

Interview on Creationism and Science

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Recently we (and other creation organisations), have been approached by a Victorian University Student with the following questions, as part of a Thesis he has been authorised to research but the University. We are posting our responses on line so all know what we have said and so all can benefit.

OUR CRITICAL COMMENT RE QUESTIONNAIRE

The chief weakness with this questionnaire is that the recipient is asked to complete definitions and then later asked questions which show that potentially different, but never revealed, definitions of those same words are being used to evaluate the response. For example: questions asking for the reader's definitions of creationism and science, are followed later by a second question asking about conflict between creationism and science. The questionnaire author uses implicit definitions of both creationism and science which are unstated by the author. This is very poor technique.

1) How would you define creationism?

A. Creationism is an explanatory system based on the concept that the reality being explained did not self-originate and is made of one or more components that do not possess the property of self-organisation, or self-origination.

As such, the concept is easily assigned to such simple systems as an iced cake, the replacement knee joint, the far more sophisticated computerised heart pacemaker or a geo stationary satellite. It is self-evident that the originator of such a system is outside the system being explained, even though the mechanism for maintaining such a system may be configured into the system.

Such an explanatory system is widely accepted when man acts as the external source of origin (as per the cake or satellite) but widely and inconsistently unpopular when and object not made by man such as the origin of the moon as earth's satellite is under discussion.

All types of creationism are subsets of this.

2) What do you think constitutes science?

A. As any good history of science text will tell you, the answer depends on what century you ask the question in. The Christian Kepler and the deist Newton regarded science as "thinking God's thoughts after him". The non-theist Hume expounded his acceptance of the ancient Greek pagan idea that matter was a self organising entity, responsible for the development of the universe through time. Since words are defined by usage rather than by fiat Oxfordian declaration, the definition of science has ranged in meaning from its use in statements by the medieval scholars that Theology is the "queen of the sciences," where the word simply meant "knowledge", down to the present science teachers' definition which regards science as "explanations about aspects of nature without reference to God" (*The Science Teacher* USA, Nov 2003, Vol.70 No.8, p.34).

What is commonly conceived of as science refers to the method first recorded (but not devised) by Francis Bacon in his work on the flaws in English education in which the 1605 reader is informed that “there are two books laid before us to prevent us falling into error - first there is the holy Scriptures which reveal the will of God, then there is the creation which declares his power”. Bacon’s world view was obviously Bibliocentric concerning man and the origin and limits of his reason (Bacon, 1605, *On the Advancement of Learning*).

This world view continued to be the basis of thinking for many pioneers of science over the next two centuries. For example, James Clerk Maxwell, (1831-1879) of electromagnetic fame, was a practising Christian who used his apriori belief that the triune nature of the Creator Godhead was stamped on the creation in resolving his attempt to explain the nature of light. This gave rise to the very successful theorem of electromagnetic radiation based on the concept of trinity in unity.

The 1800’s brought the influence of the founding father of modern geology, Charles Lyell, whose aim was to “free the science from Moses” (Letter to G. Scrope, 1830) which opened the door for his chief disciple Charles Darwin to conclude the short time span for the history of earth declared by Moses in Genesis, was no longer to be considered a logical restraining factor on evolution over vast ages.

And of course there is always my good old science teacher colleague Charlie Waite, who stated to his students in frustration that there’s really only one useable definition: “Science is what scientists do!”

If one is to be faithful to the whole gamut of history in order to define science accurately, then science is that human activity by which an explanation of reality is sought which is logically consistent with the explainer’s apriori view of the world. Any data which does not fit with this apriori view is regarded as either irrelevant, or is put in the “too hard” basket until somebody can think of a way to make it logically consistent or make it disappear. Such a solution can range from mere logic to something more heuristic.

3) What determines what is and what is not science?

A. See definition above, with the political modifier that whoever holds the reins of power and authority in the world gets to inflict their definition or apriori view as THE defining paradigm in science, or any field for that matter, e.g. the recent forced resignation of Professor Michael Reiss from the Royal Society, UK – so a better question would be: **“Who (not what) determines what is and is not science?”**

4) How do you justify that Creation is a science?

A. If the author of the question means by “science”, that which is a naturalistic explanation (i.e. atheistic) – then no view of creationism could be acceptable as science, since it involves apriori views that are extra natural, supernatural or supranatural; theistic or deistic. On the other hand, Kepler and Newton would have had no problem with creation as science and neither do modern Christians involved in science, such as Professor A.E Wilder-Smith, Dr Gary Parker (whose evolutionist genetics textbook I used at the University of Queensland before he [or I] was a creationist), UK Chemist Dr Monty White, USA Biologist Dr David Menton, Australian Geologist Dr Andrew Snelling or published Chemistry Professor Dr Ed Neeland (University of British Columbia, Canada).

5) How do you go about maintaining and improving the scientific status of Creationism?

A. As with all conflicts, you analyse the reason for the problem and deal with the root cause. If the conflict is who controls the definition – you replace them; if it is lack of data – you collect it; if it is apparent inconsistencies – you do more research; if it is an apriori or worldview conflict – you must find the means to popularise one at the expense of the other.

6) What do you think about the legitimacy of science, and how does this compare to the legitimacy of Creationism?

A. See answer to Question 2

7) How do you go about gaining knowledge about the world?

A. If by “world”, you mean exclusively the physical and natural, then the observer obviously must start with the apriori assumptions that a) the world is real; b) man is both real and rational; and c) for every real and rational question there is a real and rational answer. These apriori assumptions are derived from apriori religious or philosophical views of the world and not from the accumulation of sense-based empirical data. In the case of Western science, they have an almost exclusively Judeo-Christian origin background. The historical bankruptcy of science in the Hindu or Aboriginal world is a case in point. Their view of the world does not include the necessary apriori positions concerning reality or the use of reality by man.

8) How does your knowledge about the world influence your interaction with the world?

A. If by “world”, you mean the physical behaviour of it – then like Kepler or Newton, you think God’s thoughts after him and notice that what goes up must come down, and you praise the Lord for the laws the Creator’s Sovereign will built into the creation. Such knowledge enables you to jump off a cliff, and mathematically predict where you will land. Alternatively, you can also discern how to land more slowly by making yourself a parachute, or even stay up there by finding a way to vertically exceed the downward rate of gravitational attraction e.g. with an aeroplane or space ship.

If you extend “world” to include the people that are in it then you must solve problems such as how did Creationists evolve? If you start with a naturalistic view, then you deem man just another animal, and your moral system flows naturalistically from this so that you have no problems with the concepts of abortion: since you kill spare cats you can cut up spare kids – the choice is pragmatic with no eternal consequence. You then also seek to explain away the fact that the majority of cultures have a Flood story of judgement.

Alternatively, if you start with a Bibliocentric God-given view of reality, then man is not just an animal – man was created in the image of God, and abortion is murder because the Creator has the right to make such a rule. Then you logically and consistently accept that the global accounts of a Flood are consistent with a world population descended from Noah and you proclaim God the creator who does act as Judge with eternal consequences.

9) How do you view the relationship between the Creationist world view and the scientific world view?

A. This question implies that the author accepts the current naturalistic or atheistic definition of science and is either innocently or willingly ignorant of the historical and transitory nature of any and all definitions of science. The question should really be – what is the reason for the conflict between an apriori revealed world view and an apriori naturalistic world view?

10) How do science and creationism make different claims about the legitimacy of the respective world views and of opposing world views?

A. See question 8 & 9 above.

11) What is the importance of science to the creationist world view?

A. What we basically call the scientific method was first recorded in a book on the nature of English education by Francis Bacon in 1605, which reports “There are two books laid before us to stop us falling into error – first there’s the scriptures, and then there’s the creation”. (Bacon, 1605, *On the Advancement of Learning*, quote rendered into modern English) Historically, what we call science is derived from a Judeo-Christian world view. The current naturalistic view of science is a parasitic one, derived from Judeo-Christian tenets on the nature of man’s reason and the existence of a universe which has consistent laws in nature (rather than diverse or polyverse). This universe concept (meaning one law) is what makes repeatable testing a logical activity. Most people involved in science either naively or dishonestly deny Judeo-Christian thought as the primary source of these apriori views.

12) What is the relationship between Creationism in Australia and Creationism in America?

A. The first creation groups in Australia were actually derived from the UK from the old Evolution Protest Movement which is now the Creation Science movement based in Portsmouth UK. Americans had little influence on any of us involved in Creation Research and our initiating role in Creationism in Australia. Whilst American creationists have definitely dominated the marketing side of Creation publications – this is a post-establishment phenomenon and not a causal one.

13) What is the relationship between different Creationist organisations in Australia?

A. The Evolution Protest Movement was replaced by Creation Science Education and Media Services, which morphed into Creation Science Foundation, which split into Creation Research and the Creation Science Foundation. CSF then became part of the Answers in Genesis organisation (USA), which has lately split into Creation Ministries International (Australia) and Answers in Genesis (USA), with Creation Research unrelated to either.

14) What specific components of the Australian context did help shape the development of Creationism in Australia?

A. God’s obviously got a good sense of humour!

B. The educational opportunity for the CSF in Queensland was very much related to the nature of the original education system in Australia, divided into public and private, where public education was basically protestant, and private education was mostly Catholic or Anglican. In Queensland, where there was a large input of free settlers with strong Christian commitment, this has undoubtedly had a direct influence, both in educational

curriculum, and in the attitudes of the ordinary person. When I was a geology student at UQ – one puzzling aspect of the course was that the head of Department (Dr A. Wilson) was also a lecturer in Old Testament. It was a long time before I discovered that even the word “Geology” was invented by the Bishop of Durham and that most of the first geologists were clergymen. The presence of a strong Lutheran, Joh Bjelke Petersen, as Premier at the time of the rising up of the Creation Science Foundation is a definite connection, along with the prior existence of many Christians in the Education department, who left open the options in the Biology curriculum re origins, and actively encouraged the fledgling movement, most of whom were teachers college or university lecturers contacted by myself to get the ball rolling.

John Mackay July 16 2009.

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