

'Need to show creation science up for what it is — wishful thinking'

By ELIZABETH BIRD

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Man, Evolution of 419

The Classification of Man Within the Order Primates



Tuesday 2 Make land, sea and plants	Wednesday 3 Sun, moon and stars	Thursday 4 animal life	Friday 5 create man, like me	Saturday 6 rest
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CREATIONISM is as much a science as evolution, and evolution is as much a religion as creationism.

That's the argument that we hear again and again to support the teaching of both "theories" in the public schools.

It seems that creationists have said it often enough and loud enough that increasing numbers of Americans are believing it. According to a recent Gallup poll, 58 percent of the population thinks creationism should be taught, while only 9 percent thinks evolution, unguided by the hand of God, should be taught, with another 33 percent favoring the teaching of evolution, including God's possible role.

Add these figures to recent reports of an evangelist who has gathered 690,000 signatures in an attempt to reinstate Arkansas Act 580, which gives equal classroom time to creationism, and the picture is hardly a victory for the forces of rationality.

Yet only recently have physicists, biologists, anthropologists and other scientists begun to give serious attention to the creationists' arguments; in their haste, they had assumed that the weight of scientific evidence for evolution was so overwhelming that no one could give the creationists credence. They were wrong, because they seriously miscalculated the American public's true level of scientific understanding.

It has become one of today's truisms that we live in a scientific age, in which decisions are ruled not by religion or superstition but by logic and scientifically proven "facts." Advertisers have long exploited the public's willingness to be mesmerized by science — the white-coated actor clutching the "scientific study," the "scientifically formulated" diet, the pain-reliever spokeswoman who "talked with our scientists, and they told me" it works.

But the public's awe of science is not matched by any real grasp of the scientific method. For those marketing any commodity, it is only necessary to say the product is scientific, not to prove it. For many years after the 1925 Scopes trial, belief in

creationism continued to be part of many Americans' religion, but it was generally understood to be just that — religion.

Then along came the scientific creationists, who cleverly managed to repackaging religion as science. They told the public they had scientific proof of creation, and the public, eager to embrace anything that would strengthen its faith, bought the whole package.

Now the evolutionists, however strong their case, are fighting a difficult battle. Evolution is complex; it is proved through a vast array of evidence, including the fossil record, geological theory, biochemical relationships between species and a battery of dating techniques, none of which many laypeople understand.

Placed against evolution, the creationists offer a hodgepodge of "scientific" evidence, carefully coached in

footprints that were apparently made at the same time as dinosaur tracks in the Paluxy River basin in Texas. If these were genuine, they would certainly be devastating to the evolutionists' case. But, leaving aside the fact that the "human" who made the prints would have had to be a giant, creationists neglect to mention that area residents have frequently admitted to having chiseled the footprints as a tourist attraction.

Another favored toy of the creationists is the "fact" that the principle of entropy, stated in the second law of thermodynamics, makes evolution impossible. Essentially, the principle states that, in any physical change, energy constantly decreases in utility, moving toward a final stage of randomness — that, in effect, the universe is decaying. Thus evolution, which requires increasing organization of energy to transform existing

Adventist Geoscience Research Institute stated that, if it were not for the Bible, he would be inclined to believe the Earth was millions of years old. After weighing these and other similar testimonies, U.S. District Judge William Overton ruled that "creation science has no scientific merit or educational value as science."

But however much science makes nonsense out of creation, it still faces problems in getting its message across. If the audience does not understand such concepts as entropy anyway, then one argument citing them seems as good as any other.

The fact is that the scientific creationists, with all their "research" and jargon, are cynically manipulating the public's ignorance, religious faith and trust in "science" to try and convince people to give their version of creation a privileged position in our educational system.

If they were truly scientists, they would set as such, debating and judging various interpretations of creation. Genesis is only one origin myth; every culture has its own account of how the world was formed, yet these are all dismissed out of hand. Only Genesis conforms exactly with the "scientific" account of recent creation.

The intent of creationists is not to seek the truth, debate evidence and subject it to scientific scrutiny; it is to obtain legal sanction for their faith. If they were true scientists, would it be necessary for members of the Creation Research Society to sign a statement of belief to the effect that "the Bible is the written word of God, and because we believe it to be inspired throughout, all of its assertions are historically and scientifically true in all of the original autographs?"

No, creation is not science, because it is based only on faith. And evolution is not religion, because it is based on evidence. To confuse the two, or to offer them as equally valid alternatives, would be cheating the nation's youth, and making them incapable of understanding the real nature of the scientific method.

Science and religion are two separate levels of truth. For any individual, they may well be compatible, and both have their place in the classroom. Evolution belongs in the science classes; let's keep creation within the comparative study of religion, where it rightly belongs.

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jargon that is also impossible to understand. Give people a choice between two sets of evidence, neither of which they really follow, and is it surprising that many opt for the "model" that accords with their existing belief?

But, frustrating as it may be, scientists must come out into the open and show creation science up for what it is — wishful thinking. There is no creation science. Most of the creationists' arguments consist of attacks on evolution, making great play with the fact that there are variations in interpretations of the fossil record. A favorite ploy is to misquote evolutionists so that they seem to be casting doubt on their own evidence.

Creationists also offer some "proof" of their own. A much-touted piece of evidence is the "human"

systems into higher systems, is impossible.

Physicists and other scientists have constantly and wearily pointed out that this is nonsense. The principle of entropy is perfectly compatible with evolution; universal energy decay does not rule out the concentration of energy in small pockets of the universe, such as the Earth.

During the appeal against the Arkansas creation-science law in December last year, the creationists presented a range of witnesses who were supposed to prove the scientific validity of their model. Their star witness, after admitting that most of her evidence consisted of attacks on evolution, finally agreed that she knew of no scientific evidence for creation.

A witness from the Seventh-Day

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