

Less Evolution, More Creationism in Textbooks

Who can say that evolutionary philosophy is not significant when it has been made the basis of social Darwinism, economic and military imperialism, anarchistic individualism, fascism, communism, animalism, racism, modernism, atheism, and practically every other harmful philosophy known to man?

—Henry M. Morris, director of the Institute for Creation Research.

Science in more ways than evolution must be completely reorganized. In fact, our whole civilization needs a going over. Mechanization and all its horrible consequences—air pollution, highway networks, college and university courses, federal bureaucracy—need to be done away with.

—Walter Lammerts, first president of the Creation Research Society.

A beleaguered American science community—from a first-year teacher of general science in an elementary school facing a contentious school board to a department chairman in a state university whose president tells him that “if enough people believe it, we’ll teach it”—now has its bruised back against the wall.

The “creation science” movement, a minority satellite of the Moral Majority, has been riding high. Its triumph is the introduction by the big publishers of special creation concepts in public school textbooks.

In a newsletter to its members headlined “Third Major Textbook Publisher Presents Creationism,”¹ the Bible-Science Association stated, “This ought to be emphasized during Creation Week to demonstrate that creationism is scientific. We are grateful!” Other publishers soon followed with token acceptance of special creation as an alternative view of origins.

“True, in each case the presentation is limited,” said John N. Moore, a professor at Michigan State University and a leader in the movement since its inception less than 20 years ago, “but it is there!”²

The summary of a national survey of censorship of public school texts and other teaching material, including literature, made jointly by the Association of American Publishers, the American Library Association,

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Publishers, engaged in their own struggle for survival, are catering to creationists.

and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,³ states the reasons for the decision of leading publishers to include creation concepts in science textbooks. Ironically, the publishers cite a basic Darwinian principle, the struggle for survival—in this case survival of the publishers.

The survey covered much more than science, so the report did not pursue the complex background of the creation-evolution controversy, which already has spawned numerous professional papers. But the essence of why theology got into biology is found in 15 lines of the summary:

The statewide adoption of textbooks and other instructional materials in 22 of the 50 states is of great import to public education, not only because it directly affects the range of educational materials used in the “adoption” states themselves but because it exerts a powerful influence on the materials that will be available in the 28 “open” states.

Populous adoption states like Texas and California, as major purchasers of textbooks, have the economic power to influence the development of editions suited to their particular educational curricula and preferences. School publishers will usually respond to such pressures out of economic necessity—though often reluctantly. They can rarely afford to turn away potential sales in a major adoption state. Nor can they, in most cases, afford the luxury of maintaining two separate editions. Thus an edition prepared for Texas or California, the two largest adoption states, often becomes the sole edition available nationwide.⁴

An awesome picture is thus drawn of a few creationist members of the California state board of education,

as at a meeting in June 1977, telling publishers to alter their texts or withdraw them, thereby influencing the quality of science teaching across the country.

The results, startling, amusing, or downright ridiculous, depending on the reviewer's predisposition, are revealed in an examination of the new biology texts. After hearing Darrow debate Bryan at the 1925 Scopes trial, an eminent anthropologist predicted that “never again will evolution be challenged in the public schools.” And in 1933 a leading biology text stated:

Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* has replaced the concept of special creation with the theory of organic evolution. At the present time biologists accept evolution as a fact but are actively engaged in efforts to discover how it has taken place.⁵ Laundered in a 1980 text by another publisher, it comes out:

Darwin asked some interesting questions and set forth a thought-provoking hypothesis about which people are seeking new clues in the light of modern science.⁶

Better not to name that “thought-provoking hypothesis.” A widely used biology book had 17 lines of page references under evolution, this in 1973. By 1979 the subject was indexed in three lines.⁷

In some of the new texts Darwin is not mentioned at all, but Mendel and Pasteur somehow escaped the blue pencil. Others introduce nonscientific theological material in the hope of placating anti-evolutionists. “Why do you think many people believe that the earth and its life must have been created by a divine creator?” a California edition asks in a general science text for elementary grades.

“Egyptians,” the text continues, “attributed the original creation to the god Nun. In Babylon it was believed the god Marduk created heaven and earth from the body of

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an evil dragon-goddess. Some American Indians thought the sun-coyote created earth."⁸

Educators and curriculum specialists express dismay over the use of creation material in texts. William V. Mayer, director of the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study and chairman of the Committee on Evolution Education of the National Association of Biology Teachers, has said that "creationists should be placed in perspective in their own words as missionaries, concerned primarily with subverting classrooms by intercalation of their religious dogma in science."⁹

Jack A. Gerlovich, science education consultant for the Iowa department of public instruction, said the development "raises poignant ethical questions for science textbook companies as accurate interpreters of science vs. economic trade-offs."¹⁰ (The Iowa department has made available to Iowa science teachers, school boards, legislators, and others a packet of materials on the subject.¹¹)

Frederick Edwards, editor of *Creation/evolution*, said he felt "the creationists have successfully intimidated the schools and publishers into near submission."

"Religion, including various creation stories, should be taught in a suitable context of its own," he said, "without categorization in the science curriculum. Within that context each creation myth and each philosophy of origins would get equal time. This would successfully meet the creationist demand and ought to end that part of the controversy."

"Classroom time in the sciences is at a premium, particularly in the secondary schools where the entire field must be covered in one junior or senior high school year. With so much to teach, there is simply no room for side-issues, controversies scientists do not take seriously, and the like. Should half the time be lost in two-model education, or more in multi-model education that would include astrology, human auras, and the creation story of the Hopi Indians?"¹²

Richard D. Alexander, University of Michigan zoologist, says that "when creation theorists strive to introduce creation into the classroom as an alternative biological theory to

evolution they must recognize that they are required to give creation the status of a falsifiable idea—an idea that loses any special exemption from scrutiny, that is accepted as conceivably being false, and that must be continually tested until the question is settled. A science classroom is not the place for an idea that is revered as holy."¹³

Equal Treatment

The limited treatment of creationism in the new texts still does not solve the merchandising problems of the publishers in the states that mandate "equal treatment," Arkansas and Louisiana. To implement the new legislation in Louisiana, public instruction officials project a total cost of \$7 million.

This would cover the cost of buying texts that teach the creationist position, such as those published by the Creation-Life Press, the printing division of the Institute for Creation Research, which cost about \$13. "Remedial" courses would prepare teachers to teach the basics of the "new biology." The law provides that Governor David Treen appoint an unpaid board of seven "creation scientists" chosen from the full-time faculties of the state's colleges and universities to assist schools in the development of curriculum guides, where needed.

An observer familiar with the publishing industry summarizes the situation this way:¹⁴

Enrollments in high school biology have been high because students who take science tend to take that subject rather than physics and chemistry. As a result nearly every publisher in the field has come out with a new text, and the competition is fierce.

Some publishers will take every opportunity to eliminate any material that might discourage sales. Textbooks are getting to be too expensive to produce and market to foster any but winners. And the era of the independent publisher is coming to a close. Most firms are now parts of conglomerates. Others have simply pulled out of school publishing entirely to get into other publishing interests.

With emphasis on the bottom line becoming more pronounced, more accommodation with special interests will be reached. Textbooks then will no longer reflect the state of the discipline but, like television, will pander to those who make the most noise.

¹ Bible-Science Association Newsletter, Minneapolis, Minnesota, January 1978.

Evolution-Creationism Clearinghouse

A clearinghouse for information about recent developments in the evolution-creationism controversy has been established by the National Association of Biology Teachers. A booklet, *Compendium of Information on the Theory of Evolution and the Evolution-Creationism Controversy*, is \$5. A bimonthly newsletter, *Scientific Integrity*, is also \$5. Order from NABT, 11250 Roger Bacon Drive 19, Reston, VA 22090. Telephone (703) 471-1134.

² Ibid.

³ See p. 211, this issue.

⁴ "Limiting What Students Shall Read," Summary Report on the survey sponsored by American Association of Publishers, American Library Association, and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, July 31, 1981, p. 15.

⁵ Hegner, *Zoology*, Macmillan, 1933.

⁶ Teter, Edwards, Fitzpatrick, and Bain, *Living Things* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981).

⁷ *Biology-Living Systems*, Merrill, 1979.

⁸ Raymond Sullivan, *Science, Environment, and Man*, Gold edition (sixth grade), California version (San Francisco: Lesswing Communications, 1972).

⁹ William V. Mayer, "The Scientific Creationists," *Liberty*, September-October 1975.

¹⁰ Jack A. Gerlovich, personal communication, May 13, 1981.

¹¹ "Methods for Addressing Creation/Evolution Controversies in Iowa Schools," Department of Public Instruction, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319.

¹² Frederick Edwards, "Why Creationism Should Not Be Taught As Science," *Creation/Evolution* 3 (Winter 1981).

¹³ Richard D. Alexander, "Evolution, Creationism and Biology Teaching," *The American Biology Teachers*, February 1978, p. 91.

¹⁴ Personal communication.

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