

Summary of Joe Meert/Walt Brown Communications Concerning a Written Debate

For over twenty years Walt Brown has offered to engage in a written debate on the question, “*Does the Scientific Evidence Favor Creation or Evolution?*” The strictly scientific aspect of this debate has always been the central part of the offer. (To read the complete debate agreement, see: www.creationscience.com/onlinebook/FAQ418.html).

Joe Meert contacted Walt Brown in 1996 to accept the challenge. Soon after reading the copy of *In the Beginning* that Walt Brown sent him, Meert no longer wanted to debate just the scientific evidence. He now wanted to include religious discussions and the Bible, which was always contrary to the debate offer. Meert insists that an editor would decide if religious arguments could be part of the exchange, but according to the offer, the editor would decide *procedural* differences between debaters, not the actual debate *topic*.

Joe Meert falsely claims that Walt Brown refuses to debate him, but the truth is that Joe Meert refuses to participate in a strictly scientific debate.

The following segments from email and letters will give readers more details:

On Aug 26, 1996, Joe Meert wrote Walt Brown:

“I am a faculty member in Geology at Indiana State University. At the present time, I would be interested in the debate form at providing there is **NO THEOLOGY** discussed. The debate will be on the intrinsic merits of the **SCIENCE** and no discussion of creationism or the Bible should be allowed. Once the debate enters this realm it becomes a debate about theology **NOT** geology.” [Emphasis his.]

A courtesy copy of *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood* (6th Edition) was then sent to Joe Meert.

On Aug. 27, 1996, Joe Meert wrote:

“Yes, I am well qualified to enter a scientific debate **IF** there is science to be debated. I am not qualified to debate theological arguments that are based on faith alone. . . . You know, I would be more than happy to debate Walter on science if he was able to debate science. I found out very early on in life that you can’t debate theology and that is really what Walt wants.”

On Aug. 31, 1996, Joe Meert, after receiving the book, changed his position and wrote Walt Brown:

“I have one major problem with the format of the debate. You refuse to allow religious discussion and want to debate on purely scientific grounds.”

On Aug. 31, 1996, Walt Brown wrote Joe Meert:

“You contradict yourself. Either sign the debate agreement and propose any changes which the editor will rule on in a binding manner, or face the fact that you are unwilling to enter into a purely scientific debate on origins.”

Joe Meert then signed the debate agreement, but added the stipulation that the debate would include religious arguments and discussions. If Walt Brown did not agree, an editor would decide. Note that the debate agreement says an editor will resolve disagreements about procedures, not what the topic will be. Meert wished to change not procedures, but the topic itself from one dealing with scientific evidence to one that would include religion.

Meert wrote, “Your “Science” is based on a literal interpretation of the Bible and nothing more. In short: no Bible, no Genesis, no flood, no hydroplate theory. A debate about your science **MUST** include your

basic underlying assumption which is entirely biblical not scientific.”

Walt Brown’s debate offer has always been for a strictly scientific written debate on the evidence pertaining to origins. The following is from CSC’s web site:

“The debate must be restricted to science and avoid religion, a broader, more complex, and less structured discipline. My focus is on the scientific evidence relating to origins. Scientific methodology is better understood [than theology] by most people. Indeed methods for reaching religious conclusions are vast, subjective, and cultural. Religious disagreements—often emotional and unresolvable—have been with us for thousands of years. A purely scientific debate will be broad enough.”

In addition, if even a few pages of “religious discussions” were part of this written debate, it would never be allowed in the public schools. A strictly scientific exchange would be an exciting resource for public school teachers and students.

On Nov. 7, 2002, Joe Meert wrote Walt Brown:

“Are you willing to follow this?

[He then took three sentences from CSC’s web site and quoted them.]

“Evolutionists who disagree and wish to participate can propose alternatives. However, they must sign, as I will, that they will abide by the editor’s decisions resolving disagreements about debate procedures.”

On Nov. 21, 2000, Peggy (CSC) wrote Joe Meert:

“We received your letter this week. You still wish to include religion in the written debate, but Dr. Brown’s debate offer has always been for a strictly scientific written debate on the evidence pertaining to origins, with no religion. A simple reading of the written debate offer clearly states that, as I am sure you realize.

What you propose is not a change in debate procedures (which would be decided by an editor). You wish to change the debate topic itself from one dealing with no more and no less than the scientific evidence.

You are eager to broaden the debate topic to include religion and you may be able to find others to engage in such a discourse. However, that is not the issue that Walt Brown has challenged evolutionists to debate.

Yours,
Peggy
CSC

P.S. Walt was more succinct when I showed your letter to him. “Either Meert chooses not to read accurately, or he is unable to base his case on science alone, or he is so angry at the Bible that it is his target.” Walt also said, that if you want to debate religion, go elsewhere.

On Aug. 8, 2001, Peggy (CSC) wrote a person who was communicating with Joe Meert:

“We understand Joe Meert’s position and also understand your frustration.

Walt Brown’s debate proposal does include a provision for changing debate PROCEDURES, but what Joe Meert wishes to do is change the debate TOPIC to include discussions of religion. You are suggesting that all we need to do is find an independent editor and if that editor rejects Meert’s suggested change in the debate topic, the debate would then take place. Conversely, if the editor ruled religion in, then the debate would not be strictly on scientific matters.

Why would anyone enter a debate and allow a third party to later decide what the topic will be? On

the other hand, an impartial editor would be the best person to resolve any disagreement on rules, word lengths, time between submissions, format, number of submissions, etc. All of this is clearly laid out at our web site and in the book. Please reread either of those offers.

The topic Walt wishes to debate has always been, *“Does the scientific evidence support creation or evolution?”* (No religious views or writings permitted.) Joe Meert is not willing to debate that topic.

If Joe Meert wishes to debate the question and include religious discussions, he will need to find another opponent. Walt Brown will only debate if the exchange is limited to scientific evidence.

On 8/24/01 Joe Meert posted the following at his web site:

Fact

1. Walt Brown's challenge includes a provision for requesting a change in the rules.

Fact

2. Meert submitted the request for a slight change (2 pages) and agreed to have the request decided by an independent arbiter. He agreed to abide by that decision.

Fact

3. Walt Brown has both the request and my signed agreement and needs only to act on them.

Fact

4. Walt will never act on this debate because he does not really want debate. Debate spoils his party. The claim “No evolutionist will debate me” gives the outward appearance of ‘my arguments are so good no one can challenge them’. If that is removed, Walt does not look so good.

I've done everything Walt requested and I can't do anything more until he decides to have the issue heard by an independent editor. I have gone back and forth on this issue so many times on pages it gets boring. The agreement is signed and I agree to abide by the decision of an independent. If he/she says that 2 pages of biblical discussion is off limits, then so it shall be.

Cheers

Joe Meert

On Jan. 2, 2002, Peggy (CSC) wrote another third party who had seen Meert's above accusations:

“You have been misinformed. Joe Meert wants the debate to include religion. Dr. Brown's offer has for 21 years always been for a strictly *scientific* debate. Meert initially wrote us and insisted on a strictly scientific debate. We agreed and sent him a free copy of Dr. Brown's book. Meert then said the debate must include religion.

It is always best to hear both sides of a controversy before drawing an opinion. Let me suggest that you urge Joe Meert to enter into a strictly scientific debate with Dr. Brown.

In case of disagreements between the debaters, Walt Brown's debate proposal has a provision for changing debate PROCEDURES, but what Joe Meert wishes to do is change the debate TOPIC to include discussions of religion. Why would anyone enter a debate and allow a third party to later decide what the topic will be? On the other hand, an impartial editor is the best person to resolve any disagreement on rules, word lengths, time between submissions, format, number of submissions, etc. All of this is quite clearly laid out at our web site and in the book.

At our home page (www.creationscience.com), scroll down to the bottom of the home page or click on the bullet labeled “Written Debate.” There you will read

*The issue is: **Does the scientific evidence favor creation or evolution?** Dr. Brown's standing offer for a strictly scientific, written, and publishable debate is on page 321. Please read the entire passage and note that a few initially agreed to a strictly scientific debate, but later changed their*

minds, insisting they would only take part if the exchange included religion. One evolutionist [Joe Meert] is so upset that a written debate will not include religion that he now misleads by saying that Walt Brown has refused to debate him. (Correspondence in our files shows how he no longer wanted a strictly scientific debate after reading the 6th edition of this book.) Dr. Brown has consistently maintained his position for 21 years; the debate should be limited to scientific evidence.

If someone says, "Walt Brown has refused to debate," we suggest you ask to see that person's signed debate agreement. (Walt Brown has published his on pages 321-323.)

After reading that, go read the written debate offer at www.creationscience.com/onlinebook/FAQ418.html and compare it with what Joe Meert is saying.

If Joe Meert wishes to debate the question and include religious discussions, he will need to find another opponent. Walt Brown will only debate if the exchange is limited to scientific evidence.

The first draft of the debate agreement was a joint effort in 1982 by a world famous geologist, Dr. Robert S. Dietz, and Dr. Brown. (Dietz was one of the founders of the Plate Tectonic Theory.) Dr. Brown lectured on creation at Arizona State University where Dr. Dietz taught. During the lecture, Dr. Brown gave the written debate challenge to Dr. Dietz who was sitting on the front row along with an assistant editor and photographer from Arizona's main newspaper, *The Arizona Republic*. Although Dr. Dietz had earlier declined the offer when the University Activities Director took both men to lunch, Dietz accepted it there in the auditorium, perhaps to save face. Much applause followed. (The Activities Director had spent weeks trying to set up an oral debate, but could find no willing evolutionist.)

The next day *The Arizona Republic* had a major article about the written debate agreement. (See "Debate Recalls 'Monkey Trial'," 6 February 1982, page F1). One sentence in that article read, **"Each promised to present only scientific evidence for evolution or creation, and to avoid religious issues."** Over the next several weeks the two men communicated several times by phone and easily formulated the agreement without bickering or rancor. Months later, Dietz called Walt Brown and the assistant editor (who had agreed to be the debate's editor) and formally backed out. Dietz said he had tried writing his side of the debate but found he couldn't avoid religion. The editor (who was an evolutionist) went to Dietz's office and tried to get Dietz to stay in the debate. Dietz would not. Oddly enough, three years later, Dr. Brown moved from Chicago to Phoenix where he and Dietz had dozens of meetings and became friends. Dr. Dietz died several years ago.

Another false statement Meert is making is that Dr. Brown "claims he is not able to discuss theology." Not true. Although Dr. Brown is not trained as a theologian, he is certainly able to discuss theology. He simply insists that the written debate be restricted to science. One simple reason for requiring this is that the debate would be of great interest to students and teachers in public schools. However, if the least bit of religious discussion is included, public schools would reject the debate. Allowing religious wrangling would also reinforce the false impression many have that creationists are pushing religion, but evolutionists want to deal only with science. Yes, we all have our religious views, but let's leave that out of our public schools. The issue will eventually be resolved based on science, which is what evolutionists fear.

We get frequent letters such as yours. People are surprised to find that the creationist wants to debate the evidence while the evolutionist wants to argue religion. Many then examine the scientific case and are excited by what they discover. To the extent that Meert is helping people see this, we are very grateful. (Most people can quickly see through Meert's distortions.) Meert is also raising people's awareness of the importance in having a thorough, written, scientific debate on this important issue. For that, we appreciate your interest and his bluster."

Sincerely,

Peggy
CSC