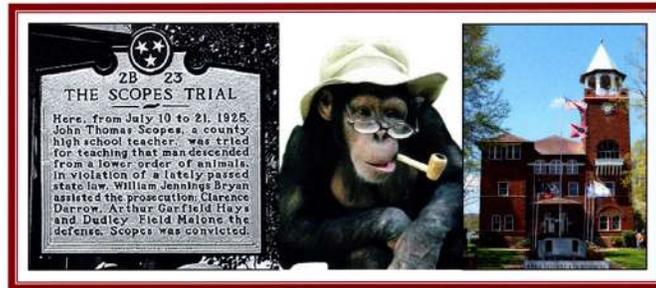


The Scopes “Monkey Trial” Revisited

A Retrospective on the Significance and Legacy of the “Trial of the Century”

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— AN OVERVIEW —

PREFACE

The historical and scientific context for the Scopes Trial of 1925.
What were the main issues at stake in the trial?

PART 1

The facts, the myths, and the legacy related to the Trial – and why it was so significant in subsequent American history.

The value and necessity of Christian apologetics.

PART 2

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— PREFACE —

Prelude: “The Trial of the Century”

This summer marks the 100th anniversary of the Scopes ‘Monkey’ Trial – one of the most high-profile media events of the 20th century that reputedly confirmed the Darwinian theory of naturalistic evolution as indisputable “settled science” while relegating the biblical account of divine creation to the status of ancient superstition and mythology.

However, the facts behind the Scopes Trial are considerably more nuanced and complex. In reality, the trial did not establish a credible scientific basis for evolutionary theory, nor did it discredit special creation as a rational and defensible alternative. In that respect, this was one of those landmark historical events that all conscientious and thoughtful Christians should know.

As an historical event, the Scopes “Monkey Trial” of 1925 was little more than a brief blip on the radar screen and a momentary diversion and distraction in the midst of the “Roaring Twenties.” But in terms of what it signified, and its legacy and impact on subsequent American culture, the trial was one of the most consequential events of the 20th century. On that basis, it rightly deserves the title, “The Trial of the Century.”

A Clash of Worldviews

The 1920s was a transitional decade. For the first time since the nation’s founding, rather than living in rural environments generally isolated from all but a few neighbors, the majority of Americans now lived in urban communities – a “city” being defined as an incorporated area with a population of 2,500 or more residents. Urban growth was driven by industrialization, immigration, and remarkable advancements in transportation with the invention of the internal combustion engine and the mass production of gasoline-powered automobiles and trucks. Also, there were exciting developments in mass communication via the new technology of radio. Literacy and general education were gradually increasing as more states mandated compulsory education. Still, at the time of the Scopes Trial, only a little more than 20% of the adult population had graduated from high school, and less than 3.5% had earned a college degree. Not many Americans were well-read in areas such as evolutionary theory and genetics.

Although usually presented as an epic debate between two sources of authority, science or religion – or Darwinian evolutionary theory versus the Biblical account of creation – in essence the

Scopes Trial dramatized a classic culture clash between two fundamentally contradictory worldviews: **Naturalism** and **Theism**. For more than two centuries, the emergence and increasing influence of a secular/naturalistic worldview have shattered the biblically influenced consensus of the past and sparked the cultural trends that have eroded much of the spiritual and moral foundation of Western civilization.

In America, the controversy over special (divine) creation versus naturalistic evolutionary theory has been the front-line issue in the emergence of the culture war that has impacted and divided virtually every area of American society and culture to the present day. As Brenda Wineapple commented in her recent book, *Keeping the Faith: God, Democracy, and the Trial That Riveted a Nation*, “The [Scopes] trial was symbolic of the deep cultural and political divides that existed in 1925, but it also captures very strongly the cultural and political divide that we are living in right now.” This includes what we believe about everything from Biblical authority, the sanctity of human life and the meaning of life to the great social, cultural and moral issues of our time, our political philosophy and how we vote. This was the real issue at stake in the Scopes Trial of 1925, and this is why Christians should know and understand this epic event in American history.

The term “**worldview**” occasionally surfaces in public discourse, but relatively few people understand its meaning and significance. In essence, a worldview is an interpretive framework for making sense of the world – a philosophical, theological and existential matrix by which we assess what is Real and True and Significant – and what is not. In other words, our worldview is the foundation not only for what we believe, but it also conditions how we live – our value system and our priorities in life. [Note: The first philosopher to introduce the concept of “worldviews” was **Immanuel Kant** (1724-1804), who used the term *weltanschauung* to denote a set of basic beliefs that underlie all human thought and action.]

According to the former UC-Berkeley law professor Phillip Johnson: “Our worldview is the window by which we view the world, and decide, often subconsciously, what is real and important, or unreal and unimportant.... Every one of us has a worldview, and our worldview governs our thinking even when... we are unaware of it.” [Quoted in Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Crossway Books, 2004), p 11.]

Similarly, in her book, *Is Reality Secular?*, the academician Mary Poplin notes, “Worldviews are like operating systems on a computer except that they are in our minds.... [Our worldview] is the lens through which we interpret reality and by which we reason.” [*Is Reality Secular? Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews* (InterVarsity Press, 2014), pp. 26, 27]

In his standard textbook on worldviews, *The Universe Next Door*, the erudite Christian scholar James Sire explains it this way: “Few people have... an articulate philosophy [of life]. Even fewer have a carefully constructed theology. But everyone has a worldview.” [*The Universe Next Door*. Fifth Edition (IVP Academic, 2009), p. 19.]

Our worldview conditions not only what we generally believe about theology and religion, but it also influences our basic orientation toward philosophy, morality, the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the arts. As the former atheist philosopher-turned-theist Antony Flew emphasized in his writings, true science cannot be detached from true philosophy. In his words: “When you study the interaction of two physical bodies – for instance, two subatomic particles – you are engaged in science. When you ask how it is that those subatomic particles – or anything physical – could exist and why, you are engaged in philosophy.” Flew might also have added, “... you are engaged in philosophy, *and also theology!*” [*There Is a God* (HarperOne, 2007), p. 89]

It is imperative that Christians understand that the Christian faith is not exclusively a personal relationship with God through belief in Jesus Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, but also a comprehensive worldview. As the apostle Paul exhorted the Christians in Rome: “*Do not*

conform any longer to the values and thought patterns of this world [i.e., the worldview of this world], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern God’s good and perfect will for your life” (Rom. 12:2). Likewise, in Colossians 2:8 he warned, “*Make certain that no one seduces you through hollow and deceptive philosophies which depend on human tradition and the principles of this world rather than on Christ.*” [Note that this is not an indictment of philosophy per se – only the acknowledgment that philosophy, like all areas of learning (including theology), is a prime target for Satanic infiltration, corruption and confusion. In fact, due to its innate importance, philosophy is the primary intellectual discipline that has been most exploited by the forces of evil for more than 2,000 years.

To qualify as a worldview, a belief system must address the two most basic components of any comprehensive philosophical system: **metaphysics** – the nature of fundamental reality (both material and immaterial or conceptual); and **epistemology** – the standards and processes by which we assess and conclude that something is real (or true) and knowable. In other words, metaphysics is all about what is real, and epistemology addresses how we can know what is real.

There are four basic metaphysical issues that every thoughtful person must ponder in this life:

- **Prime Reality:** What is the ultimate Source (or Cause) of all that is? Is it chemical and physical matter, or is it an eternal and transcendent Creator/God?
- **Origins:** Where did everything (including us human beings) come from?
- **Identity:** What is a human being? Are we merely highly evolved mammals, or are we creatures made in the image of God (the *imago Dei*)?
- **Destiny:** What happens when a person dies?

Correspondingly, every thoughtful person must ponder three basic epistemological issues:

- **Knowledge:** How is it possible to know anything at all?
- **Morality:** Is there an objective standard for determining right and wrong, or are all values merely subjective and relative?
- **Meaning:** What (if anything) is the purpose of human life?

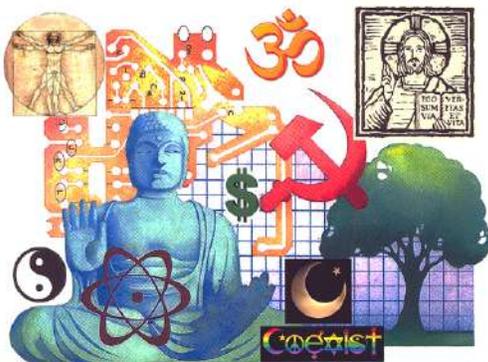
On a personal and existential level, the most fundamental issues of life are these:

- (1) **Identity: Who (and what) am I?**
- (2) **Origin: Where did I come from?**
- (3) **Meaning: Why am I here (or, what *should* I be doing here?)**
- (4) **Destiny: Where am I going – i.e., what is my final destination?**

Three Worldview Options

Over the past two centuries, many philosophers and theologians have sought to identify and describe the various worldview orientations that underlie the basic beliefs and practices of different philosophies and religions. For example, in his masterly and practical “Basic Worldview Catalogue,” *The Universe Next Door*, the Christian philosopher and theologian James W. Sire identifies, compares and contrasts seven distinctive orientations:

- **Christian theism;**
- **Enlightenment-influenced deism;**
- **Naturalism (a.k.a., Materialism);**
- **Nihilism;**
- **Existentialism;**
- **Eastern Pantheistic Monism;** and
- **New Age “spirituality.”**



Reduced to their most basic essence, these seven orientations can be reduced to three fundamental worldview options: Naturalism, Theism, and Pantheism.

1. Naturalism.

- There is no God and no supernatural reality.
- Everything in the universe, including humankind, is the product of random (and purposeless) materialistic processes.
- The implication: Morality and ethics are human constructs.
- There are no absolute standards for right and wrong; all thoughts, words and actions are merely subjective impressions and expressions of opinion.
- Justice is relative, and the world operates according to the law of the jungle: “Survival of the fittest,” and “Might makes right.”

2. Theism.

- Everything – including humankind – is the product of an eternal, infinite and omnipotent Creator who designed the universe for a purpose.
- God is transcendent – he is not part of the universe.
- The ultimate purpose of the universe was the creation of humankind.
- God is the ultimate source of truth, morality, and justice.

3. Pantheism.

- The fundamental reality and the essence of all things is Brahman – the Universal World Soul.
- This is the essence of monism: “All is One,” and that One is innately spiritual.
- Everything is “God” – including things both material and immaterial.
- The material world is only an illusion (maya) and has no meaning.
- “God” is immanent, but not transcendent.
- We are all “God.”

[Note: Pantheism is irrelevant to the issues at stake in the Scopes Trial of 1925, which focused exclusively on the implications of atheistic naturalism and theistic creationism.]

Darwinism 101

Charles Darwin (1809-82) was the most influential naturalist and biologist of the past 200 years. His most prominent and influential works were *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). A religious “free thinker,” he wrote that he “gave up Christianity” at age 40.



Darwin’s basic agenda, and his stated goal, was to “overthrow the dogma of separate creations.” According to him, human beings are not a special creation of God but the products of certain naturalistic processes over time: random genetic mutations that occurred

in the genetic code, natural selection that preserved beneficial mutations, and the “survival-of-the-fittest that perpetuated the evolution of the species. Over time, he came to the conclusion that humanity descended from “a hairy quadruped” that itself evolved over tens of millions of years from lower life forms.[1]

[Note: The reader chosen by Darwin’s publisher to review the original manuscript of *Origin of Species* was Whitwell Elwin, a distinguished clergyman and editor of *Quarterly Review*. Elwin was, to say the least, underwhelmed. In his words, he found the work to be “a wild and foolish piece of imagination” and suggested that Darwin might do better writing a book about pigeons.[!] His candid conclusion: “At every page I was tantalized by the absence of proofs.... It is to ask the jury for a verdict without putting the witnesses in the box.”

[Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin: The Power of Place* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), pp. 75-76.]

In his *Autobiography* (published posthumously in 1887), Darwin noted “the extreme difficulty or

rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man... as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting, I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist.” However, he wrote that although this conclusion “was strong in my mind about the time when I wrote the *Origin of Species*, since that time... it has very gradually, with many fluctuations, become weaker.” Therefore, he conceded that he must now “be content to remain an agnostic.” [Ref. John G. West, ed., *The Magician’s Twin: C. S. Lewis on Science, Scientism, and Society* (Discovery Institute Press, 2012), pp. 130-31.]

According to many of Darwin’s ardent followers from the mid-19th century to the present, the implications of his theory of naturalistic evolution undermined any real basis for belief in God.

- Thomas Huxley, an English biologist and anthropologist known as “Darwin’s Bulldog”: “*Teleology, as commonly understood (to mean design and purpose), received its deathblow at Mr. Darwin’s hand.*” [*Man’s Place in Nature* (Appleton, 1864).]
- Julian Huxley, a grandson of Thomas Huxley, an evolutionary biologist, and the first president of the British Humanist Association: “*Darwinism removed the whole idea of God as the creator of organisms from the sphere of rational discussion.*” [*Evolution: The Modern Synthesis* (Allen & Unwill, 1942).]
- *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1975): “*Darwin did two things: he showed that evolution contradicts scriptural legends of creation and that its cause, natural selection, was automatic, leaving no room for divine guidance or design.*”
- Evolutionary biologist and historian of science, Ernst Mayr: “*The Darwinian revolution was no mere replacement of one scientific theory with another, but rather the replacement of a worldview in which the supernatural was accepted as a normal and relevant explanatory principle by a new*

worldview in which there was no room for supernatural forces.”

- Oxford evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins: “*Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin described, and which we now know is the explanation for existence and apparently the purposeful form of all life, has no purpose.... It is the blind watchmaker.*”

“Although atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.” [*The Blind Watchmaker* (Norton, 1987), p. 6.]

“It is safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid, or insane (or wicked, but I’d rather not consider that.”

[Richard Dawkins, “Put Your Money on Evolution.” *The New York Times* (April 9, 1989), VII.35.]

By the late 1800s, most scientists had converted from belief in special divine creationism to some form of evolutionary theory. Darwinism seemed to offer a natural “scientific” explanation for the origins of contemporary life forms without reliance upon supernatural intervention. Naively, many Christian scholars, including leading conservative theologians and clergy, accepted some form of theistic evolutionary theory virtually without question. For example, several articles in *The Fundamentals* (1905-15), including those written by editors A. C. Dixon and R. A. Torrey, tacitly endorsed theistic evolution. [For more information, see Jeffrey D. Breshears, “Science and Fundamentalism,” in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (Zondervan, 2017), pp. 599-602.]

Social Darwinism and Eugenics

Darwinian evolutionary theory impacted not only biological science but also great social and cultural trends. In the 1860s a cousin of Darwin, **Francis Galton** (1822-1911), was the first to propose the new “science” of **eugenics**, including selective breeding, so as to promote a “survival-of-the-fittest” agenda and thereby accelerate the process of human evolution.

According to Galton and his successors, “defective” humans should be sterilized so as to reduce “inferior” offspring. Darwin was also an avid proponent of eugenics, and his son Leonard would later become the president of the national Eugenics Education Society in England. In fact, the full title of Darwin’s first book was *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*.[!]

In the fifteen years between **Margaret Sanger’s** founding of the pro-abortion American Birth Control League in 1921 (the predecessor to Planned Parenthood) and 1935, more than thirty states enacted laws to compel the sexual segregation and sterilization of persons designated as eugenically unfit – in particular the mentally ill and retarded, habitual criminals, and epileptics. As George William Hunter stated in his *Civic Biology* textbook (see Part 1: Prelude to the “Monkey Trial”), “If such people were lower animals, we would probably kill them off to prevent them from spreading.” [Cited in Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (Basic Books, 1997, 2006), p. 27.]

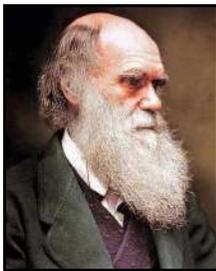
A few years later, of course, the ultimate legacy of the eugenics movement would culminate in Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime’s mass extermination of “undesirables” – the “mentally retarded,” the physically handicapped, homosexuals, Jews and Gypsies. Modern eugenics and the denial of the sanctity of human life have resulted in the greatest mass murder of innocent human beings in history. As the historian Richard Weikart explains in his books, *From Darwin to Hitler* and *Darwinian Racism: How Darwinism Influenced Hitler, Nazism, and White Nationalism*:

Eugenics was a movement that aimed at improving human heredity.... Indeed, long before the Nazis came on the scene, Darwinian biologists, anthropologists, and other scholars – including Darwin himself – were insisting that Darwinism provided intellectual support for racism and even racial extermination....

One of the most important features of Darwin’s theory was his proposed mechanism for evolution: natural selection through the struggle for existence. Darwin argued that the population of any species, including humans, grew faster than the food supply, leading to competition for scarce resources in which the fit – those better adapted to their environments – survived and reproduced, while the unfit perished. [From *Darwin to Hitler* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and *Darwinian Racism* (Discovery Institute, 2022)].

Regarding race relations, Darwin was seemingly a proponent of pseudo-“scientific racism.” As Weikart writes, “Darwin thought that some races – black Africans, Native Americans, and others – were intellectually inferior to Europeans.... Thus, many Europeans in the 19th century construed Darwin’s theory as justification for annihilating other races.” [Richard Weikart, “Darwinian Racism: How Evolutionary Theory Shaped Nazi Thinking.” <https://evolutionnews.org/2022/02/darwinian-racism-how-evolutionary-theory-shaped-nazi-thinking/>]

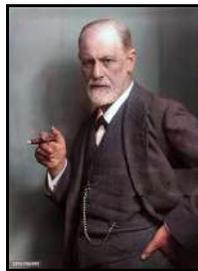
In terms of his social, cultural and political influence, Darwin was an integral part of modernism’s “secular trinity” along with **Karl Marx** and **Sigmund Freud**. Together, the legacy of these three cultural titans in terms of their influence in both the natural sciences and the social sciences has largely defined most of the radical secular trends of the past 175 years.



Darwin



Marx



Freud

The Origin of Everything: Two Views

There are two alternatives regarding the essence of the existence of all the natural world, including human beings.

1. Naturalistic Evolution [a.k.a. “**Darwinian**” and “**Neo-Darwinian**” evolution]. The implications of naturalistic/materialistic/unguided evolutionary theory include:

- We live in a self-existent (and uncreated) universe that had no beginning.
- Matter is eternal and is all there is. To quote the celebrity astronomer and media star Carl Sagan: “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” [Note: All ancient pagan cosmologies assumed that the universe was eternal and had no creative beginning. Only the Bible posited *creatio ex nihilo* – “creation out of nothing” – Gen. 1:1.]
- Matter is all that matters.
- Supernaturalism is essentially superstitionism.
- Teleologically, the universe had no purpose: it just is.
- Likewise, the laws of nature have no explanation: they just are.

By the 1820s, most naturalists had come to believe that the Earth was millions of years old, and that human life had existed far longer than the 6,000 years that biblical genealogies seemed to indicate in Genesis 5 and 11.[2]

The emerging consensus among scientists in the late 19th century was that all life forms evolved from a common primordial origin over millions (or billions) of years. The implications:

- Human beings are highly evolved mammals.
- Human beings are complex psycho-chemical machines, products of random material and chemical forces that are evolving toward higher states of consciousness.
- There is no explanation for the reality of consciousness.
- There is no explanation for the reality of morality.

- There is no explanation for the reality of human creativity.
- Mankind has no supernatural essence or “soul.”
- Human history has no ultimate purpose or goal.
- Death is the extinction of human personality and consciousness. As the philosopher of science Ernest Nagel declared: “Human destiny is [merely] an episode between two oblivions.” [Cited in David Gooding and John Lennox, *Being Truly Human* (Myrtlefield Press, 2018), pp. 240-242.]

In his younger years, **C. S. Lewis** was somewhat skeptical regarding the claims of Darwinian evolutionary theory, but over time he became increasingly critical of the theory. Lewis addressed the topic of evolution in several of his books and essays, and in private letters.

John West notes that in Lewis’s book, *Miracles*, he emphasized that “the birth of modern science and its belief in the regularity of nature depended on the Judeo-Christian view of God as Creator: ‘Men became scientific because they believed in a [supreme and divine] Legislator’” who created the physical laws that govern the universe. However, “Throughout his life, Lewis displayed a healthy skepticism of claims made in the name of science... even before he was a Christian.”

Lewis was a vociferous critic of “**scientism**” – the belief that modern science should be the ultimate authority on all matters, both physical and conceptual – including not only moral and religious matters but also in terms of cultural values and even political policies. Likewise, Lewis had no tolerance for “**evolutionism**” – the idea that “matter magically turned itself into complex and conscious living things through a blind and undirected process.” In a letter to his father a few weeks after the Scopes Trial in 1925, Lewis declared that Darwin’s theory was built on “a foundation of sand of gigantic assumptions.”



[John G. West, ed., *The Magician’s Twin*, p. 109.]

Lewis also picked up on Darwin’s doubt regarding the reliability of the human mind given the evolutionary process: “If my own mind is a product of the irrational... how shall I trust my mind when it tells me about Evolution?” As Lewis explained, “By treating human beings as products of blind non-rational forces, scientific reductionism eliminates man as a rational moral agent.... [which would) open the door wide to the scientific manipulation of human beings.”

Obviously, Lewis treated “scientism” and “evolutionism” as major forces in the spiritual and moral deterioration of Western civilization. As West notes, “It is significant that Lewis spent World War II writing not about the dangers of Nazism or communism (even though he detested both), but about the dangers of scientism” and its efforts to undermine humankind as spiritual and moral creatures made in the image of God.

In books such as *The Abolition of Man* and *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis also warned against the troubling prospects of the emergence of “scientocracy” and “technocracy” – the undue power and influence that elite scientists and technocrats increasingly exerted in government, education and the media both in totalitarian and democratic nations.

In his final book, *The Discarded Image* (1964), Lewis observed that “Real biologists” [rather than propagandists] recognize that evolution is simply a hypothesis, not a dogmatic truth, and that scientific theories are suppositions, “not necessarily facts.” With rare perceptivity, he also observed that “Each [theory] reflects the prevalent psychology of [its] age.” [*The Discarded Image* (1964). Also see John G. West, ed., *The Magician’s Twin*, p. 140ff.]

Furthermore, if humanity – and the human mind in particular – was the result of an evolutionary process, it certainly was not in keeping with mindless and unguided Darwinian evolutionary theory but rather evolution via intelligent design – a form of “theistic evolution.” [For an incisive critique of theistic evolution, ref. John West, *The Magician’s Twin*, p. 132ff.]

Even more problematic, of course, would be the reality of the human soul, including our moral and imaginative consciousness and our conception of beauty.

2. Theistic Creation. “Big Bang” cosmology, modern astronomy and astrophysics all confirm a universe that had a beginning about 13.8 billion years ago, and the consensus in the field of geology estimates that planet Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old. At certain times in the evolution of planet Earth, God created new life forms to inhabit the planet – most notably during the Cambrian “explosion” circa 540 million years ago.

Human beings were a special creation of God: they did not evolve from lower life forms and earlier hominids. According to the Bible, humans were created “in the image of God” (the *imago dei*), and like all other species, they then reproduced “according to their [own] kind” as in Genesis 1:24-27. The creation of humanity was God’s ultimate plan as set forth in the “anthropic principle.” [See Part 2: “The Cult of Scientism.”] The universe and planet Earth have precisely the exact physical constants and properties necessary for human life to exist and flourish. Also, the laws and constants of physics are not random – and if they were not so precisely fine-tuned, no life – especially, no intelligent life – would exist.

Regarding the creation of humanity, estimates vary from about 50,000 years ago or longer. In their book, *Who Was Adam*, co-authors Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross emphasize that “the archaeological record does not display a gradual evolutionary emergence of modern human intellectual and artistic capabilities. At 50,000 years ago, advanced human culture appeared out of nowhere. The archeological record reveals a veritable explosion of human culture – anthropology’s “big bang” – which marks the appearance of God’s image.” The authors add that “At no other time in human history has the biblical account of humanity’s origin held greater scientific credibility than it does today.”

[*Who Was Adam?* (RTB Press, 2015), pp. 253ff.]

— PART 1 —
THE SCOPES TRIAL
 (July 10-21, 1925)

Prelude to the “Monkey Trial”

In 1925, the Tennessee legislature passed the **Butler Act**, a law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public schools, which read in part:

It shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities... and all other public schools of the state, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the state, 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. Offenders shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined between \$100 and \$500.

Immediately, the **ACLU** (American Civil Liberties Union), founded five years earlier in 1920 by notable left-wing activists including **Roger Baldwin**, **Norman Thomas** and **Arthur Garfield Hayes**, challenged the constitutionality of the Tennessee law and offered support to any teacher who would defy the law. Sitting in the soda fountain area of a drugstore in Dayton, Tennessee – about 40 miles north/northeast of Chattanooga – **George Rappleyea**, the manager of the local Cumberland Coal and Iron Company and an ardent evolutionist, suggested to the drugstore proprietor, **Fred Robinson**, that they challenge the new state statute. Robinson, the chairman of the local school board, agreed that a controversial, high-profile trial could be good for business and “put Dayton on the map.” The county school superintendent, **Walter White**, actually approved of the anti-evolution law, but he also liked the idea of generating publicity for the town.

Together, these city leaders convinced **John T. Scopes** (1900-70), a 24-year-old general science teacher at Central High School, to be arrested for teaching evolution to high school students. Scopes, whose father was an avowed socialist and an agnostic, apparently held no strong political or religious views. Although he disapproved of the

new state law, he was not an outspoken critic of it. Purportedly, he had read a passage from George William Hunter’s state-approved *Civic Biology* textbook to his science class that contained the line, “*We have now learned that animal forms may be arranged so as to begin with the simple one-celled forms and culminate with... man himself.*”



John T. Scopes

Following the pre-arranged script, Robinson, Rappleyea, and other conspirators immediately arranged to have Scopes arrested. So essentially, the Scopes Trial was little more than a scheme to create “a big sensation,” pump up the local economy, and bring the town some notoriety.

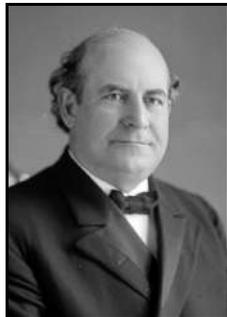
To generate publicity, Robinson called the *Chattanooga News* and the *Nashville Banner* with the urgent news: “*This is Fred Robinson. I’m chairman of the school board here. We’ve just arrested a man for teaching evolution.*” The following day, a front-page article appeared in the *Banner*: “*J. T. Scopes, head of the science department of the Rhea County high school, was... charged with violating the recently enacted law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in the public*

schools of Tennessee.... The prosecution is acting under the auspices of the American Civil Liberties Association [sic] of New York.” The Associated Press immediately picked up on the story and sent it out to every major newspaper in the country. Dayton was now “on the map”!

The Key Players

Hoping to attract maximum media coverage, Rappleyea then wrote to the British novelist H. G. Wells, an ardent evolutionist, and invited him to join the defense team. Wells, however, declined as he had no legal training and was unfamiliar with the American judicial system. Meanwhile, Tennessee’s Attorney General, **A. T. (Tom) Stewart**, was appointed to prosecute the case along with two local attorneys, the brothers **Herbert and Sue Hicks**. Of the three, only Stewart had the requisite legal expertise and experience. In addition, **William Bell Riley**, a prominent Baptist pastor, seized the opportunity to recruit **William Jennings Bryan** to assist the prosecution. Riley was the founder of the World Christian Fundamental Association and an outspoken Young Earth Creationist who had gained considerable media attention in the past for referring to evolutionary theory as “an international Jewish-Bolshevik-Darwinist conspiracy.”

At the time, William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925) was one of America’s foremost celebrities. A former three-time candidate for President – twice as the Democratic Party’s nominee and once as the nominee of the Populist Party – Bryan had also served as Secretary of State in the Woodrow Wilson administration. After World War I he devoted much of his time to political reforms and moral and religious issues, focusing on the increasing secularization of American culture. Bryan was particularly troubled by the secular trends in public education that he believed were marginalizing or outright excluding God. He



regarded Darwinian evolutionary theory as a significant driving force in these trends, and he warned that if naturalistic evolution became generally accepted it would eventually erode belief in God and traditional morality. In his words, “Science is a magnificent material force, but it is not a teacher of morals. It can perfect machinery, but it adds no moral restraints to protect society from the misuse of the machine. It not only fails to supply the spiritual element needed but some of its unproved hypotheses rob [mankind of its moral] compass” and thereby pose a threat to human welfare.

Beginning in 1921, Bryan began publicly campaigning against evolution theory. No defender of academic freedom, he was both a capital ‘D’ Democrat and a lower-case ‘d’ democrat who believed in majoritarian rule. He argued that in a democracy, if the majority of citizens in a community opposed evolution, their tax dollars should not go to teaching it in public schools and universities. In his words, “*Taxpayers have a right to say what shall be taught.... The hand that writes the paycheck rules the school, and a teacher has no right to teach that which his employers object to.*”

Always the consummate showman, Bryan toured the country denouncing and ridiculing evolution, offering \$100 to anyone who would admit to being descended from a monkey. He sometimes added: “*While you may trace your*

ancestry back to the monkey if you find pleasure or pride in doing so, you shall not connect me with your family tree!”

At the invitation of William Bell Riley, Bryan agreed to come to Dayton and serve on a *pro bono* basis although in fact he had not tried a case in 36 years. His celebrity status and his presence assured that the trial would generate considerable media coverage, and once word got out that Bryan was involved, numerous lawyers offered to defend Scopes.

Over the next few weeks a defense team formed that included **Dudley Field Malone**, **Arthur**

Garfield Hays, and **Clarence Darrow**. Of the three, Malone was most aligned with the ACLU’s agenda. In his book, *Summer for the Gods*, Edward Larson describes Malone as a “pompous” and “swank New York city slicker” with “a passion for radical causes.” He was, however, an articulate courtroom orator, and as a professing Christian who supported theistic evolution, he added credibility to the defense’s case – at least in the minds of many observers. Arthur Garfield Hays, named by his father in honor of three 19th-century Republican presidents, is described as “a left-wing Park Avenue attorney” who “grew rich representing major corporations and famous entertainers,” although he claimed that his real passion was defending the poor, persecuted, and defenseless dissenters in society. Regarding the issues related to the Scopes Trial, Hays opposed all government restrictions on the free speech of teachers and professors.



Clarence Darrow was probably the most famous – or infamous – trial lawyer in America at the time and the nation’s premier legal defender of high-profile leftists such as the five-time Socialist Party presidential candidate Eugene

Debs and “Big Bill” Haywood of the radical IWW (Industrial Workers of the World). Based in Chicago, Darrow’s reputation was that of a flamboyant self-promoter whose abrasive personality was so toxic that even the ACLU regarded him as too radical. Many suspected that he would attempt to transform the trial from an emphasis on academic freedom to a general assault on the Bible and Christianity. However, once he learned that Bryan would be joining the prosecution, Darrow refused to be sidelined. This was the opportunity of a lifetime, and he used his national notoriety to force his way onto the defense team. And as many had feared, he immediately dominated the defense team and its agenda.

While often described as an agnostic, Darrow was in fact a militant atheist whose intellectual mentor was the bombastic 19th century orator and infidel, Robert Ingersoll. Darrow proudly defied traditional social and moral values, and he publicly characterized Christianity as a “slave religion” that attracted mostly “soulless religio-maniacs” and anti-intellectual ignoramuses. His involvement in the Scopes trial was the only *pro bono* case he ever worked on in his career, and his apparent motive was to destroy the credibility of the Bible. He also held a personal grudge against the “religious fanatic” William Jennings Bryan.

The ACLU defense was based on three arguments:

(1) **Evolution theory is a scientific fact.** Most scientists and philosophers of science accepted Darwinian evolutionary theory as “settled science” (to use the current term) as it relates to the origins of all life forms including human beings.

(2) **Separation of church and state.** The biblical account of special divine creation is a religious doctrine, not a scientific one, and should not preclude the teaching of real science.

(3) **Academic freedom.** Since its founding a few years earlier in 1920, academic freedom was a top priority for the ACLU – particularly on behalf of socialists, communists and social nonconformists. The organization’s position was that academic freedom is essential to healthy education and the spirit of democracy, and neither the state nor religious authorities nor majoritarian opinion have the right to control what is taught in public schools. Prior to the Scopes Trial, **John Neal**, a former law professor at the University of Tennessee, had emphasized this issue by declaring that “*The question is not whether evolution is true or untrue, but involves the freedom of teaching, or more important, the freedom of learning.*” In *Summer for the Gods*, Edward Larson comments that “the issues raised by the Scopes trial and legend endure precisely because they embody the characteristically American struggle between individual liberty and majoritarian democracy, and

cast it in the timeless debate over science and religion.” [Summer for the Gods, p. 265.]

This was apparently the context for the most famous statement later associated with the trial: **“It is bigotry for public schools to teach only one theory of origins.”** This oft-repeated “quote” is usually (but probably erroneously) attributed to Clarence Darrow, but more likely the source was Dudley Field Malone.^[3] Such a sentiment runs contrary to everything Darrow stood for given his ardent atheism and his contempt for the Bible and Christianity. Ironically, however, Bryan would have agreed with the statement if only for practical and tactical reasons. As Edward Larson explains, anti-evolutionists in the 1920s would undoubtedly have preferred to have only biblical special creationism taught in public schools, but Bryan argued for the state to bar the teaching of evolution based on the reality that public schools throughout the country already prohibited the teaching of special creationism. Therefore, “by thus casting his argument as one for neutrality in education on the controversial topic of human origins, Bryan was able to gain support for anti-evolution laws from non-fundamentalists.” [Ibid., p. 257.]

As noted previously, Bryan also made his argument on the basis of his democratic orientation, arguing that *“The real issue is not what can be taught in public schools, but who shall control the education system.... If the people [i.e., the majority] are not to control the schools, who shall control them?... The disgrace is not the Tennessee law; the disgrace is that teachers... should betray the truth imposed on them by the taxpayers”* by violating the law.”

[Note: Bryan’s position on democratic and majoritarian rule and the ACLU’s position on academic freedom both miss the mark: what matters is Truth based on verifiable facts and sound reason.]

Six weeks prior to the trial, Judge **John Raulston** scheduled a grand jury inquiry that indicted Scopes on the word of three students who testified that he had read passages about human

evolution from Hunter’s *Civic Biology* textbook. The entire session, including the indictment, took only about an hour, after which the trial was scheduled to begin on July 10.

A Media Circus

From the outset, a carnival atmosphere surrounded the Scopes Trial. Dayton’s civic leaders formed a Scopes Trial Entertainment Committee, and as Edward Larson notes in *Summer for the Gods*, “City officials roped off six blocks of the town’s main street as a pedestrian mall, which quickly filled with hucksters and proselytizers. The state sent a mobile chlorination unit to provide an adequate supply of safe drinking water and a sanitary engineer to oversee waste disposal.” Banners strewn across the street included everything from advertisements by local merchants to evangelistic Bible verses and signs with messages such as *“Read Your Bible.”* An estimated two hundred reporters, along with an eclectic horde of publicity hounds, curiosity seekers, fundamentalist evangelists, militant atheists and East Coast elites descended upon Dayton while vendors hawked hot dogs, lemonade, and souvenirs. One billboard featured a chimpanzee drinking a soda, and merchants decorated their shops with images of primates advertising various items such as monkey dolls and lapel pins that read, *“Your old man’s a monkey.”* The constable’s motorcycle even carried a sign reading *“Monkeyville Police.”*



As the trial began in the Rhea County Courthouse, motion-picture cameramen and press photographers stood on tables and chairs to film and photograph the major participants as if it were a championship boxing match. An estimated two

hundred reporters covered the trial for newspapers across America and even as far away as London. The Scopes Trial was also the first public event to be broadcast “live” on the radio, and loudspeakers positioned in the city square kept the overflow crowd informed of the proceedings inside the courtroom. To generate widespread interest, the media portrayed it as “the trial of the century” and a “battle royale” between “religion and science” – i.e., the followers of Christian fundamentalism (or “Old-Time Religion”) versus the informed advocates of modern science.



Arriving in Dayton, Bryan immediately added fuel to the fire, calling the event “a gigantic conspiracy of atheists and agnostics against the Christian religion.” The mainstream media thought otherwise. For example, an editorial in the *Nashville Banner* referred to Bryan as “something of a storm center,” implying that his crusade was little more than an ego trip. **H. L. Mencken** of the *Baltimore Sun* took the opportunity to depict fundamentalists as bigoted, uneducated and narrow-minded “morons.” It was also Mencken who first characterized the proceedings as a “**Monkey Trial.**” And of course the great American humorist and social satirist, Will Rogers, had to weigh in, declining an invitation to come to

Dayton with the comment, “Bryan is due back here in the New York Zoo in July.”



H. L. Mencken and friend

The Trial

In retrospect, the Scopes Trial dramatized the key issues in the intense fundamentalist/modernist controversy that were fracturing all of America’s mainline Protestant denominations at the time. The issues were (1) biblical authority in general; and (2) biblical hermeneutics as it applied specifically to the interpretation of not only the Genesis account of creation but the entire first eleven chapters of Genesis. In other words, how authoritative was Genesis – or the Bible in general – historically and scientifically?

The presiding judge, John Raulston, was a conservative Methodist and a lay minister who showed up for the trial each morning carrying his Bible. He was also overtly prejudiced in favor of the state’s case, and the outcome was a foregone conclusion even before the trial began. Reportedly, eleven of the twelve jurors were regular churchgoers, and none had ever read a book on evolution.

The trial began on July 10 as the courtroom was jam-packed with a thousand spectators including journalists, film crews, local citizens and curiosity seekers from all over Tennessee and beyond. Sparks flew immediately when Judge Raulston ordered an invocation. Darrow vehemently objected – it would prejudice the jury, he complained – but his objection was denied. Jury selection took several hours, after which Judge Raulston read the Genesis account of creation. As



Early in the trial, Darrow and Bryan have a friendly chat.

in the grand jury session several weeks earlier, the prosecution called three witnesses who testified that Scopes had indeed read the o f f e n d i n g

passage from the science book, then rested its case.

The defense responded by attempting to call several “expert” witnesses, mostly professing Christian scientists and theologians who supported Darwinian evolution, but Judge Raulston ruled that such testimony would “shed no light” on the case. For their part, the prosecution had no success in recruiting scientific “experts” to bolster their case. Few notable scientists publicly opposed the theory of evolution, and those who did believe in special creation were either unavailable or disinterested in testifying. But all of this was irrelevant. After all: **This trial was not about biblical authority or whether evolution was true, but whether John Scopes had broken the state law.** Nonetheless, and in the midst of the sweltering, humid temperatures, the trial droned on for several days as the prosecution and defense argued legal technicalities. Scopes himself was little more than a passive bystander, and Bryan, as an advisor to the prosecution, contributed relatively little to the proceedings. For the most part he sat sweating and fanning himself in the stifling July heat. Public and media interest soon began to wane as expectations turned to boredom.

A few days into the trial, Arthur Garfield Hays challenged the “unreasonableness” of the state law, comparing the critics of Darwinian evolution to 16th century peasants who opposed



Nicolaus Copernicus’s heliocentric theory of the universe. In his words, “*Evolution is as much a scientific fact as the Copernican theory,*” and he argued that scientific expertise rather than conventional thinking should set the standard for science education.

Clarence Darrow followed with a two-hour monologue in which he reminded the jury (and the media) that the Tennessee state constitution recognized religious freedom – “*All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience*” – but the recent anti-evolution statute established a particular religious viewpoint in the public schools. Darrow asserted that the Bible “is not a book on biology,” and its authors knew nothing about modern science. Furthermore, he added that most intelligent modern Christians accept evolution as a scientific fact. The media was duly impressed. The *Chicago Tribune* hailed Darrow’s speech as “one of the greatest speeches of his career,” and numerous other newspapers reprinted the speech in detail. For his part, Bryan countered that this case was simply “*a concerted attack upon revealed religion... by a minority made up of atheists, agnostics, and unbelievers.*”

On Wednesday, July 16, Dudley Field Malone addressed the court: “*We will show by the testimony of men learned in science and theology that there are millions of people who believe in evolution and in the story of creation as set forth in the Bible and who find no conflict between the two.*” Speaking strictly for himself, he continued: “*While the defense thinks there is a conflict between evolution and the Old Testament, we believe there is no conflict between evolution and Christianity.*” Arousing fears of a new “inquisition,” he argued that the Bible could be regarded as an authoritative source for theology and morality, but certainly not for science. Turning to Bryan, Malone declared: “*There might be a conflict between evolution and the peculiar ideas of Christianity which are held by Mr. Bryan as the evangelical leader of the prosecution, but we deny*

that [he] is the authorized spokesman for the Christians of the United States.”

The following day, Bryan opened with an hour-long critique of evolution using familiar arguments from many of the stump speeches he had delivered over the previous three years. Malone responded with a half-hour rebuttal in which he stated that Bryan’s self-described “duel to the death” against evolution was fallacious because “[T]here is never a duel with the truth. The truth always wins, [and] The truth does not need the forces of government.” He concluded with the memorable words: *We feel we stand with progress. We feel we stand with science. We feel we stand with intelligence. We feel we stand with fundamental freedom in America. We are not afraid. Where is the fear? We defy it!*”

Once Malone finished, spectators on both sides, including the assembled press, erupted in spontaneous applause. Ironically, J. W. Butler, the legislator who had proposed the Tennessee anti-evolution law, later called it “the finest speech of the century.” According to the *New York Times*, this was “the greatest debate on science and religion in recent years.” Reportedly, even the affable Bryan congratulated Malone for his stirring eloquence (if not his content).

The Climax

On Monday afternoon, July 21, the much-anticipated confrontation between Bryan and Darrow finally occurred. This was not, however, a scheduled debate: it was in fact a courtroom interrogation on an irrelevant issue. To the surprise of almost everyone except the defense team, Darrow called Bryan to the stand as an “expert witness” on the Bible, presumably to discredit the state’s case by exposing Bryan’s ignorance of scientific matters. Although surprised and unprepared, Bryan agreed to testify with the assumption that he would later be allowed to cross-examine Darrow, Malone and Hays. Bryan also saw this as an opportunity to defend biblical faith and traditional morality by undermining the veracity of Darwinian evolution.

The day was unusually hot, and the courtroom was so packed that Judge Raulston ordered the proceedings to adjourn to the courthouse lawn, beneath a large tree. For the next two hours some 3,000 spectators stood fanning themselves in the sweltering heat. Bryan confidently took the witness stand, and Darrow began the interrogation. As the *Nashville Banner* later reported, “Then began an examination which has few, if any, parallels in court history. In reality, it was a debate between Darrow and Bryan on Biblical history, on agnosticism and belief in revealed religion.” When asked if he took everything in the Bible “literally” [meaning literalistically], Bryan replied: *“I believe the Bible absolutely. I believe it was inspired by the Almighty, [although] He may have used language that could be understood at that time.... Some of the Bible is given illustratively [symbolically or metaphorically], for instance: ‘Ye are the salt of the earth.’”*



Darrow’s interrogation.

Bryan also affirmed his belief in biblical miracles. When asked if he believed Jonah was swallowed by a whale, he replied yes, but noted that the Bible calls it a “great fish.” When Darrow expressed incredulity, Bryan asserted that *“One miracle is just as easy to believe as another”* – to which Darrow replied sardonically: *“It is for me!”* Under further questioning, Bryan stated his belief that God temporarily stopped the sun during a battle fought by Joshua and the Israelite army against a coalition of Canaanites as recorded in Joshua 10:13. Bryan also reiterated his belief in a literal worldwide flood, that all languages dated from the Tower of Babel, and that Adam and Eve were created as the first human beings. When challenged on such matters, his standard reply was, *“The Bible states it. It must be so.”*

Darrow asked where Cain got his wife, to which Bryan replied that he didn’t know – adding,

“I leave the agnostics to hunt for her.” When questioned if he ever thought about how long mankind had inhabited the earth, Bryan admitted that no, he never thought about it. When pressed by Darrow, he answered, *“I never think about things I don’t think about!”*

On the age of the Earth, Bryan conceded that the “six days of creation” could be symbolic language for six vast periods of time – even millions of years. [Note: Even the Scofield Reference Bible of 1909, a favorite among fundamentalists (and in later years, many evangelicals), noted that the word “day” (Hebrew: *yom*) can refer to an unspecified “period of time” as in the “day/age theory.”]

As Darrow’s questioning intensified, Bryan became increasingly exhausted and exasperated. Turning to Judge Raulston, he declared that *“The defense did not come here to try this case. They came to try revealed religion. I am here to defend it.”* In response, Darrow retorted, *“You insult every man of science and learning in the world because he does not believe in your fool religion.”* When Judge Raulston asked Darrow what the purpose of this examination was, he replied that the defense wanted to prevent “bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States.” **Significantly, Darrow never questioned Bryan about human evolution** or the special creation of human beings in the image of God. He knew that Bryan would counter by pointing out that no verifiable “missing links” exist in the human fossil record. Darrow also avoided the issue of the impact of naturalistic evolutionary theory on private and public morality.

Finally, Bryan’s demeanor began to crack. Turning to the judge, he said, *“Your honor, I think I can shorten this testimony. The only purpose Mr. Darrow has is to slur at the Bible....”* Then, in a dramatic gesture, Bryan stood and addressed the crowd, accusing Darrow of “slurring at the Bible.” Darrow reacted angrily, shouting at Bryan and shaking his fist at him. The spectators sprang to their feet, and pandemonium broke out. With

Bryan and Darrow glaring and shaking their fists in each other’s faces, the judge, fearing a riot, pounded the gavel and adjourned the court.

As the crowd dispersed, Darrow was mobbed by sympathetic reporters and spectators, shaking his hand, patting him on the back and congratulating him. Bryan, on the other hand, sat mostly alone, slumped in his chair, mopping his brow and muttering repeatedly, *“Slurring the Bible... slurring the Bible....”* Meanwhile, many of his most ardent fundamentalist supporters were disappointed, feeling betrayed by the mild concessions he made on the issue of biblical literalism and, especially, the age of the earth.

Although the general assessment of most of the press was that Darrow had truly made Bryan look like a monkey, the cross-examination had actually been anything but a slam dunk. Nevertheless, Darrow was exuberant. He promptly telegraphed H. L. Mencken, who had returned to Baltimore a couple of days earlier, with the good news: *“I made up my mind to show the country what an ignoramus he was and I succeeded.”*

The Verdict

Under pressure from state authorities who considered the trial to be an embarrassment, Judge Raulston abruptly ended the trial. He ordered Bryan’s testimony from the previous day stricken from the record and suspended all closing arguments with the words, “I think to save time we will ask the court to bring in the jury and instruct the jury to find the defendant guilty.”

Bryan was shocked – he had written an elaborate closing statement and planned to put Darrow on the witness stand and expose him as skeptic and an infidel. In particular, he wanted to challenge Darrow on the absence of “missing links” in the fossil record between humans and other primates.

The end came abruptly. The jury deliberated for nine minutes before returning its verdict: *“Guilty!”* John Scopes was convicted and fined \$100. For the first time in the trial, Scopes addressed the judge,

the jury and both sets of attorneys. He referred to the state law as unjust and a violation of academic freedom, and he pledged to continue the fight.

Bryan, Darrow and their respective allies spoke briefly. Predictably, Darrow had the last jab: “*I think this case will be remembered because it is the first case of this sort since we stopped trying people in America for witchcraft*” – a reference to the infamous Salem Witchcraft Trials more than two hundred years earlier. And with that, a local minister delivered a benediction and the judge adjourned the court.

The Aftermath

The ACLU immediately appealed the ruling, but the Tennessee Supreme Court upheld the verdict while dismissing the \$100 fine on a legal technicality. No longer comfortable in Dayton, John Scopes felt he needed to move on in life. He applied and was accepted into the graduate program at the University of Chicago to study geology, after which he became a petroleum engineer. To his credit, he avoided capitalizing on his fame on the lecture circuit, nor did he make cameo appearances in movies. He also showed no interest when his case was eventually reviewed on appeal by the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Prior to the Scopes Trial, in typical hyperbole, Bryan had referred to the case as “*a duel to the death*.” In a sense, he was right: Five days after the trial ended, Bryan, who had suffered from diabetes for years and whose energy was drained by the sweltering July heat the previous two weeks, died while taking a nap after attending the morning worship service in the southern Methodist church in Dayton. The previous day he had reportedly told a journalist, “*If I should die tomorrow, I believe that on the basis of the accomplishments of the last few weeks I could truthfully say, ‘Well done.’*”

Following Bryan’s death, Tennessee Governor Austin Peay issued a proclamation declaring that him “a martyr” who died for “the faith of our fathers,” and many thousands came out to show their respect as his body was transported by rail to

Arlington National Cemetery, where he was buried with honors.

Bryan was commemorated in several country and folk music ballads, including “William Jennings Bryan’s Last Fight” by Vernon Dalhart, “The John T. Scopes Trial” by Carlos B. McAfee, and perhaps most notably in “The Death of William Jennings Bryan” by Charlie Oaks in which he was honored for his lifelong social and political activism on behalf of the common man and his stand against the “infidels and fools” who promoted the theory of godless evolution.

Five years after his death, fundamentalists founded Bryan College in Dayton to provide an institution of higher education based on a biblical Christian worldview.

The Legacy

According to popular revisionist mythology, Bryan died a broken man, disgraced and humiliated by the drubbing he took from Darrow. This assessment doesn’t seem to correlate with reality, but it fits well with the way the story was sensationalized and marketed in the popular media.

A few years after Bryan died, Frederick Lewis Allen wrote *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s*, claiming that Bryan was disgraced and “covered with humiliation” as a result of Darrow’s withering interrogation. “The sort of religious faith which he represented could not take the witness stand and face reason as a prosecutor.... Theoretically, fundamentalism had won, for the law stood. Yet really fundamentalism had lost... and the slow drift away from fundamentalist certainty continued.” Allen’s distorted account of the trial even claimed that Bryan had espoused Young Earth Creationism while on the witness stand. Nevertheless, the book became a bestseller, selling over a million copies. Even worse, it influenced a whole generation of historians and college students over the next several decades. [Ref. *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (Harper & Brothers, 1931), p. 205]

Sixty years later, Barrington Boardman, the author of *Flappers, Bootleggers, “Typhoid Mary”*

and the Bomb: An Anecdotal History of the U.S. from 1923-1945, repeated the myth that Darrow’s grilling of Bryan “resulted in Bryan’s total humiliation and, in the opinion of many, his death.” He noted that Darrow, when informed of Bryan’s death five days later, reacted with characteristic sarcasm, calling him “Goddamned fool.” Edward Larson also quotes Darrow boasting to friends, “We killed the son-of-a-bitch!” [*Flappers, Bootleggers, “Typhoid Mary” and the Bomb: An Anecdotal History of the U.S. from 1923-1945* (HarperCollins, 1989), pp. 38, 39. Edward Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, p. 100.]

In fact, Bryan apparently felt that he had done a credible job upholding the integrity of the Bible and was in relatively good spirits after the trial. For the next two days he remained in Dayton, revising the closing arguments that he had not been able to give at the trial but which he now planned to deliver to audiences all across America in the coming months.

For the record, Tennessee’s anti-evolution law was finally repealed in 1968.

In retrospect – and in reality – the Scopes Trial was a “Pyrrhic Victory” in that it dealt a severe blow to the credibility of traditional biblical Christianity. The Darwinists, with the overwhelming support of the media and mainstream academia, decisively won the P.R. battle as the trial was misrepresented from the outset as a contest between “science” (i.e., Darwinian evolutionary theory) and “religion” (in particular, Young Earth Creationism). For many Americans, the trial exposed fundamentalist “old-time religion” as out-of-date and a relic of the past. As the historian William Leuchtenburg interpreted the outcome, “The anti-evolutionists won the Scopes trial; yet in a more important sense, they were defeated, overwhelmed by the tide of cosmopolitanism.” [*The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32* (University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 217-23. Quoted in Ronald L. Numbers, *Galileo Goes To Jail... and Other Myths About Science and Religion* (Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 178.]

Thomas Bailey concurred. In his view, “The fundamentalists at best had won only a hollow victory, for the absurdities of the trial cast ridicule on their cause. Increasing numbers of Christians

found it impossible to reconcile the realities of religion with the findings of modern science.” [*The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*. Second Edition (1961), p. 795.]

Conservative Christians were often depicted as shallow, anti-intellectual, anti-science, and culturally irrelevant. According to Samuel Eliot Morison: “Within a few days after his ordeal, Bryan was dead, and with him died much of the older America.... The fundamentalist crusade, although it now had a martyr, no longer had the same force.” [Samuel Eliot Morison, *et al*, *History of the American Republic* (Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 436.)

In his generally positive biography of Bryan, Louis Koenig provided an in-depth and lamentable assessment:

Despite Bryan’s own self-assessment of the trial, in the world’s eyes Darrow had subjected him to humiliation on a scale rarely suffered by a major American politician. His stumbling under Darrow’s questions ill-served his cause. He brought upon himself a heap of ridicule and derision, and even to this day he remains buried under it.

Yet the brawling, circus aspects of the trial which worked so much to Bryan’s disadvantage have obscured its other affects. If Bryan failed to meet the challenge of science, Darrow failed equally, although not so obviously, to meet the challenge presented by traditional religion to modern philosophy....

But the worst failure at Dayton was Bryan’s, and it was a failure in his responses to Darrow’s prickly, tricky, but entirely foreseeable questions, to demonstrate the connection between fundamentalist religion and morality, or the relevance of fundamentalism to modern-day problems. Ironically, on the basis of his own public record, of his years of struggle for social causes, there was no one better qualified than Bryan to explain these connections. His own life was an eloquent refutation of Darrow. Driven by faith in God’s word and purpose, he had worked for decades, courageously and against crushing odds, to overcome America’s social injustices and the murderous strife of war....

His worst lapse at Dayton was to permit the wily Darrow, posing as the champion of truth, to slide past that record without acknowledging it and create a false image of himself that has endured in posterity. The portrayal of Bryan that is cemented in the stage drama and the motion picture *Inherit the Wind* (1960) is the gross distortion that Darrow contrived at Dayton. It is that of a bigoted, ill-informed, hopelessly outdated old man. Darrow and the dramatists who have taken their cues from him have cheated posterity of knowledge of the whole man, of the better man, the resolute champion of social justice, who for decades prior to the Monkey Trial made religion and the Bible the foundation of an earthly kingdom of social justice and brotherhood among men and nations. [Bryan: *A Political Biography of William Jennings Bryan* (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1971), p. 654ff.]

[Note: In the Hollywood movie version of *Inherit the Wind* (1960), Bryan, having been disgraced and deprived of a closing argument, launches into a hysterical, impromptu speech as the courtroom empties. It is a pathetic and futile effort, and he suffers a heart attack and drops dead in the process – an indefensible mix of Hollywoodish “artistic license” and radical historical revisionism.]

Perhaps the historian Joseph R. Conlin provided the most succinct and accurate assessment of the Scopes Trial in his words, “In fact, the only winners in the Monkey Trial were Dayton’s businessmen... masters of ballyhoo... who raked in outside dollars for almost a month.” [*The American Past: A Survey of American History* (Harcourt College Publishing, 1997, p. 780.)]

A Lesson to be Learned: Apologetics Matters

The Scopes Trial was one of the most significant events in the past hundred years of American history. In retrospect, it dramatized in microcosm the core issue that would define America’s emerging culture war: the tidal wave of secular humanism that was already beginning to inundate every area of America’s social, cultural, and even

religious landscape. From that time to the present, there would be an open and unrelenting assault on, and a steady erosion of, the Christian influences that had made America a unique nation in all of world history. The Scopes Trial also exemplified in dramatic fashion the reality that apologetics matters. Christian apologetics – which sets forth the rational and the factual case for the truth and the reliability of the Christian faith – should be thoroughly integrated into the life and ministry of the local church. If we desire to be effective witnesses for Christ, we must be prepared to clearly explain and defend *why* we believe the Christian faith is the Truth in keeping with I Peter 3:15 – “*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for [what you believe and] the hope that you have.*” As Christians who take seriously our calling to be a source of Light, Love, Hope and Truth, it is imperative that we be prepared to support and defend the factual and the rational reasons *why* we believe in the authority of Scripture and in the salvific mission of Jesus Christ.

To quote the esteemed Yale church historian, Jaroslav Pelikan: “*The church should always be more than a school (i.e., more than a center of Christian education); but the church should never be less than a school.*” Unfortunately, most churches fail in this calling. Quality apologetics education should be a priority – and particularly for high school and college-age students. As I emphasized in my book, *The Case for Christian Apologetics*:

The Bible sets forth a rational philosophical and theological explanation of reality in the context of a theistic worldview that is coherent, consistent, and comprehensive....

Philosophy teaches us *how* to think logically and clearly; theology teaches us *what* to think about God and life as revealed in the Bible; and apologetics teaches us *why* it is reasonable to trust the principles and the doctrinal and moral truths of Scripture.

Ultimately, there is only one reason why anyone should want to be a Christian: because it is *True* – i.e., because it is based on Reality....

We often are told, “You can’t *argue* someone into the Kingdom of God.” True enough, but we also can’t *love* someone into the Kingdom, either.... No one comes to faith unless the power of the Holy Spirit is at work in their heart, drawing them to Christ. But what apologetics *can do* is to break down barriers to faith by exposing and dissolving erroneous arguments and irrational prejudices against belief in Christ, and by defending the historical and philosophical integrity of the Christian faith and worldview....

As Christians, we are called to be apologists – defenders of the faith – just as we are called to be evangelists (or witnesses) for Christ. In fact, in our multicultural and pluralistic society today, evangelism without apologetics is oftentimes an exercise in futility.

Would you like to broaden and deepen your understanding of the Christian faith so as to more clearly and effectively explain and defend what you believe to both Christians and non-Christians? Very simply, that is the purpose and the value of apologetics....

Of all people, Christians should be the most thoughtful, the most inquisitive, and the most creative as we strive to fulfill our calling to love and honor God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind.

And that is why Christians should study apologetics.

[Jeffrey D. Breshears, *The Case for Christian Apologetics*, pp. 17, 18, 24, 25-26, 12, 30, 31.]

— PART 2 —
SCOPES 2.0: THE SEPOCS TRIAL OF 2025

The Times, They Have A-changed

Confronting the Education Establishment

The Scenario

Imagine something similar to the Scopes Trial if it occurred today: Virtually the whole scenario would be flipped. As Bob Dylan sang some 60 years ago, “The Times, They Are A-changin’” – but it is inconceivable that anyone back then had any idea just how radically things would change. Even the most radical proponents of social change would never have anticipated recent trends such as same-sex “marriage,” “transgender” ideology, or the redefinition of “equality” as “equity.” The times certainly have a-changed, but in many respects certainly not for the better.

I call this update “**Scopes 2.0 – The Sepocs Trial of 2025**” (i.e., “Scopes” spelled backward).

- The location is the “**I. M. Woke Social Justice Center**” in “**Eutopia, California.**”
- The defendant, **John Sepocs**, is a biology and natural sciences teacher and an assistant baseball coach at George Soros High School.
- The defense attorney is **William Jennings Barr** of the Alliance Defending Freedom.
- The prosecuting attorney is **Karleen Marx**.
- The judge is **Ima Judge**.
- The “jury” is composed of the men, women, “non-binary individuals” and “others” who form the Eutopia Unified School District Board of Education.
- The jury foreperson is the chairperson of the Board of Education, **Randall Winebibber**.

The Indictment

Judge Ima Judge: Let us begin. Will the prosecution please read the indictment?

Karleen Marx: Your Honor, and ladies and gentlemen and those who identify as “other” or “non-binary” on the jury: The defendant, John Sepocs, is charged on three counts:

(1) Confusing students and violating a central principle of modern “progressive education” by challenging key tenets of standardized science.

(2) Violating state mandates regarding the separation of church and state by teaching an unauthorized and unscientific religious alternative to conventional Neo-Darwinian evolution.

(3) Refusing to address students by their preferred pronouns.

Your Honor, the charges against Mr. Sepocs are clear and unambiguous, and the prosecution argues that Mr. Sepocs’ contract with the Eutopia Unified School District should be terminated for interjecting – and even imposing – unauthorized religious views in his natural science classes at Eutopia High School.

First of all, for denying “settled science.”

Second, for misleading students by mixing true science with religion and pseudo-science theories.

And regarding the third count, “Failing to address students by their preferred pronoun,” that charge will be brought up at a later time as it is unrelated to science.

The state argues that Mr. Sepocs’ contract with the Eutopian Unified School District should be terminated for injecting unauthorized religious views into his natural science classes. On two

occasions the principal of Soros High School met with Mr. Sepocs, but he refuses to abide by our stipulations. He argues that teaching only one view on a controversial subject violates the traditional ethical standards of quality public education. He also claims that it is “illiberal” to do so.

Deconstructing the Indictments

Judge Judge: Thank you. That is direct and to the point. Mr. Barr, what is the defense’s position?

W. J. Barr: Thank you, your Honor. The charges against my client are erroneous, as I will explain.

Mr. Sepocs has a well-earned reputation among most of his colleagues and students as an admirable person and an effective teacher who is quite knowledgeable in his field. Mr. Sepocs is a true educator who simply teaches the two major views on human origins as accurately and objectively as possible: **conventional naturalistic Neo-Darwinism** and the **traditional alternative, special creation**, based on the most recent research that calls into question the validity of secularistic and random evolutionary theory. He simply presents the arguments for both sides, and otherwise encourages students to research and determine for themselves which position is more plausible based on the scientific evidence and the principles of logic and reason.

For that, he is in danger of having his job terminated.

Regarding Count #1 – The claim that Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory is a “scientific fact” – that is factually incorrect. Many science professionals with the highest credentials – including many who hold no particular religious beliefs – challenge the scientific basis for conventional naturalistic/materialistic evolutionary theory. I can provide the names of many if the court is interested.

Karleen Marx: I don’t think we’d be interested. I know a lot of educators, but I know of no one in the scientific community who disputes conventional evolutionary theory.

Judge Judge: Perhaps there are some credentialed scientists who question certain aspects of evolutionary theory. Every profession has its dissidents. Please continue, Mr. Barr.

W. J. Barr: Thank you. As for Count #2 – “Violating state mandates regarding the separation of church and state” and confusing students by mixing true science with religion and pseudo-scientific theories,” Mr. Sepocs is being tried primarily because of his philosophy of science, although of course his philosophy of science is influenced by his religious beliefs.

This allegation is a clear violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution regarding freedom of expression and religious liberty. The state’s charges against Mr. Sepocs violate a fundamental principle of education, which is a fair,



The (mythical) I. M. Woke Social Justice Center
Eutopia, California

honest and factual presentation of opposing views on controversial issues. Mr. Sepocs has always taught the standard arguments for the theory of evolution, but he also challenges his students to reassess the conventional thinking when it comes to the arguments that allegedly support evolutionary theory.

What Mr. Sepocs encourages his students to do is to think critically – which requires that they understand the arguments of both sides of an issue.

Furthermore, I would remind the school board that in the Scopes Trial of 1925 the most cited – and the most decisive – argument by the defense was the assertion that **“It is bigotry for public schools to teach only one theory of origins.”** Mr. Sepocs agrees, which is why he believes that students should be exposed to both sides of the evolution debate.

Karleen Marx: I object! This quote is taken out of context. Clarence Darrow and the other defense attorneys were arguing that true science rather than ancient religious mythology should prevail, and that neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory is incontestable. It is, as we say today, “settled science.” All intelligent and well-educated people know and understand this!

Judge Judge: My apologies, Ms. Marx, but I will have to overrule your objection. In the interest of fairness, let’s hear the point that the Defense is trying to make.

W. J. Barr: Thank you, your Honor. And by the way, that quote is not taken “out of context,” and it is as relevant now as it was a century ago.

Now, if I may proceed: Mr. Sepocs’ character, as well as his professional conduct and expertise in his field of science, is exemplary. During his time at Soros High School, he has earned the respect of most of his colleagues and students for his character as well as his knowledge in his field of science.

The charges against Mr. Sepocs are reminiscent of the spurious accusations leveled against **Socrates** by the Athenian city council in 4004 BC. Socrates was charged with essentially the same offense: ‘corrupting the youth.’ But in reality, as most of us know, he was one of the greatest philosophers in history who was simply teaching his followers to question authority. (Not necessarily to *reject* authority, but to *question* authority.) In the process he had a profound impact on Western philosophy and history through his student **Plato**, Plato’s student **Aristotle**, and countless other renowned thinkers to the present time.

Karleen Marx: Your Honor, we’re not interested in debating anybody’s ideas about philosophy or religion – we’re talking here about scientific facts! That’s what Mr. Sepocs is hired to teach, and that’s what’s at stake in this trial.

Judge Judge: Correct. Mr. Barr, do you have anything else to say?

W. J. Barr: Yes, as a matter of fact, I have much more to say. And let me add that as related to Count #3 – “Mr. Sepocs’ failure to address students by their preferred pronouns... as it is [allegedly] unrelated to science” – in fact, such a charge *is* related to science. It is a biological fact that sex is determined at birth based on one’s genetic makeup and one’s chemical and hormonal characteristics – not to mention one’s genitalia. And that is in fact “settled science.”

Karleen Marx: I strenuously object, your Honor! Talk about bigotry! As a women’s rights crusader for all of my adult life, I also uphold the dignity and the rights of transgender individuals. They have my deepest respect. This is America, and Americans have the right to define themselves as they prefer.

W. J. Barr: Even when biological males compete against biological females in women’s sports and win contests and trophies that should rightfully belong to girls and young women?

Karleen Marx: “It’s a matter of equal rights, Mr. Barr! Biological males who believe they are actually females and who are transitioning have every right to do so. Again, I would remind you that this is a free country. If someone feels that he or she was born in the wrong body and needs to transition, no law should prevent him or her from doing so. To think and do otherwise is *not* politically correct!

W. J. Barr: Even if your moral code and ideology defy reality?

The Integration of Science and Philosophy

Judge Judge: Okay, we need to move on. Your views, Mr. Barr, are not how we see things in progressive states like California. Is there anything else that you want to add?

W. J. Barr: Yes – absolutely. To repeat the ACLU’s famous declaration a hundred years ago: “*It is bigotry for public schools to teach only one theory of origins.*” But that is precisely the status quo in contemporary science education in most

schools. What is at stake here is certainly credible science, but credible science cannot be separated from rational philosophy. The two disciplines are complementary, not contradictory.

Godless naturalistic and materialistic science – which is the only philosophy of science currently allowed in public schools – has no explanation for the origins of anything. For example: Although the reality of the **Big Bang** is generally accepted, it is beyond the purview of natural science as to *What* (or *Who*) caused this cosmic phenomenon. *What* or *Who* was responsible for the Big Bang? Science has no answer. In fact, most scientists show no curiosity regarding the Cause – they only study the physical and material Effects. But what was the *source* of the matter and energy that generated the Big Bang? Scientists have no clue. Furthermore, naturalistic science has no explanation for...

- The **design** and “**fine-tuning**” of the universe;
- The **fundamental forces of physics**: gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces – forces that are critical to all interactions in the universe from the smallest subatomic particles to the largest celestial bodies.
- Also consider the **chemical composition** of the universe that eventually allowed for life to emerge on planet Earth – all of which absolutely defies “chance.”

Karleen Marx: Your Honor, Mr Barr may think this is “interesting,” but we know that science has an explanation for all these phenomena. This is frankly a waste of time! Neither you nor I nor anyone in this courtroom should be subjected to this kind of speculation and propaganda. Mr. Barr and his client, Mr. Sepocs, are obviously Christians, but a venue such as this is all about the rule of law. Furthermore, this case is about scientific facts, not someone’s bizarre ideas when it comes to so-called “philosophy.”

W. J. Barr: Your Honor, I’m not arguing religion right now. I’m merely making the case that true science cannot violate the simple laws of logic.

The Case for Intelligent Design.[4]

Judge Judge: Mr. Barr, I’m going to give you a pass right now, but if you stray off into the Bible and religion, I will intervene and shut you down.

W. J. Barr: I understand, your Honor. And I am confining my arguments to science and logic – and simple “common sense.” But please keep in mind that secular humanism, a godless orientation, is also a “religion” as recognized by the U. S. Supreme in the 1962 case of *Torcaso v. Watkins*. So when my arguments have theological connotations, please keep in mind that secular arguments also have a religious context.

The best explanation for the evidence related to Big Bang cosmology, the amazing design and fine-tuning of the universe, the fundamental forces of physics, the chemical composition of the universe, and the alternative to naturalistic and materialistic pseudo-science, is the scientific theory associated with **Intelligent Design (I.D.)** – which should be acknowledged universally as a credible alternative to mainstream materialistic scientific theory.

Karleen Marx: Objection, your Honor! Intelligent Design has been thoroughly refuted by the scientific community. It is a pseudo-scientific theory. Any article on Wikipedia, for example, that refers to Intelligent Design labels it “pseudo-science!”

W. J. Barr: Yes – when it comes to Wikipedia, it is very biased against Intelligent Design theory. But the court should know that one of the principal co-founders of Wikipedia, **Larry Sanger**, has become one of the foremost proponents of Intelligent Design. In fact, it was the arguments put forth by I.D. that led Mr. Sanger, a lifelong agnostic, to eventually come to believe in God. In fact, he is now an outspoken Christian.

Judge Judge: I will let you proceed, but if you start pushing Christianity I’ll bring this whole hearing to an end. I consider myself to be a very “spiritual” person, but I do not identify with any particular religion. They are all just alternate paths to “God” – or to some transcendent Force.

Karleen Marx: I agree, your Honor! We’re on the same page when it comes to religion.

W. J. Barr: Okay... I would not find that to be surprising. But anyway, as I was saying, Intelligent Design is not “pseudo-science,” and its critique of Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory should be taken seriously. As defined by one of its foremost proponents, the mathematician and philosopher **William Dembski**, I.D. is “the study of patterns in nature that are best explained as the product of intelligence.” In other words, patterns in nature that indicate intentionality and purpose rather than randomness and purposelessness. This would include, for example, the laws of physics. To quote the former atheist philosopher-turned-theist, **Antony Flew**, “The important point is not merely that there are [laws] of nature, but that these laws are mathematically precise and universal.” [*There Is a God* [HarperOne, 2007], p. 77.] Also consider the phenomenon of **DNA**. In the words of Microsoft founder Bill Gates, “DNA is like a computer program, but far more advanced than any software we’ve ever created.” How could impersonal matter have designed and manufactured complex DNA “naturalistically” over time? It makes no sense!

It is important to note that Intelligent Design is a scientific theory that explains the arrangement of materials within our universe, our solar system, and on planet Earth. It is not a theological doctrine of creation *per se*. Nonetheless, it is certainly compatible with the biblical account of creation.

Stephen Meyer, a philosopher of science and a founder of the Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture, provides a formidable case for I.D. in his book, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design*, in which he argues that non-intelligent causes are incapable of producing any kind of highly functional complexity. Intelligent beings can produce all kinds of complex sophisticated mechanisms – everything from ancient Roman aqueducts and sewage systems to medieval cannons to modern automobiles and computers, but unintelligent matter has no capacity or potential to produce anything that requires

complex functionality.

So what should we make of such phenomena? According to the physicist **Brian Miller**, “The most obvious conclusion about our universe is that it was created by a transcendent mind who designed it for the purpose of supporting life.” Likewise, the same principle applies to all life forms – including human beings. **John West**, an author and vice-president of the Discovery Institute, has noted: “As Stephen Meyer points out, the modern version of the design inference is not an argument from ignorance [such as in the “God of the gaps” hypothesis], but an argument from knowledge. It is based not on what we don’t know about nature, but about what we do know.” [*The Magician’s Twin*, p. 164.]

Long before the emergence of a systematized Intelligent Design theory in the late 20th century, philosophers and scientists such as **René Descartes** (1596-1650) and **Isaac Newton** (1643-1727) were comparing the mechanical perfection of the workings of the universe to that of a clock, designed and created by God. Perhaps most notable was the Anglican clergyman and philosopher **William Paley** (1703-1805). In his 1802 book, *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, Paley argued that any kind of complex “design,” such as a watch, implies an intelligent designer. Also consider the philosopher **Alfred Edward Taylor** (1869-1945) who in his 1945 book, *Does God Exist?*, declared that nature reveals “anticipatory design” for which random evolutionary processes cannot account.

Karleen Marx: Your Honor, I thought we were not going to be subjected to all this hypothetical God-talk regarding “anticipatory design” and other such conjectures. Mr. Sepocs is on trial for confusing students by mixing science with religion and pseudo-scientific theories related to Intelligent Design. This needs to end before the jury gets totally confused!

Judge Judge: I would be inclined to agree with you, but I would like to hear more about Intelligent

Design. I’ve heard it referenced occasionally, but I know little about it. Mr. Barr, you may proceed.

W. J. Barr: Thank you, your Honor. There is much more to be said on the subject. Among the various components of the I.D. argument, two in particular should be emphasized.

First is the issue of **specified complexity**. Unlike any mountain whose shape was formed naturalistically over eons of time, the images on Mt. Rushmore provide evidence of Intelligent Design. Obviously, these images were shaped and formed by an intelligent being, a master artisan and sculptor, for a specific purpose. Since 1950, when the molecular biologists **Francis Crick** and **James Watson** first discovered the incredibly complex structure of DNA, the implications have confirmed the belief that only a transcendent divine source could have created life.

In 1998 William Dembski applied the concept of specified complexity in nature to the origins of life in his book, *The Design Inference*, in which he argued that specified complexity cannot be explained by Darwinian evolutionary processes. As he put it, “In reality, the only plausible source for specified complexity is intelligence.” [William A. Dembski, “Specified Complexity,” in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017), p. 639.]

Second, please consider the implications of the concept – and the reality – of **irreducible complexity**. Consider a common mechanical mousetrap. It is composed of several parts – all of which are essential if the machine is to function as a mousetrap so as to achieve its purpose. In that sense, the mousetrap is irreducibly complex: remove any part, and it no longer functions as originally designed. The same principle applies to the various components of biological systems. The elimination of one or more of the “parts” will shut down the system altogether.

Darwin’s theory of evolution by random variation and natural selection in which, in his words, “numerous, successive, slight modifications” occurred over eons of time is simply untenable. Natural selection cannot possibly

“work” until all the necessary “parts” in a molecular system are in place and functioning. As the biochemist **Michael Behe** has noted, “Molecular machines are composed of proteins and/or nucleic acids... that contain hundreds or thousands of amino acid or nucleotide residues.... When considering proposed evolutionary explanations, all such features must be accounted for.” [Michael J. Behe, “Irreducible Complexity,” in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017), pp. 390-91.]

Imagine, if you can, how phenomena such as eyes, or wings, or any complex biological organs and systems could possibly have “evolved” naturalistically over eons of time. To say the least, such a preposterous “leap of faith” defies credulity. As John West explains, “Irreducible complexity is simply the “fine-tuning” argument applied to biology. Just as the laws of nature are finely tuned for the existence of life, many systems in biology seem to be exquisitely fine-tuned for their functions.” [*The Magician’s Twin*, p. 165.]

Karleen Marx: “Ahh – seem to be!” That’s mere conjecture. Your Honor, we are not evolutionary scientists and experts in microbiology. We need to trust the experts in this field!”

W. J. Bryan: Excuse me, Ms. Marx. But as I mentioned, many experts dispute evolutionary theory. We need to be open-minded and listen to the arguments of its critics. To do otherwise is close-minded and illiberal.

Judge Judge: Please continue, Mr. Barr.

W. J. Barr: Thank you. There are, of course, multiple other problems with Darwinian evolutionary theory, of which I’ll note three of the most obvious. First, there is no evidence supporting the theory of naturalistic **abiogenesis** – the presumption that non-living matter somehow evolved over millions of years into living life forms. In reality, living things come only from other living things through reproduction – i.e., the natural process of biogenesis. As the biochemist **Fazale Rana** and astrophysicist **Hugh Ross** recount in their book, *Origins of Life*, beginning in the 1950s with the experiments of the chemist

Stanley Miller, “many scientists predicted the origin of life problem would be solved in the next few decades.” However, more than fifty years later, “scientists stand no closer to understanding life’s beginning than they did [then].” [*Origins of Life* (NavPress, 2004), pp. 24, 25, 27.]

Even Wikipedia, which consistently slanders Intelligent Design theory as “pseudo-science,” acknowledges that “the challenge for abiogenesis researchers is to explain how such a complex and interlinked system [as life] could develop by evolutionary steps, as at first sight all its parts are necessary to enable it to function.... [T]he transition of non-life to life has never been observed experimentally, nor has there been a satisfactory chemical explanation.”

Secondly, the “**Cambrian explosion**” confirms the emergence and diversification of new and more complex life-forms when they first began to appear in the fossil record during the Cambrian geological period some 540 million years ago. According to the biologist Darrel Falk:

The history of life is characterized by episodic “mini-explosions” in new body forms.... [T]he different animal forms that arose at that time were very different from each other, and almost without exception no other major innovation in animal body plan was ever developed again. Today, and apparently for the last 500 million years or so, it appears that genetic changes... that would bring about a major change in morphology... have not occurred....

One of the current mysteries in biology is what was different at the time of the Cambrian explosion such that genetic change enabled major new body plans to be developed. The mystery associated with the rapidity and uniqueness of the Cambrian explosion has caused many Christians to propose that God’s design activity is especially apparent during this period of time. [Darrel R. Falk, “Cambrian Explosion,” in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (Zondervan, 2017), p. 79.]

In addition, there is no evidence in the **fossil records** supporting the theory that **random genetic mutations** led to macro-evolution (i.e., **trans-**

species evolution) – either in regard to human development or in the case of any other living species.

All arguments that life formed naturalistically fail scientifically – just as they also fail philosophically (and theologically). All of this correlates with the fundamental “first principles” of classical philosophy from the time of **Aristotle** (384-322 BC) to the present – whether theoretical philosophy related to physics, mathematics and the metaphysical realm of reality, or practical philosophy as applied to history, economics, ethics, or politics.

As **Thomas Aquinas** (c. 1225-74) emphasized in his writings, God is the “necessary Being” and the “primary cause” of all that exists. It is perfectly reasonable to believe in God through **natural theology** – the insights gleaned from the realities of the natural world. As the apostle Paul noted in Romans 1:18-20: *“The wrath of God is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what he has made, so that men are without excuse.”*

Karleen Marx: Your Honor, please strike this Bible verse from the transcript. It is irrelevant. The apostle Paul knew nothing about cosmology, geology, physics, or anything else related to modern science! Furthermore – and if there is in fact a “God,” it would be sacrilegious to call him “wrathful.”

Judge Judge: Objection sustained. Mr. Barr, your religious views are irrelevant, and we do not take the Bible to be an authority on science.

W. J. Barr: I was merely making the point that Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest and most influential thinkers in world history, was very much in-synch with what the apostle Paul wrote regarding God’s self-revelation through nature –

what is often called “natural theology.” But please let me make my point. In his *magnum opus*, *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas set forth “**Five Ways**” that our study of nature leads us to belief in God as the necessary Being behind the universe.

Karleen Marx: Your Honor, I’m not interested in what some medieval theologian had to say, and I doubt that anyone on the jury is interested. Who cares about what they thought back then? Gag me – or I should say, “Gag Mr. Barr” – with a spoon! Those people knew nothing about modern science!

Judge Judge: Please, Ms. Marx. I understand. But let’s allow Mr. Barr to continue, whether his views are valid or not.

W. J. Barr: As I was saying, Thomas Aquinas made the point that it is perfectly reasonable to believe in an infinite and omnipotent divine Being such as is revealed in the Bible. Here are his arguments:

(1) **The law of motion.** Everything in motion has been set in motion by something else. God is the original “**Prime Mover**” of everything that is in motion.

(2) **The law of causality.** All things in this world have their respective causes, and nothing is its own cause. God is the ultimate “**First Cause**” of every effect. (Thomas adapted this principle from the philosophy of Aristotle.)

(3) **The law of contingency.** This is in keeping with the theological principle of *aseity*: God is the original, self-existent, and “**Necessary Being**” from which everything else comes. Nothing in this world exists because of itself.

(4) **The law of perfection.** All things are measured by a standard of perfection. According to Thomas: God is the “**Perfect Being**”... “which is to all [other] beings the source of their being, goodness, and every other perfection.”

(5) **The law of design.** Often referred to as the “**teleological argument**,” this holds that all things in the universe have a design and purpose toward which they move. This purpose is something which they could not do of themselves or through blind chance. Furthermore, every design has a designer.

For Thomas, God is the omnipotent and omniscient “**Designer**” “by whom all natural things are directed to their end.” As cited above, Scripture affirms that “*Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made....*” (Rom. 1:20).

Now, none of these arguments is conclusive in-and-of itself, but cumulatively they constitute a formidable case for a Creator based on the principle of **abduction**: a plausible explanation or conclusion based on the most logical assessment of the known facts and observations. Abduction is also sometimes described as the “inference to the best explanation.”

A further word of caution: although the evidence for Intelligent Design refutes mindless naturalistic materialism, it does not necessarily make the case for biblical theism. The case for the God of the Bible and the case for Jesus Christ relies on different apologetical arguments and evidence. Nonetheless, it correlates consistently with Thomas’s “five ways.”

Conversely, the theory of naturalistic evolution is not just pseudo-science – it promotes a particular theological system – atheism, or at least agnosticism.

The Cult of Scientism

The unacknowledged problem with a purely naturalistic and materialistic view of science is that of “**scientism**” – the belief that current scientific hypotheses and naturalistic theories should be accepted as the ultimate authority on all the wonders of the universe and everything in it. As such, modern science has become a form of secular religion for many; it is essentially the deification of science. However, even science is subject to the philosophical laws of logic and reason.

One of the most perceptive critics of scientism was the great Christian philosopher and apologist, **C. S. Lewis**. Early in his career Lewis came to realize that scientists often asserted authority in areas for which they had no requisite education or

expertise – including philosophy, morality, and even public policies. Consider, for example, the following absurd affirmations of faith from some of the most influential proponents of scientism:

- Astronomer and social influencer, Carl Sagan: “*The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.... “As science advances, there seems to be less and less for God to do.... Whatever it is we cannot explain lately is attributed to God.... And then after a while, we explain it, and so [there is no longer any reason to believe in God].”*
- Physicist and philosopher Victor Stenger: “*So where did the laws of physics come from? They came from nothing.*” [*God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist* (Random House, 2007).]
- Philosopher John Post: “*There can’t be a cause of the origin of the universe, since “by definition the universe contains everything there is or ever was or will be.”*
- George Wald, a scientist and Nobel Prize winner in physiology: “*Given enough time... the impossible becomes probable.*”
- Philosopher, logician, and notable “public intellectual” Bertrand Russell: “*Man’s origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collations of atoms.*” [“A Free Man’s Worship” in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* (Longmans, Green and Co., 1918).]
- Evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins: “*The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good; nothing but blind pitiless indifference.*” [*The God Delusion* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006).]
- Also note this astonishing, not to mention self-refuting, declaration from Charles Darwin himself: “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.” [*On the Origin of Species* (1859).]

More than 20 years later, in a letter written in 1881, Darwin admitted to sometimes thinking that the universe “is not the result of chance,” and he added: “But then with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”

[Quoted in John West, *The Magician’s Twin*, p. 131.]

In the early 2000’s Antony Flew (1923-2010), a renowned professor of the philosophy of science and one of the most influential proponents of atheism in the world, announced that he had recently come to believe in an eternal, infinite and omnipotent God. In particular, Flew was primarily convinced by the arguments put forth by advocates of Intelligent Design based on the biological information encoded in DNA.

Karleen Marx: I’ve heard of Antony Flew. Many of his colleagues believed that late in his life he was suffering from dementia or senility – or maybe he was just afraid of dying – so in desperation he claimed that he now believed in God.

W. J. Barr: Sure – he had been a lifelong atheist, as were most of his friends and colleagues. But listen to why Flew became a theist. As a student at Oxford University, Flew often attended the Socratic Club debates led by C. S. Lewis, who emphasized Socrates’ famous dictum, “*Follow the evidence wherever it leads to its ultimate conclusion.*” This became Flew’s guiding motto for the rest of his life, as he noted many years later: “The Socratic principle I saw exemplified there – of following the evidence wherever it may lead – increasingly became a guiding principle in the development, refinement, and sometimes reversal of my own philosophical views.” [*There is a God*, p. 42.] As he explained in his final book, ***There Is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*** (2007), until recently he had argued that the default position for all serious

thinkers was that there is insufficient evidence to believe in God. However, in recent years the arguments for the existence of God have become over-whelming considering recent scientific discoveries and the arguments put forth by proponents of Intelligent Design theory.[5]

In his book, Antony Flew focused on three phenomena in particular:

- The existence of the universe: How did everything – both chemical and physical – come into existence?
- The intricate “fine-tuned” laws of nature; and
- The phenomenon of life: How did life originate from non-life?

Even more astonishing to Flew was the mystery of human life:

- What natural process can explain the phenomenon of human consciousness, including self-consciousness – and the fact that we are conscious of being conscious?
- What natural process can explain the phenomenon of human thought, of understanding, of discerning meaning – even regarding things that have no physical characteristics such as love, liberty, truth, and beauty? “The power of thinking in concepts [such as these] is by its very nature something that transcends matter.”
- What natural process can explain the phenomenon that “**the cells in your body keep changing and yet ‘you’ remain the same**”?

Pondering such mysteries is what led the physicist and cosmologist **Brandon Carter** to propose the “**anthropic principle**” in the mid-1970s, a critique of the “random universe” theory in favor of the theory that life – especially human life – was “pre-planned” from the very first nanosecond of the cosmos based on the “fine-tuning” of the universe and our solar system. As **Patrick Glynn** later emphasized in his book, *God: The Evidence*: “Far from being accidental, life appeared to be the goal toward which the entire

universe from the very first moment of its existence had been orchestrated [and] fine-tuned.” [*God: The Evidence* (Forum, 1997), p. 8] However, the atheist position is that at some point in the history of the universe, the impossible and the inconceivable just naturally happened. This might be the very definition of “absurdity.”

Antony Flew summarizes the issue this way: “**Take your pick: God or [the] universe. Something always existed....** I have followed the argument where it has led me. And it has led me to accept the existence of a self-existent, immutable [i.e., unchanging], immaterial, omnipotent, and omniscient Being.” [*There Is a God*, pp. 165, 155.]

Karleen Marx: Please, your Honor. This is all too much. I can’t focus this long, and I’m sure that nobody on the jury can, either. Have mercy on us and cut this off. Other than Antony Flew, I’ve never heard of these other people who Mr. Barr has referenced. And all I know of C. S. Lewis is that he wrote children’s stories about Alice in Wonderland – or was it Mary Poppins? Anyway, who cares about his opinions on matters such as these?

Judge Judge: I understand, Ms. Marx. Are you finished, Mr. Barr?

W. J. Barr: Just one more reference, your Honor, for the benefit of those on the jury who have the capacity to focus.

I’ve mentioned that after a lifelong pursuit of following the evidence to its logical conclusion, Professor Antony Flew, perhaps the most acclaimed atheist in the world at the time, became a theist – a believer in God – on the basis of the evidence put forth by the proponents of Intelligent Design. In a similar vein, the former philosophy professor, agnostic, and co-founder of Wikipedia, **Larry Sanger** (b. 1968), recently wrote an article that went viral on the Internet entitled, “How a Skeptical Philosopher Becomes a Christian.” [<https://larrysanger.org/2025/02/how-a-skeptical-philosopher-becomes-a-christian/>.] Sanger describes how from the time he was a teenager in the 1980s to his recent Christian conversion, “I was driven by a personal truth-seeking mission, a mission both moral and

epistemological.” He goes on to write, “I honestly did not understand why most people [including most philosophers and scientists] were uninterested in the questions I was asking.”

Similar to Antony Flew, Sanger found the arguments put forth by Intelligent Design advocates, such as the phenomenal “fine tuning” of the universe, to be absolutely compelling. In addition, he acknowledges that Thomas Aquinas’s “Argument from Causality” established that there was a first cause of the universe, the “Argument from Contingency” concluded that a necessary being exists, and the “Argument from Design” supported the case for a “cosmic designer.” As he concluded, “The arguments taken together are far more persuasive than I had [previously] understood.... Taken together, the arguments point to a necessary being that exists apart from space, time, and matter.” Sanger goes on to comment:

Science says the Big Bang was the beginning of the universe. But whatever had a beginning has to have had an explanation. As this is the beginning of matter itself, it cannot have a material cause; thus it must have an immaterial cause.

Similarly, certain features of the universe that are absolutely necessary to explaining how fundamental natural laws operate are physical constants. Physicists tell us that if the values of those constants were different, then various things could not have happened; for example, atoms could not have formed, or stars could not have ignited and given off light and heat. But scientists have never offered an explanation for these constants....”

Furthermore, even if we had a perfect scientific explanation of each of these things, the conjunction of the facts in our explanations seem to be driven by a purpose.... [C]ertain incredible leaps [in the evolution of the universe] seem designed to lead life on earth ever onward to greater awareness and knowledge, culminating in [humanity]. If the very emergence of order seems to exhibit ends or purposes or designs, we may hypothesize a designer who created the order of

the universe.

As Einstein said, “God does not play dice;” rather, all the physical laws and constants, as well as the initial conditions of matter and energy, were chosen with the purpose of bringing about the incredibly rational universe we see before us. [<https://larrysanger.org/2025/02/how-a-skeptical-philosopher-becomes-a-christian/>]

In summary, let me just reiterate that everything that exists must be uncaused, self-caused, or caused by another Force or Thing or Person. To re-emphasize a previous point: Most of what we believe is based on the principle of abduction: What is the most plausible and probable conclusion based on the most logical assessment of the known facts and observations? We believe in God because the rationale and the evidence are overwhelming.

- The Source of all that exists must be self-existent, eternal, infinite, and omnipotent.
- The Source must have a mind and will.
- Therefore, the Source must have personhood. We (human beings) have personhood, and Effects cannot be greater, or more complex, than their Cause.

Please understand that **Christians do not believe that everything that exists requires a cause – but only that everything that begins to exist requires a cause. Science tells us that the entire universe had a beginning. God, however, is by definition self-existent and eternal. Therefore, God is the great uncaused Cause of all that exists. As the very first verse of the Bible (Genesis 1:1) declares: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”**

Karleen Marx: I would ask the stenographer to strike that reference to the Bible. That is totally inappropriate!

Judge Judge: Sustained. Yes, please remove that from the transcript.

W. J. Barr: My point is as simple as it is obvious. Science is essential for studying *how* things work, but it can never answer *why* anything exists or the *ultimate origin* of anything that exists. Christians cannot explain where God came from – but we

don’t consider that to be problematic for believing in God. *Something* – or more correctly, *Someone* – must be self-existent and eternal. Serious and thoughtful students need to know and understand both (or all) sides of any important and controversial issue. In the case of Christian students, they should never fear views and opinions that contradict Scripture. And this is why apologetics is so essential. As we read in I Peter 3:15 – and my apologies for citing the Bible – we must “*always be prepared to give the reason [i.e., an explanation and a defense] for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*”

Karleen Marx: Objection, your Honor! There he goes again, quoting something from the Bible!

Judge Judge: Objection sustained. Mr. Barr, you must control yourself. I know you’re a zealous Christian, but you must make your case on a scientific, or at least a philosophical, basis.

W. J. Barr: Your Honor, that is what I’ve been doing for the most part. I’ve merely cited relevant Scripture passages to show how clearly the Bible supports what we know about the origins of the universe and all life forms – especially human beings.

In summary, just let me say that there is no rational or defensible reason – other than anti-religious bias – for schools to teach only one view of origins, naturalistic evolutionary theory, to the exclusion of Intelligent Design and special creation. As Stephen Meyer and others have urged for the past thirty years, “*Teach the controversy.*”

Teach both views honestly and fairly, and encourage students to “follow the evidence wherever it leads to its logical conclusion.”

John Sepocs has an excellent reputation, both personally and as a teacher. He should be acquitted of these charges, and the administration at George Soros High School should issue a formal apology for the way he has been discriminated against due to his scholarly and Christian convictions.

Judge Judge: Thank you, Mr. Barr. I have found some of your comments to be quite interesting. I cannot refute your arguments, but personally, I

remain unconvinced that there is a God. Actually, I prefer not to believe in God. For me, I prefer to live my life on my own terms. To quote the great British poet and intellectual – and atheist! – William Ernest Henley, “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” I am accountable to no one or no thing other than the good people here in Eutopia.

Ms. Marx, do you have anything further to say?

Karleen Marx: Your Honor, Mr. Barr’s comments have only confirmed in my mind that we do not need, and do not want, a religious fanatic such as Mr. Sepocs teaching and indoctrinating our students. We trust that the jury will do the right thing and find him guilty. He should be terminated and his teaching license revoked.

Judge Judge: Understood. The jury should retire now to the adjoining conference room and render its verdict. Keep in mind that the eyes of the entire Eutopian community are on you. You must uphold the values that have made us the envy of our entire state.

The Verdict

The jury meets for seven minutes – two minutes shorter than the original Scopes’ trial jury met, and returns to the courtroom. Judge Judge addresses the jury foreman, Randall Winebibber.

Judge Judge: Mr. Winebibber, have the men, women, “non-binary individuals” and “others” who form the Eutopia Unified School District Board of Education reached a decision?

Chairperson Winebibber: We have, your Honor. But first, I would like to share my own thoughts on this matter. I have them here on my smart phone, and this should take less than about half an hour.

Judge Judge: Uh, Mr. Winebibber, that won’t be necessary. Feel free to post them on the school board’s website, but we need to wrap this up before Happy Hour ends at the local Hooter’s.

Chairperson Winebibber: Well, okay – if you insist. I am disappointed to say that it appears that we have a hung jury. One member of the school

board, who in the past has admitted to being a church-going Christian and who, in his words, is “well-versed in Christian apologetics,” has dissented from the majority and refuses to convict Mr. Sepocs. I don’t need to name who he is – I’m sure that most of us here today already know. But as a result, we cannot render a verdict.

Judge Judge: That is both regrettable and, I would say, irresponsible.

Mr. Sepocs, you will be reinstated, but I would remind you that you will be under intense scrutiny even more than in the past. You are not a “team player,” and you need to adapt yourself to the values and priorities of Soros High School and the vast majority of residents here in our community.

Anyway, thank you all for coming, and let us now go our own separate ways in a spirit of unity. Follow your bliss, and may The Force be with us all. Court is adjourned!

The Aftermath

In response to the court decision in this trial...

- The local chapter of Hellraisers for Social Justice at GSHS organized mass protests to disrupt John Sepocs’ classes;
- Community activists protested outside John Sepocs’ home, harassing and intimidating his wife and children;
- Nearly 90% of the faculty at GSHS signed a petition calling for the termination of Mr. Sepocs’ contract for “teaching views on evolution that contradict ‘settled science,’ creating unnecessary controversy and disrupting the unity and damaging the academic reputation” of GSHS and the Eutopia Unified School District;
- Mr. Sepocs was replaced as the assistant baseball coach by the coach of the JV girls’ cheerleading squad;
- His membership was revoked in the local Eutopia Bicyclists Consortium to Save Planet Earth (EBCTSPE);
- He was barred from the local World Gym;
- His library card was revoked; and

- He and his wife were often denied service at the local Starbucks, and employees at the local Ben & Jerry’s refused to serve his children any flavor other than vanilla.

Most regrettably, Sepocs’ pastor at Inclusive Community Church, formerly a friend and supporter of Sepocs, suggested that given the controversial nature of the trial and the negative publicity the church had received as a result, it would be more “Christ-like” if Sepocs no longer taught Sunday School and voluntarily resigned from the church’s Advisory Board.

Three months later, John Sepocs sold his house in Eutopia and moved to Destiny, Florida with his wife and family where they bought a nicer and less expensive home, and where he was hired to teach Natural Sciences and Biology and serve as the chairman of the Science Department in Phillip E. Johnson Memorial High School.^[6] He was also hired as the head baseball coach.

NOTES:

[1] Darwin was not the first to promote a theory of organic evolution. In the early 1800s the French naturalist **Jean-Baptiste Lamarck** (1744–1829) argued for the spontaneous generation of life and the “transmutation of species” (i.e., macro-evolution)—even theorizing that humans eventually evolved from Orangutans (great apes). Lamarck’s theory of “progressive development” was based on the transmission of acquired characteristics (sometimes referred to as “soft evolution”). Each succeeding generation progresses beyond the level of complexity of its ancestors and then passes these traits on to its offspring. In contrast to Darwinian evolution theory, this was a natural process rather than being driven by an aggressive (and predatory) “survival of the fittest” ethic. Later “neo-Lamarckians” attributed this developmental process to “the wisdom and goodness of the Creator.” [Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, p. 19.]

A generation after Lamarck, the Scottish geologist **Charles Lyell** (1797-1875) sought to reconcile his religious faith with Darwinian evolution theory. Gradually over the years, Lyell came to accept the theory of the “transmutation of species,” arguing that such a concept was as much a “remarkable manifestation of creative Power” as creating each species separately, and that humans were different from other animals only in their unique “intellectual and moral qualities.” However, he struggled to square his religious beliefs with evolution,

and it was only late in life that he finally committed to the theory of natural selection. In the final edition of *Principles of Geology*, Lyell noted that it still remained “a profound mystery” how the huge gulf between man and beast could be bridged.” [Ref. Wikipedia, “Charles Lyell.”]

[2] The 6,000-year chronology, along with other narratives in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, poses a hermeneutical challenge. Many Bible scholars argue that this “young earth” interpretation of early Genesis is based not on a “literal” reading and interpretation of the text but rather a “literalistic” approach that fails to consider the particular literary genre and intent of the primaevial Genesis narratives prior to chapter 12 and the calling of Abram (Abraham). Some, such as the philosopher William Lane Craig, refer to Genesis 1-11 as “mytho-history,” after which, the narrative transitions to standardized/conventional “history” based on the essential factors of time and place.

Regarding the “**six days of creation**,” even the Scofield Reference Bible of 1909, a favorite among fundamentalists (and in later years, many evangelicals), noted that the word “day” (Hebrew: *yom*) can refer to an unspecified “period of time” as in the “day/age theory.”

This view holds that the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are not comprehensive, but instead are intended to identify individuals of great historical and/or theological significance. The Hebrew word for a “progenitor” (*Mowliyd*) who would “bring forth” or “begat” (*yāla*) a subsequent and significant historical figure may be that person’s direct “father” (*ab*) or a prominent “ancestor.” As Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross explain in their book, *Who Was Adam?*, “Bible authors organized genealogies according to patterns.... For example, Matthew 1 uses three sets of 14 names while omitting some of the names listed in I Chronicles 1-9.” Similarly, the genealogies recorded in Genesis 5 and 11 have theological and symbolic rather than strict chronological intentionality. [Ref. *Who Was Adam?*, pp. 50-51.] †

[3] In *Summer of the Gods*, Edward Larson notes that this quote, attributed to Clarence Darrow, apparently first appeared in the introduction to Wendell R. Bird’s article, “Creation-Science and Evolution-Science in Public Schools: A Constitutional Defense in Public Schools,” in a 1982 edition of *Northern Kentucky Law Review*. [Ref. *Summer of the Gods*, pp. 258 and 316.]

On its website, the National Center for Science Education states that “Darrow did not say any such thing during the trial – at least not according to the quasi-official, published transcript of the proceedings in *The World’s Most Famous Court Trial* (National Book Company, 1925).” [https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv+255bbd3e2019d6ad&q=Did+clarence+arrow+say,+%22it+is+bigotry+for+public+schools+to+teach+only+one+theory+of+origins.]

The general consensus seems to be that “the quote was actually spoken by Darrow’s co-attorney, Dudley Field Malone, who often paid lip service to the value of tolerance.” But liberals and leftists have always used this tactic when in the minority on a particular issue, only to turn the table on the opposition once they gain power. So while it is true that Malone argued on one occasion, “For God’s sake, let the children have their minds kept open – close no doors to their knowledge” – this came only after he had previously shouted at the prosecutors, “Keep your Bible in the world of theology where it belongs and do not try... to put [it] into a course on science!” [See Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, p. 257.]

[4] In this article I capitalize the term “Intelligent Design” as it applies to contemporary I.D. theory for the purpose of emphasis and so as to associate it specifically with its primary founders and proponents as those listed in footnote [6].

[5] Prominent proponents, books and organizations associated with various forms of Intelligent Design theory include:

- Charles Thaxton, *The Mystery of Life’s Origin* (1984).
- Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (1985).
- Philip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (1991).
- Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton, *The Soul of Science* (1994).
- Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box* (1996).
- William Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (1999).
- Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?* (2000).
- Jay Richards, *God and Evolution* (2010).
- Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (2009).
- Stephen Meyer, *Darwin’s Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design* (2013).
- Stephen Meyer, *Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe* (2021).
- **The Discovery Institute.**
- **Reasons To Believe.**

[6] Phillip Johnson, a graduate of Harvard and the University of Chicago, taught law for more than 20 years at the University of California at Berkeley. His book, *Darwin on Trial* (Regnery Gateway, 1991), was an incisive critique of Darwinian evolutionary theory and helped launch the modern Intelligent Design movement.