

Editorial

Is Darwin on the cross?

The question was raised in the 4th November copy of *The New York Times* when it entitled the editorial of Garry Wills (political and cultural historian), regarding the re-election of George W. Bush, “The Day the Enlightenment Went Out”.

Wills’ theory, with which the directors of the newspaper palpably concur, is that Bush was re-elected because “many more Americans believe in the Virgin Birth than in Darwin’s theory of evolution”.

In truth, Wills and other analysts of the recent political events in America affirm much more. In their minds, the wave of anti-Darwinism and the struggles to remove the theory of evolution from American school textbooks were the cultural sealant that allowed Bush’s supporters to become the majority; a cultural sealant composed of not only an aversion to the theory of evolution, but also of a certain distrust of the secular sciences. And it was the latter, according to Wills, that ensured the destruction of the Enlightenment in the United States in that first week of November 2004.

This editorial will not focus on political analysis, but rather on the consequences of it. If Wills is right, if there is truly a predominant social bloc with a cultural sealant incorporating antagonism towards the theory of evolution and qualms about scientific thinking in the Superpower, then new problems will crop up for those studying or working in the field of science communication not only in the United States, but throughout the world.

Firstly, understanding what made the so-called “Scientists of God” so alluring (at least in Mid-America) is essential. The “Scientists of God” are a group of religious conservatives that explain the origins of mankind with a dissimilar, fanciful scientific theory. The group has been around for some time, and has spent most of it in the courts of numerous states of the Federation to impede the teaching of Darwin’s theory in schools. But never before has this movement enjoyed such widespread success; in actual fact, it has now become hegemonic. Why has the theory of the “Scientists of God” become so popular, so suddenly? And why has the theory of the “Enlightened Ones”, the scientific theory trusted by almost all men of science, failed in becoming a part of man’s common sense, a part of the culture of the masses?

The other problem generated by the ascent of the Scientists of God and their followers regards the strategy that the Enlightened Ones will have to adopt to overturn the current unfamiliar cultural situation. What communication strategy will the Enlightened Ones have to appropriate to stop the indisputable defeat of November 2004 from becoming a habitual occurrence? How can a persuasive communication strategy be developed to remove Darwin from the cross he has been nailed to by the results of the American presidential elections?

And finally, as everything that happens across the Atlantic reverberates throughout the world, what answers (to the above questions) will have to be found in the rest of the globe?

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