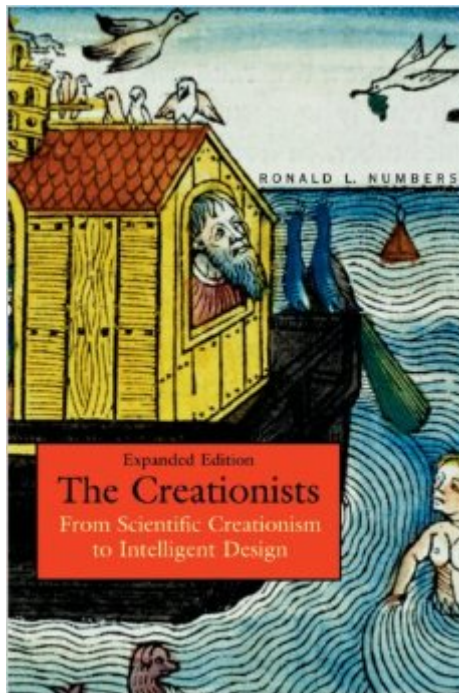


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The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism To Intelligent Design, Expanded Edition



Synopsis

In light of the embattled status of evolutionary theory, particularly as "intelligent design" makes headway against Darwinism in the schools and in the courts, this now classic account of the roots of creationism assumes new relevance. Expanded and updated to account for the appeal of intelligent design and the global spread of creationism, *The Creationists* offers a thorough, clear, and balanced overview of the arguments and figures at the heart of the debate. Praised by both creationists and evolutionists for its comprehensiveness, the book meticulously traces the dramatic shift among Christian fundamentalists from acceptance of the earth's antiquity to the insistence of present-day scientific creationists that most fossils date back to Noah's flood and its aftermath. Focusing especially on the rise of this "flood geology," Ronald L. Numbers chronicles the remarkable resurgence of antievolutionism since the 1960s, as well as the creationist movement's tangled religious roots in the theologies of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Adventists, among others. His book offers valuable insight into the origins of various "creation science" think tanks and the people behind them. It also goes a long way toward explaining how creationism, until recently viewed as a "peculiarly American" phenomenon, has quietly but dynamically spread internationally--and found its expression outside Christianity in Judaism and Islam.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an astonishingly evenhanded, objective history of the scientific creationist movement. As Numbers points out, this is one of those areas where it seems very difficult to carry on a rational

discussion. Despite how many fundamentalist creationists and humanists view the controversies over creation and evolution, the issue is not either a simple religion vs. humanism or religion vs. science struggle. As the author points out, "Rather than finding clerics arrayed in simple opposition to scientists, we discover conflicts of a different sort: psychological, as creationists struggled to reconcile the apparently conflicting claims of science and Scripture; and social, as they quarreled with one another over competing scientific and biblical interpretations or contested the boundaries of science and religion with evolutionists in courthouses, legislative halls, and school-board rooms." (p. 10) And, despite the ad hominem arguments employed by some earlier customer reviews, that is what Numbers deals with in an objective, historical fashion. He seldom betrays his own sympathies, and has received compliments from eminent creationists as well as historians and scientists. It is eminently clear that the creationists have never been able to agree on their interpretations of the first creation story in Genesis. These disagreements between the young earth and old earth creationists are delineated in great detail. From my point of view, I should also point out that they do not agree with competent biblical scholars, either, who will place Genesis in the cultural context of the ancient Middle East. The first creation story in Genesis is fairly obviously a religious counterstatement to other ancient myths, not a scientific treatise.

Originally published in 1992, this superb history of the evolution of creationism, mostly in the United States, by University of Wisconsin-Madison professor Ronald L. Numbers fills a major gap in the literature on the subject. The landscape of the evolution/creationism debate is filled with polemical works attacking evolution and advancing the cause of creationism/intelligent design, or vice versa, but there are few serious, sophisticated, and dispassionate histories of the debate. "The Creationists" is the gold standard if one is seeking to understand the history of the interplay between competing world views--evolutionary biology versus Judeo/Christian understandings of human origins--rather than learn arguments for the polemical battles currently taking place. While complete objectivity is beyond the capability of anyone, Numbers seeks to tell the story of this debate impartially as possible. To a very great degree he succeeds, and we all benefit. In "The Creationists" Numbers pulls back the curtain beyond the high-profile Scopes Trial of 1925 and the recent textbook battles to focus on a less well-known but a remarkably interesting and complex story of how those firmly believing in the inerrancy of the Bible sought to deal with Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory. There is an extraordinary cast of characters in this effort ranging from George Frederick Wright, who published "Man and the Glacial Period" in 1892, to Wendell R. Bird who developed a political strategy to demand the teaching of creationism alongside evolution in the

public schools in the 1970s. These divergent characters, the organizations they created, and the religious traditions they represented all competed amongst themselves on how best to counteract the effects of evolution.

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