

Handling the creation debate with integrity

Paul Garner, Cheltenham Bible Festival 2007

The issue of creation is one of foundational significance to Christianity. However, if we're honest, it's not always handled well. Debates on the issue are often excessively polemical and generate "more heat than light".

As we think about how we should approach this debate, we need to realize that our heart attitude is important. *What* we say is only part of our witness for Christ – *how* we say it also speaks volumes. We should always seek to be courteous and respectful, even towards those with whom we strongly disagree.

How should this impact upon our relationship with evolutionists? There are several things to say:

- *Recognize that not all evolutionists are atheists.* Some Christians have adopted an evolutionary view. They may even have been "put off" believing in creation by the attitudes or ill-informed arguments of some creationists.
- *Listen carefully to what evolutionists say.* Respect their expertise, try to understand their point of view and make sure you represent it fairly to others.
- *Don't ridicule evolutionists.* This is a great temptation, especially for speakers and preachers, but it's extremely unhelpful. How will we reach unbelievers with the message of Christ if they know we mock them in this way?
- *Don't imply that evolutionists are frauds.* Most evolutionary scientists are personally honest and conscientious. They are consistently interpreting the data within their chosen scientific paradigm.
- *Show humility.* If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Don't try to bluff your way out of a tight spot.
- *Love your enemies.* It's tough – opposition to those who believe in creation can be fierce and unrelenting. However, our opponents may be paying more attention to our behaviour than our arguments.

What about the scientific issues? We should set the highest standards of truthfulness and honesty in our arguments. This means being willing to acknowledge all the evidence that bears upon an issue – not just the data that fits our preferred theory. We should be ready to admit that even creationist arguments from science can be wrong and we should avoid using doubtful arguments, such as "Evolution is just a theory", "Darwin recanted on his deathbed" and "No new species have ever been produced".

Above all, our ultimate aim should be to glorify God in all that we say, do and think.

Recommended web sites

The following web sites provide further information that may be helpful. Please note that we do not necessarily endorse everything on these sites.

Biblical Creation Society – UK based membership society

<http://www.biblicalcreation.org.uk/>

Creation Biology Study Group – the premier site for creationist biology

<http://www.bryancore.org/bsg/>

Geoscience Research Institute – useful resources on creationist geology

<http://www.grisda.org/>

Truth in Science – for those concerned with the promotion of balanced science education

<http://www.truthinscience.org.uk/site/>

Answers in Genesis – helpful list of “Arguments creationists should not use”

http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/faq/dont_use.asp

Recommended books

Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design*, Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1997. ISBN 1-883925-15-0.

Recommended for the scientific reader. Sympathetic treatment for those who might be skeptical of the creationist position.

Leonard Brand, *Beginnings: Are Science and Scripture Partners in the Search for Origins?* Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005. ISBN 0-8163-2144-2.

Recommended for the general reader. A good basic introduction to the creation-evolution question.

David J. Tyler, *The Guide: Creation – Chance or Design?* Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2003. ISBN 0-85234-544-5.

A helpful introduction to the biblical teaching on creation and its implications for everyday life. The last three chapters offer an introduction to the scientific arguments.

Kurt P. Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time: What the Bible Teaches and Science Confirms About Creation and the Age of the Universe*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 2002. ISBN 0-8054-2462-8.

A very thoughtful book offering a positive model of earth history based on Genesis 1-11. Fairly technical.

Kurt P. Wise and Sheila A. Richardson, *Something From Nothing: Understanding What You Believe About Creation and Why*, Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 2004. ISBN 0-8054-2779-1.

A more popular presentation of the material covered in Faith, Form and Time. Highly recommended for the general reader and especially students about to go to university.