

The 20th Century's Most Divisive Trial Explodes Again

Ninety-two years ago, a historic trial erupted on the national scene. The repercussions of the case reverberate throughout America to this very day, affecting every generation.

The Scopes Monkey Trial was one of the most sensational cases in America's history. It was called "The Trial for America's Soul" and is commemorated yearly with a reenactment at the National Historic Landmark courthouse in Dayton, Tennessee.

Nearly a century ago, a substitute teacher was accused of violating Tennessee law by instructing students on evolution in a public school. A presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan, led the prosecution, while attorney Clarence Darrow defended John Scopes.

During the eight-day trial, Bryan tried to "protect the Word of God against the greatest atheist or agnostic in the United States!" Darrow lampooned his opponent's "fool's religion."

Visualize the Scene

Without hi-tech advances, here's the scenario:

- Unprecedented press coverage with 200 reporters including two from England plus front-page *New York Times* coverage
- 200 telegraphers plus cameramen sending out film via planes
- The trial was broadcast on live radio
- Trained chimpanzees performed on the courthouse lawn!
- *Time* and *Life* magazine disparaged "fundamentalists" while syndicated columnist H.L. Mencken gave trial reports mocking townsfolk as "morons" and "yokels."

The circus-like atmosphere of the trial ended with Mr. Scopes

found guilty and fined about \$1400 (today's money). Bryan died in his sleep five days afterwards. The verdict was later overturned on a technicality and later, a biased and dishonest play and film, *Inherit the Wind*, caused millions to ridicule religious opposition to evolution.

The fundamental issue is the same today: regarding the origin of our universe and mankind, will we honor a secular/evolutionary worldview or a spiritual/creationist worldview? And can instructors present both views or must those adhering to the trustworthiness of Scripture be forced to remain silent in the face of one-sided propaganda?

Center Stage Once Again

The Wall Street Journal featured a story on May 8 concerning a sculptor working with the American Humanist Association to place a 7-foot tall statue of Clarence Darrow outside the courthouse next to that of William Bryan's. AHA's mission is to "bring about a progressive society where being good without a god is an accepted and respected way to live life."

On July 1, on these grounds, we participated in a patriotic rally. It wasn't primarily about freedom of speech or religion. Rather, it focused on the ongoing attempt by secularists in America to blur or remove symbols reminding us of our Judeo/Christian heritage.

I was the main speaker alongside Dale Walker, president of the Tennessee Pastors Network; Sen. Mae Beavers, Tennessee gubernatorial candidate and numerous Christian leaders. Our presence gave expression to our passion to preserve America's heritage and proclaim that our Founding Fathers were not atheists and evolutionists.

A recent Gallup Poll on this issue reveals: 42 percent believe God created humans in their present form and evolution is wrong; 31 percent state God directed the process of evolution; and, only 19 percent feel God was not involved so they accept

evolution.

Call to Christian Activism

The dogmatic theory taught in schools and perpetuated by Hollywood that human beings accidentally evolved over billions of years by “natural selection” is mind-boggling. It’s akin to postulating that Mount Rushmore formed spontaneously. Without any Creator to whom we’re accountable, Darwinian evolution teaches we’ve descended from ape-like creatures through mutation and time.

In his 160-year old *Origin of the Species*, Darwin stated, “Let us assume ...” or “We may well suppose ...” over 800 times! We’re supposed to acquiesce so our youth base their lives on assumptions rather than the authoritative Word of God, which emphatically says, “Remember your Creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1).

Intellectual elites see biblical teaching on creation as an offense to intelligence. They declare it unscientific and dismiss the biblical account of man’s origin. Atheist Richard Dawkins said, “If you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane.”

Jesus declared, “Have you not read that He who made [*created*] them at the beginning made them male and female” () so does Dawkins’ description apply to Him? Are Psalm 19 and Romans 1:19-33 which affirm God as Creator simply fairy tales?

Call to Communicate Truth

Because of the stigma and national embarrassment of the Scopes trial (along with the defeat of unbiblical Prohibition), multitudes of Christians were disheartened. From the 1920s to 70s many retreated from engagement in the public square. Failing to recognize what Augustine called our dual responsibilities in the “City of God and the City of Man,” scores said, “Just preach the gospel...” “Stay out of politics...”

“Let things collapse so Jesus will come back!”

Jesus directs us to preach the gospel but it’s the gospel of His kingdom, advancing His reign over every sphere of life. We have the Great Commission but also the Cultural Commission whereby, as “salt” and “light,” we “expose unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11).

We’re called to be Christian advocates for righteousness. The Abolition Movement that eradicated slavery and the Civil Rights Movement that combated injustice through nonviolence are just two examples of Christian activism that changed America.

Christians are not to be silent bystanders in the face of this tsunami of secular humanism. We’re called to be peaceful, prayerful and passionate ambassadors for our Judeo-Christian heritage.

Our society has experienced unbelievable devastation, having drifted from our biblical foundation of God as Creator and scripture as our authoritative guide. I call your attention to the *Bullseye Challenge* that exposes this tragic development, while helping us in just 30 days educate our families and churches in an unshakable biblical worldview!

We must be equipped and engaged in this ongoing battle dealing with Origins 101. One man, Charles Darwin, propagated a theory that adversely impacted the world. Will you join with Christians like those who gathered in Dayton, Tennessee, to promote truth and persuade others like our Founding Fathers did to honor our Creator as our Declaration of Independence affirms? {eoa}