

Forum

Creationism in denial

Philip Gold (Commentary, "Darwinism in denial" Aug. 23) and Jonathan Wells (Commentary, "Evolution for the masses" Sept. 23) claimed evolutionary scientists are in denial, but it is they and other creationists who refuse to face reality.

Although not fundamentalists of the kind Mr. Gold disparages as "Bible-thumping buffoons," Mr. Gold and Mr. Wells employ classic creationist tactics that grievously misinform the reader. These include trying to fool the public that intelligent design (ID) creationists are becoming a major force in science, their progress only hindered by conspiring Darwinists.

Mr. Wells said America is the most scientifically advanced nation, and that most Americans are creationists. But America is not the best-educated country, belief in creationism drops as education levels rise, most scientists reject creationism in favor of evolutionary science, and nearly all top scientists are nontheists.

While listing all pro-evolution scientists would fill a newspaper, ID creationists are as scarce as hen's teeth. They are being vigorously promoted by theistic groups (Mr. Gold mistakes media coverage of the resulting ID controversy as proof of its legitimacy), but their influence within science is nil.

Messrs. Gold and Wells fantasize that multitudes of scientists obstinately believe in "random materialism" because of some need to reject the supernatural in favor of the natural. Let's get real. Scientists are intelligent researchers who go

where careful observation and analysis lead them to. This practical, nondogmatic system for figuring out how things work has built the extraordinary high-tech world we live in. Science has not rejected creationism because scientists are nonbelievers, but because no one has produced compelling evidence that there is a creator. For the PBS series "Evolution" to have given equal weight to creationism would be as absurd as a program titled "The Mind" including the views of psychics, or an "Astronomy" series giving serious attention to astrologers.

Because science dominates modern times, creationists are looking for some shred of evidence that bolsters their dogmatic faith. All the planets orbiting the sun in perfect circles, and a Earth year precisely 360 days and exactly 12 lunar months long, would be evidence of meticulous craftwork. The real universe is so lacking in evidence for intelligent design that creationism has inevitably fallen into a sad state, one well illustrated by the work of Michael Behe that Mr. Gold and Mr. Wells so favor. Mr. Behe is reduced to trying to find evidence for the Creator in the supposedly "irreducibly complex" micromachinery of cells. When Mr. Behe cannot figure out how a complex system evolved he simply concludes

that some deity must have done it. Mr. Behe's methods are not science, they are faith-influenced pseudoscience. Many if not most Christian scientists, such as Brown University's Kenneth Miller, have concluded there is no biological or other scientific support for the existence of an intelligent designer — it's all a matter of faith.

As for Darwinian evolution being random as Mr. Gold claims, in 1859 Charles Darwin published the first comprehensive explanation of how evolution occurs via the nonrandom, nonintelligent process of natural selection. Back in the 1940s, Darwinian scientists warned that insects and microbes would rapidly evolve resistance to our toxins not because some supernatural intelligence is pulling their genetic strings but because natural selection favors those DNA codes that have the genetic alternations that allow them to survive and thrive. Alas, we did not listen to the evolutionary scientists, with dire results. Let's not make the same mistake at the beginning of the 21st century.

Because creationism is a myth of no practical use, major institutions are not churning out creationists for science and industry. Why hire someone who peers into microbes only to exclaim, "Darn, this is so complex that a supreme deity must be behind it"? Creationists must turn

to faith-based groups like the Discovery Institute that Mr. Gold belongs to because hard-nosed private investors won't waste their money on such supernaturalistic pseudoscientists. Only a few million dollars is invested in creationism per annum.

Around the world, universities graduate talented evolutionary scientists whose skills are in big demand. Superb evolutionists like

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Craig Venter and Francis Collins (a devout Catholic) head the human genome projects. Motorola is advertising its Digital DNA, software that literally evolves via genetic algorithms using Darwinian selective forces. Investments and profits involving evolutionary science amount to many billions. In Kansas the Republican governor allied with

science and industry to reinstate evolutionary science after creationists conspired to get them dropped from the school testing requirements.

It's ironic that the conservative movement that favors a free market, capitalist economic system that benefits so much from Darwinian evolutionary science is the key source of opposition to the same science. It's a stunning disconnect from modern reality, one driven by a mistaken notion that the Darwinian materialism leads to societal decay — this is why it's the Discovery Institute for the Renewal of Science and Culture.

The U.S.A. is the only developed democracy where absolute belief in a creator remains a majority opinion, and we suffer from markedly higher rates of homicide — including school shootings — incarceration, juvenile mortality and sexual disease transmission than the more secular democracies. Almost all Japanese and Scandinavians know that Darwinian evolution is true, few strongly believe in God, and they're doing quite well.

By no means should scientists adopt the religion of creationism. Instead it is time for the American people to catch up with the rest of our fast evolving modern world.

GREGORY S. PAUL
Baltimore, Md.

Mr. Paul is the "Author of Dinosaurs of the Air" (Johns Hopkins University Press, to be published next February), and is a member of Washington Area Secular Humanists.