



# MARK CARWARDINE

## WILD THOUGHTS

Evolution doesn't always get it right. The first debate of the Republican candidates for the 2008 US presidential election has just proved beyond all doubt that it throws some extraordinary and unlikely mutations into the gene pool – in this case the Republican candidates themselves.

During the debate, 3 out of 10 of the candidates declared that they do not believe in evolution. One, Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas, actually represents a state that has twice tried to ban evolution from its classrooms. It's scary that three men seeking to lead the USA openly reject scientific consensus on geology, physics, biology, palaeontology and astronomy, though perhaps not particularly surprising, given the 'anti-science' stance of the current President.

What's worse is that, according to recent opinion polls, nearly half of all Americans agree – a substantial proportion of them believing that the Earth is about 6,000 (not 4.5 billion) years old and that God created humans in one defining stroke.

They'll be delighted, no doubt, with the \$27 million Creation Museum that opened recently in Kentucky. The work of Answers in Genesis, a fundamentalist Christian group that believes the Bible is literally true, this creationist Disneyland has one specific aim: to persuade visitors that the Book of Genesis is scientifically defensible.

Armed with its slogan 'Prepare to Believe', it uses high-tech displays and 21st-century animatronics alongside pseudo-scientific explanations to 'prove' that God really did create the universe in six days. It even has a special-effects theatre, complete with vibrating seats, showing the Great Flood and how dinosaurs survived aboard Noah's Ark.

It's fine for people to believe whatever they want, of course. But it's utterly wrong to pretend that science supports such fairytale notions when clearly it doesn't. If this propaganda is allowed free reign, it'll soon be too much to ask for presidential candidates to represent the reality-based world instead of asserting that dinosaurs lived alongside Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.



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