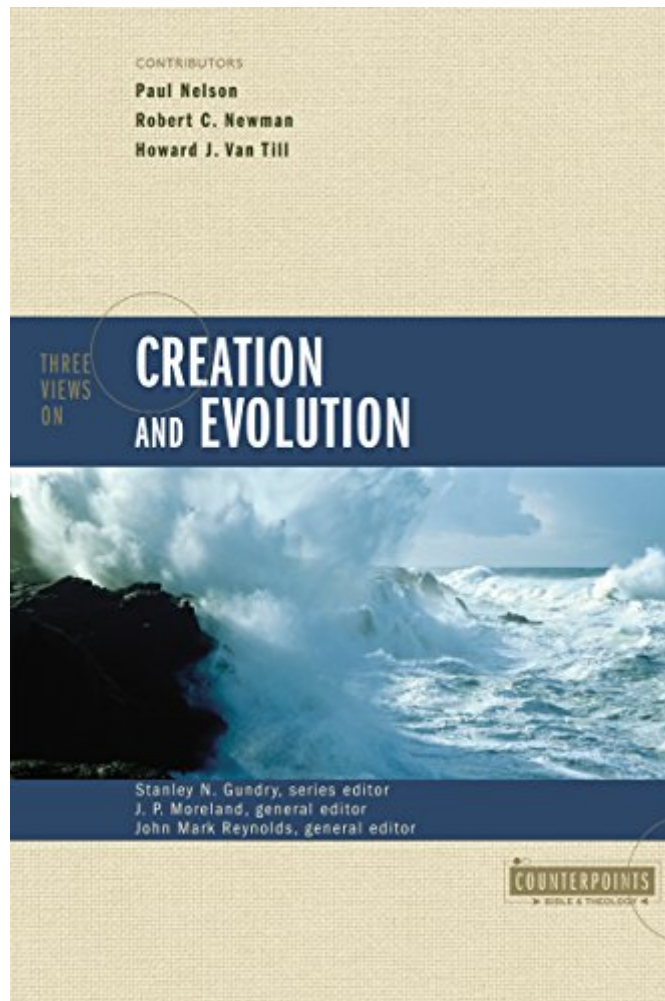


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Three Views On Creation And Evolution (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



Synopsis

For Christians, the issues raised by the different views on creation and evolution are challenging. Can a "young earth" be reconciled with a universe that appears to be billions of years old? Does scientific evidence point to a God who designed the universe and life in all its complexity? *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* deals with these and similar concerns as it looks at three dominant schools of Christian thought. Proponents of young earth creationism, old earth creationism, and theistic evolution each present their different views, tell why the controversy is important, and describe the interplay between their understandings of science and theology. Each view is critiqued by various scholars, and the entire discussion is summarized by Phillip E. Johnson and Richard H. Bube. The Counterpoints series provides a forum for comparison and critique of different views on issues important to Christians. Counterpoints books address two categories: Church Life and Bible and Theology. Complete your library with other books in the Counterpoints series.

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Customer Reviews

This book consists of essays by proponents of each of the three views (Young Earth Creationism,

Old Earth Creationism, and Theistic Evolution) and commentaries by practitioners of four disciplines: Biblical studies, theology, philosophy, and science. The entire discussion is concluded by summaries by Philip Johnson, an advocate of intelligent design, and Richard Bube, an advocate of theistic evolution. The result is only partially successful. I am particularly impressed with the essays by Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds (Young Earth Creationism) and Howard J. Van Till (Theistic Evolution). Both give lucid and reasoned presentations of their views. I was pleasantly surprised to see Nelson and Reynolds, neither of whom I have read before, forego some of the more common but already discredited scientific arguments for a young Earth. Van Till presents a well thought-out and challenging integration of science and theology. I am very disappointed by the commentaries, however. My first complaint is that the commentators sometimes seem unwilling to critique the essays primarily within their own expertises. For instance, John Jefferson Davis spends much of his space discussing the fossil record. On the one hand, none of the other commentators talk about this important piece of evidence. On the other hand, I wish the editors could have found someone other than a theologian to do this. My second, more serious complaint is that each of the four commentators speaks entirely from an Old Earth Creationist perspective. In fact, Walter Bradley (who is supposed to provide criticism from a scientific perspective) uses the space allotted for commentary on the Old Earth Creationist perspective to attack the positions later presented in the Theistic Evolution essay.

"Three Views on Creation and Evolution" provides an excellent and professional philosophical/theological discussion on Christian views relating to origins. Three major essays are presented, each by a different author or authors. Each essay provides a different perspective on how the Biblical account of origins relates to the mainstream scientific account (and, more generally, how Biblical interpretation and Christian theology relate to the scientific method). Each essay in turn is critiqued by four other scholars, to which the essay's author(s) are given opportunity to respond. Finally, two other scholars' essays conclude the book. Young-earth creationism (YEC) is presented by Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds. YEC is the classic literalistic approach to Genesis, in which adherence to the plain meaning of the Genesis text is the epistemological imperative, no matter what the divergence with mainstream science (and the divergence is radical). Thus it is strange that so little time is spent on Biblical interpretation in this essay. Science, too, is largely ignored (except for some surprisingly glib concessions that you might think would be quite damaging to YEC, such as "Natural science at the moment seems to overwhelmingly point to an old cosmos", p. 49). Instead, the presentation is largely philosophical - a tack I personally found quite

interesting, but unconvincing (offering "recent creationism is intellectually interesting", p. 50, as a major reason in support of YEC just doesn't cut it). This general approach - heavy on the philosophy and theology, while light on science and Biblical interpretation - is repeated throughout the book.

In "Three Views on Creation and Evolution," several Christian thinkers defend differing approaches to the integration of science and theology, particularly with regards to Genesis and God's method of creation. Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds support Young-Earth Creation, which argues that the account in Genesis should be taken literally and the 'days' actual twenty-four hour periods of creation six to ten thousand years ago. Robert Newman defends the Progressive Creation view, which contends that the universe and the earth are very old, and the 'days' referred to in Genesis are not to be taken as literal twenty-four hour periods, but rather as unspecified periods of time. Howard Van Til defends Theistic Evolution (or, Fully-Gifted Creation), whereby God created the universe with the capability to develop life. Additionally, a host of commentators, including J.P. Moreland, Philip Johnson, and Walter Bradley, offer responses to the individual essays or to the exchange as a whole. Unfortunately, while I view the topic as a worthwhile one, I simply felt that this book did not contain enough meat to be valuable. Most of the authors spend the time trying to show that their view is consistent with a solid Christian faith or that it is, for some theological or practical reason, preferable. However, this does not really resolve the debate. The authors should have spent more time analyzing the relevant Bible verses and, especially, discussing the scientific evidence. This book does establish that all of the views, including theistic evolution, are quite compatible with a Christian faith and worldview, but it does not really advance the issue much further. Moreover, the authors of each section are not given the chance to respond to their colleague's essays.

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