



AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

August 31, 1977
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HUMANISTS OF THE YEAR

Anton J. Carlson — 1953
Arthur F. Bentley — 1954
James P. Warbaase — 1955
C. Judson Herrick — 1956
Margaret Sanger — 1957
Oscar Riddle — 1958
Brock Chisholm — 1959
Leo Szilard — 1960
Linus Pauling — 1961
Julian Huxley — 1962
Hermann J. Muller — 1963
Carl Rogers — 1964
Hudson Hoagland — 1965
Erich Fromm — 1966
A. H. Maslow — 1967
Benjamin Spock — 1968
Buckminster Fuller — 1969
A. Philip Randolph — 1970
Albert Ellis — 1971
B. F. Skinner — 1972
Thomas Szasz — 1973
Mary Calderone — 1974
Joseph Fletcher — 1974
Henry Morgenthau — 1975
Betty Friedan — 1975
Jonas E. Salk — 1976
Corliss Lamont — 1977

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Dear Mr. Madron,

Thank you so much for writing me. I have your letter of 12 August before me.

First, an extremely important point: there is no such thing as "the humanist view" of evolution. There is also no humanist view of mathematics, or physics, or astronomy, etc. In the "Statement Affirming Evolution as a Principle of Science" Dr. Wilson sent you, you will note that it was signed by Christian theologians as well as scientists, educators, community leaders and college presidents. Perhaps a dozen signers are Humanists of the 186 or so listed.

Another important point...there may be no such thing as the "creationist theory" either! For fifteen years, I have followed the "creationist" or anti-evolutionist movement in the US. I have yet to see the "theory of creation" stated! What is the theory? What are its postulates? Is it based on the First Chapter of Genesis? Is it based on the Second Chapter of Genesis? (It cannot possibly be based on both, for they differ diametrically). How old is the earth and its organisms according to the "creationist" theory?

Creationist materials attack what they consider "holes" in the theory of evolution. But even this is not done according to the scientific model. That there are problems raised by the theory of evolution no competent scientist would deny...and they do write about these in excellent publications. Dr. Stephen Jay Gould has an on-going series of such articles in Natural History magazine...the past ten issues are rewarding reading. The questions raised by creationist materials are "straw men." E.g., if the 1st and 2nd Laws of Thermodynamics made evolution "impossible," by the same token life on this planet would be impossible! They simply misapply a scientific law, depending on the general ignorance of their readership to accept their views.

Creationist materials claim ten states in the union have considered "equal time for creationism" bills. I can document these: Washington State, Georgia, Mississippi, Iowa, Florida,

Tennessee (voided by action of the court, US, 3rd District in 1975), Colorado (failed by legislative vote), Missouri and California. All the above, except California, not explained by parentheses generally fail in committee, but are reentered year after year. In California in 1972, the State Board of Education adopted a policy requiring "equal time" for creationist views, but the Attorney General instructed the state schools that they need not abide by an unconstitutional instruction. Two members of the Institute for Creation Research of San Diego hold seats on the California State Board of Education. The issue continues to arise in California. The School Board of Dallas, Texas, voted to adopt a "creationist" text last January. This may be in litigation by now. Litigants, interestingly, will not be Humanists, but members of the Greater Council of Churches of Christ of the Dallas area! Columbus, Ohio schools adopted a policy to include creationist materials, but there is no immediate evidence that has been taken to the point of purchasing any due to increasing opposition from local religious leaders and educators. (My visit there in February stirred up local papers, who were surprised to find the policy had been adopted over a year earlier...so very quietly). I have not yet been able to document the Charlotte, North Carolina case, except for one small newspaper clipping suggesting the city school board was considering action similar to that taken in Dallas, Texas. The outcome of it I do not know. I hope to hear on that soon, as I have a letter off inquiring.

In addition, the creationist leader Duane Gish claims that the state legislature in Oregon should be added to the above list of states, but as yet I cannot document his claim. (...that would make 10, not 9. There may be others).

The November-December issue of The Humanist will contain an exchange of articles on this issue again. We are presenting one by Duane Gish of the Institute for Creation Research and one or more responses, much shorter, by Drs. William V. Mayer of the BSCS group, and Preston Cloud, biogeologist, Cal-Santa Barbara. I have advance copies before me of all three. We asked Gish to tell us what the theory of creationism is...he did not. So, there was little left for Mayer and Cloud but to point that out. Do avail yourself of a copy when it is available, or subscribe! We try to be fair and let the spokespersons speak for themselves in our magazine. I know you'll enjoy it.

Thank you for writing me. I hope this reply helps. But my most important point is this...there is no humanist view of evolution. There is a scientific view. Then, there are several Christian views, of which the creationists are but a tiny minority (Catholic views are extremely close to modern evolutionary biology, and a vast distance from the views of Gish and the ICR).

Best wishes,
Bette Chambers
Ms. Bette Chambers
President, AHA