The Evolution of Creation Science, Part 2: Beneficial Mutations

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Creation science (CS) is a discipline in which evidence is sought to support a literal interpretation of the opening chapters of Genesis. Its technical literature has existed since 1964, long enough to test for trends in positions on certain topics. Here, we present a study of CS literature from 1964 through 2015, focusing on trends regarding the topic of beneficial mutations. Acceptance of beneficial mutations was low among CS authors in the twentieth century but has risen sharply in the current century: the number of CS authors accepting beneficial mutations was approximately equal to the number of CS authors rejecting beneficial mutations in the period 2011–2015. The rise in acceptance is largely due to twenty-first-century creationist interpretations of transposons and similar phenomena as divinely programmed machinery for beneficial mutations that were allegedly loaded by God into the genomes of the originally created organisms.

According to the young-Earth creationist (YEC) worldview, the literal wording of the book of Genesis is an accurate record of past events. Proponents of the YEC view hold that the earth and all kinds of organisms were independently created about 6,000 years ago, as described by the literal wording of Genesis. Widespread popularity of the YEC view persists, despite the mountain of physical evidence that the earth is billions of years old and that all organisms evolved from a common ancestor, and despite abundant endorsement in the New Testament of a figurative rather than literal approach to Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch.

Creation science (CS) is a discipline in which practitioners seek extrabiblical support for the YEC view. In 1964, supporters of the YEC view launched Creation Research Society Quarterly, the earliest technical journal of CS. CS has since produced several such journals, a brief history of which we described in our first article in this series and which will not be repeated here. These journals are peer reviewed and only accept manuscripts that agree with a literal interpretation of Genesis. The YEC movement feeds information from CS journals into its popular, nontechnical publications, which refer to studies published in CS journals to lend the appearance of legitimacy from “science” to their claims.

The literature from CS technical journals has now become vast enough and sufficiently long lived to test for the presence of temporal trends in positions on various topics. In our previous article, we reported an investigation into such trends in the topics of vestigial structures (as mainstream scientists understand them) and biological degeneration (as CS practitioners understand it). Here, we report
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