

Creationism claims for itself the status of scientific theory, although most observers would describe it as religious belief. For the sake of argument, let us take the creationist assertions seriously as scientific propositions and explore their credibility and the consequences of their adoption....

The "theory" for which creationists so fiercely seek equal time in the classroom makes two principal, testable assertions about nature. First, the creationists claim that the age of the Earth and the rest of the known universe is approximately 6,000 to 10,000 years, a figure derived not by measurement but by literal interpretation of the Genesis story in the Bible. And second, the creationists claim that the present forms of life (plus others now extinct) did not evolve over billions of years but were all created in one week, about 10,000 years ago.... Adoption of creationist "theory" requires, at a minimum, the abandonment of essentially all of modern astronomy, much of modern physics, and most of the earth sciences. Much more than evolutionary biology is at stake. (p. 55)

To a point slightly beyond the middle of the article, Hammond discusses the fact that the earth and universe seem to be full of evidences for great age and that these evidences appear to be consistent with each other. He then points out that, to date, the "scientific creationists" had done little or nothing toward producing consistent theories or models which might provide alternative explanations of these evidences for long periods of time. Hammond (and the second author, Lynn Margulis, a biologist) then employ the last 3 columns of the article to present a brief defense of the standard biological evolution. But note what a great advantage the authors gained for promoting their evolutionary view, because they were able to thoroughly fault the creationists for openly rejecting so much evidence for great age.

Without a doubt, a high percentage of the readers of Science 81 were not particularly eager to "climb on the evolutionary bandwagon." As many polls have shown, the American public has a tendency to be hesitant about accepting biological macroevolution. This hesitancy is also present among public school teachers, especially on the elementary level. But, with "proof in hand" of the young-earth creationists' great errors and inability to effectively defend their position on age, Science 81 and scores of other magazines and journals have had great success in breaking down the confidence which people--especially educational personnel--formerly had in creationism. And, as we examine the way in which other publications used this large "weak spot" in the creationist armor we will see how greatly this technique contributed to the phenomenal success which the anticreationism movement now enjoys.

In 1984 the most influential of all events in this conflict occurred. This was the publication and distribution of the booklet Science and Creationism, by the National Academy of Sciences, of Washington, D. C. The National Academy