

'The better scientific model is the creationist one. Evolutionary view has too many inconsistencies'

Professor teaches a supernatural creation of world

By Rebecca Salner

Dean Kenyon is a soft-spoken, serious and sincere man who teaches evolution at San Francisco State University.

But he doesn't believe in evolution. He believes in God and scientific creationism — an alternative theory which parallels the biblical story of creation.

Kenyon has taught the biology department's only evolution class for 12 years. For eight of those 12, he was a believer in macro evolutionary theory as were the vast majority of his colleagues.

They haven't changed. He has. Four years ago, after "technical evidence" convinced him that evolutionary theory was incorrect, he began including scientific creationism in his course and drawing criticism from those whose beliefs he once shared.

Kenyon defines the main tenet of scientific creationism this way:

"In the relatively recent past — 10,000 to 20 000 years ago — the entire cosmos was brought into existence out of nothing at all by supernatural creation."

According to Kenyon, gaps in the fossil record and the lack of evidence documenting transmutation of species strongly support creationist views.

The fossil record is posing the greatest problem for today's evolutionists, says Kenyon:

"Rather than exhibiting trends, the fossil record gives a picture of stasis and then gaps." (Stasis is the existence of species over long periods of time without change.)

Creationists theorize that fossils and rock strata formed during a worldwide flood, not over billions of years as evolutionists believe.

"Holes are characteristic of evolutionary theory," he says. "The better scientific model is the creationist one. Evolutionary view has too many inconsistencies."

One of Kenyon's most outspoken critics on campus is Professor Lawrence Swan, who calls creationism "embarrassing."

"How can an institution of higher learning permit the teaching of an aberrant misinterpretation and what I would consider an intolerable representation of the truth?" asks Swan. "What we're faced with is a very interesting intellectual morass. What do you do with a professor who has gone wrong?"

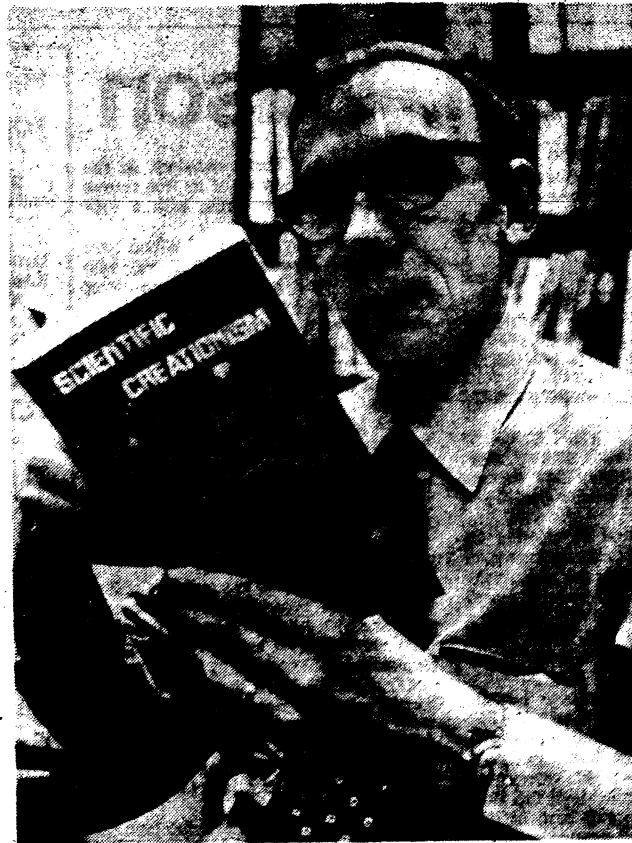
For Swan, academic freedom is no defense for teaching creationism.

"If this is academic freedom, almost any bucket will go in. I can talk absolute nonsense to my class."

"Do geologists allow a flat-earth advocate to teach? Would astronomers like astrologists? But this (creationism) differs because the evidence for it is not scientific, it is religious. Does a professor have the right to teach anything he wants? Can society afford to deny science?"

Creationists' attacks on the holes in evolutionary theory enrage Swan who claims they employ a "You don't know, therefore God" argument.

Douglas Post, professor of ecological and systematic biology, agrees, saying, "I don't think there is any



positive evidence to prove creationism. They rely on negative evidence. Their main argument is that you can't prove that Darwin is correct. But I don't think that just because you can't prove Darwin you can automatically conclude that creationism is correct."

Kenyon denies the religious base of his group's evidence and says creationism is not a "God of the gaps" theory. "Our evidence is of the same status

as that used by evolutionists. We talk about fossils, rocks, animal species..."

"One of the creationist's points is to say this is not religious," says Swan. "That's malarkey. The major premise is the first chapter of Genesis. It's an argument, an old argument, between trying to understand what's natural versus the miraculous."

None of the professors in the department have expressed much sup-

Biology professor Dean Kenyon's controversial course seems to be well-supported among the students

port for creationism, although a few have said the issue is "interesting."

Department Chairman William Wu also believes the theory is religiously based.

"Having listened to Dr. Kenyon on one side of the coin and some of our evolutionists on the other, I have to tend to agree with it being biblical. It fits."

"Any person who has gone to Sunday school will immediately grasp the similarity. But in fairness to scientific creationism and to Dr. Kenyon, Dr. Kenyon believes that the Bible should not be brought into it."

Kenyon admits a connection between religion and creationism but holds fast to the belief that religion does not enter the classroom.

"If you're not familiar with the technical literature you may think that Genesis is being taught. It is quite a radical departure from what most of our faculty learned in graduate school. It takes a lot of effort to change that. Any line of thought which tries to figure out ultimate origins will come into areas of religious thought," says Kenyon.

Although he may not bring religion into the classroom, Kenyon personally is religious and believes there are "no errors in the Bible."

In 1969, he took a leave of absence from the university to attend the University of California at Berkeley's graduate theological union. Five years later he attended Trinity College at Oxford to work on a project titled "The Reception of Darwinism by the Church of England." On his desk is a plaque

proclaiming, "In Christ are hid all the treasures and knowledge."

Kenyon, 40, is a quiet, scholarly man customarily clad in a professorial tweed blazer and conservative gray slacks. His students like him and even circulated a petition supporting his inclusion of creationism in the course.

He seems genuinely surprised at the violent reaction of some faculty, and one or two students. And though he appears to be the only creationist under fire, he claims there are others on campus — three at the least, but he won't say who.

Even Swan, his critic, says Kenyon is "a very sweet, gentle, quiet, somewhat convincing man."

Only two professors contacted were remotely supportive of Kenyon's theory.

Sarane Bowen, a specialist in cell and molecular biology, said the issue makes the department's course offerings more interesting.

Charles Hagar, physics and astronomy, said, "I think it's very nice to shake up the basket and see what goes on. I'm always in favor of controversy. I think that's how science progresses. All too often, evolution has been presented as fact and it's kind of interesting to see that challenged by alternative theories. If they're wrong, let the scientists knock them down."

Kenyon has been asked to hold discussions of creationism to 5 percent of class time — a guideline developed by Chairman Wu, who said Kenyon is not policed, although a faculty member is auditing the class.

Wu believes the issue of Kenyon teaching creationism is resolved.

Swan and Kenyon want further discussion of the matter, and believe it is unresolved.

Swan would prefer that Kenyon not teach creationism, or, if he must, at another university.

Kenyon wants more time given to creationism.

"If I were to dream about it, I would say a 50-50 split" between evolution and creationism, says Kenyon.

Federal beat: Washington

Joseph Young

Postal merit system poor

MERIT PAY BLUES — If the U.S. Postal Service's merit

It said that the Office of Personnel Management, which is in charge of the experimental program in which more than 250,000 federal employees are participating, has failed to receive sufficient funding from Congress to hire and train people to analyze and evaluate the experiment being carried out by the various federal agencies. As a result the OPM has lacked the "degree of control needed to carefully manage and evaluate the experiment," the GAO said.

GAO said the OPM has failed to determine the impact of alternative work schedules on agency operations and hasn't considered the public's views about the effects of work schedules on the degree and quality of government service

heated political issue is debatable.

NO INDEXING CHANGE SEEN — Meanwhile, there's one bit of good news regarding retirement benefits.

Edwin W. Meese III, who will be President Reagan's counsel and chief adviser, told the New York Daily News that he sees no change forthcoming in the indexing system which ties civil service retirement and Social Security cost-of-living adjustments 100 percent to the rise in the Consumer Price Index.

"After all, the index thing is a very small gesture towards giving retirees some chance to keep up with the cost of living," Meese said. "I think that in inflationary times that's

Parties at the projects

The San Francisco Giants have donated 200 baseball jackets and several private organizations and individuals have contributed \$1,500 to help children who live in public housing projects have happy Christmas holidays.

The San Francisco Public Housing Tenants Association is using the money and gifts to sponsor a series of Christmas parties in the projects. The parties start tomorrow.

The first party will be held in North Beach at the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood House. The schedule of other parties are:

Dec. 19, Holly Courts 1 p.m.; Alice Griffith, 2:30 p.m.