



### 1.3 Evolution or creation?

The theory of evolution, which is taught in schools everywhere, is not in itself contrary to Catholic faith. It was a Catholic priest, Fr. Gregor Mendel (†1884), who developed the theory of genetic heredity, which provides the foundation for the modern understanding of Darwinian evolution. The human body could well have evolved in some way.

#### # Survival of the fittest?

But from knowledge of evolution we should not conclude that people are merely animals or that human actions must be guided by the principles discovered by Charles Darwin (†1882), whereby species flourish when only the strongest survive and evolve (as in the “survival of the fittest”). Such ideas can lead to social injustice and even to terrible violence against the weaker members of society (think of the National Socialism of the Nazis, which championed the survival of the fittest). The theory of evolution can help us to understand the way living organisms develop over time, but it must not be a basis for denying the equal

dignity of all human beings, who whether weak or strong have been created by God in his own image. For this reason, we as Christians have a particular concern for the weaker members of society. The social teaching of the Church is based on this (SEE TWEET 4.45).

#### # Human animals?

All animals have a remarkable ability to adapt to their natural habitat, and they have a power to act and a desire to flourish not found in machines. Human beings, however, have capacities far beyond those of animals. To illustrate this difference, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (†1951) said that a dog knows its master, but not that its master is coming home the day after tomorrow. G. K. Chesterton (†1936) observed that birds build nests, but they do not build nests in the Gothic style (EVERLASTING MAN). Such examples illustrate that animals do not think in terms of time or about any of the abstract ideas that make possible language, art, architecture, ethics, science, philosophy, or theology. We human

#### What about dinosaurs and aliens?

The existence of dinosaurs has clearly been proven by palaeontologists and other scientists. The earth is many billions of years old and has gone through different geological phases. This does not contradict the Catholic view on the origin of the earth. Pope John Paul II once said: “The truth cannot contradict the truth” (OCT. 22, 1996). Real scientific truths will never be in contradiction with the truth of the faith (SEE TWEET 1.5). Therefore, the Church is not afraid of science.

Once in a while we are surprised by vague photographs that seem to depict a UFO or an extraterrestrial creature. Some say God wanted to practice first before he created human beings, and so he made aliens. But there is no indication at all of this in the Bible or in good science.

Although astronomers can see ever more of the universe, life beyond earth has not been found, although there are planets where that is a theoretical possibility. Even if there is life outside earth, it has been created by God in love. For this reason, we do not have to worry about questions concerning aliens.

#### Read more

*Evolution:* CCC 282–289; CCCC 51; YOUCAT 42. *The soul:* CCC 362–368, 382; CCCC 69–70; YOUCAT 62–63.

beings, on the other hand, are able to think abstractly. Our thoughts and desires can go beyond our instinct to survive in this moment. This supports the idea of human beings having immortal souls. Animals are satisfied to be what they are, but human persons seek ultimate happiness and are discontent with finite, created things alone.

#### # Immortal soul

Our souls make us the persons that we are and give us our own selves, which can make conscious choices. Unlike animals we can make choices based on our sense of what is morally right and wrong. We do so by consulting our conscience, our knowledge of good and evil (SEE TWEET 4.1 AND 4.12). God loves every human being so much that he gave each one a soul that will continue to live after his body dies. God created our souls the very moment that our lives began, at conception (SEE TWEET 4.26). Our souls are the core of our lives, which make us human, giving us minds and wills. Because we have human souls, we are able to love God and one another.



Evolution and creation are not mutually exclusive. Evolution is evident in nature, but we, with our souls, have been created by God.