

11/19/05

Intelligent Design... Or Not

by

Tom Holbrook

While attending a wedding reception yesterday I was asked about my take on the decision recently taken by the Kansas state Board of Education to allow the teaching of the Intelligent Design (ID) theory in science classes of public schools. The Board's decision would not supplant the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution but would offer students an opportunity to hear a valid alternative to that which has become known as the only possible explanation for man's origin, for those schools that chose to include the ID theory in their curriculum.

For those who read my columns you already know my answer to his question. I am a firm believer that public school education should be one of inclusiveness to allow our children to be aware of what is happening in the real world. Because of those well meaning but dangerously narrow minded individuals of faith in 1925 who approached the teaching of evolution as "doing the devil's work," their attempt to stop it with the "Scopes Monkey Trial" became an all or nothing contest, and the teaching of Creationism began to slide precipitously down that ever present slippery slope of extinction. Hindsight being 20/20 as they say, the correct approach would have been to allow the teaching of Darwin's theory alongside the accepted theory of God's involvement.

Whether one believes in God or not he or she should be interested in allowing the truth to be heard in the classroom. If your side of the argument is the truth I would think you would trust its facts to speak for themselves and convince those listening. Tom, you ask, what if one believed in the theory of re-incarnation should it be allowed in our classrooms? My answer would be that it already is. Teachers discuss openly the cultural foundations of the Native American Indians who believe in the possibility of his ancestors to re-appear in the form of an eagle, wolf, bear or some other noble animal.

Then there are those who introduce Transcendental Meditation as a means of relaxing and "*calling upon that greater power within you,*" while falsely claiming it is not religiously based? The **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi**, a religious cult leader from India made the practice of TM famous back in the 50's and has since made millions from the sale of TM products and retreats at his Peace Palaces across the globe. I'm sure I will receive several comments about the success of TM regardless of its origins but, please, don't try to deny its religious association. Yoga also is a religious based technique of exercise, relaxation and becoming at peace with one's inner self and its inclusion in some public schools' curriculum is obviously acceptable.

Do I want to do away with any of these Middle Eastern, religiously grounded, practices of worship and soul seeking or remove them from the public view? In my perfect world where I could receive

anything I would ask for... possibly. But in the United States, whose Constitution guarantees the practice of a religion of my choice, and your choice, I could not legally ban the practice of them. All I ask is that Christianity and its related cultural trappings, which by the way represent 77% of American citizens, be allowed a level playing field; equal playing time; our time in court; or whatever colloquialism one would choose. In other words, don't forbid a Christian presence at the podium of life while allowing any and all other beliefs the right to be heard and seen. Unfortunately, that is the politically correct reality these days.

A 2001 survey, with over 50,000 households participating, showed that the overall Christian population of the United States has decreased from 86% in 1990 to right at 77%. Within that body of believers those declining the greatest were the major protestant denominations, i.e., Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Even though the total body of Christian believers had a decrease, those churches whose style is more evangelical in nature had an increase of over 326%, numerically speaking.

The disturbing statistic, at least to me, was that every single religious belief based on Middle Eastern tradition increased dramatically, i.e., Muslim- 109%; Buddhist – 169%; and Hindu – 237%. Does this mean that these religions are disseminators of truth more than the Christian faith? In no way! They're just getting more air time than the Christian faith?

What do I mean? Look at it this way... Proctor and Gamble's Jif Peanut Butter is the nation's number one selling brand on the market. I know because that's what my wife says to buy... I also researched it in the industry. If Jif was suddenly told by the government that it could no longer advertise its product in any way and, also, had to remove its jars from the shelves of any chain supermarkets, limiting its sale to Mom and Pop stores, or local convenience stores, how long do you think it would take for Jif to go out of business and Peter Pan to rise to the top? Would it be because they had an inferior product? No! How can anyone know, much less learn the truth about anything unless they are allowed to hear about it on a regular basis, asking questions, and experiencing it for themselves. The Eastern religions have been the coddled favorite of those making the rules and given access to our school children in many forms, shapes and sizes while Christianity has been relegated to the back rooms and private schools.

Here's an insight I think is very telling, as well as somewhat expected... according to the aforementioned survey, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and those with no religion have a greater preference for the Democratic party over the Republican. That was true in the 1990 as well. Those of the Evangelical or Born Again Christians are most apt to identify with Republicans, according to the survey. For those who might be interested, at the time of this writing I am still a registered Democrat, although it will be changing to Independent in the near future.

Three cheers for the Kansas State Board of Education for taking a stand to allow some intelligence back into our high school classrooms.