

The Case for Teaching Creationism

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Guest Column

(This letter was sent to each member of the NM State Board of Education.)

Dear Member of the New Mexico Board of Education,

Motivated by a letter by Elizabeth Best that appeared in the Los Alamos Monitor on August 13, 1996, I would like to provide you some input on the issue of how I perceive the issue of biological origins should be handled in the New Mexico public schools. Let me provide a brief sketch of my background. I am presently a technical staff member in the Theoretical Division of Los Alamos National Laboratory, a position I have held since 1984. I have a Ph.D. in geophysics and space physics from UCLA. As to worldview, I would describe it as Christian, as opposed to atheist.

Because I have serious concern about how the origins issue is currently handled in the New Mexico public schools, I sincerely appreciate the willingness of the state Board of Education to hold open discussion on this topic. Let me begin by saying the principal focus of my concern is that mandating only the evolutionary perspective, as the current policy does, sends the message to atheist teachers, not just in science but in all subjects, that they have full legal authority and approval to indoctrinate their students without restraint in an atheist worldview. This attitude prevails on the part of several teachers in the Los Alamos schools, and I suspect it is common in schools throughout the state.

The behavior of these teachers, I believe, violates even a basic level of respect for the religious convictions of a large fraction of New Mexico citizens. Yet these teachers believe they have sanction for their actions in state education policy. But how can assault on religious belief by those paid from the public treasury be justified in view of a plain reading of the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution? The policy relating to biological origins indeed has ramifications profoundly more far reaching than biology. I believe it

is incumbent upon the members of the New Mexico Board of Education to take decisive action to eliminate one root of a seriously improper situation.

To me citizens with religious convictions in New Mexico ought to have genuine grievance with a dogmatic teaching of atheism in the public schools. The atheist worldview insists there are no standards of right or wrong. It says there is no ultimate purpose or meaning. It implies there is no basis for human responsibility. It undermines the very concept of government by law. Why should a worldview so hostile to the beliefs of a majority of New Mexico citizens and hostile to the principles on which our nation was founded be given such a privileged or even exclusive position in the public schools? Why should a worldview that gives license to criminal behavior, drug abuse, and anarchy be sanctioned by our state's taxpayers? This is a question that demands a clear answer. And it is an issue the State Board of Education has the authority to deal with.

My training is as a scientist, and as such I would like to comment on the intellectual underpinnings of the concept of evolution. It may come as a surprise to many that the scientific discoveries during the last 45 years in biology, especially in molecular biology, have provided one of the most difficult to refute evidences for God's reality the human race has ever faced. This evidence resides in the genetic language by which the minutest details of the structure and function of every organism on our planet are described and encoded. The genetic language is indeed a language in the truest sense. It consists of a (small) set of abstract symbols plus a set of grammatical rules. Its ability to describe in concise manner the structure, essentially at the atomic level, of every aspect of the material makeup of every organism that has ever lived staggers the mind.

But the meaning the language carries (as is the case of any language) resides in the abstract symbols, and this characteristic makes language a non-material phenomenon, a phenomenon that cannot be accounted for by the laws of physics and chemistry. By analogy to our human experience that human language originates in and flows from the human intellect, one is pressed to conclude the genetic language originates from outside the material realm from an Intellect that far transcends our own. The logic for this conclusion is simple and tight. I would challenge anyone to refute it. If a person has any doubts about God's reality, I humbly suggest this person consider the implications of the existence of the genetic language. Evolution, which assumes and then asserts that matter has within itself all the necessary ingredients for the emergence of life, is thus fundamentally flawed, because life's most essential ingredient, its coded instruction set, is non-material.

But there are many other serious intellectual difficulties with the concept of evolution (which, by the way, are not discussed in public school classrooms today because of present policy). These include the issue of biogenesis, that is, how a living, self-reproducing organism arises from non-living chemicals. Evolutionists, despite stories in the popular media to the contrary, do not have even a clue how this could occur. The reason is simple. The crucial ingredient, the coded instructions that provide the blueprint for an organism's structure and function, cannot be obtained by material processes. What we know as scientists from thermodynamics and information theory establishes this conclusion essentially beyond debate.

A second additional difficulty has to do with what the evolutionist offers up as the fundamental mechanism for macroevolution, that is, for the generation of new structures and function. In simple terms this issue has to do with how one gets feathers from scales or an airborne bat from a mouse. Darwinism, including neo-Darwinism, insists the answer is selection pressure acting on the natural variation in a species population over many generations -- in other words, protracted microevolution. But macroevolution requires dramatically more than protracted microevolution. Evolutionists are less than honest in not acknowledging that systematic simultaneous structural changes, and not merely random local changes, in the complex set of genetic instructions are needed. Insisting that protracted microevolution is able to work macroevolution miracles is nothing but an irrational leap of faith. Again the basic problem is that the genetic language is a non-material phenomenon whose source lies outside the realm of physics and chemistry.

A third intellectual difficulty involves the evolutionist claim that the fossil record represents indisputable support for evolution when just the opposite is actually true. What Stephen J. Gould of Harvard has termed "the trade secret of paleontology" is the fact that the transitional forms one would expect to find in the rock record, were evolution true, are systematically absent. Darwin himself recognized this grave difficulty and devoted a whole chapter in *The Origin of Species* to it. Darwin admitted the glaring lack of intermediate types in the fossil record to be "the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory." A modern day evolutionist, David Kitts, writing in the journal *Evolution*, observes, "Despite the bright promise that paleontology provides a means of 'seeing' evolution, it has provided some nasty difficulties for evolutionists, the most notorious of which is the presence of 'gaps' in the fossil record. Evolution requires intermediate forms between species, and paleontology does not provide them." Can a hypothesis be accorded scientific status if its chief claims are not supported by the observations?

A fourth similar problem has to do with the evolutionist interpretation of the geological record which steadfastly ignores the ubiquitous evidences for global catastrophism. Only in the last 10-15 years has the reality of global mass extinction events become widely known outside the paleontology community. Only in about the last 10 years have there been efforts to account for such global extinction in terms of high energy phenomena such as asteroid impacts. But the character of the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and most of the Cenozoic sedimentary formations themselves argues for catastrophic mechanisms with energies orders of magnitude beyond anything yet considered by evolutionists. Field evidence indicates high energy processes were responsible for most of these formations. The proposition that present day geological processes are representative of those which generated the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and most of the Cenozoic formations is absurdity from a geological standpoint. This renders evolutionary conclusions based on assumed gradualistic fossil successions untrustworthy at best.

The fifth additional intellectual problem with evolutionary claims concerns the extreme confidence level assigned to radiometric dating methods. Radiometric techniques are in stark conflict with most non-radiometric means for estimating geological time. One example of a non-radiometric method is the rate of soluble ion accumulation in the oceans. Concentrations of highly soluble species like sodium, which are far below saturation levels in ocean water, are readily measurable in the world's rivers. The simplistic procedure of dividing the present mass of sodium in the oceans by the current rate of sodium deposition yields an age for the oceans less than two percent of the radiometric age of the earth!

Similarly, the small extent of physical diffusion of radiogenic helium measured in highly radioactive zircon crystals in Precambrian granite from cores drilled at Fenton Hill near Los Alamos in the 1970's yields a dramatically shorter age than that obtained by radiometric methods. Similarly, the amazing state of preservation of bone protein in dinosaur bone from many locations in the world, including New Mexico's own *Seismosaurus*, likewise suggests profound conflict with radiometric techniques. These examples represent but a small sampling of a much longer list of methods that give much smaller estimates for geological time. An error in time scale by even one factor of ten makes the idea of large scale evolution untenable.

These intellectual difficulties with the proposition of biological evolution cannot be casually brushed aside. But the current rules in our educational institutions restrict free discussion and debate of these issues. But why should the evolutionist claims be immune from critique? My discussion of the problems

with evolution to be sure is but a brief summary, but resources are available that provide much more detail and documentation. I would be pleased to point you to these if you are interested.

In conclusion, I urge the State Board of Education to replace the present policy on the teaching of biological origins that mandates to a large degree an atheistic worldview in the public schools of New Mexico -- a policy that many parents and taxpayers consider to be intolerable from a moral and ethical standpoint and one that effectively shields evolutionist dogma from intellectual criticism -- with one that mandates a more balanced approach. I suggest that the new policy require that whenever the concept of biological evolution is presented, regardless of the course or subject context, the scientific problems associated with the concept be explicitly included in the discussion. I suggest a specific listing of the scientific difficulties with evolution, similar to those I have summarized in this letter, be explicitly included in the new policy. I also strongly urge that the new policy include wording which gives teachers a clear and incontestable mandate to include alternatives for origins other than evolution in their class activities. In my opinion the specifics of such alternatives do not need to be delineated in the policy. The crucial criterion for the new policy is that it end the exclusivistic and privileged place the atheist dogma of evolution is now granted in the New Mexico public schools. May God give you courage to do what is right in this matter that has such profound and far reaching consequences.

Respectfully,
John R. Baumgardner