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Further Reading

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- See also: Creation's Fate in the New Testament; Fall, The; Hebrew Bible; Judaism.

Creationism and Creation Science

Creationism is the belief in the supernatural origins of the universe. Although many different religious believers – with various mixtures of scientific explanation – could agree to such propositions about divine power and involvement in the natural world, the term has come to be associated exclusively with conservative Christian opposition to evolutionary theories of nature, based on the adequacy of the Bible to answer the mystery of creation. Strictly speaking, almost all thought (in the European world) about cosmic origins before the modern era was creationist in character. However, beginning in the seventeenth century, a number of scientifically oriented thinkers in Western Europe began systematic study of the operation of natural laws. These views proposed to reframe divine action in terms of, or even subordinated to, the workings of nature. As science grew in authority, by accumulating worldly reasons for natural facts and explaining previously mysterious phenomena, "creationism" came to refer to the position of resistance to such scientific explanations: creationists retained a caring, Providential picture of the world's operation, including its origins, while "scientific naturalists" posited that natural facts and forces were sufficient to understand nature.

Creation Science has a more specific meaning and a more recent history. By the 1960s, some creationists grew impatient with attempts to defy modern science. Instead of trying to object to science completely, creation scientists

proposed the development of an alternative science, leaving out the naturalistic assumptions and ignoring whole fields of Darwinian research. Creation science attempts to make creationism up to date and scientific through the search for natural facts that support the Providential and biblical picture of God's loving creation of the world.

For both creationism and creation science, the advent of Darwinism was a crucial turning point. Previous views of nature tacitly assumed that God carefully watched over the Earth's creatures with the special creation of individual species, generally in their present location. By contrast, Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species* (1859) proposed that divergent species develop through wholly natural mechanisms, specifically, by hereditary variation and struggle within their natural environment. While he did not himself openly criticize religious beliefs in the creative action of the divine, his theory of species development through natural selection had no place for such thought. Moreover, as Darwinism and other similarly secular scientific theories in the late nineteenth century rose in public authority and influence, many enthusiasts for science used the new knowledge as a weapon to attack religious belief. In this context, creationism was put on the defensive and grew avowedly anti-scientific and even anti-modernist, as it affiliated with traditionalist social values and conservative politics in the twentieth century.

While the labels "creationists" and "scientific naturalists" defined the polar extremes of this cultural divide, there were also larger numbers of people who occupied positions on the spectrum in between, with various religious Darwinist and progressive evolutionist positions that allowed for divine action in the world expressed through the natural means that science had come to understand. In public debates, however, creationists were eager to identify their position as the only truly religious stance, with any middle ground on the road to secularism and atheism. In the United States, the publication of a series of books called *The Fundamentals* in the 1910s institutionalized this traditionalist religious orientation, with biblical literalism as a theological centerpiece.

Despite the claims to be doctrinally steadfast through the ages, such fundamentalist-inspired creationism has been, ironically, a modernist phenomenon. The focused attention on the biblical creation account in open scorn of modern science has only emerged in the wake of these modern scientific propositions. From the creationist point of view, scientific inquiries are merely elaborate versions of vain human efforts to understand God's cosmic workings; better to keep loyal to a set of truths higher than those of any merely human inquiry. The divinely inspired Word of God enshrined in the Christian Bible provides a lens for viewing the facts of nature in their order, beauty, and blessed indications of divine care for humanity.

While creationists could agree on the truth of the Bible and the arrogant temptations of scientific claims, they disagreed on the ways they read the Word of God. There have been three main versions of creationism: the gap, the day-age, and the young Earth theories. With Genesis as a touchstone for Christian creationist explanations of origins, some have been content to accept large lapses of time in the history depicted within the first few verses of the Bible's opening chapter. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth," therefore, serves these creationists as an accurate record of origins, with the next verses describing events occurring ages later in time. This gap theory maintains biblical literalism, but leaves room for naturalistic explanations in the gaps of time not explicitly mentioned in the Bible. Other believers in biblical inerrancy strayed a little further from literalism: The day-age theory was the proposition that passages about days in the Bible corresponded to whole long ages of time. For example, the six days of creation therefore would not mean the activities of a literal line on a monthly calendar, but God's actions over eons, explained to humanity in the story form of a creator/father's work week. Both the day-age and the gap versions of creationism offered the potential to accommodate modern professional scientific insights into a biblical understanding of the world. This could not satisfy the most ardent of creationists. The Seventh-Day Adventists, a small American denomination founded in 1863 in the wake of early nineteenth-century millennialist expectations of Jesus' imminent return, championed a more radically literalist, anti-scientific creationism. In the early twentieth century, an Adventist preacher, George McCready Price, made the first modern attempts to systematize the argument for a young Earth. He called evolution absurd for its improbability and inaccessibility to empirical verification, and he proposed an alternative: special creation of unchanging species, and a worldwide flood – namely, the one described in the biblical story of Noah – that can explain the seeming antiquity of rocks and fossils. By the early twentieth century, however, Price represented a minority position, even among creationists. For example, during the Scopes Trial (1925), William Jennings Bryan used day-age ideas to prosecute John Scopes and to defend Tennessee's Butler Act, which prohibited the teaching of evolutionary theories of human origins. Creationists of all varieties remained publicly quiet until the 1960s. During this age of atomic power and ambitions for space travel, when there was unprecedented enthusiasm for progress through science and technology, the young-Earth creationists launched a counterattack.

Creation science, built on the young-Earth version of creationism, began to take shape with the publication of John Witcomb and Henry Morris' *The Genesis Flood* (1961). These ideas for a 6000-year-old Earth took institutional form with the founding of the Creation Research

Society in 1963, and they have been gaining popular support through the democratically compelling argument that creation science does not seek to defy professional science but just to gain equal time alongside it. Ironically this argument has gained unintended support from left-wing theories about the relativity of truth and the social construction of scientific knowledge. In this setting, science is just another ideology and creation science offers an alternative ideology. However, in a precedent-setting legal case about an Arkansas law mandating equal time for creation science with evolution science, the Supreme Court declared that creation science is not a science, but a religious position that has no place in public education. Ironically, some contemporary creationists have turned against creation science because in its eagerness to establish another parallel science, it has taken on too many of the trappings of science; for these creationists, the point is to witness the truth of their religious truths against the godless despair of modernist thinking distorted by the folly of Darwinism. These rumblings from within fundamentalism have not stopped the public progress of creation science.

In its open defiance of mainstream science, creation science has contributed to an inhibition in public education about the basic principles and facts of evolutionary theory in general, and also about the biological functions of ecological systems that support a healthy environment. This has added a religious edge to environmental policy discussions since creationist religious believers have tended to fear environmentally friendly policies because they associate them with paganism. When advocates of the ecological imagination call for biophilia and a humble turn from anthropocentric practices, creationists tend to see non-Christian nature worship and an erosion of moral standards. While most creationists are at least suspicious of environmentalism, there is a recent movement to regard environmental destruction not through scientific ecology, but through a theological argument about defending God's creation. This trend in conservative Christianity connects to its historic distaste for the dissolving forces of cosmopolitan corporate capitalism. Just as mass-culture markets can destroy traditional values, so too they can destroy the beauties of the Earth. Despite these developments, most creationists align politically with anti-environmentalism or with minimal efforts to curb humanity's ecological footprint.

Despite its legal setbacks and its scientific implausibility, creationism in the form of creation science continues to be broadly influential in the United States and in some other parts of the world because it strikes a responsive chord in many people for its ability to portray empirical reasons to believe in the personalized and comforting pictures of the creation that are set out in the Bible and conservative Christian theology. These positions are largely unresponsive to scientific critique, and they fuel

periodic political advances for creationism, most recently in the Kansas school system. In an age when many feel distrust and even fear of the growing power of science, but also enthusiasm for the technological fruits of scientific ways to shape our relation with nature, creationism and especially creation science are ways to keep the traditional faith and still lay claim to a kind of scientific authority.

Paul Jerome Croce

Further Reading

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- See also: Biophilia; Darwin, Charles; Science; Scopes Trial.

Creation's Fate in the New Testament

Nature has two dominant fates in New Testament books. It either passes away to be replaced by a new creation, or is transformed anew. In either case tension exists between nature's current state and its future form.

On the future Day of the Lord the heavens and Earth will disappear with a loud snap consumed by fire (2 Pet. 3:10–12). This annihilation of creation prepares the way for new creation to replace the old (Rev. 21:1, 4–5; cp. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). The new creation is to be an entirely spiritual existence (1 Cor. 15:42–50).

This view suggests a disregard for current nature – after all, it is going to be replaced or destroyed anyway. But there is a call for humanity to live transformed lives in the present creation as if it were a new creation (2 Pet. 3:11–14). The dissolution of nature was never intended, and there is a constant hope that the end of the world can be avoided. Nevertheless the dualism behind this view chooses to perfect the human spirit over nature.

The dominant New Testament view of nature's fate is its restoration alongside human restoration. Jesus' miracles

in nature – restoring overtaxed fish populations (Lk. 5:4–10, Jn. 21:1–11), increasing the Earth's fertility through multiplication of fish and bread (Matt. 14:13–21; 15:29–39; Mk. 6:30–44; 8:1–10), enhancing its nourishment by changing water into wine (Jn. 2:1–11), or reestablishing supporting relations between species (fish provide the coin to pay state tax, Matt. 17:24–27) – restore nature's fertility. Those parts of nature resisting Jesus' call of fertility, like the withered fig tree, are removed (Matt. 21:18–22; Mk. 11:12–14, 20–26).

Jesus' miracles in nature reveal nature's divine character previously hidden, thus reestablishing nature's abundant fertility by which it expresses divine creation. The incarnation of God in human form is more than the creator's passion for creation, it argues for God's embeddedness in it. Water is no longer just water and bread is no longer just bread but they are aspects of the divine (Jn. 4:10–14, 6:51).

The agricultural setting of Jesus' parables is more than a reminder of his rural upbringing. The thorns, thistles, frustrated sowing and harvest also recall the cursed farmer and ground of Genesis' Adam and Cain (Gen. 3:17–18; 4:11–12). Jesus' words reinvigorate the farmer and fertilize the land, reversing Adam's curse, if both are receptive to his message (Matt. 13:8, 23, 30 and Mk. 4:8, 26–32). Farmers hesitant to plow – unwilling to trust God's reestablished commitment to man and soil – are not ready for the Kingdom (Lk. 9:62).

Numerous images of husbandry – chasing down lost animals (Matt. 18:12, Lk. 15:4), cultivating (Lk. 13:8), grafting (Rom. 11: 17–19), harvesting (Matt. 9:37; Jn. 4:35), plowing (Lk. 9:62; 1 Cor. 9:10), pruning (Jn. 15:2), reaping (Rom. 1:13; Rev. 14:14–16), sowing seed (Matt. 13:3; Jn. 4:36–37), shepherding (Matt. 25:32; 26:31; Jn. 10:2), threshing (Matt. 3:12) and watering (1 Cor. 3:6–8) – argue for human integration into nature. Human alienation from nature is over.

The fate of nature in Revelation includes its replacement (21:1–5). But there also are stronger images of nature's lengthy transformation process alongside God's purification of humanity. The scroll of history, a literal bridge of material continuity, stretches from the writer's day into the future. Nature is not only increasingly renewed in Revelation but it is also enlisted as Christ's ally in the fight against human evil (Rev. 12:16). Nature is to assist in bringing humanity to repentance (Rev. 16), and to end evil's rule. Birds pick clean the bones of the wicked, the Earth swallows the Devil, and Satan as well as the wicked are locked up and burn forever in terrestrial lakes of fire (Rev. 19:17–21; 20:3; and 21:8).

Restored creation so appeals to God that God descends down to wed creation. God's place is with creation (Rev. 21:3; 22:1–2). The vision of the end times in Revelation returns full circle back to the creation images of Genesis. The Creator, who vivified nature with his water and