

## Creationism in Public Schools

Julius B. Poppinga, a New Jersey attorney who is president of the evangelical Christian Legal Society, believes that parochial, tax credits and alternative school systems are not the answer for the Christian. He says that government and educators must recognize the pluralism that exists in the public schools and adapt their methods accordingly. He suggests that creationism should be taught along with evolution in science classes, and both should be equally regarded as theories.

There is a growing demand, both in the U.S. and Canada, for the creation theory to be considered in the public school science classes. Many evangelicals endorse the "two-model" approach in public school teaching of both evolution and creation. The Institution of Creation Research (ICR) is giving extensive help to all who desire equal time in the schools. In supporting this effort, the ICR says that it is responding to the frustration of parents whose children are being "literally programmed" by the exclusive teaching of evolution.

Former head of the Alberta Teacher's Association, Ivan Stonehocker, a member of the Evangelical Free Church, is leading efforts to mandate the teaching of creationism in Alberta's classrooms. Stonehocker says, "All we ask is a balance, not a bias, in scientific teaching".

The Fellowship Executive Council of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada endorsed a plan of its research and service committee to enlist their members in Ontario to write 10,000 letters to the Ontario Minister of Education to request equal time for the teaching of scientific creationism. This letter writing campaign brought a deluge of mail to Queen's Park.

The director of the ICR, Henry Morris, who has a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, says that evolution is just as much a religion - for humanists and atheists - as creationism is for Christians. Both origin models are theories. I agree. Yet the issue of creationism versus evolution appears limited only to the science classes. Students are encouraged to evaluate both models. Dr. Bill Quick, a University of Regina biologist, says that it's time our educators saw creation and evolution as testable models and treated them as such. The students can examine the evidences presented to them and determine which model is more accurate.

The cause espoused by Christian parents in mandating equal time is laudable. But is it realistic? Can the discussion of evolution versus creation be limited just to natural science? No! Evolution is no longer seen as merely a working hypothesis. It has been elevated to the rank of a world and life view - a religion. It is now the key unlocking the secrets of the origin and existence of all things.

Many secular scientists are so convinced of the evolution model that they consider it no longer a matter of debate. Dr Carl Sagan, chief writer and host narrator of the new, television series *Cosmos*, states to creationists that evolution is not theory but fact.

Evolutionism is a religious commitment - just as humanism, atheism or Islam are. Evolutionists have returned to primitive natural religions which deified the powers of nature and worshipped them. Julian Huxley, in his article *Godless Religion*, says that man must face the world without God. Man has now become responsible for his own evolution on this planet.

We are exhorted to face our newly found freedom from the supernatural; with courage tempered with wisdom, and hope tempered with knowledge. We must work for our future. Our increased knowledge, says Huxley, should define man's sense of right and wrong more clearly so as to provide better moral support, and to focus the feeling of sacredness on fitter subjects. Instead of worshipping supernatural rulers, it will sanctify the higher manifestations of human nature, in art and love, in intellectual comprehension and in aspiring adoration, and will emphasize the fuller realization of life's possibilities as a sacred trust." This is Huxley's confession of faith - his world and life view - and not just the presentation of a theory.

Evolution is not a theory that only relates to the origins of the world. It is used as a basis to evaluate what is observed and as a foundational principle for the sciences. The question of origins influences our view of man and his world; the way he lives, works, suffers, hopes and dies in it. So as, a man believes he interprets and works.

George Wald, a chemistry professor from Harvard University, expressed with great force the modern idea that all things, including man, are merely the product of chance. His view is that man is no more than matter. "Four hundred years ago there was a collection of molecules named Shakespeare which produced Hamlet." Wald's comment demonstrates the impossibility of neutrality. There are no naked facts. To be for or against evolution has become, not a matter of accepting or rejecting observed data. It is a faith decision.

In education we must be aware that it is impossible to teach apart from an interpretive framework. When we are conscious of the primacy of Scriptures - not limiting the Christian faith to individualistic salvation - but seeing it also as a world and life view, the debate of creationism versus evolution will lead to religious choices. Not only the natural sciences should be taught within the Scriptural framework - but every subject. In a pluralistic society, parents should have the right to choose the religious educational direction for their children.

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