

Teaching Creationism Defended: A Response to John Lilley

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Editor:

John Lilley, in his 8/29/96 letter, mixes the Monitor's title on my 8/23/96 guest column with the actual content and arguments of the column itself. Although the column was assigned the title, "Case for Teaching Creationism," nowhere in this letter to the members of the New Mexico Board of Education did the word 'creation' or 'creationism' appear. Furthermore, nowhere did I advocate the teaching of creationism on the public schools of our state. And nowhere did I "divide teachers into atheists and Christians" to the exclusion of Native Americans, Jews, and Moslems. I believe apologies are in order both from the Monitor and from Mr. Lilley for these inaccuracies.

Instead, what I was urging the Board of Education to do is to put a stop to the exclusivistic teaching of evolution as the sole explanation of biological origins, to end the censorship of critique of the evolution hypothesis in the classroom, and to guarantee teachers the authority to handle the topic of biological origins in a free and open manner. I was simply asking the Board to require that evolution compete fairly in the marketplace of ideas and not be given a privileged place with no opportunity for critique or debate.

Mr. Lilley confides he gets "heartburn" over the idea that religion might become an issue in our school classrooms. But should it not be pointed out that almost every topic is fundamentally religious in nature? Certainly science is religious to the extent it begs for an explanation of 'why' for all the structure and evidence of design around us and of 'how' it all came about. There is no way around it -- these are religious issues.

Similarly history must deal with the flow of ideas and their impact, and most ideas are loaded with beliefs and values. The same is true of literature, sociology, psychology, political science, and the arts. Even mathematics has at its root metaphysical implications. True education acknowledges the religious content of every idea and every academic discipline. True education

acknowledges every worldview has built in assumptions and presuppositions and makes distinctive truth claims. True education aggressively identifies, compares, and analyzes these competing truth claims.

On the other hand, excluding 'religion' from education is a clever forensic trick on the part of atheists to impose exclusively their metaphysical framework on the educational process. To censor the 'religious' elements from science, history, sociology, psychology, and political science is to leave room only for the atheist perspective. And this is the situation that largely prevails in American public schools today.

But the social consequences are horrendous. Atheism provides no logical basis for any moral standard. It provides no basis for any human responsibility. It provides no categories for justice, beauty, compassion, kindness, or human worth. There are clear logical reasons why there is rampant violence in our schools, why suicide, drug use, and teen pregnancy rates are so high, and why crime is so pervasive. These things flow directly from the belief system being taught dogmatically to young people in our public schools. If anything should cause heartburn and motivate us as parents, citizens, and taxpayers to get involved this should.

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