

Review of “Creationism”

Religion Compass

Minor Revision ✓

This is an excellent article, easily accessible, comprehensive, very insightful. It gives both the historical sweep, and the conceptual issues. Especially good is the way the author frames this in terms of biblical authority in the modern world, rather than in terms of religion versus science. The works cited include the most important materials that readers who want more should look at. Very well done, exactly fits the bill for Religion Compass. I have 3 minor suggestions for short additions, and a couple of proofreading comments.

1. Early on, on page 3, the author mentions Darwin's mechanism of natural selection, and how it repudiates doctrines of providence. I suspect that most readers will know either too little or too much about Darwin to be in a position to boil his theory down to the basics. A sentence or two here about the basics would help, especially in conceptualizing exactly what the challenges to traditional religion are. One way to set this up is Darwin's 4 basic principles: heredity, variation, overproduction, and natural selection. Most students associate Darwinism exclusively with the 4th ("survival of the fittest"), but the theological issues circle largely around the third (variation is the product of chance). (As an aside, while Riley is the first Fundamentalist leader to link organic evolution and Higher Criticism [p. 4], Charles Hodge does it in 1874 [fingering Strauss].)

2. The author mentions that Creation Science makes use of a 19th century definition of scientific method (p. 9). It would be helpful at some point to contrast this with a more contemporary account of what science is (and this author is a master of summing up in a sentence or two complex matters quite accurately).

3. On p. 14 the author mentions that ID has been rejected recently in the courts. A few sentences about the Dover decision would be a helpful addition. The judge in that case asked very probing questions that elicited a very helpful lay-person account of what science is, and it is in this context Dembski/Behe had to admit in court that ID had produced no research agenda. If this were set up with an account of science (comment #2), this court case would make a lot of sense to readers, and illustrate the ways in which this really is not about science, but the Bible.

Proofreading:

p. 2 line 30, delete comma after "theologians"

p. 4 line 3 "Testament is" not "Testament as"

p. 10 line 6 "astronomical" I think must mean here "extremely," but in this context the word is confusing, since it could also refer to the cosmos.