

The Pseudo-Science: Creationism

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THOSE WHO THINK the credibility of creationism was forever destroyed by the Scopes “monkey trial” of the 1920s are in for an unpleasant surprise. Evolution, the organizing principle of modern biology, is again under assault.

Fundamentalist schools have special biology textbooks that teach evolution only to refute it. More insidiously, evangelical Christians, who now control several thousand school boards, have begun to reinsert creationism into public school biology classrooms under the doctrine of “equal time.”

Conservatives who ask that evolution be taught as a theory up for grabs act as if evolution were seriously contested. They neglect to say that the arguments against evolution are all formulated by creationists and rejected by scientists. The arguments of fundamentalists are not “creation science.” They are a subterfuge for the insertion of religious doctrine into the classroom.

While mainline Christian denominations accept evolution as the method by which God accomplished creation, fundamentalist Protestants believe that Adam, the first man, was created instantaneously by God and was immortal until the moment he sinned. Since evolutionary theory contradicts the literal scripture, fundamentalists hold belief in it a threat to salvation.

Fundamentalists argue that intelligent design is the only explanation for the patterns found in nature. They also claim that evolutionary doctrine leads to the belief that the world is purposeless, meaningless, careless, and impersonal. Because evolution puts humanity at the highest level of developed natural forms, they say, it undermines faith in a higher power, leading to moral relativism.

But the significance of the Darwinian revolution actually undermined the presumption that humankind was at the center of creation, beginning with Adam and Eve. It had the same effect as earlier inquiry that revealed that the earth revolved around the sun and the earth was not the center of the universe—propositions which the church also resisted tooth and nail.

Evangelicals claim that evolutionary theory is just as religious as creationism. They call Darwinism “the officially sponsored, government-backed creation myth, with scientists the priesthood.

But no one claims that salvation will result from accepting evolutionary theory. And scientists do not ask that their word be accepted on faith. Evolutionary theory is based on demonstrable propositions, which anyone can verify: a common genetic code, the fossil record, shared anatomy. Sound geological evidence contradicts the Biblical postulation of a worldwide flood.

If a myth is a story that must be accepted as it is, a dogma, then evolutionary theory is not a myth. It is an organic body of knowledge, modified according to many new findings since Darwin. Creationism, on the other hand, is a myth. It belongs in classes on comparative religion, where the Biblical story can be compared to the Hopi, the Iroquois, the Aztec, and all the other creation stories.

Creationism may prove to be one of the weakest links in the armor of the Christian Coalition. Voters in Vista, California, recalled a Christian Coalition majority after the school board put creationism on equal footing with evolution. But in hundreds of other districts, the Enlightenment is already

vanquished.

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P.S.

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