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**'Did the universe and life evolve, or
was it specially created in six days?'**



You be the judge ...

Introduction

In June, 2005, *Creation Ministries International–Australia*¹ accepted an invitation for a written ‘mini-debate’ with the Australian Skeptics on the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) weblog of Margo Kingston (a well-known left-wing Australian journalist). The topic was ‘Did the universe and life evolve, or was it specially created in six days?’.

This was an exciting opportunity to get the message out to many thousands of secular folk. To see feedback to our website from this debate, visit our feedback page² posted that same year.

The format included three essays each up to 1500 words:

Opening essay (posted on June 13, 2005)

Second essay of rebuttal and/or new material (June 16, 2005)

Final essay of rebuttal, summary, etc. (June 19, 2005)

All arguments were prepared unseen by the opposing side.

The debate generated unprecedented interest; normally a few dozen comments are posted on this popular secular media site in response to issues and articles, but hundreds and hundreds of people have posted reactions to this exchange.

The link to the site is <www.webdiary.smh.com.au/index.html>. Readers’ comments can also be found as follows: First Essays³, Second Essays⁴, Final Essays⁵.

1. Then known as *Answers in Genesis (Australia)*.

2. www.creationontheweb.com/content/view/2644

3. www.webdiary.smh.com.au/archives/phil_uebergang_comment/001149.html

4. www.webdiary.smh.com.au/archives/phil_uebergang_comment/001165.html

5. www.webdiary.smh.com.au/archives/phil_uebergang_comment/001177.html

Those Putting the Case for Creation

Creation Ministries International (CMI) is a non-denominational ministry which seeks to support the Christian church in upholding biblical authority, especially in the field of origins/Genesis. The CMI scientific team for the debate consisted of the following:

Dr Don Batten has a Ph.D. in Plant Physiology from the University of Sydney and has worked as a research scientist for 20 years. He has published peer-reviewed scientific papers in the secular literature, as well as in technical creationist journals. Don co-wrote and edited the best-selling *The Answers Book*. He currently works full-time for *Creation Ministries International*, in Brisbane, Australia, as a speaker, writer and consultant scientist.

Dr Jonathan Sarfati has a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand), and has published papers in secular science journals on high-temperature superconductors and selenium-containing ring and cage-shaped molecules. One of his books, *Refuting Evolution*, has over 450,000 in print. A former New Zealand national chess champion, he currently works full-time for *Creation Ministries International* in Brisbane, Australia, as a speaker, writer and consultant scientist.

Dr Tasman Walker has a B.Sc. (Hons.) majoring in Earth Science, a B.Eng. (Hons) and a Ph.D. in Engineering from the University of Queensland. He has an extensive background in planning, design and operation of power stations, as well as geological assessments of coalmines for new fuel supplies and operational monitoring. He currently works full-time for *Creation Ministries International* in Brisbane, Australia, as a speaker, writer and consultant geologist.

Dr Carl Wieland has degrees in Medicine and Surgery from Adelaide University. In 1978 he founded *Creation* magazine, which now has subscribers in over 140 countries. He has authored and co-authored many articles in creationist publications, and several books. A former medical practitioner, he has since 1987 worked fulltime for the ministry now known as *Creation Ministries International* in Brisbane, Australia, of which he is currently Managing Director.

Those Putting the Case for Evolution

The Australian Skeptics 'is a group that investigates the paranormal and pseudo-science from a responsible scientific viewpoint'. Many scientists are members or friends of the Skeptics, three of whom have shown particular enthusiasm to take part in this debate.

Dr Paul Willis is from ABC television. Dr Willis' ABC website biography states that he got into science as a kid and has never grown out of it. 'He found his first fossil when he was a six-year-old pom and has been hooked on Palaeontology ever since. Moving to Australia at the age of nine, Paul went on to study Geology and Zoology at Sydney University before completing a Ph.D. at the University of New South Wales studying fossil crocodiles. Paul has been with the ABC since 1997 as a cross media science broadcaster, regularly appearing on radio, TV and online.'

Dr Alex Ritchie was born in Scotland and studied Geology at Edinburgh University (1955-59), gaining his B.Sc. (Hons) in Geology. He also carried out research on early fossil fishes, for which he was awarded a Ph.D. in 1963. He lectured in Geology at Edinburgh University (1960-63) and Sheffield University (1963-67) before joining the Australian Museum in 1968 as its Curator of Fossils. Dr Ritchie was the Palaeontologist at the Australian Museum from 1968 until he retired in late 1995. On his retirement the Australian Museum Trust awarded him a Research Fellowship, an honorary position enabling him to continue active palaeontological research based at the Australian Museum, with full access to its facilities and resources.'

Dr Ken Smith is from the University of Queensland: 'I am an Honorary Research Consultant in the Department of Mathematics, The University of Queensland. Since retiring from full-time lecturing in January 1997 I have been working, also in an honorary capacity, in the Chaplaincy Services at The University of Queensland.'

Peter Bowditch writes: 'My job is to collate and edit the comments of these and other scientists. I am not a working scientist myself, (I am a computer consultant and my academic background is in psychology and epistemology). In my spare time I am Vice President of Australian Skeptics and I run a web site at ratbags.com which addresses the problem of uncritical thinking.'

For Creation: Opening Essay



1

Opening Essay by *Creation Ministries International*

Schools, universities, and the media assert that all life is the result of billions of years of evolution—i.e., no Creator was involved or necessary. Creationists who take Genesis as Jesus Christ did,¹ i.e. literal history, and claim the universe was created in six days² around 6,000 years ago,³ are derisively dismissed as being (at the very least) stupid, or unthinking, or blindly ignoring facts. But this doesn't stand up in the light of the many highly-qualified creationists awarded Ph.D.s⁴ and other science-based degrees from highly-regarded universities. Their views on the origin of life, age of the earth, etc., are usually dismissively (and often emotively) ridiculed *without* careful consideration. So we appreciate this opportunity to at least present a brief case.

1. www.creationontheweb.com/Jesus_age

2. www.dbts.edu/journals/2000/mccabe.pdf

3. www.creationontheweb.com/chronogenealogies

4. www.creationontheweb.com/bios

A very different starting point

The idea that science is just a bunch of facts that speak for themselves is not taken seriously anymore by modern philosophers of science. Facts always have to be interpreted within a framework (paradigm),⁵ which is built upon starting assumptions (unprovable beliefs). Because the past is not accessible to direct observation or experiment, historical science (e.g. paleontology) is severely limited compared to operational (experimental) science,⁶ which has given science its deserved reputation for public benefit in e.g. transport, communication, health, etc. Both creationists and evolutionists have the same facts (though unfortunately it is always possible for inconvenient ones to be ignored), but different assumptions.

Today's dominant paradigm is built upon the unstated assumption that any action by the miracle-working Creator God of the Bible must be excluded from even the definition of science, regardless of how the facts might fit⁷ (that would have been news to the creationist founders of modern science, like Newton). Modern historical geology was built on philosophical assumptions⁸ which excluded the biblical notion of a recent global watery catastrophe—by definition, rather than observation.

Aware of the impossibility of knowing the past with certainty without an eyewitness historical account (which is what the Bible claims to be), Bible-believing scientists start with an alternative set of beliefs. They would argue that, if you start from the assumption that our Creator really has spoken through His prophets (Hebrews 1:1; 2 Timothy 3:16), then what we see around us ought to fit with what the Bible says about how it all got here. And it does.

5. www.creationontheweb.com/content/view/2105

6. www.creationontheweb.com/naturalism

7. www.creationontheweb.com/lewontin

8. www.creationontheweb.com/hutton

Evidence for the Creator God of the Bible

1. Natural law

The *Laws of Thermodynamics* are the most fundamental laws of the physical sciences.

- 1st Law: The **total** amount of mass-energy in the universe is **constant**.
- 2nd Law: The amount of energy **available for work** is running out, or *entropy* is increasing to a maximum.

This means the universe cannot have existed forever, otherwise it would already have exhausted all usable energy. The 2nd Law implies that no natural process can increase the total available energy of (i.e. 'wind up') the universe. So it must have been 'wound up'; (high available energy) by a Creator 'outside' (and greater than) the universe.

2. Life itself

The evolutionary world view must explain the origin of first life,⁹ for evolution to even start. So materialists have faith that life began from non-living chemicals ('chemical evolution'), then try to find evidence for it. Yet observational science shows that life arises only from life (the law of biogenesis), with no known exception. Even the simplest life needs much elaborate machinery, including the ATPase electromotor,¹⁰ to use energy and make copies of itself. Since natural selection involves differential *reproduction*, it cannot be responsible for the first self-reproducing cell. There are vast hurdles for non-living chemicals to overcome to form life, because real chemistry works in the opposite direction. Interestingly, the world's leading atheistic philosopher, Antony Flew, abandoned atheism

9. www.creationontheweb.com/origin

10. www.creationontheweb.com/motor



2

Opening Essay by The Australian Skeptics

The question we have been asked to address here could have the simple answer of 'Yes', because the two options are not mutually exclusive. It is quite possible that the universe and life came to where they are today by a multi-billion-year process of evolution, following a six-day big bang, but taking this position leaves us nothing to talk about.

This debate then is really about the evidence for two of the many possible scenarios about the origin of what we see around us today. I will call these the Creationist view and the Scientific view. I will repeat that these are only two of many possibilities. Refuting one does not automatically make the other one correct, so what is required is to evaluate the evidence for both and to compare the bodies of evidence to see which more accurately describes reality and accords with what else is known about how the universe works.

Before going on to discuss these two worldviews, I would like to say what is necessary to turn a hypothesis into a scientific theory. Science requires that any assertion must meet three criteria:

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● *Testability* – This really means that the claims make predictions which can be tested for validity, either by direct experiment or by observation of regularities in what has happened in the past. ‘Observation’ can be indirect or by inference—nobody alive today has ever seen an electron or an ice sheet covering Europe, but the theories about both result in testable predictions.

● *Falsifiability* – It must be possible to imagine the sort of observation or experimental result which would result in the theory being shown to be false. It is possible, for example, to imagine that under certain circumstances an increase in pressure lowers the boiling point of water. That no such observation has been made does not of itself make the relevant physics theories correct or valid, but the recognition of the possibility allows the theories to be a part of science.

● *Corrigibility* – Science does not claim absolute truth or complete knowledge, and any theory accepted as being scientific must allow for correction and modification as knowledge is extended and new information becomes available. This allowance must go as far as abandoning a theory completely if subsequent research shows that the observations it was based on were illusory or that the methodology used to investigate it was flawed. Newton’s calculations about gravity are perfectly useful for everyday use, or even for navigating spacecraft to distant planets, but Einstein extended the theory to interactions between objects further towards the ends of the mass scale. Lord Kelvin’s work on thermodynamics has been refined over the years as better measuring equipment and calculating power has become available, but his theories about the age of the Earth (which he corrected himself over the years as better data became available) were discarded completely when radioactive decay was identified as the mechanism maintaining core temperature.

Creationism makes the following claims, among others:

● The universe and everything in it was created somewhere between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago.

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- The process of creation took place over six twenty-four-hour days.
- The sequence of creation was (Genesis 1):
 1. Pre-existing water
 2. Light and darkness
 3. Heaven as distinct from water
 4. Dry land and oceans
 5. Plant life
 6. The sun, moon and stars
 7. Fish, whales and birds
 8. Land animals
 9. Man and woman
- Except when the order of creation was (Genesis 2):
 1. The Earth and the heavens
 2. Man
 3. Plant life
 4. Animal life
 5. Woman
- There was a world-wide flood about 4,500 years ago.
- In this flood, all human, plant and animal life was destroyed except for eight people and the plants and animals which they had managed to load onto a boat and keep alive for just over a year.
- All humans on Earth today are descendants of those eight people.
- All animals and plants on Earth today are descended from the occupants of the boat.
- All geological formations seen today were laid down during the eight to ten months of the flood.

SKEPTICS vs CREATIONISTS

A FORMAL DEBATE

One often sees the might and power of the well-funded evolutionary establishment arrayed against the Bible—but rarely in a way that allows those scientists who support biblical creation to engage it fairly and openly. However, a series of web debates, with Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper as a host, enabled the two forces to go head to head in writing, with plenty of time to prepare between 'rounds'. Offered for the first time in this concise, easy-to-read volume is the entire debate as it appeared in its original form. See the 'best shots' from both sides, as the expert evolutionist scientific team mustered by the Australian Skeptics squares off with the scientists and writers from *Creation Ministries International*. Then—you be the judge.

