

NEWS AND COMMENTS

CREATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Although the case for evolution was supposedly won by the famous lawyer Clarence Darrow at the Scopes (“Monkey”) Trial in 1925, it has been well documented that in the succeeding years evolution was downgraded or removed from high-school biology textbooks. While the decades following the Scopes Trial were quiet, renewed interest in the issue of evolution and creation resurged in the 60s and 70s, especially in California, Texas, and Tennessee, where numerous battles over textbooks have been waged regarding the inclusion of creation in the public-school science curriculum. Evolutionists believed themselves to have won a decided victory after the 1981 Arkansas trial when U.S. District Judge William R. Overton issued a firm decision stating that it is unconstitutional to *require* that creation be taught in public-school science classes. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this decision, and in Louisiana a trial is pending concerning a modification of Arkansas Act 590. Yet some trends are already becoming evident.

Some evolutionists have expressed concern that in consequence of efforts to win legal battles, the public has been made to realize that some creditable scientists do not believe in evolution. Furthermore, evolution is being downgraded in the elementary and secondary textbooks, not because the authors desire these changes, but because of a strongly competitive market. A textbook that does not emphasize evolution sells to more school districts than one that does, and the economics of the textbook industry have probably done more to reduce the thrust of evolution in the public schools than any other single factor.

A 1982 Gallup Poll has shown that the naturalistic evolution presented in science textbooks is not widely accepted. Of 1518 adults queried, only 9% believed that man has developed without God’s aid over millions of years from less advanced forms of life. Thirty-eight percent believed that man developed from less advanced forms of life *with* God’s aid, while 44% believed that God created man within the past 10,000 years, and 9% did not know. With such beliefs at the popular level, the considerable objection to teaching only evolution in the public schools is not surprising. When family religious beliefs are attacked through required public-school classes, some negative reaction is inevitable. Whether this is contributing to the increase in private-school attendance is a matter of conjecture.

During the past three years evolutionists have reacted with an unprecedented series of publications against creation, including three symposium volumes and at least half a dozen books. The American Geological Institute has published a pamphlet entitled “Why Scientists Believe in Evolution” (it should probably be more accurately entitled “Why *Some* Scientists Believe in Evolution”), and the National Academy of Sciences has likewise published a well-written and attractively illustrated brochure entitled *Science and Creationism — A View from the National Academy of Sciences*. To read much of these materials is a sobering experience. Some of the errors made by creationists are well depicted, while the errors of evolutionists are minimized. Likewise there is unbelievable ignorance, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation of the arguments for creation. Most of the arguments used against creation are not new, and there is considerable duplication of thought and authors. In the three symposium volumes already mentioned above, five authors appear at least twice.

Slightly different is the new symposium volume entitled *Is God a Creationist? He isn't! ...* at least not according to the authors who put little stock into the authenticity of the biblical record.

Overall the stage has changed dramatically. In the past, evolutionists largely dismissed creation as a nonthreatening myth held by a minority. Apparently this is no longer the case, and the defense of evolution is taking on an apologetic fervor.

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