



Why evolutionism is wrong and creation is right

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How did you feel as you read the above headline? Did it strike you as rather confrontational and arrogant? It was intended to mirror the title of a lecture being given last year in different parts of the country by Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics at University College, London. Steve believes strongly that 'Creationism is wrong and evolution is right' and is being given plenty of opportunities by the media to say so. The result has been many newspaper articles and TV and radio interviews dealing with this theme, particularly as it relates to the teaching of creationism in schools.

Creationism is spreading

Apparently, many school children and even teachers are now saying that they believe that the Earth and the living things it contains were all created in six days a matter of thousands, rather than millions, of years ago. Evidence to support this widespread belief in creationism came in a surprise result to a MORI poll carried out in January 2006. This found that 22% of the 2,112 respondents believed in 'six-day creationism'. A further 17% believed that living things had originated by the intelligent design of a creator. Only 48% believed that life arose by a chance process of evolution in which God played no part.

A personal story

In 1965, belief in a six-day recent creation was almost unheard of and evolutionism was universally accepted. It was in that year that I went as an undergraduate to study biology at the brand new Sussex University. This was the first year that the biology course had been available and the new Dean of the School of Biological Sciences was a certain Professor John

Maynard Smith. As everything was so new and there were only a few of us on the course, we undergraduates had more direct contact with him than would normally be the case.

In 1965, Maynard Smith was already a well known evolutionist. He would go on to become one of the most respected evolutionary scientists ever, eventually receiving, amongst many other prizes, the Craford Prize for his contribution to evolutionary theory. This prize is acknowledged to be the equivalent of the Nobel Prize.

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I abandoned belief in evolution.

A change of mind

Maynard Smith was a brilliant, dynamic and inspirational scientist and teacher. I feel privileged to have been at Sussex at that time and owe a lot to him. Nevertheless, it was while I was at Sussex that I abandoned belief in evolution and became a despised 'six-day creationist'. I have continued actively to follow the debate ever since and am more convinced than ever that the decision that I made then was the right one.

What was it that caused me to change my mind? There were two gradual processes and one dramatic moment involved in my decision. As a teenager in the 1960s, I was gradually becoming more and more convinced that the Bible could be fully trusted. At the same time, I was becoming more and more sceptical about the nature of the evidence for evolution. Was there really conclusive proof that

it had happened as it was supposed to have done? Where exactly was all this overwhelming evidence? It certainly couldn't be found at Sussex. What could be found there were brilliant theoretical ideas, not hard evidence to do with the past.

A dramatic moment

The dramatic moment came during my final year, when I finally very tentatively voiced my doubts and was astonished at the reception that I received. It happened during a seminar in which we were discussing the evolution of the vertebrate eye. After a lengthy evaluation of the problem, none of us could see how it could possibly have happened. I hesitantly suggested that perhaps this meant that the eye had not evolved. I did not mention God, creation or intelligent design. I was simply taking our discussion of the evidence to its logical conclusion. I was completely unprepared for what happened next. My fellow students began to mock me for believing in God. The lecturer leading the seminar who until that moment had been gentle and encouraging became visibly agitated. He refused to debate the issue or to allow the discussion to continue.

A refusal to debate

This blind refusal to permit a debate told a powerful story and showed me that in the theory of evolution we are not really dealing with science but with an alternative belief system. Something very similar is happening now as Richard Dawkins and Steve Jones, both of them scientists of influence with a public platform, refuse to debate with creationists and instead use scornful mockery and misrepresentation to try to discredit those who disagree with them. ■