Darwinism and Indoctrination by Our Public Schools

Author: Dr. Jerry Bergman
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Christians for the past dozen years or so have become increasingly discouraged with the public school system (Limbaugh, 2003). The writer has taught from preschool to the graduate level for almost 35 years, mostly in public schools. His experience has forced him to conclude that this discouragement is fully justified.

Schools, Indoctrination Centers?

Schools are openly indoctrination institutions, designed to inculcate those in their care with a specific set of values and beliefs (Atlas, 1992). As Robertson notes, the public school is

an agency formally charged by society with the task of socializing the young in particular skills and values. We usually think of the school as being mainly concerned with teaching skills and knowledge.... But the schools in every society also engage in outright indoctrination in values. We may find this fact more readily apparent in societies other than our own ... the school socializes ... through the “hidden curriculum” implicit in the content of school activities, ranging from regimented classroom schedules to organized sports (1987, p. 129).

From a Christian world view, some of the values and beliefs in which students are indoctrinated in public schools are positive (such as the love of learning) but others are
negative (such as discarding all absolute values). A major problem is that the anti-Christian side of religious questions often are forcefully (and persuasively) presented with impunity, but the Christian position is typically censored from the curriculum (Bergman, 1980). The reason for this one-sided indoctrination is because the anti-Christian position is labeled “secular”, and thus can be taught in public schools. The Christian side, though, is viewed as “religious,” and separation of church and state, it is often successfully (but incorrectly) argued, prohibits this side from being presented in public schools (Whitehead, 1983, 1985).

Although teaching content guidelines often are not rigidly enforced, and the material covered in class is somewhat up to the teachers discretion, a strong pervasive pattern exists for the anti-Christian side to be presented far more often, especially in the larger city and suburban school districts. The reason why the creation view of origins often is not taught is because it is viewed as “religious,” but teaching Darwinism is believed to be the teaching “science” and therefore is objective and “proper.” Enforcement of this norm is, ironically, more common at the higher-grade levels. Another reason is because the “experts” themselves were taught Darwinism; thus teach it to their students.

The writer’s experience is that positive comments about distinctly Christian values and religion in general are rare in both the behavioral and natural sciences, especially at the college level. On the other hand, negative comments about Christianity, often inaccurate or grossly distorted, commonly are made. In the writer’s entire undergraduate education (four majors) and graduate training (completion of 5 masters degrees, and the equivalent of three Ph.D.s) he has heard, at best, only three clearly positive comments about Christianity.
The positive comments include the acknowledgement that “the church” has historically assumed a major responsibility in the care of the mentally and physically sick (during the Middle Ages, it was noted, the care given in many monasteries was both very compassionate and of fairly high quality). The second comment was made by a strongly anti-Christian professor who in almost every class criticized both religious believers and their beliefs. Yet he once admitted that the most effective means of rehabilitation that he has witnessed in the prisons was religious conversion. The third comment was by a Jewish professor, who stated that the Old Testament contained a lot of “wisdom,” and a remarkably high level of insight for ancient historical writing. He made it clear he was not implying that the Hebrew Scriptures were God’s word, but only that their level of insight was very “interesting.” His other comments about religion were quite critical, especially of Christianity.

Conversely, I can remember countless negative comments about Christianity and religion in general. A few of my professors seemed to feel that their main class goal was to lambaste Christianity and all religious beliefs, values, ideas, and persons. And most of the time when they did so, religion had nothing to do with the subject matter we were considering in the class. Below is an excerpt from one professor’s lecture that not only reveals his lack of knowledge about the Scriptures, but the comment’s totally inappropriateness in a biology class (in this class the professor spent one entire hour, nonstop, criticizing Christianity and the Bible).

My last point… I want to discuss is what I think is the basic error of fundamentalists believe that the Bible is true throughout. However, it is obvious,…to anyone who has read the Bible, that it is full of internal contradictions.

He then gave several of what he thought were examples of biblical contradictions.

Another interesting…contradiction in the Bible occurs in (Genesis 6:19) “And of every living of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark to keep
them alive with thee. They shall be male and female.” (Genesis 6:20) “Fowl after their king, of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee to keep them alive.” (Genesis 6:22) “Thus did Noah.” I call to your attention that in these two passages two of every sort are brought into the ark. (Genesis 7:2) “Of every clean beast, thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female” (Genesis 7:3) “The fowls also of the air by sevens.” (Genesis 7:5) “And Noah did it unto all the Lord commanded him.” That is very difficult for Noah, even granting an Omnipotent deity to carry out two contradictory commands. To take two of everything vs. taking seven of the clean beasts and fowls and two of everything else is a clear-cut contradiction any way you look at it (recorded and transcribed by a student).

Many professors do not go to this extreme, but similar ignorance is constantly passed off as “knowledge” in our college and university classrooms today. In a graduate level course titled Myth and Myth Making, although this professor was extremely knowledgeable and very open to alternative points of view (and was an excellent discussion facilitator), it was clear from most of the student comments that they assumed a priori that naturalistic evolution is true (no one mentioned theistic evolution, and atheistic evolution was consistently implied). Few blatantly anti-religious comments were made, but this form of indoctrination, although more subtle, is far more effective. If a student verbalized, “I think that the God belief is a myth and God does not exist,” such confrontation might elicit some latent religious feelings that a few students may still have. Blatant propaganda is far less effective, and this makes the pervasive indoctrination that is common in the public schools all the more dangerous.

As an example, in a graduate class, half of one class period was spent discussing illusions to animals in everyday speech (he is sly as a fox, eats like a bird, is messy as a pig, etc.) as well as in literary metaphors. Several of the students suggested that these illusions were common due to our genetic evolution from lower animals, and that humans could have inherited some of these traits from these particular animals in their long evolution. Although humans have traits that some animals manifest, this does not prove we evolved from them. Although the students suggested that many common illusions to
animals are inaccurate (owls are not actually very wise compared to other birds, and pigs actually are among the smartest of animals, etc.) the alleged similarities were noted and, it was assumed, this was evidence for Darwinism.

Probably the best example of indoctrination, partially because it is clearly anti-religious, is that typically found in Death and Dying classes. I have completed several graduate courses titled variously Death and Dying, Bereavement, Sociology of Aging and similar. It was specifically taught as fact in all of these courses that there is no life after death, and that the person dying “must accept this fact” instead of utilizing “rationalizations” or “delusions”—such as the fact that death is not the final end of life—to deal with “reality.”

Also criticized were use of such euphemisms as a man that died has “passed away,” is now “beyond the veil” has “reaped his heavenly reward,” or “is with the Lord.” In several classes it was specifically stressed that these terms should never be used in reference to the dying or dead. The person is simply “dying” or “has died” and, except in our memory, is gone forever and no heaven or hell exists. In the three classes, there was no recognition or awareness indicating that many people believe death of the body is not the everlasting end of the person’s consciousness or existence.

Life after death is obviously a subject of great importance to most religions and touches on the heart of our relationship to our Creator and the message of theistic religions. Christianity and those religions that share its heritage, including Judaism and Islam, are concerned foremost with salvation and the assurance of life after physical death of the body. The courts have consistently ruled that the state is not to be hostile toward religion. Yet instruction in colleges typically is very hostile, as this example illustrates. The instruction in these classes was specific and matter-of-fact: there is no life after death, and to believe in this falsehood is foolish. Furthermore, not one person in
the class challenged this assumption (in this class I was also far too timid to say anything).

The position often taught in the public schools and colleges is primarily latent atheism. The Detroit chapter of American Atheist published an article titled, “Atheists Die—God Believers Pass On” that notes the primary difference between atheists and “God Believers” is that atheists find strength that comes from facing head on the reality of death as the final end. This is exactly the attitude that was openly conveyed in the death and dying, bereavement, and sociology of aging courses that the author completed (all with an A grade). As Bates notes

Across the country this month, school administrators are resolutely barring classroom creches, Bible stories, angels, carols and other traces of Christian dogma. Yet scarcely anybody is raising a stink about censorship. Contrast another holiday. In the view of some conservative Christians, Halloween is a pagan festival that has no place in the public schools. Parents who advance that argument, says Arthur Kropp of People for the American Way, are guilty of “censoring Halloween”; they should quit trying “to spoil the fun.” Mr. Kropp adds a rebuke that conservative Christians periodically utter against opponents of official Christmas observances: “I mean, let’s lighten up.” ...Religious-right activists perceive the Halloween-Christmas distinction as part of a vile double standard. People who complain about Christian materials in the classroom are lauded as saviors of the Constitution, but people who complain about anti-Christian materials are reviled as Grinchlike censors plotting to subvert the Constitution (1993, p. A11).

Many educators demand censorship of Christian ideas. Professor Stanley Fish, speaking at Stanford in November 2003, said that

“Tolerance, mutual respect, and freedom of speech are always bad ideas. They are cheerleading, flag-waving, and slimy! Censorship and regulation comes first, free speech comes second. Free speech requires constraint, which is thought to be opposite.” Without censorship, he told the audience, original and provocative speech is just so much noise. Tolerance and mutual respect must be directed toward specific ends. “Disrespect,” Fish declaimed, “is a prerequisite for respect” (Black, 2004, p. 297).

**Indoctrination in Darwinism**
This writer is convinced that Darwinism is believed primarily because the schools and the mass media indoctrinate students in this world view, and unfairly criticize all varieties of creationism. Often the criticisms are inaccurate, distorted, or poorly done, although not always. School is clearly an indoctrinating institution, and this conclusion has been supported by a large number of studies that have intensively investigated the school process. Although the indoctrination often is not obvious to a person who is a product of the school system, it is very apparent when the curriculum in the school system is reviewed by those who hold other values. When the educational process in other countries is evaluated by Americans, the indoctrination process is even more obvious (Atlas, 1992).

The case for Naturalistic Darwinism is, at best, weak and, more accurately, Darwinism is a hypothesis that has been falsified and, thus, should be relegated to the status of astrology, phrenology and other theories now proven false. The editor of Nature Structural and Molecular claimed that “Darwinism and evolution have nothing to do with how living things came to be, just what happened once they were here” (2005, p. 101). Yet, most all textbooks claim otherwise. Darwinists recognize that the schools are a major means of indoctrinating students into their belief structure, and for this reason are against presenting opposing belief structures in a favorable light. Dr. John A. Moore, a biologist at the University of California at Riverside, stated in a paper titled “Countering the Creationists” that “If we do not resolve our problems with the creationists, we have only ourselves to blame. Let’s remember, the greatest resource of all is available to us—the educational system of the nation.” And they do use it well. As O’Leary accurately notes, the creation evolution controversy is not between people who want to impose religion in the classroom and people who want to keep it neutral. A classroom that accepts evolution in the form of ultra-Darwinism is not “neutral”; it can easily become a conduit for intolerant
views on religion and for a specific set of assumptions about human nature, society, and politics that most parents would oppose (2004, p. 106).

Indoctrination in the Textbooks

A major concern relative to teaching creationism in the public schools is only one side is taught in the textbooks. The now classic study of textbooks found that a clear anti-Christian bias exists in most textbooks used today (Vitz, 1986). Stanford Ph.D. and Harvard Law School graduate Bruce Shortt concluded that the drift to secularism in public schools began shortly after Darwin. By 1879 the McGuffey readers removed most of the righteousness and piety values, although the series still contained lessons affirming traditional morality (Shortt, 2004, p. 312). Now, little of the traditional morality is left. Publishers today know that it is common (and perfectly legal) to indoctrinate students against the creation world view and they are not shy about doing so. Many current biology textbooks take pains to argue against the creationist interpretation, as is obvious in the following quote from a popular biological textbook:

The existence of homologous organs, or the existence of similarities in the structure of various body parts, does not refute the idea of special creation. There is just as much reason for believing that the Creator would choose a common plan for building His creatures as that He would choose different plans for each. However, one of the results of studies in comparative anatomy is the discovery of vestigial structures. Vestigial structures are those that appear in the organism in a seemingly functionless role. The human appendix, hip bones in snakes, and rudimentary legs in whales are all vestigial structures. It is easy to explain the existence of such structures by the idea of descent. They represent useless or inoperative parts against whose existence natural selection is working. By the concept of special creation, however, it is difficult to explain why such parts exist (1982, p. 849).

The writer, in the completion of over 1,000 quarter hours of college credit and from his teaching experience of over 35 years, has read literally hundreds of textbooks. Virtually all of them assume a priori that no God exists, rarely even adopting the agnostic position.
Most textbooks also express, at least covertly, an anti-Christian bias. One text I taught from on delinquency by Empy (1982) repeatedly stressed the “inferiority” of Christian principles and concepts. The text was especially critical of the Christian “innate depravity of man” teaching (and of the necessity to “bring up a boy according to the way for him” to counteract the natural tendencies of selfishness). Christianity was repeatedly misrepresented (although Empy had to admit that Christian acts of charity and kindness were common in history). Yet, this text was actually more balanced than many that I have used in my college teaching.

Probably one of the most serious and common areas of textbook censorship is creationism and theism in general (Bergman, 1980). Bates notes that

Censorship implies a normally unhindered marketplace of ideas, whereas the classroom marketplace is tightly cosseted by design. Schools exist to promote certain ideas over others—evolution over creationism, industriousness over sloth, tolerance over bigotry. State regulations are chockablock with one-sided mandates (1993, p. A11).

As Leo concluded in recent years “references to God and religion” have tended to “disappear on exams and in texts” (2002, p. 53). Leo recounts one case where “all references to God, the Bible” were censored from a major text by Barbara Cohen. Even on tests “all references to” religion in one state are now gone. A textbook I used to teach Anthropology at Defiance College titled Anthropology, by Ember & Ember (1985) assumed a priori reverse creationism, i.e., humans created God, and not the other way around. The only question is how and why humans created theos. One of many theories developed to answer this question is the human mind “needs” to explain certain events, such as the universe’s existence. Another theory is the idea that “the God belief” is functional because it unifies society, facilitating social harmony and societal bonds, which reduce the likelihood of suicide and other problems that stem from anomie. Another theory of why humans created God by Karl Marx argues that religion is
an illusion and the idea of God is used by the powerful to control the powerless (Kluger, 2004, p. 68).

A neutral position would take the agnostic view and note that people believe God exists because it has survival value, and this is why religion is a cultural universal (Hamer, 2003). Why this is true includes the observation that humans have learned about God as a result of our interactions with him. An example would be through revelation as recorded in the Scriptures. Since all persons come from Adam, who clearly knew that God created him, this belief would be part of our universal cultural heritage, modified only by time and local conditions. Thus religion would, for this reason, be a cultural universal. This option could be presented in addition to the reverse creationism position, helping the text be more fair and balanced, but it was not.

These are only a few examples of this almost universal problem in secular education. This state of affairs did not always exist, and is fairly recent. As Henry notes:

At the outset of this century, the instructional program of the great Western universities frequently referred to the God of the Bible, the living self-revealing God. Courses . . . gave prominence to the Ten Commandments and to the Sermon on the Mount, and presented Jesus of Nazareth as the perfect example of morality . . . By the late 1920s, a striking shift of perspective had prevailed. References to deity no longer focused on the . . . self-revelatory God of Biblical theism, but rather on an anonymous God in general, a John Doe god (1984, p. 1).

The example of the Tennessee mother who was jailed over a “textbook battle,” illustrates that this indoctrination is increasingly becoming “forced”. In this case the school refused to consider an alternative to a “mandatory” book, which, according to the mother, Mrs. Frost, advocated values that she strongly opposed. Ironically, the principal accused the mother of being involved in a “parental action group” that was part of “a national anti-public education movement that would like to indoctrinate students in its
narrow religious and philosophical point of view” (quoted in Clark, 1984, p. 62). Even anti-censorship groups support censorship of creationist books as Bates notes that anti-censorship organizations don’t champion all ideas. People for the American Way has attacked a history book that said the Bible inspired the Constitution’s Framers. The National Coalition Against Censorship has praised the opponents of “creation-science” biology textbooks (Bates, 2003, p. A11).

Those who are endeavoring to achieve a more balanced presentation of origins (and a less dogmatic teaching of atheistic evolution) can attest to the fact that the controversy is not over the humanists trying to present a balanced view and the Christians a one-sided view, but more often the humanists wanting to indoctrinate students in their point of view only, and the creationists wanting a fair hearing (Shortt, 2004). This censorship and viewpoint discrimination occurs at all levels of public education, from elementary through college (Black, 2004).

The Christian response is to be aware of the conditions in one’s local school district, especially if one’s children, or grandchildren, attend. One must then bring anti-religious bias concerns to the attention of school boards. To do this, curriculum materials and textbooks must be examined, and students asked about what is discussed in their classes. The concern is not censorship, but insuring that the Christian position is that the prevalent anti-Christian indoctrination is modified so as to reduce the psychological rape of Christian children (Glenn, 1985). The Scriptural solution, as summarized by Hanes, is as follows:

In Ephesians 6:16-17, Paul urges us to put on the helmet of salvation to protect our minds against the fiery arrows aimed at us by the adversary. These “arrows” are not actual physical weapons but are . . . destructive false ideas whispered to us by a spiritual enemy and meant to separate you from your [Christian] friends and . . . [God] (1983, p. 30).
Excellent supplements such as *Pandas* are often used, and many more balanced texts exist that are used primarily in Christian schools by several million students—such many published by Bob Jones University Press, School of Tomorrow, Rod & Staff, Abeka Books (at Pensacola). Good texts exist, but are not used in public schools. Jim Nelson Black, in a study of American colleges, found indoctrination was the norm to the extent that he concluded colleges are actually corrupting the minds and morals of the next generation (2004).

**Should We Listen to the People?**

Surveys have shown that close to 90 percent of the general public want both creationism and evolution taught. Critics argue that truth is not determined by polls. Interestingly, a number of studies have shown that “crowds are often smarter than individuals” (Shermer, 2004, p 38). One study of the popular television series “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” found that the audience was right 91 percent of the time compared to only 65 percent for experts (Shermer, 2004, p. 38). Shermer concludes that “for solving a surprising large and varied number of problems, crowds are smarter than individuals.” Shermer notes that for decades the dogma has been that crowds make poor judgment. The classic work on crowds by Gustave Le Bon (which I studied in graduate school) *The Crowd; a Study of a Popular Mind* concluded that “crowds” are generally *not* smarter. In Shermer’s words “there is now over whelming evidence, artfully accumulated and articulated” in the book titled *The Wisdom of Crowds*, (Surowiecki, 2004) that “the many are smarter than the few.”

For example, when asked to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar, the group average was 871, and the actual figure was 850. Only one of the 56 subjects in the study guessed closer then the group average. In the group, individual errors on either side of the true figure tend to cancel each other out. This is true, not only in estimating numbers,
but, as Shermer and others have demonstrated, also in many other situations. The key is that the group should be autonomous, cognitively diverse, and decentralized—ruling out the crowd effect so well known for producing irrational mobs.

Interestingly, smaller polls point to the same conclusion. Channel 1 News asked the audiences their opinion on a controversial issue each week. The audience was primarily students who subscribe to Channel 1 News. On November 9, 2004 the students were asked, “What should be taught in schools?” Twenty-one percent answered Creation, 17 percent Evolution, and 62 percent both. Only 17 percent wanted Evolution and only 83 percent wanted either Creation or both taught. In this case the group may be wiser then the intellectuals.

References


