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Special Interest Forum - Current topic Creation vs. Evolution Start date of current Forum: 3/23/2006 • Forum will end 4/13/2006

From time to time, topics of discussion will come up that are not a good fit for the Letters to the Editor section . . . usually due to things like the length of the letters or the need to post responses sooner than once a week on Thursday.

The purpose of this forum is to provide an open discussion by recognized participants on subjects of public interest. It is not a platform for flaming, name calling, libel, personal attacks, defamation, foul language or bad taste. The publisher reserves the right to reject letters for any reason and they also reserve the right to discontinue the forum at any time for any reason.

Basic Rules:

1. No flaming, name calling, libel, personal attacks, defamation, foul language or bad taste.
2. Letters must be signed with your full name, address, phone number, and email address. Only your name and city/state will be posted with your letter.
3. Forum topic discussions will be limited to 3 weeks of exchange.
4. New letters will be reviewed and posted as soon as possible. Newest letters will be posted at the top.

The Seldovia Gazette values freedom of speech. We'll see how this goes, it's a lot of work for the Editors and if this gets out of hand, we will simply cut it off. We accept letters submitted by either: by email to tomg@seldovia.com or maryg@seldovia.com or by mail (ONLY if you also submit a computer CD containing the document) to Seldovia Gazette, P.O. Box 97, Seldovia, Alaska 99663.

4/13/2006 Ed Hekman, Alto, Michigan

People get really passionate when they talk about science & religion, but I think there is one thing almost everyone agrees on and that is that we live in a fascinating, marvelous, beautiful, awesome world. Another thing I think most people would agree on is that we all seek to understand as much of this world as we can. That, after all, is the definition of science – the organized body of knowledge about this world we live in – a collection of the best explanations we can come up with for why things work the way they do.

Dr. John Haught, in his book “Deeper Than Darwin” gives an interesting illustration. He asks what are the possible explanations for a pot of water boiling on the stove? One explanation is that “the heat energy from the combustion of the natural gas and oxygen is causing the water molecules to vibrate faster and faster until some of them begin to escape into the atmosphere above the pot.” Another explanation is, “I put the pot on the stove and turned it on.” And a third explanation is, “I want tea.” All of these

explain how the DNA “deck of cards” for a living organism can get shuffled by it’s environment, it does not begin to explain how the “deck of cards” got there in the first place, much less how life came to be. The International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life is a group of esteemed scientists worldwide who have been developing and studying naturalistic theories for the origin of life for about 45 years now. They hold an international conference every three (3) years. After years of debate, they have concluded that life could not have originated via naturalistic causes here on earth. The current “best explanation” from this august group of scientists is panspermia – life was seeded on this planet by other intelligent beings from somewhere else out in space.

The origin of the universe, the origin of life, why we have a sense of right and wrong, why I love my children, these are all questions that have no naturalistic explanations. As I observe the awesome world I live in, the most logical, reasonable explanation

are right answers, but they don't "map" onto each other, and none of them is more right than the others.

When I look at the world around me, I naturally look for the "heat/vibrating water molecules" explanation because I have an engineering background. I understand however that there are limits to scientific explanations and there are other explanations that are equally real and correct. Science can explain many things and it is miraculous to me that this universe is as ordered and understandable, and describable by mathematics as it is. There is no reason why it should be so understandable. There are limits however beyond which science cannot go. Science cannot tell us what caused the big bang creation event because, as Hawkings and Penrose tell us, that was before energy, matter, space and time existed and is therefore, by definition, not something that science can address. As soon as scientists begin to expound on theories about what occurred before the big bang, they have left physics and moved into meta-physics, which is another term for religion. (Similarly science stops at the edge of a black hole – another singularity.) Explanations for why the big bang occurred or what or who caused it to happen are in the "I want tea" category of explanations.

The theory of evolution is a very good explanation for the adaptation of living organisms to their environment. It explains the variation in the beaks of the finches that Darwin observed in the Galapagos. It explains the peppered moths in England during the time of wood and coal burning in London. But while it does

for the why questions for me is that it was made that way by an infinitely powerful and infinitely loving Creator (who began building this universe 13.6 billion years ago, who delicately balanced the four fundamental forces to enable stars and galaxies to form, who used stellar nucleosynthesis to make the heavier elements elements, who set in place the laws of physics, etc.).

Even in this fast paced, high tech society, we all worship something. For some it may be power, or money, or fame. For some it may be a person or an institution. For others it may be self. But ultimately all these things fail, decay, and disappoint. I choose to worship the Creator, and I believe He has a purpose for all this marvelous creation He has made. I believe He wants to be in relationship with me (and all people). The thing that motivates me to try to understand how and why this amazing world works is because I want to know Him more fully (through what He has made) and I want to be known by Him. That relationship brings great joy, meaning, and purpose to my life.

Ed Hekman
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4/10/2006: Phil Pachulski, Charlevoix, Michigan

While Mr. Gain may be intelligent and well read, his postulating from the podium gets a little long of tooth. Using sarcasm and derision to try and intimidate Msrs. Gieseke, Hoard, and Janes to win arguments, is a sign of a weak argument. First of all I don't advocate teaching religion in a school system, personal beliefs belong in a home, between family. Secondly, I would resist vociferously, any attempt by a school system to teach the evolution theory, as it is just that, a theory. The Wall Street Journal had an article this week on new hope for Evolutionary advocates, as scientists had discovered fossils of a prehistoric fish with articulating fins that give hope to providing the link to modern man. I have news for them, catfish with articulating fins exist in Asia today, and have escaped into South Florida ponds as they were brought to the U.S. by Asians. The articulating fins enable them to walk from one pond to another, but don't expect them to be seen in a tux and tails anytime soon. Proponents of Darwin's theory on Evolution, always fail to reveal that Darwin himself had stated, the hole in his theory was that no link had yet been found that proved by physical evidence the transition skeletal features to substantiate his theory. Classical Physics ignores erratic behavior, and uses idealized systems to explain the world. The errors in Newton's calculations of planetary motion were ignored until Einstein came along to explain them. Mr Gain

The idea of the Chaos Theory is that what appears to be a very complex, turbulent system, can begin with simple components operating under a few simple rules. One of the characteristics of such a system is that a small change in the initial conditions, often too small to measure, can lead to radically different behavior. Run the equations two, four, eight times, and they may seem to be giving similar results. But, the harder you drive the system, the more iterations result, and the more unpredictable it becomes. Classical science aims at producing an outcome, then conducts an experiment to confirm it. But natural systems don't behave so neatly. The specific details can be described, yet no one can predict the outcome. The oldest historical document we have is the Bible. True there are only four Gospels contained, while there have been approximately thirty written, and also true it has been translated, and simplified many times from it's original Coptic writing, but it exists from it's compilation in the first and second century. I can't find the Bible of the Apes, no matter what library I search. The majority of the World's religions outside of Christianity, believe in re-incarnation. You can believe what you want, as any battle you fight to find your personal puzzle pieces, is your personal battle, and you develop your own belief system. When I wake up in the morning, watch a full moon in an evening, listen to the call of wild geese flying overhead, or hear the giggle

states in Italics THAT SUPERNATURAL IS NOT A VALID EXPLANATION. Perhaps he had better re-visit that statement, as science and the Catholic Church have agreed to the description of Stigmata (The appearance of bleeding wounds in the feet, hands, side, and head identical to that of the Biblical Jesus) in two certified cases to be classified as "supernatural:..Science is fluid, as the sum of all its parts changes, the results change.

of one of my grand-daughters, you can take your Big Bang theory and give it back to Darwin, there are a few billion people on this earth who feel differently.

Phil Pachulski

4/2/2006: Kevin Gain

Today, I was going to explore the Babylonian and Sumerian origins of the Creation and Flood myths of the Bible, but I've changed my mind. I didn't want to get into the epistemological differences between science and Religion (understanding vs. Believing) just yet, this being only my third letter and all, and no one wants to be glued to a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* or Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* when there's parties to go to and beers to be drunk, and the sun is shining, and spring is in the air and your fancies are turning to other things... but I feel it's time to address this recurring drivel that science is simply a belief system on the same level as belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible.

"It's just a theory," they told Giordano Bruno as they lit the match. "It's heresy," they said to Galileo as they turned the key. "You can't prove it with the Bible."

A couple weeks ago, Mr. Hoard claimed to know nothing about Intelligent Design, then, a few days ago he starts parroting the Irreducible Complexity gibberish of Michael Behe, one of its most vociferous advocates. It causes me a great deal of despair to listen to people who have never set foot in a science classroom, repeating a group of words they have memorized, completely convinced that this parroting somehow constitutes actual understanding.

Is it any wonder that these people think only in terms of believing and disbelieving? Understanding is a concept that eludes them, much like the concepts of myth, allegory, metaphor, fable, parable, tale, legend and story. When they have to begrudgingly admit that they are simply believing what they are told, regurgitating the first religious doctrine that was spoon fed to them - if they were spoon fed in Iran they would just as enthusiastically regurgitate a different doctrine - they must then try to pretend that *actual understanding* is just belief because they have clearly illustrated their complete lack of it.

Understanding science takes a monumental amount of time and effort and not everyone has the same capacity for it, but saying "God did it" is a cop out. **Invoking the supernatural is not an acceptable explanation in science.** These people are not willing to take the time and make the effort to actually understand science or they are so in love with their literal interpretation of the

There are beer cans all over the place and while I would like to claim that God did it, I don't think you'll be buying that. Just buy more beer and I'll be happy. For the tee-totaling self-righteous Christians, that's called a metaphor.

I would like to point out to Mr. Giesecke that the only people who are "formulating" this entire non-debate "debate" of science vs. religion are the Born Again, Fundamentalist, Literalist, Apocalyptic, Messianic, One True Religion, Holier Than Thou, Gerry-Fallwellian, Evangelical, American Christians. I would also like Mr. Giesecke to understand that there are numerous scientists who embrace both evolution and God. They believe that God created a universe in which evolution occurs naturally and that God works constantly in their and other people's lives.

FUNDAMENTALIST, LITERALIST CHRISTIANS HAVE NO MONOPOLY ON GOD!

Mr. Giesecke is a member of the "Creation Research Society". Here is the CRS Statement of Belief:

All members must subscribe to the following statement of belief:

1. The Bible is the written Word of God, and because it is inspired throughout, all its assertions are historically and scientifically true in the original autographs. To the student of nature this means that the account of origins in Genesis is a factual presentation of simple historical truths.
2. All basic types of living things, including man, were made by direct creative acts of God during the Creation Week described in Genesis. Whatever biological changes have occurred since Creation Week have accomplished only changes within the original created kinds.
3. The great flood described in Genesis, commonly referred to as the Noachian Flood, was an historic event worldwide in its extent and effect.
4. We are an organization of Christian men and women of science who accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The account of

Creation myth of the Bible that they must try to blur the line between belief and understanding. Religious Fundamentalism, be it Christian or Muslim, (most other spiritual traditions don't suffer from this brand of Certainty) is the antithesis of understanding.

"I am against religion because it teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world" - Richard Dawkins.

Mr. Behe, of the Discovery Institute in Seattle - you may remember Them from my first letter - claims that bacterial flagella are too complex to have evolved; therefore "God did it." He doesn't actually say God though - remember the Supreme Court. Mr. Behe's "Irreducible Complexity" has taken the entire scientific community by storm. He has truly baffled virtually everyone working in bacteriology, microbiology, molecular biology, biochemistry and a hundred other disciplines, and has scientists around the world standing there with their mouths open. From New York to Calcutta to Tokyo scientists are pulling their hair out and crying, "What does it all mean?" Thankfully, no one has jumped out of a building yet. They just can't understand why, out of all the complexity in the entire universe, Behe chose a bacterium to scientifically prove the existence of God. Once again, **invoking the supernatural is not an acceptable explanation in science.** And once again, read the verdict in Kitzmiller -v- Dover to see how far Behe's claptrap got in front of a Christian, Republican, Bush appointed Judge. And, NO, Mr. Behe and his cronies at the Discovery Institute are not "former evolutionists" who have "seen the light". They are Bornagins.

"If you are in possession of this revolutionary secret of science, why not prove it and be hailed as the new Newton? Of course, we know the answer. You can't do it. You are a fake." - Richard Dawkins.

In science, we apply deductive reasoning to empirical evidence. As should have been clear from my first letter and is clear to anyone who actually studies science. (Pay attention Mr. Geisecke) The repeatable experiment is one of the empirical aspects of scientific understanding. Just because chemical (a) reacted with chemical (b) today and has for the last couple hundred years every time we've dumped a into b does not prove, with the level of certainty that the Fundamentalists enjoy about their One True Religion(s), be it Christianity or Islam (most other spiritual traditions don't suffer from this kind of certainty, "no I'm not stuttering") that it will do the same tomorrow, but we can be reasonably sure (barring supernatural intervention) that it will. Of course, by the same reasoning, the sun could reverse its course tomorrow - but probably not, (barring, of course, supernatural intervention). The repeatable experiment is not the be all and end all of science, Mr. Geisecke. You conveniently forgot direct observation, logic and deductive reasoning. But I would expect nothing less. Please spit out that gum.

Fundamentalist Christians know for a fact that Jesus is coming to

the special creation of Adam and Eve as one man and one woman and their subsequent fall into sin is the basis for our belief in the necessity of a Savior for all mankind. Therefore, salvation can come only through accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior.

As I have said before, any rational person disinclined to believe in talking snakes will look at the research and come to the same conclusion. Mr. Geisecke obviously does not fit these criteria.

There should be no conflict between science and Religion as the two deal with entirely different kinds of truth. I suggest you read the Clergy Letter. Just Google it, you'll find it.

In case anyone was wondering why I have developed a Richard Dawkins fetish today, it is to bring home the point about the difference between believing and understanding and to illustrate just how far these people are willing to go to prevent the possession of school children by the demon of understanding. I don't know if Mr. Hoard understands that carefully and deliberately quoting someone completely out of context isn't just the equivalent of lying, it is lying.

"Quote mining" is a typical Creationist strategy (a favorite of Fox News also) where they carefully and deliberately quote various scientists or other notable people completely out of context, to pretend these people support their folderol or to try to discredit anyone who actually makes sense.

I was unable to find the exact quote Mr. Hoard attributed to Richard Dawkins although, in time I assure you I will. I suspect it comes from his book *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*, in which he skewers Creationists and which I no longer own. Having, over the course of the last 20+ years, read most of Dawkins books, I can tell you that the Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University is no friend of Creationism. Perhaps the word *superficially* in this "mined quote" should give the reader a clue. If you would like to understand where the venerable Dr. Dawkins stands on Creationism and ID, I suggest starting with "*The Blind Watchmaker.*"

As for this Creationist "quote mining" of Darwin: Darwin had the peculiar literary style of asking questions or formulating problems, which he would then address. The Creationist Quote Miners simply leave out Darwin's answers to these questions. This quote comes from Darwin's *Origin of Species* 1859 p.172 of the first edition. In the sixth edition, you can find it on p.134. Go see for yourself. If you wish to actually understand evolution instead of just believing or disbelieving, then actually reading the *Origin of Species* is a wonderful place to begin.

To go back to Mr. Geisecke for just a moment: There have been a lot of Religious Fundamentalists who claim that America has gone to hell after Darwin or the sixties or whatever, but I would

get them and only them. Not the Muslims with their objection to the Trinity and all, and certainly not those Jesus killing Jews. Buddhists don't get into Heaven either so don't feel left out. The Religious Fundamentalists may try to pretend that we envy them this brand of certainty, but I assure you we do not. Science is not about believing or disbelieving it is about understanding. Scientists start by looking at the world and then develop explanations that fit the facts, even if those explanations that have been patiently hammered out by science don't have the same drama as myth, or the same brand of Certainty as Religious Belief. Scientists do not try to fit the world into their myths. Religious Fundamentalism is based on unquestioning belief in what cannot be seen and science is based on empirical evidence, rational thought and brutal questioning. Scientific knowledge is discussed rationally every day in the scientific community and if a theory does not fit the facts it is rejected. **Invoking the Supernatural is not a valid explanation in science.**

"Today the theory of evolution is about as much open to doubt as the theory that the earth goes round the sun" – Richard Dawkins

"Son, who ate all the cookies in the cookie jar?"
 "Well Dad," (crunch, crunch, swallow) "God did it"
 "OK son, since I wasn't actually there, that's good enough for me. Good thing He's a loving God!!"
 "Dad, why is the sky blue?"
 "Well son, God did it."
 "Where do babies come from Dad?"
 "God did it"
 "Where do people come from?"
 Saying "God did it" doesn't get you anywhere.

The idea that just because something happened one minute ago or yesterday or a million years ago means you can't understand what happened and just have to believe the Bible, is typical of the self-induced ignorance these people relish. Last Thursdayism also becomes a valid explanation. This is the non-disprovable hypothesis that the entire universe was created last Thursday, complete with the appearance of age. Does anyone have a strong piece of wire I can borrow? I want to shove it through my eye socket and play with *my* cerebellum too.

If you crush your beer cans one way and I crush mine another, its pretty simple to look in the garbage and know who's been bogarting all the beer. "Burp, 'scuse me." Same thing with evolution.

direct your attention to the genocide committed against the Native peoples of America when "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" was official government policy, and the Good Christians reveled in the slaughter of the "Godless Savages." The complete subjugation of the "inferior sex "(they're still trying to tell women what can and cannot happen inside their own bodies). The enslavement of a race of people, and countless other atrocities. I would postulate that what has made this country great is that, unlike some other parts of the world, we have managed to rein in our Religious Fundamentalists who's beliefs have justified untold horrors throughout history.

Next time I would like to take a look at this "Infallible Word of God" (The Bible) that Mr. Geisecke and his ilk try to wrap the world up in like a fish at Pikes Market in Seattle, paying particular attention to the contradictory descriptions of Creation (Genesis 1 and Genesis 2) and it's insights into the nature of this Male Deity, including His *commanding* of genocide and the "babysitting" of the Midianite virgins: Numbers, Chapter 31 verses 1-2, 7,17-18,30-35; His big Thumbs Up on slavery: Num.31, Joshua 9:23; Leviticus 25: 44-46; and my personal favorite: 2Kings2: 23-24 where God, through his Prophet Elisha, gets two bears to attack 42 small boys because they made fun of Elisha's bald head. Stephen Colbert is right! That's where we'll start anyway. This could take awhile.

While it has been mildly amusing, debating this non-debate, it has been an unneeded waste of my time. I don't want to get too distracted from the original impetus for these letters. I heard my first Creationist, Duane Gish, one of Mr. Geisecke's cronies at CRS, as a junior, studying Biology and Philosophy at UAF. Back then it was the general consensus of the scientific community to simply ignore these Religious Fundamentalists masquerading as scientists. Unfortunately, that policy led to the kind of nonsense we have seen with the Seldovia Gazette. It is a sad turn of events in this country that Rupert Murdoch, George Bush and Gerry Fallwell all roll over in the morning and smell each other's foul breath. There are still some of us who don't think that's a good idea. Think globally act locally. I would like to point out that giving "equal time" to this flat earth twaddle is no different than the promotion of it and is still not responsible journalism.

Sincerely, Kevin Gain

3/28/2006: Pastor Jonathan Hoard

AThe more statistically improbable a thing is, the less can we believe that it just happened by blind chance. Superficially the obvious alternative to chance is an intelligent designer. @ - Dr. Richard Dawkins, Department of Zoology, Oxford University

flange and is moved by a motor that has many moving parts. This motor can reach 200,000 RPM and stop and reverse motion in a quarter of a turn. If any one of the many parts wasn't present this organism would die. If anyone of the parts didn't function, it

Aln fact, evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientist have accepted it and many are prepared to Abend @ their observations to fit in with it @ - H.S. Lipson, FRS, Professor of Physics, University of Manchester, UK

AOne cannot be exposed to the law and order of the universe without concluding that there must be design and purpose behind it all... To be forced to believe only one conclusion-that everything in the universe happened by chance-would violate the very objectivity of science itself...They [evolutionists] challenge science to prove the existence of God. But must we really light a candle to see the sun? It is in scientific honesty that I endorse the presentation of alternative theories for the origin of the universe, life and man in the science classroom. It would be an error to overlook the possibility that the universe was planned rather than happening by chance. @- Dr. Werner von Braun

AAAs by this theory innumerable transitional forms must have existed, why do we not find them embedded in countless numbers in the crust of the earth? The number of intermediate links between all living and extinct species must have been inconceivably great. @ - Charles Darwin

Indeed!

I too could go on and on. As time goes by more and more scientist are realizing the Agig is up @. This has brought about the emergence of AIntelligent Design @. ID is not merely another approach (or conspiracy) of fundamental Christianity. Christians know who the designer is. ID is the product of former evolutionists who realize that their interpretations do not hold up. I hold no affinity for ID. I would like to see God get the credit He is due.

However, ID has given us some helpful insights. One of which is AIrreducible Complexity @. Taking the mouse trap as an example: All five parts of a mouse trap must be present for it to function. Take away any one of them and it ceases to function. Functionality is important, because if something can =t function it can =t live and evolve. Mr. Gain did a fine job of making fun of the giraffe anecdote in my last letter but the facts stand as they are. A giraffe can only function as it is in it =s present state, anything less would prove fatal. The same goes with migratory birds that set out on flights to places they have never been, traveling over water most of the way, not only arriving at the right place but having been fortunate enough to store up just enough energy to make it. Take also the one celled flagellar bacteria also called the flagellar motor. A simple organism that moves itself with a tail. The tail is connected to the body by a

would die. If any one of the parts was arranged out of order it would die. Feel free to believe that those parts came from no where and assembled themselves in proper time and form. But if you believe that, be honest with yourself and admit that is a belief not fact born out by observation. Irreducible Complexity is everywhere.Mr. Gain also made light of the story of the moon landing. But the science still stands. The data shows the moon to be less than 10,000 years old. Likewise, as mentioned before, our sun is fading. Slowly yes, but fading. Billions of years ago it would have been so close as to make life impossible. We all know what a slight change it would require in distance to drastically change this planets climate.

I agree with Mr. Gain that there are untold articles and books to be read to support evolution. We were all raised with it. We all carried text books with fanciful pictures of prehistoric man as a hunched over brute. Pictures rendered from a mere tooth, later discovered to come from a pig. Asking evolutionists what they think of evolution is like asking Lenin what he thinks of Marx.

This issue at hand here is not science. At issue is our belief system by which all of us approach life and interpret what we see. I am as close minded as Mr. Gain. I believe that the God of the Bible created this world and I interpret what I see around me from that foundation. Those who don =t believe the God of the Bible interpret their world based upon that BELIEF system.

As for this belief system (fundamental Christianity and creationism) being a danger to our children; I can only tell you what I teach here. The Bible tells children that God made them special and with purpose, that God loves them more than anything and will never stop loving them. That out of that love, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for their sins and forgive them, and make them God =s children. It tells them that God will teach them how to live in this world so that they honor God and bless others. It teaches that God wants to produce in them love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control, (stop me if this is too scary) and that God wants them to live forever with Him in Heaven. I know, sometimes I scare myself. If you can =t take my word for it you can always stop in- there is no secret handshake.

As for me being a fool, I am honored and humbled to wear that badge. (Curious? Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31)

As for me being a liar, well, time will tell.

This is my last submission on this subject. I am always willing to talk personally. I want to thank the Seldovia Gazette for this forum.

For His greater glory,
Jonathan Hoard

3/26/2006: Hank Giesecke

Regarding the Creation/Evolution issue. Several points need to be kept in mind:

1. The debate is usually framed by the evolutionists as science (meaning evolution) versus religion (Creation). Your dictionary defines science as systematized observations and experimentation. Can the experiment of the origin of the universe be run again? No. Can the experiment called the origin of life be run again? No. hence, both "theories" are belief systems.

Now the challenge is to see which "model" best fits the physical evidence and laws. When you examine, even superficially, the assumptions of evolution you find them wanting. For example, you do not get living (organic) material from inorganic (rock). It is called biogenesis - living material comes only from living material. No exceptions. Sorry.

There has been a lot of recent study on the issue of information. Our DNA is our "supply" of information about every facet of us as a living being. If, as evolution postulates, we came from single celled organisms (See #1 - ie. cannot get living material from rock), they have roughly 100 base pairs in their DNA chain. We as humans have 3 Billion base pairs. We are packed with information. Where would it come from?

By the way. Lest the evolutionists bring up natural selection - no one argues against natural selection - where the weak are weeded out. BUT natural selection does not add and cannot add any information.

Darwin in 1859 saw cells as just blobs of material. No good microscopes. Now we well know that every living thing must do 5 functions ALL AT ONCE. If, for example, you can take in nutrition but cannot give off waste you won't last long. Evolution argues that all the functions would have evolved, and come into existence, slowly over long periods of time. Cannot happen that way.

2) There are and continue to be huge consequences for this worldview called Humanism, based upon evolution. Let me cite just a few. If we are all just evolved pond scum, then life is not at all valuable and we can easily justify killing the unborn (over 43 million so far!) The teen suicide rate is huge today - in many cases because teens - at that important point in their life - see no purpose because they are being told they are just some sort of cosmic accident.

Since 1963, when the Bible and prayer were taken out of schools such things as violent crime, drug abuse, child abuse, suicide, etc. have all gone up dramatically. The cost to America in both dollars and lives ruined is staggering.

WORLDVIEWS HAVE CONSEQUENCES!!!!

Does it ever dawn on evolutionists (Humanists) that the primary reason America has been the light of the world, the most successful nation in the history of the world, is because it was founded on a Biblical worldview - which is based on Truth. We were made in His image, He created everything and so He knows how it works and yet we humans think we're in charge. (It would be like getting a new machine and ignoring the instruction manual!!!) How sad for us personally and as a nation.

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3/20/2006: Kevin Gain

Mr. Hoard's letter uses the typical "shotgun approach" where Creationists throw out numerous accusations which are impossible to adequately address within the time/space constraints of the forums they choose. They must do this because not a single one of their claims will stand on it's own merit. They try to pretend that a public battle of sound bites is equivalent to the rational discussion of scientific knowledge that takes place every day in the scientific community. Understanding science requires understanding complex concepts, not believing what you are told or being able to parrot a few phrases. It is very sad that we seem to be entering a new "Dark Age" where the pursuit of

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understanding is labeled “Liberal Intellectual Elitism” and truth is more and more being defined by uniformed opinions and not by facts.

Mr. Hoard’s letter is a regurgitation of only a teeny weeny microscopic sampling of the thousands of outrageous claims made by these clowns. All I can hope to do here is give a short response to a few of these claims and explore with you the nature of the Creationist subterfuge.

This ridiculous story that NASA was afraid that the lunar lander would sink in 100 feet of dust is a lie made up by Creationist, Kent Hovind. NASA had sent the Surveyor probes to the moon years before they ever sent a manned spacecraft, as had the Soviet Union. They knew exactly what the surface of the moon was like long before Armstrong stepped on it because they had already sent unmanned probes. This moon dust story is, quite simply, a lie, and the idea that the moon should have more dust on it than it does if the world is really billions of years old is an old canard that has been debunked even by creationists like Andrew Snelling over a decade ago, and is no longer used by nationally known creationists. This nonsense is on par with Creationist claims that legends of Knights fighting dragons come from the “fact” that this is when the dinosaurs actually lived. As I said in my first letter, Seldovia was scraping the bottom of the barrel.

Now, regarding the still standard Creationist misrepresentation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics: They know very well that no one can adequately teach the Laws of Thermodynamics to someone who has never studied physics, in this or any other forum where they spew their nonsense. I suggest, if you are interested, you go take a couple freshman level physics classes at an accredited university. This will only take about six hours a week for about eight months. Let me just say this: The *overall* entropy of an isolated system can never decrease. However, the entropy of *parts* of the system can spontaneously decrease at the expense of an even greater increase in other *parts* of the system. The Creationists state flatly that entropy can never decrease; this is in direct conflict with the most fundamental law of thermodynamics that entropy equals heat flow divided by absolute temperature. Yes, the sun is “using up it’s energy” and it will certainly “burn out”- to use the colloquial - in a few billion years, but the Earth has been the recipient of some of that energy for the *last* few billion years.

Now lets try, or hopefully not try, the statement that “ mutations are always seen to detract from a species, never improve it”.If a gene in bird flu mutates in a way that allows it to infect human beings or other non-avian species and thus increases the occurrence of that new gene in particular and bird flu in general, let’s see if the Creationists can simply deny it’s existence and have it go away.

As for the long necked giraffe joke...A giraffe walks into a bar...

31: 140-144.

Do you care to spend the time and make the effort? That’s only ten papers! I read at least fifty just for an undergraduate project on Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning. There are many, many, more papers on transitional fossils readily available to anyone who cares to spend the time and make the effort. Creationists rely on the fact that hardly anyone in the general public has the time or the inclination to thoroughly review the scientific literature.

How about the claim that pressure in oil/gas wells proves that the Earth is “young”. Pressure in oil/gas wells proves that these deposits are surrounded by substrate that is impermeable to oil/gas. Geologic events may allow the migration of some of these deposits into “young” oil/gas fields. You may then say, “young fields” not “young Earth” or “young oil”.

At this point I’m going to stop addressing Mr. Hoard’s #2 birdshot. As you can see this is becoming quite tedious. I would apologize for my lack of diligence if it weren’t for the fact that there are many thousands more of these ridiculous claims floating around out there. If even one tenth of one percent of this nonsense had any merit, the entire scientific endeavor would come crashing down. They do not, it has not and it will not.

When the Creationists are not telling outright lies, they count on the massive gap between what is known by science and even the literate public. They oversimplify and misrepresent very complex concepts in physics, geology, paleontology, chemistry and biology and pander to the general public who do not have the necessary background in science to investigate their claims - all for the sake of clinging to a literal interpretation of the Bible.

Remember, scientists don’t just pretend to understand science. They have spent their whole lives studying, and are out there every day working to better understand the natural world in which we live. Hopefully that understanding will be used for the betterment of mankind - not that corporately owned politicians necessarily use this knowledge for anything other than lining their own pockets or try to subvert it to continue to line their own pockets.

We are watching jobs that require knowledge of science and math be shipped out to other countries where young peoples minds are not poisoned with the notion that science is “only a belief system” and “my uninformed opinion is as valid as any scientist’s”

I personally believe (among other things) that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are working for the Enlightenment of all sentient beingsbut this belief has nothing to do with science and furthermore I am not trying to use government institutions to force it on school children

I suggest Mr. Hoard stick with expositions on his Personal Jesus

and he runs into Francis Hitching who wrote *The Neck of the Giraffe*. He finds that Hitching claims to be a member of the Royal Archaeological Institute, which he is not. He finds that Hitching implies in the "Acknowledgements" of *The Neck of the Giraffe* that paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould had helped in the writing of the book, and that his book had been endorsed by Richard Dawkins, which it had not. When asked, Dawkins stated: "I know nothing at all about Francis Hitching. If you are uncovering the fact that he is a charlatan, good for you. His book, *The Neck of the Giraffe*, is one of the silliest and most ignorant I have read for years." The reference book *Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 103, page 208, lists Hitching as a member of the Society for Psychical Research, the British Society of Dowsers and of the American Society of Dowsers. His writings include: *Earth Magic*, *Dowsing: The Psi Connection*, *Mysterious World: An Atlas of the Unexplained, Fraud, Mischief, and the Supernatural and Instead of Darwin*. The giraffe walks out of the bar.

If anyone wants my old Vertebrate Biology textbook, it's yours.

Lets explore the claim that there are no transitional fossils. I would ask that you begin with a perusal of the following papers published in scientific journals:

- Caldwell, M. W. and M. S. Y. Lee, 1997. A snake with legs from the marine Cretaceous of the Middle East . *Nature* 386: 705-709.
- Conway Morris, Simon, 1998. *The Crucible of Creation*, Oxford University Press.
- Cronin, T. M., 1985. Speciation and stasis in marine ostracoda: climatic modulation of evolution. *Science* 227: 60-63.
- Domning, Daryl P., 2001a. The earliest known fully quadupedal sirenian. *Nature* 413: 625-627.
- Domning, Daryl P., 2001b. New "intermediate form" ties seacows firmly to land. *Reports of the National Center for Science Education* 21(5-6): 38-42.
- Eldredge, Niles , 1972. Systematics and evolution of *Phacops rana* (Green, 1832) and *Phacops iowensis* Delo, 1935 (Trilobita) from the Middle Devonian of North America. *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 147(2): 45-114.

until he has taken the time and made the effort to understand at least the basics of Biology, Chemistry, Physics etc...and to keep it out of the schools unless he would like to participate in a class on Comparative Religion.

The Jains (the World's sixth largest religion) have a story about the blind men and the elephant: The first blind man walks up to the elephant, touches it's foot and says, "The elephant is a rock". The second touches the elephant's leg and says, "The elephant is a pillar". The third touches the elephant's trunk and says, "The elephant is a pipe". The next blind man touches the elephant's tail and says, "The elephant is a rope. If these blind men were honest seekers of truth, they would sit down, discuss their findings and try to come to some rational conclusion about the nature of the elephant (as is done in the scientific community) or simply enjoy their own perception. If these blind men were Religious Fundamentalists or Holders of any other Rigid Ideology, they would immediately begin condemning each other to Hell if not sending each other there directly, over their tiny little perception of the rather large Elephant.

Our own personal experience of the Devine or God, or what have you, is way more subjective than the verifiable workings of the Material World we are all experiencing, and are not easily shared with or explained to people who we feel have not had the same experience, although, if we look closely we will see there is no one who has not had this experience. The cultural interpretation of that experience may prevent us from truly sharing what it means to be human with other human beings. When Christians get Saved in a Church, they call it being filled with the Holy Spirit. Hindus may call it the Opening of the Heart Chakra. And Buddhists engaged in the Powa practice may experience a perception of the Oneness of All Being. I personally remember the first time I looked at, and understood the workings of, a marine estuary and equate that with my personal experiences of all of the above.

Sincerely, Kevin Gain

3/16/2006: Mark Janes, Seldovia, AK

Dearest Editors:

I hope I am not the only one responding the recent letters regarding creationism seen here. (As usual, Mom in Dallas had the scoop before me and called and let me know.) What a treat to read Mr. Hoard's and Mr. Gain's letters in the same issue of the Gazette. It is March in Seldovia, time for some controversy! But really, we all need to consider such issues, formulate opinions and

The focus on fringe issues to the detriment of the mission government is counterproductive. An example would be this obsession with gays. First they don't get abortions, and really, the number of homosexuals trashing marriages here in Seldovia or anywhere is probably not statistically measurable, the heterosexuals are doing a fine job of trashing marriage themselves.

put them into actions by voting.

I respect Mr. Hoard's faith and its impact on his life and I agree with Mr. Gain's points regarding the history of this debate, but I feel they both missed a very important point of this entire debate.

This debate is only marginally about how an individual's faith and spirituality interacts with the world. Those are intangible and can't be debated. And as Mr. Gain pointed out creationism has been debunked a long time ago as a scientific theory. I look at the issue from another perspective: How faith and religion are being used to shape our community, this country, and the world.

The rebirth of the Stokes Monkey trial in the cloak of Intelligent Design is not really about science versus faith or even a search for truth. Just as the original trial was used to create division in this country and exploit it for political gains, so is the promotion of Intelligent Design.

I contend that the very act of people adopting a label on the political spectrum, such as "right wing, conservative", "left wing, liberal" as a sign of faith is setting oneself up to be used as a political tool by a few in our society for gains in power and wealth. Many in the religious community might welcome this expression of power, an incorporation of our religious "heritage" and a morality brought to bear in our government. But the facts don't support it. 26 years after Ronald Reagan and his cadre of Republicans rose from the ashes of Watergate, by admittedly using issues important to evangelicals and fundamentalists, I really don't find our government on any higher moral ground and arguments certainly can be made to the contrary.

Using God in politics has never been about good government: government, when done correctly, solves collective problems well, faith deals with spirituality. It is fine that people who are running for office may have a faith in a higher power, but mostly I want them to have the skills and intelligence too effectively, legislate, judge and administrate a complex and sophisticated enterprise.

I find this injection of religion into government scary and dangerous, as did people 217 years ago when they wrote "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..." FIRST words of the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. They were serious, and understandable so, as they were seeking to escape the arbitrary rule of a politician "ordained" by God, King George III. Irony aside, it is wise compromise. They mandated: Do religion on you own time, don't assume that everyone wants it, and don't mix it with governmental functions.

The beauty of the Constitution is that it grants rights to individuals and prevents government (us, collectively) from overreaching. In fact many of the Constitutional framers thought that the mixing of religion and politics would ultimately be worse for religion than politics. Many in politics appeal to the lowest common denominator, dwelling in a very cynical place; faith and religion shouldn't even be seen in the same neighborhood.

But if we must use our individual faith to inform us on the politics, I beseech you to not just consider science texts, or reproductive rights or the structure of the family or who should have sex with whom. Let's use faith and morality to inform us on global warming and its effects on the "unborn," consider the cost of health care and its impact on the nuclear family, consider the morality of saddling our children and their children with an exploded national debt. Finally I wish faith would inform us on the effects of a war on the young and innocent and on our collective soul; I know that it some instructions on these issues came from a guy named Jesus. Or was it Vishnu? Or Mohamed? Or Buddha? Or Elvis?

Thanks for the rant and as usual follow the money!

Mark Janes

3/9/2006: Pastor Jonathan Hoard, Seldovia, AK

In May of 1969 when Neil Armstrong took that "giant leap for man kind" the world, and especially the NASA scientists held their breath. Why? Because science (the practice of observation and calculation of what is seen) told the NASA engineers that space dust accumulates on the moon at a rate of 1 inch per ten thousand years. They had taken this data into account when fitting the Eagle lander with large, round "snow-shoe" like feet. We all have seen the picture of Mr. Armstrong's foot print, but maybe we forget that his next statement referred to the firmness of the moons surface. The picture shows maybe a half inch of dust. The fact is, the science wasn't wrong, but the BELIEF

We have all most likely known someone born with 47 chromosomes. As loving and genuine as these people are, none of us would call Down Syndrome an evolutionary miracle. Mutations are always seen to detract from a species, never improve it. In addition to that, an intermediate type has never been found either living or in the fossil record.

I am not a scientist and I will quickly admit that there are many who know much more than I do. But the honest observation of design requires a designer. How else could a giraffe lean his

system of the scientist was!

It has long been put forward that the Bible is in conflict with science. Long before the world's leading intellectuals were in fear of falling off the edge of the earth, Isaiah recorded in chapter 40:22, that God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. True, the Bible is not a science book. True also, that the Bible is a BELIEF system requiring faith, but it clearly isn't blind faith. Believing God created the world is not the biggest step of faith people are taking today. It takes far more faith to BELIEVE that everything came from nothing. That life came from rock. That order came from disorder. That a prince came from a frog.

A scientist who observes the water color painting on your wall, seeing the various colors, identifying purposeful brush strokes, seeing a pattern in it's presentation, never concludes that billions and billions of years must have been required for the paper to form out of nothing, the paint to form out of nothing, and the paint to arrange itself in such a manner that it would represent something as specific as a fishing boat sailing out of the harbor. Instead, though he wasn't present when the painting was done, and may not know the one who did the work it is a simple conclusion to make that there is an artist. You don't have to be a medical professional to see the design of a human eyeball.

The fact is that evolution is a belief system. The god of evolution is TIME. This is why every few years a new study comes out increasing the time from the beginning of the universe. The effort is to use time to explain the complexity of the universe. But time doesn't help evolution it hurts it. From what we observe we see the universe winding down, as the second law of thermodynamics explains. We can observe earth's gravitational hold on the moon slowly weakening. We are losing our moon. However, if the universe were billions or even millions of years old Neil Armstrong drowning in dust would be the least of our worries. We would be drowned twice a day by horrible tides. Likewise, our sun is losing both mass and diameter. This is being measured. Millions of years ago the earth would have been uninhabitable with a much larger sun. Another observable fact is that there is still very high pressure in the oil and gas wells, pressure that would have dissipated over millions of years. Observation tells us that our universe is winding down not up.

Evolution stands on the claim that things are progressing upward. This too isn't proven out by observation. One of the most complex parts of living matter is the chromosome. One would think that man would be at the top of the chromosome list or at least near the top. Not true. We know man has 46 chromosomes. We also know a silk worm has 56 and a fern 480. Beyond that we can see that evolution of chromosomes isn't a benefit.

head down to a pool of water without the blood pressure in his head killing him. Evolution can not explain the many tiny valves in the giraffe's neck that stop blood flow for a moment while his head is down and then reacts by pumping the blood up to the brain when the head is raised again. How many giraffes had their head explode before they decided to evolve. The fact is, that anything less than a complete giraffe couldn't drink, couldn't procreate, couldn't live and couldn't evolve. The closer we look at this world of ours the more we will see this principle nearly everywhere we look.

I am not speaking for the "Intelligent Design" movement. I have never met or spoken with anyone who promotes it. I am not speaking for the Christian community or for any organization. This is what I believe. I believe there is design clearly evident in our universe. I believe the Bible tells me who that designer is. Is it faith? Yes. Most certainly. Is it a blind leap out into an unintellectual darkness? Absolutely not. God has shown His handiwork in the Creation. Everything from beauty for the sake of beauty to the emotions of anger or joy that we feel while reading this, that cannot be explained any other way. He has shown His handiwork in the images of my unborn babies sucking their thumbs. In the beating of my heart to my cognitive thought. And most importantly in the forgiveness I know in my life for all the junk I have done and the change that He alone has produced in me. In the corner of the painting is His signature.

If this makes me a "Bible thumping, born again, right wing fundamentalist, creationist", then I will proudly wear that badge. If by all that we simply mean that I believe in the God of the Bible, that I take Him at His Word and I am allowing Him to create in me the person He wants me to be. If this offends some folks I can't apologize for that. But I can sympathize, I am offended by all kinds of things as well. If you want, we can get together and go over them. That's part of life in this melting pot. Thankfully we still have the first Amendment that allows us all the freedom to speak our mind.

Everybody believes something. Everybody believes in some kind of god. Our belief systems shape the way we live and think in this life. The God of the Bible has passed the test. I am so thankful He got my attention and so thankful for the joy that comes from knowing Him as He intended me to do, through Jesus Christ, my Savior.

Please feel free to let me have it or to ask me more about my Jesus. After all, for the time being we still live in a free country.

For His greater glory,
Jonathan Hoard

3/9/2006: Kevin Gain

I can't believe there are Creationists around who still call themselves Creationists. I thought they all jumped ship to the new, improved, supposedly Supreme Court friendly version that they're calling Intelligent Design Theory, since their first laughable attempt at subverting rational thought failed so badly. Seldovia was scraping the bottom of the Fundamentalist Literalist Christian propaganda barrel when it wound up with this outdated version of religious fundamentalism.

Rather than address this ancient and completely debunked fundamentalist fantasy, I would like to concentrate on their newest idiotic attempt to force their religious beliefs on school children, as I'm sure they will get around to sending a new representative to Seldovia, probably during the third or fourth incarnation of this farcical nonsense.

This will take far longer than three hundred words but as no scientist or philosopher was allowed three days at the Church, I beg your indulgence.

Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake and Galileo died in prison for pointing out that the earth goes around the sun. Lucky for Darwin, by the time he rolled around, the Western World, unlike the Middle East where Fundamentalist Monotheisms developed, no longer allowed religious zealots to murder heretics. However, religious fundamentalists have a long history and copious experience in subverting the truth by whatever means available when it contradicts a literal interpretation of whichever book they believe in.

Intelligent design was invented at the Discovery Institute in Seattle - a right-wing Christian think-tank who's stated goal is to promote the teaching of Christian theology in public schools - after the 1986 Supreme Court ruling against a Louisiana law requiring the teaching of Creationism in public schools on the grounds that it violated the Establishment clause of the Constitution. "Intelligent Design" has nothing to do with science. They simply revamped creationism to try to sneak it by the Supreme Court. These Biblical Literalists have manufactured the "ID controversy" in the same way the "tobacco controversy" was manufactured by the tobacco companies. There is no controversy. ID is pure subterfuge.

Science, in a nutshell, is this: "The physical world is very complex, if we apply deductive reasoning to empirical evidence, we can understand how it works." The basic premise of ID is: "The world is very complex, therefore, (while we won't actually say Male Deity because we know how the Supreme Court feels about that) there is a Male Deity in the sky". Simply saying, "God did it" does not advance scientific understanding and has nothing to do with science and that is why the entire scientific community unequivocally dismisses it. Ideas of God belong to religion, not science.

There should be no conflict between religion and evolution, as science and religion deal with two very different kinds of truth. Although there is of necessity a conflict between Biblical literalist views of creation and modern science, the majority of Christians do not hold these views. Neither, do Buddhists, Hindus, Taoists, Jews, Muslims, Jains, Sikhs, Sufis etc... Faith in God does not require belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible, nor does it require belief in the Male Deity concept of God "Who" is beyond all concepts. You are also not required to shake in your boots when Christian preachers threaten you with Hell.

More than 10,000 Christian clergy in America have already signed The Clergy Letter which is a statement of support for evolution in particular and science in general and an acknowledgement that "evolution is a foundational scientific truth". The Vatican Observatory Director says that the ID movement "actually belittles God" and notes that "science and religion are totally separate human pursuits. Science is completely neutral with respect to theistic or atheistic implications which may be drawn from scientific results". The rest of the world gets it. Even the rest of the Christian world has gotten over it. The only people who feel threatened by evolution are the loud and well funded Born-Again, Fundamentalist, Literalist, Apocalyptic, Messianic, Right Wing, Holier than Thou, One True Religion, Gerry-Fallwellian, Evangelical, American Christians.

It is extremely unfortunate that the entire scientific community and most of the Christian community was dismissed so callously by the Seldovia Gazette reporter who seemed dazzled by what I can only conclude was her first introduction to this pseudo-science and its deceptive rhetoric and obviously to science it's self.

If you wish to understand science you must study science. As with Buddhism, which deals with entirely different subject matter, there are no shortcuts through blind belief. In *Kitzmiller v. Dover* (2004-05) it became clear that even a right-wing Christian Republican Bush appointed judge could see through the blatant misrepresentation of fundamentalist literalist religious belief that is "intelligent design theory". As can any rational person disinclined to believe in talking snakes.

Sincerely,
Kevin Gain



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