



# An Attempted Very Brief and Abridged History of Intelligent Design and the Creation - Evolution Controversy

As found on the IDEA Center Website at <http://www.ideacenter.org/>

**1611:** King James Bible published<sup>5</sup>

**1654:** Archbishop Usher calculates that the world was created in 4004 B.C. <sup>5</sup>

**1802:** Paley publishes "Natural Theology"<sup>5</sup>

**1830:** Charles Lyell publishes Principles of Geology, one of Darwin's primary sources<sup>5</sup>

**1859:** T.H. Huxley, atheist, "Darwin's Bulldog," and self-proclaimed "gladiator general" of Darwin's theory anticipates a public controversy between science and religion. Writes Darwin, "I am sharpening my claws and beak in readiness" just before *Origin of Species* published<sup>1</sup>

**1859:** Darwin Publishes *Origin of Species*:

(Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882) was a British scientist who laid the foundation for modern evolutionary theory through his concept of the development of all forms of life through the gradual process of natural selection. He was born in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England on February 12, 1809. Darwin originally went to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh but then dropped out in 1827 to prepare for becoming a clergyman in the Church of England by studying at the University of Cambridge. While at Cambridge he met two major scientists, geologist Adam Sedgwick and naturalist John Stevens Henslow, who had profound impact on his life. After graduating from Cambridge in 1831, Darwin joined an English survey ship, the HMS Beagle, largely due to Henslow's recommendation, to take a scientific expedition around the world. Quoted from Ref 3.)

**1860:** T.H. Huxley debates Archbishop Samuel Wilberforce at the British Association meeting at Oxford.<sup>7</sup>

**1860~1900ish:** Reaction to Darwin: Much fighting over Darwin's theory. "At first much of the opposition to Darwin's theory came from scientists on grounds of evidence, not from theologians on grounds of scripture." (Francis Glasson quoted in Ref 3). "The reaction to the *Origin* was immediate. Some biologists argued that Darwin could not prove his hypothesis. Others criticized Darwin's concept of variation, arguing that he could explain neither the origin of variations nor how they were passed to succeeding generation. This particular scientific objection was not answered until the birth of modern genetics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. . . . In fact, many scientists continued to express doubts for the following 50 to 80 years." (Garland E. Allen and Randy Bird quoted in Ref 3). However, eventually there was much religious opposition as well.<sup>1</sup>

**1874:** John William Draper publishes *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*, which reinforces a characterization of religion at war with science<sup>1, 6</sup> and "fostered the impression that religious critics of Darwinism threatened to rekindle the Inquisition"<sup>1</sup>.

**1896:** Andrew Dickson White publishes *A History of The Warfare of Science With Theology*, criticizing Christian theology, scripture, clergy, and religious history and adding much fuel to the secular popular and academic intellectual fire kindling against Christianity and religious thought in society.<sup>1, 6</sup>

**1905-1915:** *The Fundamentals*, a series of popular booklets published by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola) describing the fundamental tenets of Protestantism. These essays were in part a response to growing popular secular trends in thinking partly stemming from ideas related to the works of Draper and White. Some essays by influential conservative Christian leaders encourage harmony between evolution and Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Some essays are published against evolution, some support evolution. However, Darwinian-like notions of random variation coupled with a struggle-for-survival were not in vogue with biologists at this time, and so many of the Christians who supported evolution saw it as "goal-directed" and not as a chance-based (today most biologists see evolutionary processes as essentially Darwinian--based upon random chance-based variation coupled with a struggle for survival-of-the-fittest).<sup>4</sup>

**1912:** New York Times Sunday Headline says "Darwin Theory Proved True; English Scientist Say the Skull Found in Sussex Establishes Human Descent from Apes"<sup>1</sup> (this was "Piltdown Man," revealed in 1953 to be a fraudulent series of fossils composed of human and orangutan skull bones.<sup>2</sup>). Piltdown expert Arthur Keith wrote that "[Darwin and Huxley]

made it possible for us men to today to pursue our studies without persecution--without being subject to the contumely of Church dignitaries"<sup>1</sup>.

**1925:** Science and religion "warfare model" had become "ingrained into the received wisdom of many secular Americans"<sup>1</sup>. Evolution, and more particularly Darwin's mechanisms of evolution (mutation and natural selection) were becoming generally accepted among biologists. Evolution had by this time filtered into high school science curriculums at a time when more people were beginning to attend public high schools for the first time. More Americans were being exposed to evolution, and opposition began to arise. The time was ripe for a controversy. 2 general forms of opposition<sup>1</sup>:  
Category 1: People who rejected all forms of evolution in favor of a young earth ("literal") reading of Genesis.  
Category 2: People who rejected the "randomness" of the Darwinian evolutionary processes because they disallowed God's purposefulness in creation.

**1925: Scopes Trial:**

- In 1925, the Tennessee legislature passed the Butler act which made it "unlawful for any teacher in any of the . . . public schools. . . to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals"<sup>8</sup>.
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) put an ad in the *Chattanooga Times* on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1925 to test a Tennessee law which forbade the teaching of evolution that human beings evolved from lower forms of life<sup>3</sup>:  
"We are looking for a Tennessee teacher who is willing to accept our services in testing this law in the courts,' the New York based American Civil Liberties Union announced soon after the anti-evolution statute passed. 'Our lawyers think a friendly test can be arranged without costing teacher his or her job. Distinguished counsel have volunteered their services. All we need now is willing client.'<sup>3</sup>
- "ACLU hired famous defense attorney, Clarence Darrow to defend teacher 24-year-old substitute science teacher John T. Scopes. Scopes agreed to confess to having violated the law, teaching evolution from the popular biology book *A Civic Biology* although post-trial evidence indicated that he, in fact, had not done so"<sup>3</sup>
- Following are a few of the statements in Hunter's book which probably would have been very unacceptable to the Christians who held to a literal creation story as depicted in the Bible in Genesis 1: "Evolution means change, and these groups are believed by scientists to represent stages in complexity of development of life on the earth. Geology teaches that millions of years ago, life upon the earth was very simple, and that gradually more and more complex forms of life appeared, as the rocks formed latest in time show the most highly developed forms of animal life. The great English scientist Charles Darwin, from this and other evidence, explained the theory of evolution. This is the belief that simple forms of life on the earth slowly and gradually gave rise to those more complex and that thus ultimately the most complex forms came into existence."<sup>3</sup>
- Scopes was a young teacher who had little to lose if convicted. He was a chain-smoker, shy, easygoing, cooperative, opposed the statute. He was courted by the ACLU to find out if he would be a defendant.
- On May 25<sup>th</sup>, a grand jury was rushed together to Scopes "before any other town could steal the show"<sup>1</sup>
- William Jennings Bryan, a progressive politician and former presidential candidate who mixed "left-wing politics and right-wing religion"<sup>1</sup> volunteered to lead the prosecution.
- There was "widely publicized ridicule of the Tennessee law" which was "eroding public support for such statutes everywhere"<sup>1</sup>. Bryan observed, "I saw such large [newspaper] space given to the ridicule but small space given to the noble act of Governor Peay in signing the bill."<sup>1</sup>
- Bryan wanted to turn the trial into a sort of publicity act to champion his cause against evolution.<sup>1</sup> Bryan would fit into category 2, of the above types opposition to evolution.
- Famous defense attorney, a public proponent of the ideas of White and Draper in his speeches and trial arguments, Clarence Darrow, a sharp public opponent of Bryan, joined the case primarily to oppose Bryan. Darrow wanted another chance to publicly humiliate Christian beliefs.
- The ACLU wanted a narrow test case to fight the law on strictly legal terms, and were dismayed that celebrities like Darrow and Bryan would be on the case.<sup>1</sup> They were especially concerned that "Darrow's zealous agnosticism might transform the trial from a narrow appeal for academic freedom to a broad assault on religion."<sup>1</sup> This is exactly what happened, and the trial became a media circus. It was the very first nationally broadcast trial in the United States.<sup>8</sup>
- The trial lasted eight days, Darrow "lost" and Scopes was fined \$100. The Tennessee Supreme Court later reversed Scopes' conviction on a legal technicality.<sup>8</sup>
- Darrow, however, considered it a victory as he cross-examined Bryan by calling the prosecuting attorney to the witness stand. Many of Darrow's questions were theological or scientific in nature regarding the accuracy of the Bible. Bryan, a career politician and a Christian who took a fairly moderate stance and opposed evolution primarily on moral grounds, was not able to answer all of the questions. However, this chain of events is one of the reasons why creationism has been largely been publicly ridiculed in the U.S.
- In the 1950's, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee wrote, *Inherit the Wind*, opened on Broadway. In 1960 it was produced by Stanley Kramer into a film. The play grossly misrepresented the actual events of the trial, portrayed opposers of evolution as religious bigots and anti-intellectuals, and has perpetuated a publicly held myth that the Scopes trial represented the triumph of science, reason, and evolution over religion, bigotry, and creationism. These two categories have remained in the minds of many as accurately describing this issue.

**1950's:** Controversy renews when "Space Race" with Russia heats up and science education again becomes an important issue.

**1959:** The centennial anniversary of the publication of *Origin of Species* also brought more attention to this controversy.

**1963:** Creation Research Society Formed.

**1968:** *Edwards v. Arkansas*: U.S. Supreme Court invalidated Arkansas statute prohibiting teaching of evolution. Court held a state cannot tailor its curriculum to any particular religious sect or doctrine. (NCSE)

**1971:** Lawyer and scholar Norman Macbeth publishes *Darwin Retried: An Appeal to Reason*. Many of Macbeth's arguments form the basis for later modern scholarly critiques of evolution.

**1972:** Institute for Creation Research Founded, anti-evolution efforts primarily from the "young earth creationist camp" until 1980's.

**1973:** Tennessee legislature passes the Butler Act stating:

Any biology textbook used for teaching in the public schools, which expresses an opinion of, or relates to a theory about origins or creation of man and his world shall be prohibited from being used as a textbook in such system unless it specifically states that it is a theory as to the origin and creation of man and his world and is not represented to be scientific fact. Any text book so used in the public education system which expresses an opinion or relates to a theory or theories shall give in the same text book and under the same subject commensurate attention to, and an equal amount of emphasis on, the origins and creation of man and his world as the same is recorded in other theories, including, but not limited to, the Genesis account in the Bible. The provisions of this Act shall not apply to use of any textbook now legally in use, until the beginning of the school year of 1975-1976;

Provided, however, that the textbook requirements stated above shall in no way diminish the duty of the state textbook commission to prepare a list of approved standard editions of textbooks for use in the public schools of the state as provided in this section. Each local school board may use textbooks or supplementary material as approved by the State Board of Education to carry out the provisions of this section. The teaching of all occult or satanical beliefs of human origin is expressly excluded from this act.

Section 2. Provided however that the Holy Bible shall not be defined as a textbook, but is hereby declared to be a reference work, and shall not be required to carry the disclaimer above provided for textbooks.<sup>3</sup>

Law declared unconstitutional by Sixth Circuit court.

**1982:** *McLean v. Arkansas*: Arkansas law taught that universe was created out of nothing, natural selection was insufficient, and everything destroyed in a flood. Judge William Overton ruled that the law violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause because it promoted unscientific theories in public schools. According to Overton's decision, a scientific (based on the testimony of Michael Ruse) must: 1) Be guided by natural law, 2) Be explained by natural law, 3) Be testable against the empirical world, 4) Be tentative, and 5) Be falsifiable. Thus "scientific creationism" was not science.

**1983.** Several "Committees of Correspondence" which worked together to fight scientific creationism in the 1970's, and the 1982 trial, grew together and founded the National Center for Science Education (NCSE), and in 1983, NCSE was incorporated.

**1986:** Hugh Ross founds "Reasons to Believe," the largest "Old Earth Creationist" organization.

**1986:** Michael Denton publishes *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*.

**1987:** *Edwards v. Aguillard*: Enacts 3 pronged test of what is legitimate to be taught in a government school: 1) must not promote a particular religion or religious view, 2) must not have the primary effect of either advancing or inhibiting religion, and 3) must not result in excessive entanglement of government and religion.

**1991:** Phillip Johnson publishes *Darwin on Trial*.

**1993:** Landmark meeting between various would-be founders of the intelligent design movement, including Phillip Johnson, Michael Behe, and others, takes place at Pajaro Dunes, California.

**1996:** Michael Behe publishes *Darwin's Black Box*, popularizing the phrase "intelligent design" and introducing the concept of "irreducible complexity".

**1996:** "Mere Creation" conference held at Biola University unites more founders of the "intelligent design" movement including Michael Behe, David Berlinsky, Walter Bradley, William Dembski, Sigrid Hartwig-Scherer, Phillip Johnson, Robert Kaita, Steven Meyer, J. P. Moreland, Paul Nelson, Nancy Pearcey, Del Ratzsch, John Mark Reynolds, Hugh Ross, and Jonathan Wells.

**1998:** William Dembski publishes Cambridge monograph series book *The Design Inference*, introducing intelligent design concepts such as the explanatory filter and specified complexity.

**1999:** Kansas removes some controversial aspects of macroevolution from the curriculum. Press ridicules Kansas and misrepresents what happened saying that they removed evolution entirely.

**2000:** Jonathan Wells publishes *Icons of Evolution*.

**2000:** Utah Law Review publishes "Teaching the Origins Controversy: Science, Or Religion, Or Speech" by David K. DeWolf, Stephen C. Meyer, and Mark Edward DeForrest explaining the constitutional legitimacy of teaching intelligent design and criticizing evolution in the science classroom.

**2001:** PBS *Evolution* first aired.

**2001:** Ohio--IDnet and members of the ID movement trying to have teaching intelligent design required by curriculum. Jonathan Wells (with the *Icons*) and the Santorum Amendment have played a major role.

**Recent Events:** The Santorum Amendment (2001, 2002)

- On June 13, 2001, the United States Senate strongly supported an amendment which states,  
"(1) good science education should prepare students to distinguish the data or testable theories of science from philosophical or religious claims that are made in the name of science;  
  
(2) where biological evolution is taught, the curriculum should help students to understand why this subject generates so much continuing controversy, and should prepare the students to be informed participants in public discussions regarding the subject."
- Introduced by Senator Rick Santorum (R-Pennsylvania); supported by a vote of 91-8.
- Afterwards, 3 senators made noteworthy comments:

Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts):

"the language itself, is completely consistent with what represents the central values of this body. We want children to be able to speak and examine various scientific theories on the basis of all of the information that is available to them so they can talk about different concepts and do it intelligently with the best information that is before them."

Senator Robert Byrd (D-West Virginia):

"I think, too often, we limit the best of our educators by directing them to avoid controversy and to try to remain politically correct. If students cannot learn to debate different viewpoints and to explore a range of theories in the classroom, what hope have we for civil discourse beyond the schoolhouse doors? Scientists today have numerous theories about our world and its beginnings. I, personally, have been greatly impressed by the many scientists who have probed and dissected scientific theory and concluded that some Divine force had to have played a role in the birth of our magnificent universe. These ideas align with my way of thinking. But I understand that they might not align with someone else's. That is the very point of this amendment--to support an airing of varying opinions, ideas, concepts, and theories. If education is truly a vehicle to broaden horizons and enhance thinking, varying viewpoints should be welcome as part of the school experience."

Senator Brownback (R-Kansas):

"In August of 1999 the Kansas State School Board fired a shot heard 'round the world. Press reports began to surface that evolution would no longer be taught. The specter of a theocratic school board entering the class to ensure that no student would be taught the prevailing wisdom of biology was envisioned. Political cartoons and editorials were drafted by the hundreds. To hear the furor, one might think that the teachers would be charged with sorting through their student's texts with an Exacto knife carving out pictures of Darwin. However, the prevailing impression, as is often the case was not quite accurate. Here are the facts about what happened in Kansas. The school board did not ban the teaching of evolution. They did not forbid the mention of Darwin in the classroom. They didn't even remove all mention of evolution from the State assessment test. Rather, the school board voted against including questions on macroevolution--the theory that new species can evolve from existing species over time--from the State assessment. The assessment did include questions on micro-evolution--the observed change over time within an existing species. Why did they do this? Why go so far as to decipher between micro and macro-evolution on the State exam? How would that serve the theocratic school board's purpose that we read so much about? Well, the truth is . . . their was no theocratic end to the actions of the school board. In fact, their vote was cast based on the most basic scientific principal that

science is about what we observe, not what we assume. The great and bold statement that the Kansas School Board made was that simply that we observe micro-evolution and therefore it is scientific fact; and that it is impossible to observe macro-evolution, it is scientific assumption. The response to this relatively minor and eminently scientific move by the Kansas school board was shocking. The actions and intentions of the school board were routinely misrepresented in the global press. Many in the global scientific community, who presumably knew the facts, spread misinformation as to what happened in Kansas. College admissions boards, who most certainly knew the facts, threatened Kansas students. The State Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the State universities were threatened based on the actions of school board. All of these effects caused by a school board trying to decipher between scientific fact and scientific assumption. The response to the actions of the board, appeared to many as a response to the commission of heresy."

- The NCSE tries to weaken bill and force it to include all controversial theories.
- Apart from the NCSE's lobbying, the actual amendment remained basically in its original form. However, it was not included in the final version of the bill, but rather was included in the "Conference Report," which is meant to explain the intent of the bill. The report said:

The Conferees recognize that a quality science education should Prepare students to distinguish the data and testable theories of science from the religious or philosophical claims that are made in the name of science. Where topics are taught that may generate controversy (such as biological evolution), the curriculum should help students to understand the full range of scientific views that exist, why such topics may generate controversy, and how scientific discoveries can profoundly affect society.
- President Bush signed bill into law on January 8, 2002 as H.R. 1, the "No Child Left Behind Act,"
- The Santorum Amendment is now one of the primary arguments being used to allow for the inclusion of intelligent design into the curriculum in Ohio, and also to allow for criticisms of evolution to be taught.

#### References:

1. *Summer for the Gods* by Edward J. Larson.
2. *Bones of Contention* by Marvin L. Lubenow.
3. *Darwinism and the Law: Can Non-Naturalistic Scientific Survive Constitutional Challenge* by H Wayne House (see <http://www-ac.s.ucsd.edu/~idea/house.rtf>).
4. *Cretinism or Evilution? No. 2* Edited by E.T. Babinski. See <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/ce/2/part12.html>
5. Timeline for Origins Class at <http://jmlynch.dhs.org/classes/origins/timeline.php>
6. *Religion and Science: History, Method, Dialogue* in "Dispelling Some Myths About The Split Between Theology and Science in the Nineteenth Century" an essay by Claude Welch.
7. See PBS *Evolution's* re-interpretation of this famous exchange.
8. William Jennings Bryan & The Scopes Trial by R.M. Cornelius at [http://www.bryan.edu/historical/wjbryan\\_trial/](http://www.bryan.edu/historical/wjbryan_trial/) from Bryan College Historical Resources (a Christian college in Dayton Tennessee, home of the Scopes Trial).