The Rise, and Fall, of Young-Earth Creationism

Basic laws of nature had not changed over time

No causes other than those we can see operating now can be employed in explanations (actualism)

The intensity of these causes does not change over time (uniformitarianism)

Opposition from Scriptural Literalists

"Scriptural Geology"

Appearance of age arguments

Henry Gosse's Omphalos argument

Charles Lyell

"We cannot sufficiently depreciate the interference of a certain class of writers on this question ... While they denounce as heterodox the current opinions of geologists, with respect to the high antiquity of the earth and of certain class of organic beings, they do no scruple to promulgate theories concerning the creation and the deluge, derived from their own expositions of the sacred text, in which they endeavour to point out the accordance of the Mosaic history with phenomena which they have never studied, and to judge of which every page of their writings proves their consummate incompetence." (1827)

Adam Sedgwick

"[T]he goodly pile, gentlemen, which many of you have helped to rear, after years of labour, has been pulled down and reconstructed; but with such unskilful [sic] hands that its inscriptions are turned upside down; its sculptured figures have their heads to the ground, and their heels to the heavens; and the whole fabric, amid the fantastic ornaments by which it is degraded, has lost the beauty and the harmony of its old proportions."

1831

Adam Sedgwick

"I cannot conclude without expressing my detestation of the [Darwinian] theory, because of its unflinching materialism;—because it has deserted the inductive track, the only track that leads to physical truth;—because it utterly repudiates final causes, and thereby indicates a demoralized understanding on the part of its advocates"

Spectator (7 April 1860)
Adam Sedgwick

“I shall always protest against that degrading hypothesis which attributes to man an origin derived from the lower animals”

October 1868

Hugh Miller

“The follies of the present day are transcripts, unwittingly produced, and with of course a few variations, of follies which existed centuries ago; and it seems to be ... that scarce an explanation of geologic phenomena has been given by the anti-geologists of our own times, that was not anticipated by writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”

1845

George Douglas Campbell

Duke of Argyll

*Reign of Law (1867)*

› Both history and physical phenomena were planned and directed by a divine Mind using natural law.

› Transmutation could occur, natural selection was not the mechanism.

Charles Hodge

“What is Darwinism? It is Atheism. This does not mean, as before said, that Mr. Darwin himself and all who adopt his views are atheists; but it means that his theory is atheistic, that the exclusion of design from nature is ... tantamount to atheism.”

1874

Louis Agassiz

› Species were fixed, unchanging entities

› Speciation occurs after catastrophes (e.g. Biblical deluge, Ice Age)

› Large numbers of each species were created in their intended habitat

› The (instantaneous) Ice Age presented a last barrier between the “prophetic” species and modern fauna; there was no genetic connection between fossil and modern species

Essay on Classification

“We recognize intelligence in the construction of a machine because we know that it could not operate in the manner it does were it not the device of an intelligent artisan ... The animal kingdom especially has been constructed upon a plan which presupposes the existence of an intelligent being as its Author”

1859
Nature shows “not only thought, it shows also premeditation, power, wisdom, greatness, prescience, omniscience, providence. In one word, all these facts in their natural connection proclaim aloud the One God, whom man may know, adore and love; and Natural History must in good time become the analysis of the thoughts of the Creator of the Universe.”

Darwinists put philosophy before facts
- “Darwinism excludes nearly all the mass of acquired information, for it assimilates and takes exclusively that which could be useful to the Doctrine. It is not the facts that determine for the Darwinists the nature of their generalizations, it is the system that dictates the nature of their reality.”
- Variation has distinct limits
- Fossil record does not support Darwinian expectations
  - “I would have been a great fellow for evolution if it had not been for the breaks in the paleontological record”

Acceptance of naturalistic explanation (but no commitment to natural selection); Evolution as hypothesis rather than theory (Feb 1860)
- But useful versus the educationally powerful clergy
- Evolution a theory well supported by empirical evidence but still agnostic about selection (1880)

Natural Selection
- “environmentalist” (ARW) versus “competitive” (CD)
- Denial of ubiquitous power specifically with regard to human mind.

Sexual selection
- Denial of efficacy.

Evolution with special creation of particular organs or organisms.
Progressive creationism or theistic evolution?
By 1900
- Earth realized to be far older than 6000 years; the accepted estimate by Kelvin was 100,000,000 years.
- Global Flood realized not to be the cause of the fossil record.
- Strict Biblical literalism was eschewed by the majority of Christians.
- Prevalence of methodological naturalism in sciences.
- Acceptance of evolution coupled with lack of acceptance of natural selection

A Triumph for Evolution?
- "We might have supposed that evolution had proceeded far enough to have made extinct any species that objected to the teaching of evolution in the public schools." (James McKeen, 1922)
- "The fight for Evolution seemed so completely won even in the [1890’s] that I recall, as a college student, almost wishing I had been born a generation earlier when the scrap was on." (W.C. Curtis, 1956)

Areas of controversy
- Mechanism of evolution
- Relationship between science & religion
  - Mainstream argued that not only did evolution not threaten Christianity but that it actually positively reinforced traditional faith.
- Proper response to anti-evolutionism
- Use of evolution to further social movements (eugenics, socialism, secularism …)

Changing Cultures
- Emancipation of slaves
- Post–bellum transition from agriculture (rural) to industrial (urban)
- Economic depression of 1870’s
- Immigration of non-Nordic or non-Anglo people
- Organization of Workers
- Appeals of suffrage for Women
- US as major world power post–WWI
  - Further decline in rural America
**Fundamentalism**

- "A movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles" (Merriam–Webster)

- Protestant version developed out of Bible conferences beginning in 1876.

- Objected to:
  - Higher Criticism
  - Attempts to reconcile doctrine with secular knowledge
  - Acceptance of the scientific worldview

- Publication of *The Fundamentals* from 1909 (12 volumes; ~3 million copies)

**The Five Fundamentals**

Presbyterian General Assembly (1910)

- Virgin birth and divine nature
- Miracles of Christ
- Crucifixion and death for man’s sins
- Resurrection and eventual return
- Bible as directly inspired and inerrant [free from error] word of God.

**Evangelism**

- "Emphasizing salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority of Scripture, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual" (Merriam–Webster)

- Need for
  - individual spiritual rebirth
  - personal commitment to Christ

- Arose as less militant wing of Fundamentalism

- Today, Evangelicals are not all Fundamentalists (though their religious leaders – e.g. Southern Baptist Convention – may be).

**Humans and other living things have:**

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<th>Exist in their present form</th>
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<th>White Evangel</th>
<th>Black Evangel</th>
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Pew Research Center survey July 2006
"I would say that a modernist in government is an anarchist and a Bolshevik; in science he is an evolutionist; in business he is a Communist; in art a futurist; in music his name is jazz; and in religion an atheist and infidel."

Belief in “golden past,” the evils of technology, and a strong anti-intellectualism

Populist crusade lead by William Jennings Bryan (Democrat known as ’The Great Commoner’) from the early 1920’s

“All the ills from which America suffers can be traced back to the teachings of evolution. It would be better to destroy every book ever written, and save just the first three verses of Genesis”

“Read the Bible, It teaches you how to act. Read the hymn book. It contains the finest poetry ever written … there isn’t another book that is necessary for anyone to read, and therefore I am opposed to all libraries”

“No Adam, No Fall; No Fall, no atonement; No atonement, no Savior”

Self-taught geologist
Seventh-Day Adventist
The New Geology (1923)
- 6000 year old Earth
- Importance of Biblical flood
Supports failed anti-evolution legislation in Kentucky.

Subsequent attempts in Oklahoma & Florida (1923)

A “scientific soviet … [is] attempting to dictate what shall be taught in our schools and, in so doing, to mould the religion of the nation.”

is against “decency, patriotism and manliness” (Billy Sunday)

“robs a man of his dignity, marriage of its sanctity, government of its authority and the Church of her power and Christ of his glory” (Amzi Dixon, 1922)

If students believe in evolution “they go back to scoff at the religion of their parents. And the parents have a right to say that no teacher paid by their money shall rob their children of faith in God and send them back to their homes skeptical, infidels, or agnostics, or atheists.” (1925)
**Butler Act of 1925 (Tennessee)**

- Forbidden to teach “any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man as descended from a lower form of animal.”
- Signed into law by Gov. Austin Peay in March 21st who said that “no one believes that it is going to be an active statute.”
- Stayed on the books until 1967.

**Billy Sunday**

- Decried ‘the old bastard theory of evolution’ being forwarded by ‘that godforsaken gang of evolutionary cutthroats’
- “To Hell with modernists. Education today is chained to the devil’s throne. Teaching evolution. Teaching about prehistoric man. No such thing as prehistoric man. Prehistoric man! Prehistoric man!”

**Bryan at Dayton**

“They found a tooth in Nebraska, in a sand pit, took it to Osborn and he and some others make it into the missing link… The scientists would throw out the Bible on evidence that wouldn’t convict a habitual criminal of a misdemeanor in any court in Christendom.”

**“Nebraska Man”**

- Henry Fairfield Osborn declares a molar to be an extinct primate, *Hesperopithecus cookii* (1922)
- Why interest?
  - HFO in debate with Bryan over human evolution
  - Nationalism over the Piltdown fossil
  - Belief that humans could not have originated in Africa
- Osborn felt the reconstruction to be imaginative
- Osborn asked William King Gregory to study the specimen. WKG found it to be the tooth of an extinct peccary *Prosthennops* and said such in a paper published in 1927.
- Where are the creationists in this story?
Scott Huse

- “A tremendous amount of literature was built around this supposed missing link.” [134]
- “There is a lesson here for us concerning the reliability of so-called ‘expert testimony,’ which is so often used to manipulate and intimidate the average person.” [135]

Gish on “Nebraska Man”

- “Isn’t science wonderful. You get such a wholesale production of conjecture from such a trifling investment of facts.”

Bryan on the Civic Biology image

- Humankind was in “a little ring ... with lions and tigers and everything that is bad.”
- “No circle is reserved for man alone ... What shall we say of the intelligence, not to say the religion, of those ... who put a man with an immortal soul in the same circle with the wolf, the hyena, and the skunk?”

Rev. John Roach Straton

- “If man is a descendent of the beast instead of a child of God, then we need not be surprised if we find him inclined to live like a beast. Monkey men make monkey morals.” (1925)
If “Christians cannot teach the views of the majority in the schools supported by taxation, then a few people cannot teach at public expense their scientific interpretation that attacks every vital principle of Christianity”

(1924)

“Bryan and Tennessee are attacking the law of evolution – as if they thought that natural laws yielded to attacks … As for Tennessee – the law of evolution cannot be overthrown by the wisdom of a state where they burn men alive.” (William Pickens)

Tennessee (1925)
Mississippi (1926)
Arkansas (1928)

“Today the evolution controversy seems as remote as the Homeric Era”

1961

Sputnik (1957)
The Genesis Flood (1961)

- Henry Morris (Hydraulic engineer)
- John Whitcomb (Theologian)
- Resurrected Price’s “flood geology”

Evolution as a plot by ...

- "Secular Humanists"
- Socialists
- Freemasons
- United Nations
- League of Nations
- ACLU
- Satan

Henry Morris

“Evolution is at the foundation of Communism, fascism, Freudianism, social Darwinism, behaviorism, Kinseyism, materialism, atheism, and in the religious world, modernism and neo-orthodoxy. Jesus said, ‘A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit.’ In view of the bitter fruit yielded by the evolutionary system over the past hundred years, a closer look at the nature of the tree itself is well warranted today.”

Henry Morris on Louis Agassiz

“[T]hey were vigorous opponents of evolutionism, as were such great scientists as ... the geologist Louis Agassiz (1807–1873) ... and many others. All of these men were believers in God, Christ, the Bible, and creation, and yet they were each able to make contributions in science of unique importance and lasting influence.”

The History of Modern Creationism, p. 27

Was Agassiz a Young Earth Creationist?

- “I dread quite as much the exaggeration of religious fanaticism, borrowing fragments of science, imperfectly, or not at all, understood, and then making use of them to prescribe to scientific men what they are allowed to see or find in nature” (Letter to Adam Sedgwick, 1845).
- Lectures on “the absurdity” of Adam & Eve.
- Unitarianism
Creation Research Society (1963)

- 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.
- 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 been accomplished only as changes within the original created kinds.
- The Great Flood described in Genesis, commonly referred to as the Noachian Flood, was an historic event worldwide in its extent and effect.
- We are an organization of Christian men of science who accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The account of 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 only come through accepting Jesus Christ as our savior.

Foundation for Thought and Ethics

“The primary purpose [of FTE] is both religious and educational, which includes, but is not limited to, proclaiming, publishing, preaching, teaching, promoting, broadcasting, disseminating, and otherwise making known the Christian gospel and understanding of the Bible and the light it sheds on the academic and social issues of our day.”

(Articles of Incorporation, 1980)

Creation Social Science and Humanities Society (1977)

“We will endeavor to show that the only true and sure foundation of man’s knowledge of himself (psychology) – of his relationship with other men (sociology) – of his communications and creativity (literature and fine arts) – of his institutions of social order (administration of justice, economics, political science) – of his activities and their descriptions (history) – is the creation of man in God’s image as infallibly revealed in the Bible. All other attempts to account for man and vain and doomed to failure.”

Foundation for Thought and Ethics

... has been established to introduce Biblical perspective into the mainstream of America's humanistic society, confronting the secular thought of modern man with the truth of God's Word...

[O]ur first project is a rigorous scientific critique of the theory of prebiotic evolution. Next, we will develop a two-model high school biology textbook that will fairly and impartially give scientific evidences for creation side by side with evolution.

Submission to IRS, 1981

Charles Thaxton & Jon Buell (1983)

“Our commitment is to see the monopoly of naturalistic curriculum in the schools broken. Presently, school curriculum reflects a deep hostility to traditional Christian views and values and indoctrinates students to a mindset through subtle but persuasive arguments. This is not merely a war over ideas, but over young people and how their lives will be shaped. The current deplorable condition of our schools results in large part from denying the dignity of man created in God's image. Even junior high students recognize that if there is no creator, as textbooks teach, then there is no law giver to whom they must answer, and therefore no need of a moral lifestyle, much less a respect for the life of their fellow man. The message of the Foundation is that this is simply unacceptable.”

Institute for Creation Research

Established in 1970 as part of Christian Heritage College (San Diego)

Graduate school formed in 1981
Answers in Genesis

- Formed in 1980 in Australia
- Lead by Ken Ham
- Opened the Creation Museum (Kentucky, 2007)

EVOLUTION IS RELIGION

According to the U.S. Constitution, the teaching of evolution is not constitutional.

Formation of the American Civil Liberties Union

Constitution does not permit a state to require that teaching and learning must be tailored to the principles or prohibitions of any particular religious sect or doctrine. Therefore banning the teaching of a scientific theory is un-constitutional.

Epperson v. Arkansas (1968)

The 1957-58 Supreme Court that decided Epperson v. Arkansas is shown. Standing from left to right: Jules M. Osborne, Eugene E. White, Fred Witten, William J. Douglass, and William B. Massey. Seated from left to right: The Rev. Darrold Stover, Reverend W. White, and党组书记 Cordell.
"Equal Time" Legislation

- Tennessee (1973)
- Arkansas (1981)
  - McLean v. Arkansas
- Louisiana (1981)
  - Edward v. Aguillard

Bible Science Newsletter (1981)

A high school biology textbook is in the planning stages that will be sensitively written to "present both evolution and creation while limiting discussion to scientific data." Dr. Charles R. Thaxton is science advisor to the project and hopes to draw together an editorial board made up of both creationists and evolutionists.

The author selected is a teaching biologist with two McGraw-Hill books in print. A program of market research for this possible three year project is underway. For more information or help contact Dr. Thaxton at the Foundation for Thought and Ethics, P.O. Box 723, Richardson, TX 75080.

The False Dichotomy

**A**: X is intricate and well suited to a task T.

**A**: X may or may not be intricate or well-suited to a task T.

**W_1**: X is a product of "a supernatural intelligent creator"

**W_2**: X is a product of "random mechanistic processes"

Contemporary science claims that the likelihood of **W_2** given **A** exceeds that of **W_1**, i.e. \( P(A|W_2) \gg P(A|W_1) \).

Science is characterized as

- guided by natural law;
- explanatory by reference to natural law;
- testable against the empirical world;
- tentative; and
- falsifiable.

Michael Ruse

Science is characterized as

- guided by natural law;
- explanatory by reference to natural law;
- testable against the empirical world;
- tentative; and
- falsifiable.

(teachers are free to teach... any and all scientific theories [about the origin of humankind].)

William Brennan, 1987
Dissenting opinion

“The people of Louisiana, including those who are Christian fundamentalists, are quite entitled, as a secular matter, to have whatever scientific evidence there may be against evolution presented in their schools”

Antonin Scalia, 1987

The ICR Response

“The majority opinion leaves open at least two alternatives to indoctrination in evolution and censorship of scientific alternatives:

the right of teachers to teach ‘a variety of scientific theories’ and to bring Scopes-type lawsuits if punished or prohibited, and

the right of schools, school districts, and perhaps legislatures to encourage or require teaching of ‘all scientific theories . . . about origins’

‘In the meantime, school boards and teachers should be strongly encouraged at least to stress the scientific evidences and arguments against evolution in their classes (not just arguments against some proposed evolutionary mechanism [Darwinism], but against evolution per se), even if they don’t wish to recognize these as evidences and arguments for creation . . .’

Tenets of Scientific Creationism

1. The Universe was "supernaturally created by a transcendent personal Creator"
2. Life ‘did not develop by natural processes from inanimate systems but was specially and supernaturally created by the Creator.’
3. “Each of the major kinds of plants and animals was created functionally complete from the beginning and did not evolve from some other kind of organism.”
4. In particular humans ‘were specially created in fully human form from the start.’
5. “There are many scientific evidences for a relatively recent creation of the earth and the universe”

ICR Impact #85, 1980