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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CREATION AND EVOLUTION COMPARED TO THEIR WORLDVIEW

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High school students' beliefs regarding origins are very important. Many high school students claim to believe in a supernatural theistic Creator. Many also report a born-again experience and would thus hold to having a personal relationship with the Creator. Such a relationship should impact all aspects of one's personal life and worldview.

The Scriptures reveal (I Corinthians 2:14–16 and Romans 1:20) that there exists a dichotomy between those that believe the Creation account and those who do not. Only the truly born-again believer is able to take every thought and attitude and compare it to the thoughts and attitudes of the Creator Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 10:5 and Colossians 1:16). Accepting this God-ordained worldview is vital to a correct view of the clash between Biblical theism and naturalism—a clash between two all encompassing worldviews, a “Creationist Worldview” and an “Evolutionary Worldview.” This dichotomy of worldviews was thoroughly investigated by David Ray; his findings are summarized in this article.

Background for the Ray Study

Ray studied four groups of school students from the eastern section of Atlanta, Georgia. The groups consisted of: (1) two Christian school groups—30 students; (2) two church youth groups—30 students; (3) one public school class—42 students; and (4) one home school group—30 students.

Instrumentation and Methodology

Two survey instruments, the CWT (Creationist Worldview Test, Deckard, 1997) and the PEERS Test (Smithwick, Nehemiah Institute, 1995), were used to gather the data.¹ The CWT test is a 51-item instrument constructed for the purpose of measuring views related to the creation/evolution controversy. The

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PEERS Test is 70 items constructed for the purpose of measuring Christian views in politics, economics, education, religion, and social issues. Students were categorized into two groups: (1) those holding to a creationist view of life, and (2) those holding to an evolutionist view of life. This evaluation process was based on answers to the CWT. The views of these two groups were compared using three PEERS categories, Education, Religion, and Social Issues. The PEERS test has a scale as follows: Biblical Theism (70–100), Moderate Christian (30–69), Secular Humanism (0–29) and Socialism (<0). For comparison purposes this same scale was adapted to the CWT.

Research Questions

Research questions were formulated to answer the following questions. How do students with creationist or evolutionist attitudes differ on:

1 and 2 issues related to education?

3 and 4 issues related to religion?

5 and 6 social issues?

7 and 8 their views toward God?

9 and 10 their views toward Christianity?

11 What is the frequency and comparative magnitude of public school students with Biblical theists worldviews when contrasted to home schooling and Christian school students?

Findings and Conclusions

Below are the findings and conclusions based on the above research questions.

Question 1 and 2 The data showed that those students who were identified as creationist registered an average composite score on the PEERS education category of only 18.77.

Even though all of these students claimed to be born-again, 39% scored in the Secular Humanism worldview category and 28% scored in the Socialism category. This provides strong evidence that many Christian students have not been taught to think Biblically or in worldview terms about educational issues.²

Furthermore, despite the low scores by those students with creationist attitudes regarding education there still existed a positive correlation between the creationist attitudes and their view toward education. While the creationists' educational category scores were low, the evolutionists students' attitudes were significantly lower, scoring -18.75, well into the Socialism worldview category. This group of students viewed education as a proper task of the civil government which lies at the heart of socialist thinking regarding education. None of the students with evolutionist views scored in the Biblical Theist or Moderate Christian categories, indicating a strong relationship between their evolution and education views. This relationship was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Thus the data showed significant differences in the views of high school students with evolutionists' attitudes toward education when compared with those students with creationist views.

Question 3 and 4 compared the attitudes of students holding creationist views and those with evolutionist views to variable *religion*. Creationist view holders scored an average of 59.53 on the CWT and 52.59 PEERS (both are mid-range on the Moderate Christian category). This reflects that the creationists have some degree of Biblical knowledge.

On the other hand the evolutionist view holders scored -5.39 on the CWT and -12.68 on the PEERS. The disparity is substantial with a significant chi square value ($p 0.001$). It may be concluded that the students with evolutionist views differed significantly from those with creationist views when it comes to religion.

Question 5 and 6 compared the attitudes of the students holding creationist views and students with evolutionist views on the PEERS variable *social studies*. Creationist view holders scored an average of 59.53 on the CWT and 32.99 PEERS (both are in the Moderate Christian category). The creationists have some degree of Biblical knowledge although the PEERS test would indicate a “lukewarm view of social issues” on topics such as homosexuality, capital punishment, pre-marital sex, and the definition of family. In contrast, the evolutionist view holders scored -5.39 on the CWT and -0.71 on the PEERS indicating a socialist view. The disparity is significant chi square value ($p 0.001$). It may be concluded that the students with evolutionist views differed significantly from those with creationist views when it comes to social issues.

Question 7 and 8 compared the attitudes of the students holding creationist views and those students with evolutionist views on the PEERS variable *God*. The chi-square analysis on eight different categories related to God demonstrated significant distribution and a strong correlation in the relationship of high school students with creationist attitudes and their views toward God. The creationist students viewed God as One who supernaturally made the universe for an ultimate purpose and as the one and only Supreme Being. They also viewed the Bible as being inerrant and inspired. In contrast, the majority of those students with evolutionists views expressed they did not believe in the existence of God along with a belief that there are many avenues toward knowing God and most did not view God’s word as a revelation.

Question 9 and 10 compared the attitudes of the students holding creationist views and those students with evolutionist views on the PEERS variable *Christianity*. Seven of the eight chi-square analyses illustrated significant distributions and strong correlations between high school students’ attitudes toward creation and their views toward Christianity. These students held to a belief in the Triune God and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the only hope for man’s separation from God. In contrast, those students with evolutionary views believed in the existence of a God yet disagreed with certain key doctrines of orthodox Christianity. For example a majority of these students held the view that sin is a mythical concept.

Question 11 The last question focused on frequencies and magnitudes of public school students with Biblical theist worldviews when contrasted with home school and Christian school students. The results showed that 39 of the 132 participating students scored above 70.00 (the cutoff score for Biblical theist) on the CWT. Twenty of the 39 were home schoolers, while ten were Christian school and nine were public school students. For the PEERS results, five students scored as Biblical theist, four were home schoolers while one was a Christian school student.

Home schoolers demonstrated the highest scores on both instruments (PEERS and CWT) in contrast to the 42 public school students who had the lowest scores on both instruments. Of the 42, only one scored in the Biblical theist range on either

instrument, despite the fact that 37 of the 42 claimed to be born-again. This is alarming evidence of the damaging effect that the public/government school system is having on worldview development and the thinking of Christian youth.

The Chi-Square Analysis showed a significant distribution from the home school, Christian school, and public setting. Hence it can be concluded that a positive correlation is present between having a Biblical theist worldview and mode of education.

Conclusions

The Bible commands parents to “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Ray’s dissertation provides the Christian creationist community with strong objective and scientific evidence that teaching a Biblical view of origins is fundamental to worldview adoption and development. Training up a child in an environment of evolutionary thinking or in an environment where creationism is not firmly taught, is a certain formula for causing the child to depart from the Christian faith. Departure from this faith will lead to the acceptance of the only alternative, evolution. Few issues could be of greater importance to the Christian family and the church than to teach youth (at home, school, or Sunday School) the Biblical doctrine of creationism.

Endnotes

1. Tests and follow-up training materials are available through Nehemiah Institute by calling 800/948-3101. Or visit their web site: nehemiahinstitute.com
2. Students consistently scored higher on the CWT scale when compared to the PEERS. This seems to be due to instrumentation differences. The CWT measures basic doctrine related to Biblical and creation/evolution issues, whereas the PEERS measures more in the realm of application of Biblical principles. This seems to indicate that many students have a grasp of basic tenets of the Christian faith, but are weak in the application of such. It is important to note that the CWT showed a .789 Spearman rho correlation with the PEERS. This high correlation indicates the two instruments are measuring something similar.



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