

Falsities in suit

"Creation on trial" (Dec. 13) is a good title deserving to be followed by something better than what does — something (of course!) more like this:

Monkey Trial No. 1 is falsely remembered, partly because of the "Whirlwind" book and film. It was won by "the Great Commoner," William Jennings Bryan. In your editorial, read "unsuccessfully" for "successfully" in your statement about Clarence Darrow: he lost.

Monkey Trial No. 2 is, in suit, laden with falsities.

1. It is false to the mythic genre to take time/place references literally. The "scientific creationists" are being unbiblical when they think they can get, from the Bible's beginning, (1) when creation happened and (2) how long it took. The creation stories ("myths," in the high sense) are more interested in Who? than in What? Their message is stated elsewhere in Scripture scores of times — e.g., "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3). How sad that the message is being missed in squabbling over details!

2. It is false to say that "evolution" is the question: rather, it is Darwinism. "Evolution" is undeniable, but from what and how? The Bible says the universe is evolving, from the mind of God by the will of God, and Darwin exceeded the province of science when he created the myths of "spontaneous generation" and "natural selection" and "the survival of the fittest." Not just Arkansas and Louisiana, but all 50 states should forbid the use of tax money to teach Darwin's myths as though they were truths.

3. It is false to state (as you do) that

"Darwinian evolution does not espouse a Godless universe." As an old man, Darwin regretted his violations of the law of parsimony (minimum hypothesis) and, referring to the fact that he was a dropout from a theological seminary, said that he had unnecessarily neglected his soul in the interest of a questionable paradigm.

4. It is false to think that "the survival of the fittest" is science. You use Ashley Montagu as support: he once told me that this doctrine is so false that "I'd like to spend the rest of my life standing Darwin on his head."

5. It is false to call "spontaneous generation" science. It's only a child-squelching Latinism for "I don't know; it just happened by itself."

6. It is false to call "natural selection" science. "Natural" is not a scientific word, but a metaphysical word in tandem with "super-natural." "Natural" selection is inherently atheistic, and tax money should not be used to teach it.

Sociology of knowledge explains why the Darwinian myths could be foisted onto the public. Business was looking for cosmic supports for capitalism, and the intelligensia for atheism and humanism — and both, for individualism.

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Clarence Darrow, defending the teacher of evolution in the 1925 Scopes Trial, failed to win acquittal for his client. But his withering cross-examination of prosecution counsel William Jennings Bryan is credited with being a major factor in the eventual overturning of the Tennessee statute that prohibited the teaching of any theory of man's descent but biblical creationism.

—Ed.

As I write this (Dec/81), the Arkansas "scientific creationism" federal case has not been settled, and I haven't passed up this fresh opportunity to attack Darwin (as you can see, below). (My most recent relevant think-sheet is #1610.)

1. The "corrosive acids of modernity" have been hard on the biblical doctrine of creation, and many theologians have been living in sin with Darwin since Lloyd's "creative evolution." The biblical lamb, for the multitudes (including most of the intelligensia), is lying down inside the scientific lion.

2. I've been reading an 1822 headwaters-of-modernity book, Hegel's THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY. He's ever careful to parallel (scientific) "process" with (religious) "providence," as subsequently Darwin early was but then came to collapse "God" into "evolution." Now, our media regularly use "Evolution" (which in this use should be capitalized) as a holophrase for "God": "Evolution" does this and that. This personification, essentially poetic, has forgotten that it's poetry and is parading itself as science: there is what's been (largely unconsciously) attacked by "scientific creationism" (sadly, a biblical literalism).

3. Parallel with the Arkansas case, we need a federal case testing whether tax money can be used to teach Darwin as science.

4. For years I used as a text Langdon Gilkey's PhD thesis (published as MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH [Anchor/65]) in spite of its fudging on metaphysics. His subtitle, "The Christian Doctrine of Creation in the Light of Modern Knowledge" (pbk. cover, but original: "A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation"), suggests the compromise in the text: creation is not fact but "symbol," "not just an irrelevant dogma inherited from a prescientific and prephilosophical past." Feel the arrogant presentism in "just" and "irrelevant"? An enemy in a friend's clothing! A sell-out to modernity! That was 13f; here is 334: "The idea of creation is an inference from revelation...validated...in every vital Christian experience." Still our best book on the doctrine of creation. Very worth study/discussion.

5. THEISM is the issue. In Hegelian terms, "world-consciousness" slowly develops toward its Source, viz. the self-conscious God. In all atheisms, such a self-conscious (or "personal") Source is denied.