

Differing Views on Creation and the Origin of Man

Conservative Christians hold a range of views on the doctrine of Creation and the proper interpretation of the first 11 chapters of Genesis. However, all share the belief that God is responsible for the universe and life – and all acknowledge how valuable it is to engage in respectful dialogue on these issues rather than letting them divide us. At this time, three positions predominate: young earth creationism, old earth creationism, and evolutionary creationism. Overlying these views, many proponents hold that the scientific evidence is best explained by the presence of intelligent design. Here is a brief summary of each position:

1. Young earth creationism (YEC): YEC proponents argue for a literal, 6-day creation that occurred approximately 6000 years ago. They contend that the proper interpretation of Gen 1-3 requires this position. Death, disease, and predation entered the world through the Fall of Adam. For the most part, geological evidences of an ancient earth are attributed to the flood of Noah. YEC advocates find the astronomical evidences of an ancient universe (such as light from distant stars) much more difficult to explain. A variety of theories are offered, but the predominant one is still the mature creation view, otherwise known as the “appearance of age” hypothesis. The leading representative group today for the YEC position is the organization Answers in Genesis (<http://www.answersingenesis.org/>). Others who hold this view include Ken Ham, David Lisle, Thomas Howe, Todd Beall, Henry Morris, John C. Sanford, Danny Faulkner, Todd Wood, R.C. Sproul and Jud Davis.

2. Old earth creationism (OEC): Old earth creationism is sometimes called progressive creationism. OEC proponents argue that God created in successive stages over a period of millions or billions of years. In other words, OEC advocates accept the scientific evidence for an ancient universe (and the Big Bang theory), but they do not accept the predominant biological theory of origins, which of course is Darwinian evolution. OEC theorizes that God miraculously created Adam and Eve about 60 to 100 thousand years ago. The strongest objection YEC proponents have to OEC is its acceptance of animal death and disease prior to Adam’s fall. The leading representative group today for the OEC position is the organization Reasons to Believe (<http://www.reasons.org/>). Others who hold this view include John Lennox, Stephen Meyer, Hugh Ross, Bill Dembski, Lee Strobel, Norm Geisler, Matt Chandler, John Piper, Jonathan Wells, and Fuz Rana.

3. Evolutionary creationism (EC): Proponents of evolutionary creationism (also called “theistic evolution”) accept the current scientific theories both of the origin of the universe and of the human race. That is, EC accepts the Darwinian hypothesis that all life, including humans, descended from a common ancestor (generally understood to be a single-cell life form). EC advocates believe that God endued Creation with the principles and laws that caused the essential components of life to self-organize. Random mutation provided the immense variety we observe in the fossil record and in living things today, and natural selection determined which species survived and which went extinct. Generally, there continues to be an open discussion within the EC position over the best way to interpret Adam and Eve – some believe they were two *actual* people out of an initial group, and some think they are allegorical. The leading representative group today for the EC position is the BioLogos Foundation (<http://biologos.org/>). Others who hold this view include Alister McGrath, N.T. Wright, Tim Keller, John Ortberg, Francis Collins, Denis Alexander, Jennifer Wiseman, Ian Hutchinson, and Deborah Haarsma.

Intelligent design (ID): The Intelligent Design movement began as a group of scholars and scientists who were unconvinced by the Darwinian hypothesis and were disturbed by the philosophical naturalism that seems to underlie it. ID proponents argue that an objective examination of the scientific evidence alone (without appealing to the Genesis account) will lead an unbiased inquirer to the conclusion that design by an Intelligent Being (i.e., God) is the best explanation of the evidence. ID contends that arguing over the age of the earth distracts from the bigger adversary—Darwinism and the philosophical atheism underlying it. As a result, one can find both YEC and OEC proponents within the ID movement, and in fact a handful of ID advocates hold to certain non-Darwinian versions of evolution (Michael Behe, author of Darwin’s Black Box, is a prime example). The leading representative group today for the ID position is the Discovery Institute (<http://www.discovery.org/>).

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<http://betweenthetimes.com/index.php/2011/06/29/the-four-views-among-evangelicals-concerning-creation/>