

Pastor's Column

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“Intelligent Design and Evolution”

In light of the on-going debate between “intelligent design” and “the theory of evolution” proponents that is taking place in a variety of School Boards across the United States, I share with you an article from the secular press regarding an article that recently appeared in the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano:

Vatican Newspaper Publishes Article Saying ‘Intelligent Design’ Not Science

By: Nicole Winfield—Associated Press

The Vatican newspaper has published an article saying “intelligent design” is not science and that teaching it alongside evolutionary theory in school classrooms only creates confusion.

The article in Tuesday's editions of L'Osservatore Romano (01.17.06) was the latest in a series of interventions by Vatican officials—including the Pope—on the issue that has dominated headlines in the United States.

The author, Fiorenzo Facchini, a professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Bologna, laid out the scientific rationale for Darwin's theory of evolution, saying that in the scientific world, biological evolution “represents the interpretative key of the history of life on Earth.”

He lamented that certain American “creationists” had brought the debate back to the “dogmatic” 1800's, and said their arguments weren't science but ideology.

“This isn't how science is done,” he wrote. “If the model proposed by Darwin is deemed insufficient, one should look for another, but it's not correct from a methodological point of view to take oneself away from the scientific field pretending to do science.”

Intelligent design “doesn't belong to science and the pretext that it be taught as a scientific theory alongside Darwin's explanation is unjustified.” He wrote, “It only creates confusion between the scientific and philosophical and religious planes.”

Supporters of “intelligent design” hold that some features of the universe and living things are so complex they must have been designed by a higher intelligence. Critics say intelligent design is merely creationism—a literal reading of the Bible's story of creation—camouflaged in scientific language and say it does not belong in science curriculum.

Facchini said he recognized some Darwin proponents erroneously assume that evolution explains everything. “Better to recognize that the problem from the scientific point of view remains open,” he said.

But he concluded: “In a vision that goes beyond the empirical horizon, we can say that we aren't men by chance or by necessity, and that the human experience has a sense and a direction signaled by a superior design.”

The article echoed similar arguments by the Vatican's chief astronomer, the Rev. George Coyne, who said “intelligent design” wasn't science and had no place in school classrooms.

Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed in off-the-cuff comments in November that the universe was made by an “intelligent project” and criticized those who in the name of science say its creation was without direction or order.

F. n. Mike