

Science Journals Support Evolution

Marshall Berman

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Editor:

A creationism-evolution debate is raging in New Mexico, with a current focus on Senate Bill 155. But a debate in a newspaper does not necessarily seek the truth. Rather, the goal is to "win." One tactic employed is never to say anything about your own position, but only to attack your opponents' position, and if possible, attack their character and morality too. That is the approach taken by John Baumgardner, Tim Wilson, and others.

An active field of study in science is always characterized by arguments and uncertainties. As the uncertainties are resolved, the scientific theory gets stronger. After almost 150 years of study, evolution is now overwhelmingly accepted by scientists. The disputes that remain deal primarily with mechanisms and details, but not the integrity of the evolutionary paradigm. Why, then, do creationists continue to raise questions concerning biogenesis, fossils, DNA, and complexity? For many of these, valid answers have been provided which are simply not acceptable to creationists. In other areas, science has not and perhaps never will answer questions of philosophical and theological implication: How did life begin? What existed before the big bang? Why was the universe created?

Creationists rarely describe their own alternative theories, so I will do it for them. They believe in the literal truth of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Most believe that the earth is about 6,000 years old, and that humans and dinosaurs lived together, just like the Flintstones. However, most religious people, and certainly most religious scientists, accept the Bible as allegory, as guidance for living a good life; they do not consult the Bible to design airplanes, discover new medical cures, or learn how bacteria evolve into forms that are more resistant to antibiotics.

Creationists believe that Genesis is scientifically true, despite the lack of evidence for such beliefs, and the scientific errors and contradictions within the Bible. For example, there are two creation stories in Genesis. In the first, six days are required for creation; light is created on the first day, but the sun

is not created until the fourth day; man and woman are created together on the sixth day, after plants and animals. In the second story, beginning in Genesis 2:4, creation was completed in a single day. Man was created before plants, animals, and woman.

Leviticus 11:6 says that hares chew their cud. They don't. In Leviticus 11:20-23, insects, crickets, and grasshoppers are stated to have four legs. They have six. In Leviticus 11:13-19, bats are listed with birds, although they are mammals. In Genesis 30:37-41, Jacob caused conception of streaked, speckled, and spotted lambs among the sheep by showing them a peeled rod; was this consistent with ordinary sexual reproduction and Mendelian genetics? Psalms 58:8 says snails melt, but they don't.

Joshua made the sun stand still; since creationists accept Newton's laws of motion, bringing the earth's surface velocity of about 1,000 miles per hour (at the equator) to a sudden stop should have wrought horrendous world-wide damage, documented in all other historical records. There are no such records. Similarly, the laws of gravity and motion should have significantly disrupted the moon's rotation, with a catastrophic collision easily predicted by today's physicists; but nothing occurred. How many people today believe that disease is caused by demons rather than viruses or bacteria? And if all these stories are metaphors, then how can the Bible be accepted as literally and scientifically true? In essence, creationism contradicts all science as well as recorded history. In my humble opinion, the Bible -is intended to provide moral and ethical guidance, and was never intended to be used as a scientific theory. As Galileo said, "The Bible tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

If Baumgardner and Wilson are so sure that scientists are morons and completely wrong about evolution, why don't they submit or cite creationism articles of their own in reputable scientific journals (not just creationist publications) like Science, Nature, Scientific American, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the Journal of Geophysical Research, the Journal of Molecular Evolution, or the Journal of the American Medical Association. Do they really, believe that tens of thousands of biologists, geneticists, geologists, physicists, astronomers, biochemists, anthropologists, archaeologists, paleontologists, are all part of some atheistic conspiracy covering up the Truth? Why have they been unable to prove their case with the Roman Catholic Church, or hundreds of Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, or oriental religions?

If the creationist cause is so strong, why did the Supreme Court rule (in *Epperson v Arkansas*, 1962. and *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 1987) that creationism was religious dogma and could not be taught in science classes. In 1986, 72 Nobel laureates and 23 scientific societies representing tens of thousands of scientists submitted an amicus curiae brief to the Supreme Court to oppose teaching Biblical literalism as science. Why have creationists been unable to convince the Pope, the United Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, the United Church of Christ, and almost all Jewish denominations, of the scientific validity of creationism? Baumgardner claims that preventing the teaching of creationism as science violates his freedom of religion. I believe that most people would claim that teaching creationism violates THEIR religious freedom.

Creationists have lost in the courts of other religions, in the courts of law, and in the courts of science. They now pursue their cause in the court of public opinion, where a lay audience, unfamiliar with real science, can be deceived by rhetoric and eloquence, but not by truth and science.

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