

## The Illusion of Academic Freedom

Brad Harrub, Ph.D. and Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

The trial started on July 10, 1925, in the old Rhea county courthouse in Dayton, Tennessee. Word had gotten out—the Scopes trial was about to begin. It was “the trial of the century.” Many people viewed it as science versus the Bible. The uproar came as a result of the Butler Act, which had just been passed in the state of Tennessee. Stated simply, the Act said: “No theory of origins should be taught in any lower public supported schools except creation as listed in the Genesis account in the Bible.” As you can imagine, this stirred up a great amount of controversy, because this particular Act made it against the law to teach organic evolution. And it did not take long for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to mount an attack. The ACLU was so vehemently opposed to the Butler Act, it took the unprecedented step of running large advertisements in major newspapers all across Tennessee, the goal of which was to find a teacher who would be willing to admit, “I broke the law by teaching evolution after the Butler Act was passed.” The ACLU, in turn, promised to provide the best lawyer money could buy. The person who eventually came forward was a coach and part-time biology teacher—John Thomas Scopes.

Prior to the Scopes trial, pretty much the only thing being taught was the Genesis account of Creation. As such, evolutionists fought diligently to swing the pendulum more firmly toward their side. Almost eighty years later, the pendulum has indeed come to rest steadfastly on the evolutionists’ side. In fact, individuals are losing their jobs because they dare to speak out against evolution! That being the case (as we are about to document), surely the ACLU will once again vociferously object, and move quickly to protest this quelling of academic freedom. Surely, the media will catch wind of the biased standards that have permeated academia, and report on them accordingly. Surely, Americans will not continue to lose their jobs because they boldly point out flaws in a scientific theory.

**Don’t hold your breath!** At a recent honors forum at Mississippi University for Women, Dr. Nancy Bryson gave a presentation titled “Critical Thinking on Evolution,” during which she presented alternative views of origins (including intelligent design). The following day, the university’s Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Vagn Hansen, asked Bryson to resign from her position as head of the school’s division of science and mathematics (see Brown and Vitagliano, 2003). Jim Brown and Ed Vitagliano, writing about this incredible scenario under the title of “Professor Dumped Over Evolution Beliefs,” noted that Dr. Bryson told American Family Radio News (in regard to Vice President Hansen):

“He hadn’t even heard my talk. [W]ithout knowing anything about my talk, he makes that decision. I think it’s just really an outrage.” **So do we!** But while this may indeed be “an outrage,” it is just a “drop in the proverbial bucket” when it comes to the discrimination that is taking place currently, or has taken place in the past, against scientists who dare to question (much less expose the flaws in) the theory of evolution.

Jerry Bergman was denied tenure by Bowling Green State University in Ohio because of his religious beliefs, and primarily because of his publications about creationism. In the forward of Bergman’s book, *The Criterion*, attorney Wendell Bird (former editor of the *Yale Law Journal*) said:

From my research for published articles in the *Yale Law Journal* and *Harvard Law Journal of Law and Public Policy*, and from my legal work in First Amendment litigation, it is my professional judgment that the cases of discrimination reported here are a very tiny fraction of the general pattern and practice of discrimination against creationists and creation-science at both the college and university level and the secondary and elementary school level (as quoted in Bergman, 1984, p. vii).

Consider the cases of two prominent scientists: Dean Kenyon and A. E. Wilder-Smith. Professor Kenyon received his Ph.D. in biophysics from Stanford University. For many years, he taught biology and evolution at San Francisco State University. However, one year he added to his introductory biology course three lectures on the subject of origins. In those new lectures, he presented data that gave potential credibility to the theory of intelligent design. Dr. John Hafernik, chairman of the biology department, viewed this as advocating creationism, and told Dr. Kenyon not to teach such a concept in his biology classes, even going so far as to declare that **only** non-theistic evolution could be taught. Ankerberg and Weldon noted that because he questioned “the orthodox dogma, Kenyon was removed from teaching the introductory biology course, and was reassigned to teaching primarily labs—work often given to graduate students” (1998, p. 100). The Academic Freedom Committee at San Francisco State University eventually ruled that the university was not permitted to require professors to teach a particular orthodoxy, but instead should encourage open dialogue.

It is somewhat ironic that such a statement echoes the exact same view advocated by Charles Darwin (who is esteemed by many as the “father of evolution”) when he wrote in *The Origin of Species*:

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RESOURCES

## RESOURCES

I am well aware that scarcely a single point is discussed in this volume on which facts cannot be adduced, apparently leading to conclusions directly opposite to those at which I have arrived. **A fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question...** (1956, p. 18, emp. added).

Where is Mr. Darwin when we need him?

A.E. Wilder-Smith held three earned doctorates in various fields of science, and was a respected researcher who worked for the United Nations. As a result, he was invited to present the Huxley Memorial Lecture at Oxford University. On February 14, 1986, he delivered a speech that was well received, even by his opponents. However, because the speech expressed doubts about evolutionary theory, he was “unable to persuade any reputable scientific journal to publish the manuscript. The comment is uniformly that the text does not fit their scheme of publications” (as quoted in Ankerberg and Weldon, p. 99). Dr. Wilder-Smith went on to comment that he was asked if, in fact, he had ever really presented the Huxley Memorial Lecture. He said:

No records of my having held the lecture as part of the Oxford Union debate could be found in any library, nor was the substance of this debate ever officially recorded. No

national newspapers, radio, or TV station breathed a word about it. So total is the current censorship on any effective criticism of neo-darwinian science and on any genuine alternative (p. 99, emp. in orig.).

Is that not a sad commentary on the state of science in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries?

Even Charles Darwin himself admitted (in *The Origin of Species*, of all places!) that “a fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question.” Seventy-eight years ago, John Thomas Scopes’ famous defense lawyer, Clarence Darrow, claimed that it was **bigotry to teach only one theory of origins!** Where is Mr. Darrow when we need him?

## REFERENCES

- Ankerberg, John and John Weldon (1998), *Darwin’s Leap of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House).  
 Bergman, Jerry (1984), *The Criterion* (Richfield, MN: Onesimus Publishing).  
 Brown, Jim and Ed Vitagliano (2003), “Professor Dumped Over Evolution Beliefs,” [On-Line], URL: <http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/3/112003a.asp>.  
 Darwin, Charles (1956 edition), *The Origin of Species* (New York: J.M. Dent & Sons).

## IN THE NEWS

In what must surely rank as an all time low in human decency, the popularity of “Reality TV” shows has resulted in such programming flooding the market, as all the major networks try to cash in on this insulting form of “entertainment.” From surviving in the wilderness to marrying a total stranger, these shows attract millions of viewers. But just when we think the media could not **possibly** stoop any lower, they do—proving us wrong in the process.

The latest “reality venture” comes in the form of an Internet group that is asking twelve contestants to board an on-line “Noah’s Ark” for forty days and forty nights. The Web site is promoting this as “11 sinners and 1 winner” (with the “1 winner,” of course, raking in big bucks at the end of the extravaganza). Each of the twelve people will portray a biblical character. The Web site boasts that this “reality gambit” will have “twelve biblical saints and sinners rubbing shoulders on the world’s most famous floating zoo.” Need a more in-depth description? Read on.

On the main deck, Jezebel is arguing with Moses over the 10 Commandments. Downstairs in the galley, Samson and St Peter are gossiping about who will be next to walk the plank. Meanwhile, on the animal deck below, someone forgot to lock the hutch doors, and a massive breakout of gerbils is

wreaking havoc in the contestants’ cabins....

But what else do you expect when 12 of the Bible’s greatest heroes and villains are locked up together for 40 days and 40 nights—with bleating sheep and aromatic skunks for company? (see Jenkins, 2003, ellipsis in orig.).

Simon Jenkins, the man in charge of the Web site promoting this travesty, noted:

We’re creating a gameshow that will put a bunch of tricky characters into a hothouse environment accompanied by lots of fur and feathers—and that hasn’t been done since the original Ark hit the water. Theology meets showbiz meets cowpat (2003).

Is it any wonder that children grow up with no knowledge of, or respect for, God’s Word? We live in a world where people seek pleasure and entertainment above everything else—**including (especially!) their Almighty Creator.** People have recast God and the Bible in a perverted way in which there is no wrath, no fear, and no judgment. The **real** “reality show,” however, will arrive when Jesus returns, and **every** knee bows (Philippians 2:10).

## REFERENCES

- Jenkins, Simon (2003), “The Ark,” [On-Line], URL: <http://ship-of-fools.com/theark/game.html>.

**Brad Harrub**