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**COVER:** Recombinant DNA techniques allow biologists to determine how many copies of a gene are in a chromosome. The groups of black dots indicate where radioactive copies of a single gene matched these giant chromosomes. Researchers hope to extend understanding of the structure and arrangement of genes in higher organisms. See p. 216. (Photo: Michael Young, Stanford)

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# LETTERS

## Evolution/creationism: Responding to the response

The "competent biologist" statement presented in the SCIENCE NEWS article on evolution (SN: 2/5/77, p. 85) has been misinterpreted by its readers. Also, the readers' response to the evolution article (SN: 3/12/77, p. 163) is not representative of the typical SCIENCE NEWS subscriber.

The "competent biologist" statement did not intend to establish a norm for competency. It was merely a statement of fact. The "tree of life" assertion is the accepted theory, probably more widely accepted among biologists than is the Copenhagen (Born) interpretation of quantum mechanics among physicists. This, however, is not to say that the scientists have established a closed-minded, authoritarian dogma. No, it is merely understood that the "tree of life" is the most viable, current explanation of the evidence, at any time capable of being amended or superseded with a better theory.

On the other hand, in creationism, one either believes in the infinite power and inherent wisdom of God, the infallibility of scripture, and accepts the direct intervention of God as *a priori* and indisputable fact, or one is a heathen, defiling the authority of the Bible.

Barring a Lysenko-type political suppression of ideas, or at least a Goebbel type of indoctrination, the creationist viewpoint will not be generally accepted in scientific circles. Its stagnant nature, its incapacity to be questioned, its inability to be defended, other than by incurring biblical authority, is inimical to dynamic scientific investigation.

David L. Myers  
Atlanta, Ga.

I would certainly regard it as newsworthy if a scientist of any stature whatsoever in any biologically oriented field would identify himself as a "creationist." I'm certainly eager to hear any facts, or reasonable array of facts, tending to support any theory in this area.

I think it would be of great interest if you continued a poll, investigative reporting, or whatever, to elicit some information on the important socio-scientific issue of the violent antagonism to evolutionary thought.

I am a psychobiologist. I know of no biologist who supports an "antievolutionary" position. I would be happy to be relieved of my ignorance and would read with great interest any "creationist," or other papers, which would adhere to commonly accepted methods of scientific proof.

My word!

George von Hilsheimer, Ph.D., F.R.S.H.  
Senior Research Scientist  
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Madison, Va.

You would like to put this subject to rest, but since I didn't see my view represented in the summary of responses to the evolution vs. creationism article, I thought I might add a healing word.

I read both the Bible and SCIENCE NEWS

"religiously," if you will, and it seems to me both unnecessary and inappropriate to pit science against religion, or evolutionist against creationist. It is as if they were journeying in separate tunnels unaware that the light at the end is the same for both, viz., the truth.

I believe in One God, and in Jesus Christ. I believe in One Truth. I believe that the facts of evolution are undeniable. I believe that evolution is God's plan of creation. I arrived at this state of mind by inquiry, not by avoiding it.

It grieves me to see a word like *versus* being used to indicate the relationship between science and religion. Both disciplines, fractionated as they are within themselves, are groping toward the same light. Perhaps science and religion will never combine efforts, but for either to use talent and energy to stifle the other is at least wasteful and probably destructive.

Arlene Eke Sivanich  
Northfield, Minn.

By not printing a sample of the letters in response to "Scientists Answer the Creationists" you have deprived scientists of the opportunity to observe and to better understand the reasoning of the creationists. Once scientists understand why creationists believe as they do, they can make rational replies to their arguments. SCIENCE NEWS would do the science community a great service by printing the views of the creationists. I hope the debate does continue so that both sides can share their positions. A nontechnical publication such as SCIENCE NEWS is the ideal forum for such a debate. Perhaps a feature-length article outlining the foundations of both schools is in order.

Brian Fitzgerald  
Framingham, Mass.

I completely support the statement, and as a matter of fact, don't think it goes far enough. How anyone with a grasp of the techniques of science and what it has accomplished for the human race could in any way mix up the theory of evolution with the theory of creationism is beyond me. To think that there is some rationale for equating these two theories defies all the rules of logic.

The theory of creationism is based on a collection of tales by unknown authors written about unknown times and undocumented happenings from unspecific locales. The theory of evolution is based on observed facts which are documented in time, locale and surroundings. These observations are reproducible for all to see and evaluate.

J. Ralph Metz  
Cranston, R.I.

I have read the statement in THE HUMANIST and agree wholeheartedly with it. I also support your editorial comment in the letters column (SN: 3/12/77, p. 163) curtailing emotional as opposed to factual discussion.

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