4th century A.D. book, “On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis” was not written in response to either the scientific revolution or Darwin's theory.

Theology aside, the letter's author is also wrong about evidence for evolution. We have found numerous fossils intermediate between groups such as fish and amphibians[1] and other major life forms. In addition, we have observed the origin of new species in both nature[2] and in the lab[3].

Evolution is consistent with all known scientific laws. The writer cited the second law of thermodynamics. It states that in isolated systems matter goes from order to disorder. Anti-evolutionists mistakenly claim that abiogenesis and evolution represent increases in order and contradict the second law. However, living things are not isolated systems. Growth of human beings from fertilized egg to adult shows that order and complexity can increase.[4] Anti-evolutionists cannot deny the facts of embryology and human development, but blindly deny evolution.

In conclusion, the writer of the Sept. 4 letter is grossly mistaken about both science and religion. He is trying to push his religion into public school science classes, to unconstitutionally indoctrinate the children of those of us who don't subscribe to his narrow, distorted and false views.

[1] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiktaalik#Discovery>

[2] https://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/news/100201_speciation

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laboratory_experiments_of_speciation

[4] <https://www.learnreligions.com/second-law-of-thermodynamics-and-evolution-3994654>

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