



It's Too Late for Steven Jay Gould

Editorial Comment by Warren Krug

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When Carl Sagan died in 1996 we mentioned (March/April 1997 issue) that he had become a creationist. Of course, we meant only that now he knows there really is a Creator. But, unless there was an unlikely deathbed conversion, it was too late for Carl Sagan.

The same can be said for another giant of evolutionism, Stephen Jay Gould, who died May 20. We regret there wasn't much in Gould's life to suggest that he may have been a "closet creationist or Christian believer."

During his 60 years of life, Gould wrote dozens of books and essays. He was also known as being one evolutionist who was willing to take on creation scientists in debate. He fought hard against the inclusion of creation science in public schools.

However, he angered many in the evolutionist camp when in 1970 he, along with fellow paleontologist, Niles Eldredge, admitted something which creation scientists have made a major issue—the fossil record offers no support for Darwinian evolution or gradualism.

Gould and Eldredge said the lack of transitional fossils was due to what they called "punctuated equilibrium." Basically, what this meant was that when a species "evolved", it changed so quickly in small, isolated populations it did not leave any fossils. They said the situation generally was one of stasis, or a lack of substantial changes in species.

Some observers quickly pointed out that this notion sounded a lot like the old "hopeful monster" theory according to which from time to time a species would give birth to or lay an egg out of which emerged an entirely different species.

Gould in his debates with creationists was given every opportunity to see the errors in his thinking. Perhaps something positive did sink in about which he wasn't willing to admit publicly but which may have remained with him during his last hours.

However, except for this bit of wishful thinking, we cannot be very optimistic about the state of Stephen Jay Gould's soul. *LSI*

—Warren Krug, editor