



# Editorial

# Guilty as Charged

*The deadliest contagion is majority opinion.*

—Unknown

Members of the Creation Research Society readily recognize that neither their Biblical nor their scientific position represents a majority view—not even close to a majority view. Nonetheless, holding a popular opinion about anything should never be a quest for Christians. While not all majority-held ideas are wrong, Christ warned that many are clearly wrong (Matt 7:12–15).

The popular perspective today is that galaxies, stars, and planets naturally formed over the course of billions of years. On some of these planets (e.g., earth), life spontaneously arose and transformed to its present state of complexity and diversity. Apparently, many Christians assume the popularity of this view makes it true. Thus, they work to accommodate this non-creation perspective into some fabric of their Christian worldview (so-called). What they have failed to understand is that the Biblical teaching of creation could never be popular in a lost and fallen world.

Sadly, this accommodation extends to much of the widely read Christian literature as well. This, in turn, influences countless additional Christians to think they too should somehow accommodate this “truth by majority opinion” into their own Biblical understanding. Rarely, if ever, is the young-earth biblical creation (YEC) position mentioned, except in a derogatory manner.

On occasion, I (or the society) have been invited by a major Christian publication to submit a short article supporting the YEC position. It is almost as if somehow the occasional token invitation will balance the ledger sheet. But as rare as these invitations are, actual publication of any YEC article is even rarer—virtually nonexistent.

Below is one such article, which I submitted upon invitation by a popular Christian magazine. The article was never published, and no specific reason was provided. Subsequently, I was offered a similar invitation from a different publication with the same outcome. Since both these magazines have previously published several anti-YEC articles, it is rather revealing that they ultimately could not bring themselves to publish even one affirmative article. This is an unfortunate indication of how much evolution/anti-YEC has become entrenched in our secularized Christian culture.

The title of the following article is *Guilty as Charged*, and I still remain guilty.

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Moron! Idiot! Imbecile! These are some of the “printable” names I have been called. My crime? I am a young-earth creationist (YEC for short). As such, I am guilty of two unpardonable “sins”—rejecting the popularly-held view that evolution is the only valid and accurate scientific theory for life and not accept-

ing the earth’s age as some 4.5 billion years. In most scientific and theological circles, this makes me someone deserving of ridicule. In fact, in some so-called Christian intellectual circles, YECs are viewed as a type of illegitimate stepchild they are forced to tolerate. This tolerance is then viewed as both embarrassing and intellectually insulting, hindering the church’s ability to attract intellectuals or appeal to “educated” people of the twenty-first century.

So be it. I am not inclined to change my thinking, at least not until some of my questions and challenges are addressed far better than anyone has so far. Let me explain.

Admittedly, the dominant thinking in “scientific circles” is that all life originated by a process of evolution over a period of several hundred million years. Thus, many Christians simply take for granted this is the only scientifically valid explanation of life (and assume God somehow used this process). However, to discuss evolution first requires a clarification of what even is “evolution.” This is unfortunate, since as a scientific concept, evolution should be clearly defined and described. Instead, textbooks often merely give vague descriptions such as “change” or “change in gene frequency,” and evolutionists have typically maintained that virtually any biological change is an evolutionary change. However, mere changes can also fit succinctly within a YEC framework, so this “vanilla” definition of evolution fails to distinguish itself from creation.

More precisely, the theory of evolution proposes that all life on earth had a common origin and shares a common evolutionary ancestry, i.e., the “common descent” of life. In his *Origin of the Species*, Charles Darwin summarized this concept: “All animals and plants are descended from some one prototype.” In other words, we and oak trees share a common ancestor from which we both evolved. Through this process of common descent, evolution claims to account for the origin and diversity of all life. Thus, evolution is more correctly defined as “common descent,” and this becomes a key distinction between the evolutionists’ and creationists’ positions. Within this parameter, scientific and Biblical concepts should be considered, and many of the arguments for evolution should be challenged. Mere change does not necessarily give you common descent. It certainly does not give you humans evolving from non-humans. In fact, “common descent” requires specific types of biological change—changes that can account for the origin of specialized functions such as flight, vision, or cognition. It is these specific types of changes that evolutionists have failed to demonstrate (my public challenge continues for evolutionists to provide an adequate genetic mechanism for common descent).

Another critical aspect of this controversy is the manner by which much of the public (and many scientists) receives information. Sitting on my desk is a newspaper clipping with the headline, “New Ancestor to Humans Found; Bridges Evolutionary Gap.” What most of the public will not be told are all the assumptions and questionable conclusions often involved in such proclamations. A case in point: The 1970s saw the very loud proclamation that *Australopithecus afarensis* AL 288-1 (more popularly known as “Lucy”) was virtually the ‘perfect’ fossil link between humans and our prehuman ancestry. In other words, she was the so-called missing link.

Anyone disagreeing, especially those Bible-thumping YECs, was just simply too ignorant to tolerate. Not nearly as well known were the serious and persistent questions about Lucy’s reconstruction—questions so serious that some of her leading supporters finally concluded that her fossilized pelvis needed to be reshaped. Why? Its form would not have allowed Lucy to walk upright. Since the popular opinion was that she did walk upright, then there must be a problem with the shape of her pelvis. Perhaps it had been damaged. Thus, it needed to be cut and reshaped to make it more like a human pelvis. Do I exaggerate? Watch the October 11, 1994, episode of *Nova*, and hear the admission first hand.

Like a master magician, evolutionists constantly keep the public eye mesmerized with continual claims of new evidence, with little hint that last year’s evidence needs to be repackaged or discarded. This unending barrage of so-called new evidence creates the popular illusion that the scientific evidence for evolution is consistently mounting, ultimately making it overwhelming. In fact, in some evolutionist circles, the cry of “overwhelming evidence” has almost become a mantra.

However, my experience has been that when asked for specifics of this overwhelming evidence, evolutionists recite such examples as peppered moths, finch beaks, and antibiotic resistance. A quick check of most college biology textbooks also reveals this as typical evidence. This brings me back to the earlier discussion of how evolution is defined. The examples of moth coloration and shape and size of bird beaks actually represent transformations of physical features associated with environmental conditions. If these conditions revert back to their previous state, so do the animals’ characteristics. Such an oscillation hardly represents evidence of common descent. What is more, mutations that cause bacterial resistance to antibiotics do so by eliminating features, such as

regulatory proteins or transport systems. Elimination of such systems cannot be offered as evidence for common descent, since common descent requires the *creation* of new systems (not their elimination). In fact, these “evidences” are readily explained by creation, and they demonstrate the inherent design within life to adapt to ever changing environmental conditions.

Writing in the *National Review*, noted microbiologist Dr. James Shapiro remarked, “There are no detailed Darwinian accounts for the evolution of any fundamental biochemical or cellular system, only a variety of wishful speculations.” This is hardly a statement consistent with claims of “overwhelming evidence.”

Other Christians reject many of the tenants of evolution (for some of the reasons I have cited), yet accept the great ages (i.e., billions of years) commonly assigned to the earth. Part of this disagreement among “creationists” centers on the frequent claim of “overwhelming evidence” for an old earth. But what does it mean to say the earth is old? The earth is old compared to what? Indeed, the initial conclusion that the earth is old was derived simply from the perception that it “looked old”—mountains, canyons, rivers, and oceans must take far longer to form than a mere 6,000 years.

In the twentieth century, certain analytical methods (especially radiometric ones) were claimed to objectively demonstrate great ages for the earth. But are such analytical methods truly objective, and do such methods give unambiguous results? Another case in point: In 1972, a fossilized skull was discovered that has since been identified merely as KMN-ER 1470 (this is its museum designation; it was never favored with a special nickname such as Lucy or Java Man). The African lakebed where this discovery was made had previously been dated at 2.6 million years using several different (supposedly independent) techniques, including radiometric. (Interest-

ingly, initial radiometric dating of the lakebed had placed it at over 200 million years, but this age was rejected since the lakebed contained fossils “known” to be far younger.)

However, radiometric dating is expensive and tedious, so samples from local regions are generally not analyzed until there is a specific reason (e.g., a significant fossil discovery). In this case, though, a significant fossil discovery was made after a radiometric age of 2.6 million years had already been assigned to the lakebed. Using this preassigned age, the 1470 fossil was then given an estimated age of 2.9 million years.

The problem was that physical features of KMN-ER 1470 were far too modern to have evolved so long ago, and immediately the assigned age was challenged. Claims of sample contamination, poor method calibration, and inaccurate sample collection were made, and new dating analysis of the lakebed soon began. Ultimately, using certain fossils found in the lakebed as a guide, a new age of 1.8 millions years was given to KMN-ER 1470. This new age was far more palatable for evolutionists, and the controversy passed.

Ironically, though, this new date required rejecting ages given by the very same so-called independent and analytical methods that many insist are a key proof that the earth is “old.” Instead, fossils “trumped” the radiometric methods. These fossils, used to guide dating techniques, are known as “index fossils.” They served as the basic tool for dating geologic strata long before the establishment of any radiometric methods (this concept was originally suggested by William Smith in the late eighteenth century and subsequently used in the nineteenth century to help establish the geologic column). But it is very reasonable to ask how we know the ages of these index fossils? Where is the independent verification? Where was

the independent verification for the age assigned to KMN-ER 1470? The answer? Ages of index fossils were assigned based upon their alleged evolutionary history. Thus, paradoxically many people find themselves rejecting the main tenants of evolution, but still accepting their application in geologic dating.

So, when some creationists challenge the assumptions and conclusions of the various dating methods commonly employed by evolutionists, it is not merely because of their “religious” beliefs or scientific ignorance. You do not have to check your brain at the door to support a YEC position. Nor is YEC merely a contrivance of twentieth-century fundamentalists, as some suggest (apparently ignoring the writings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century geologists, such as George Young and William Rhind). There are serious (but often ignored) problems with the popular dating techniques. Attempts to date “young” samples with the uranium/lead technique or to date “old” samples with carbon-14 are known to give erroneous results. Yet, what criteria are used to establish a date for samples in order to know which method to use to establish a date for the samples? The circularity is unavoidable.

In addition, the ubiquity of carbon-14 provides evidence of an earth much younger than billions, or even millions of years. In less than one million years, radioactive decay will deplete every atom of carbon-14 from any fossil. Yet, a study by a group of creation scientists (presented at the 2003 Conference of the American Geophysical Union) reported that detectable levels of carbon-14 could still be found in a variety of samples taken from many different geologic periods. All of these samples are allegedly far older than one million years, including diamonds presumed to be over a billion years old. The results were both consistent and conclusive.

Detectable levels of carbon-14 were found in all samples—fossils, coal, and diamonds—regardless of their alleged age. Using the very same reasoning as evolutionary geologists, carbon-14 data provide clear evidence that these samples are all far less than a million years old.

Critics have yet to offer a significant response to this work. But ultimately I suspect they will reason the study must be flawed (even if they cannot determine how), because it is so well established that the earth is some 4.5 billion years of age. But, this brings us back to the initial question. How was an age of 4.5 billion years established, and why is this more scientifically acceptable than the earth being only a few thousands years of age?

As a final note, physicist, Dr. H. Lipson’s comments (*Physics Bulletin*, 1980) can serve as a warning in this controversy: “Evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it and many are prepared to ‘bend’ their observations to fit in with it.” I have briefly offered some examples of how observations are bent to fit an evolutionary paradigm and how this affects various scientific conclusions, including geologic dating.

I have not attempted to offer a final word on this topic and have not even dealt with any of the Biblical aspects, such as the recent statement by some Catholic bishops that we should not expect Scripture (esp. Genesis) to be either scientifically or historically accurate. But I do offer the challenge that we Christians should fully evaluate what we believe about origins and not merely parrot the popular opinions expressed in our textbook or a TV program. Instead, perhaps all of us can be brave enough to be guilty as charged.

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Editor

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