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Letters

Creationism Series Continues To Draw Response

Dear Editor:

Randy Moore's factual comparison of the movie *Inherit the Wind* and the "real trial" brings out some interesting differences. The picture he paints of William Jennings Bryan, however, differs significantly from the one Clarence Darrow describes in his 1932 autobiography *Clarence Darrow: The Story of My Life*.

I've always been impressed by the similarity of newsreel footage and the movie. Many points in Darrow's description are also very similar to the movie. Darrow provides a very readable account of Bryan's role in trying to stop the teaching of evolution. His autobiography also explains why he is an agnostic. He raises basic questions that make one think about the usefulness of simple answers to difficult questions. Creationists are much easier to deal with if one shows how little help they offer to people who want to think about religious questions. The great majority of traditional religious groups oppose them. For these reasons, creationists generally will not permit the subject of religion to enter the debate. They often play the role of reasonable nice guy in conflict with angry scientists. Was Bryan one of the originators of that role?

If one of our goals as teachers is to develop critical thinking, we should encourage investigation of religious questioning by our students. Many of the biological and religious questions are the same, e.g. where did we come from, what is time, etc. Values questions overlap many disciplines and can be raised by social science and humanities teachers as well. *Inherit the Wind* demonstrates that religious values which are produced by intimidation are not comforting or enlightening. One would think that any help we can give our students in dealing with the big questions we are all perplexed by would be welcomed by them. We can probably communicate with them better about these questions than we can about biology. Teaching is as much about questions as it is about answers.

Don Igelsrud
Calgary, Alberta

Categorization of Evolution Meanings Is Proposed

Dear Editor:

It is important that we understand "why students think something [educators] are teaching is inaccurate." (Brian J. Alters, "What is Creationism," February *ABT*, p. 103). The article, an attempt to analyze opposition to evolution by classifying and characterizing Christian thought, was certainly helpful in this regard. However, one reason why students say they think evolution is not true is because there is confusion about what evolution is. Part of that confusion is because the word, *evolution*, means several things.

I submit a categorization of some of these meanings, in the forlorn hope that such a scheme, or one like it, will be adopted, and different words will be used for different meanings:

1. *natural selection*—a mechanism which makes some types of evolution possible.