

Evolution as work of God acceptable dogma, pope says

By Frances D'emilio
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

VATICAN CITY — In his most comprehensive statement yet on evolution, Pope John Paul II insisted that faith and science can co-exist, telling scientists that Darwin's theories are sound as long as they take into account that cre-

ation was the work of God.

The pope's message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, a lay organization meeting in Rome this week, recalled how Pope Pius XII proclaimed in 1950 that evolutionary doctrine was a "serious hypothesis."

In the statement released Wednesday, the pope said new

knowledge has confirmed that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution is "more than a hypothesis."

Darwin's theory — that humankind was the product of a slow, evolutionary process from early forms of life — conflicts with the literal Biblical account of creation, that the world, including humans, was created in six days.

Although the pope has in the past made references to the growing scientific consensus behind evolution, his latest comments were the clearest and most comprehensive in support of Darwin's conclusions.

The fact that he issued the statement to a group of lay scientists added additional resonance to the Vatican's position that evolution

and faith in God can co-exist.

By not challenging the evidence supporting evolution, the Vatican places the Roman Catholic viewpoint in stark contrast to that of some fundamentalist Christians, who believe the Biblical account of

Creation is literal.

John Paul cautioned that the Church and the faithful must remain firm on two points: Creation itself is the work of God, and human beings have another dimension beyond the physical.



▣ Pope John Paul II criticizes "Bible-only" thinking in his latest encyclical letter, "Faith and Reason" (*Fides et Ratio*). The pope, a onetime philosophy professor, warns against "fideism," the idea that rational knowledge has little value for faith. He condemns "biblicism" as "one currently widespread" symptom of the problem. John Paul defines biblicism as the tendency "to make the reading and exegesis of Scripture the sole criterion of truth." A pretty good synonym for biblicism would be traditional Protestantism, according to *Christian News* (11/23/98). The rule of Christian faith, the pope claims, is unity among three sources of truth: "Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium [teaching authority] of the Church."