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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM?

In many legislatures this spring, a controversy is raging over whether "scientific creationism" should be taught in the public schools as an alternate theory to evolution. The liberals who used to demand "academic freedom" to teach unpopular views have changed their tune; they are working diligently to censor the ideas they hate.

The scientific creationists are asking, in the name of academic freedom, that, if the schools teach the theory of evolution as the explanation for the origin of the world and of man, then the theory of creation should likewise be presented to the students. The scientific creationists argue that the theory of creationism is no more dogma-based and no less science-based than the theory of evolution.

During the presidential campaign last year, Ronald Reagan put himself on the side of the "give both sides a hearing" approach. He told reporters that there are "great flaws" in the theory of evolution.

The scientific creationists are not rushing headlong into another Scopes trial or into the granite wall erected in the name of separation of church and state. They have learned to avoid the political and legal mistakes of earlier anti-evolution warriors.

The scientific creationists don't mention God, the Bible, or any religious book. The fact that scientific creationism and the Bible arrive at the same conclusion as to the origin of the world and man does not mean that creationism is Biblical or unscientific. Plato and Aristotle, using reason alone, concluded that God exists.

Decades ago, it was easy for science to say that rotting food spontaneously generated maggots and fruit flies. We had no proof against that conclusion. But Pasteur proved that only "life begets life." Extensive modern research with fruit flies, which spawn generations in a few days, show that even after 40 years of manipulating their evolution, fruit flies remain fruit flies.

Transmutation is the linchpin of the Darwinian theory of evolution. It holds that all species of plants and animals developed from earlier forms by hereditary transmission

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of slight variations in successive generations over eons.

Darwin knew he was on shaky ground in asserting the evolution of major differences. But he promised that later fossil discoveries would produce the missing links. There are millions of evidences for variations, but anyone knowing modern facts on mutations and Mendel's Laws understands the difference between those and proof for evolution. Despite intense research and digging for more than a century, the missing link is still missing.

For the last several years, the evolutionist scientists have been engaged in a soul-searching controversy about how evolution happened. The debate reached its crescendo in October 1980 when 150 scientists specializing in evolutionary studies met for four days in Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History to thrash out new hypotheses which are challenging older ideas.

The big issue at the semi-secret conclave was macroevolution. The scientists have a hard time even agreeing on the term, but it generally means the evolution of major differences such as the evolution of birds and mammals out of reptiles. It is, indeed, hard to define something which has never been proven to have happened.

Case after case of alleged missing links has been proven to be a fraud, including the Piltdown man in England and the Peking man in China. Dr. Niles Eldridge, a paleontologist from the American Musem of Natural History in New York, said, "The pattern that we were told to find for the last 120 years does not exist." No wonder the Chicago meeting of evolutionist scientists was closed to the prying eyes and ears of religious fundamentalist observers.

Many outstanding scientists are not evolutionists. For example, Dr. Wernher von Braun, the man whose team built the Saturn 5 vehicle which launched Apollo 8, the world's first spacecraft to travel to the moon, wrote in 1972: "We in NASA were often asked what the real reason was for the amazing string of successes we had with our Apollo flights to the Moon. I think the only honest answer we could give was that we tried to never overlook anything. It is in that same sense of scientific honesty that I endorse the presentation of alternative theories for the origin of the universe, life and man in the science classroom. It would be an error to overlook the possibility that the universe was planned rather than happened by chance."

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