

Letter to Editor, San Ramon Valley Times

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By **Burt Bogardus**

Evolution a religion?

A Sept. 28 letter claims that "evolution is just as much a religion as the belief in God," and its teaching in public schools should therefore be unconstitutional.

I strongly agree with the writer that religious indoctrination has no place in public schools. Sectarian schools can perform that role well enough.

But what is religion? The word derives from the Latin *religare*--to bind or restrain. Most religions contain the following elements:

- (1) A "Holy Book" (e.g. Koran, Bible) delineating specific beliefs and behaviors to which adherents must strictly conform.
- (2) Belief in the existence of one or more invisible, all-knowing, all-powerful beings.
- (3) Prescribed rituals (e.g. sacrifices, fasts, prayers) to propitiate the gods and curry their favor.
- (4) Special intermediaries (e.g. priests, ministers) who claim to intervene on the supplicant's behalf.
- (5) Observance of "Holy Days" (holidays).
- (6) Belief in a supernatural existence after death, in which rewards or punishments are meted out.

Frankly, I fail to understand how evolution bears any resemblance to the above.

The precepts advanced by Charles Darwin's Origin of Species in 1859 have withstood scientific scrutiny for almost one and a half centuries. They are controversial in only one sense--they flatly contradict the puerile creation mythology found in the Book of Genesis.

For 2,000 years, religion (specifically Christianity) has been the enemy of scientific advancement. If America is to play a significant role in the future, it must cease binding the developing minds of its youth with the shackles of ancient superstition.

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