

The Ultimate Standard

God's Word Versus Man's Arbitrary Opinion

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Sometimes critics of creation refer to the creation/evolution debate as “science vs. the Bible” or “reasoning versus faith.” By framing the debate in this way, perhaps they mean to imply that evolutionists use their minds and creationists do not. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, evolution is the anti-scientific view and is contrary to reason as shown here: Evolution: The anti-science.¹ If not science versus faith, what is the real heart of the controversy?

An Ultimate Standard

Both creationists and evolutionists are able to reason and do science. This is because we are all made in the image of God and live in God's universe. The difference is what we accept as our ultimate standard. When we give reasons for things we accept as true, we often appeal to a more authoritative standard for support. We believe P because of Q, and we accept Q because of R and so on. But ultimately, any chain of reasoning must end; it cannot go on forever because we can't know an infinite number of things. So, any chain of reasoning must terminate in an *ultimate standard*.

An ultimate standard is something that we hold to be unquestionable but cannot prove from anything more foundational (otherwise it wouldn't be ultimate). Since we have different ultimate commitments, creationists and evolutionists interpret the same evidence differently.²

Which Standard?

Biblical creationists accept the Bible as the ultimate standard. Evolutionists do not.³ Some evolutionists hold to the philosophy of naturalism as their ultimate standard. Others hold to rationalism; still others hold to empiricism. But what do all evolutionary philosophies have in common? They all reject the Bible as a standard. All evolutionary standards are man-made. They all assume that human beings are able to reason and gain knowledge without God—autonomous reasoning. So, the creation/evolution debate really comes down to God's Word versus man's autonomous reasoning.

But if man appeals to his own reasoning as his ultimate standard, how can he ever know if that standard is correct? At best he can say that it seems to account for all the things he knows; but what about the infinite number of things he does not know? In other words, there might be true things that are contrary to his standard that are as yet undiscovered. Although man can arbitrarily assume a standard of his own choosing, he could never have any reasonable confidence that his chosen standard is universally accurate. Clearly, only an omniscient being could possibly provide a standard of reasoning that is certain to be correct in all cases. Since any manmade standard lacks universal justification, it amounts to nothing more than an arbitrary opinion. So, the origins debate can really be summed up as: “God's Word versus man's arbitrary opinion.”

Faith: The Precondition for Reason

In reality, both creationists and evolutionists use logical reasoning. We both employ logical deduction more or less correctly. But the real issue is this: what do we accept as our standard for interpreting evidence? Ultimately, one either starts with God's Word or an arbitrary opinion. So, in reality, the evolutionists are the ones being unreasonable. They have simply dismissed the history recorded in the Bible and have decided to base their thinking on their own guesses rather than on God's knowledge. This is necessarily arbitrary—which is one form of irrationality.⁴

On the other hand, if we place our faith in the Bible, it makes sense that we should be able to think and reason, and gain knowledge. God has made our minds and has revealed some knowledge to us. Since God is sovereign over all truth (Colossians 2:3), there are universal standards of reasoning (laws of logic) that we can use to correct and improve our understanding of the universe. Without faith that God created us as He has said in His Word, there would be no reason to think that rationality is possible (see Atheism: An irrational

worldview⁵). So, upon careful reflection we will find that faith in the biblical God is actually necessary in order to have a rational worldview.

Reasoning from the Scriptures

Reasoning is one of God's gifts to humankind, and God expects us to use the mind He has given us in a way that is faithful to the Word He has given us. That is, we are to reason using God's Word as our ultimate starting point (Proverbs 1:7) and to reject mere speculations that contradict God's knowledge (2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Timothy 6:20).

Unfortunately, many people use their minds in a rebellious way: treating God's Word as a mere hypothesis to be evaluated according to their own arbitrary philosophy. Philosophies that use human guesses rather than God's Word as an ultimate starting point are prone to misinterpret evidence since the starting point is necessarily arbitrary.

We are *pro-reasoning*,⁶ and we start with the Bible as our standard because any other standard would be irrational. Only God can provide us with a necessarily correct universal standard for knowledge because only God has universal knowledge. Christians have faith that the Bible is what it claims to be: the authoritative Word of God. And because we have such faith, we have a reason for reasoning.

Footnotes

1. Lisle, J., 2008. Evolution: The anti-science. *Answers in Depth* 3:16–18.
2. Although evidence is important, it is our ultimate standard that tells us what to make of the evidence. For example, suppose that a naturalist witnessed something that was apparently a miraculous, supernatural act of God. Would he allow for the possibility that a genuine miracle had occurred? No, his ultimate standard will not allow him to consider that as even a possibility. He will simply assume that it was a natural phenomenon and that all the causal factors are not yet known.
3. This is true for all evolutionists—even those who profess the Christian faith. Those who dismiss parts of the Bible such as the Genesis account (or read it in an allegorical way) clearly do not accept the Bible as their ultimate standard. An ultimate standard would not be rejected or modified by a contingent standard.
4. A rational belief is one that has justification. We must have a reason for what we believe; otherwise, why not believe the opposite?
5. Lisle, J., 2007. Atheism: An irrational worldview. *Answers in Depth* 2:148–149.
6. Isaiah 1:18; Acts 17:2, 18:19.