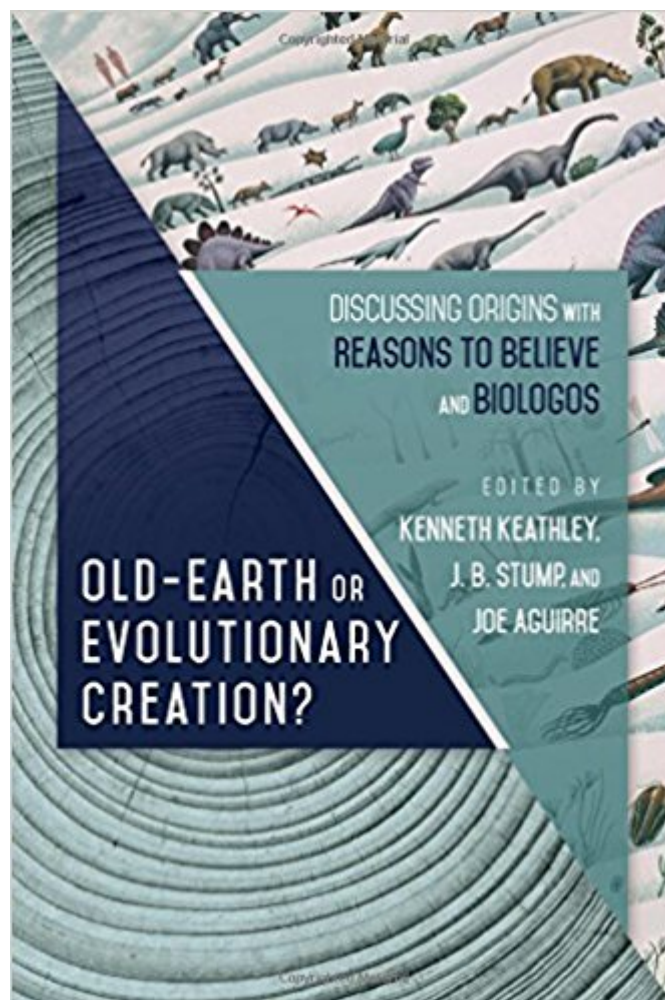


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# Old Earth Or Evolutionary Creation?: Discussing Origins With Reasons To Believe And BioLogos (Biologos Books On Science And Christianity)



## Synopsis

Christians confess that God created the heavens and the earth. But they are divided over how God created and whether the Bible gives us a scientifically accurate account of the process of creation. Representatives of two prominent positions—old earth creation (Reasons to Believe) and evolutionary creation (BioLogos)—have been in dialogue over the past decade to understand where they agree and disagree on key issues in science and theology. This book is the result of those meetings. Moderated by Southern Baptist seminary professors, the discussion between Reasons to Believe and BioLogos touches on many of the pressing debates in science and faith, including biblical authority, the historicity of Adam and Eve, human genetics and common descent, the problem of natural evil, and methodological naturalism. While both organizations agree that God created the universe billions of years ago, their differences reveal that far more is at stake here than just the age of the earth. *Old Earth or Evolutionary Creation?* invites readers to listen in as Christian scholars weigh the evidence, explore the options, and challenge each other on the questions of creation and evolution. In a culture of increasing polarization, this is a model for charitable Christian dialogue.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kenneth Keathley (PhD, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) serves as director of the L. Russ Bush Center for Faith and Culture and as a professor of theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He has published several books, including 40

Questions on Creation (with Mark Rooker) and Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach. For over thirty years, Keathley has served in a variety of roles in churches throughout Missouri, Louisiana, the Carolinas, and Virginia, including youth pastor, interim pastor, or senior pastor. Before teaching at Southeastern, he served two years at Midwestern Baptist Seminary and almost six years at New Orleans Baptist Seminary as both an administrator and professor. He and his wife Penny live in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and have a son and daughter and three grandchildren.

J. B. (Jim) Stump (PhD, Boston University) is senior editor at BioLogos, where he oversees the development of new content and curates existing content for the BioLogos website and print materials. He has also been a philosophy professor and academic administrator, and he frequently speaks to churches and other groups on the intersection of science and Christianity. He is the author of *Science and Christianity: An Introduction to the Issues*, coauthor of *Christian Thought: A Historical Introduction* and coeditor of *How I Changed My Mind About Evolution* and *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*.

Joe Aguirre is editor in chief at Reasons to Believe, an organization in the Los Angeles area that spreads the gospel by demonstrating that sound reason and scientific research—including the very latest discoveries—consistently support, rather than erode, confidence in the truth of the Bible and faith in the personal, transcendent God revealed in both Scripture and nature.

This book is the result of a series of meetings between representatives of BioLogos, advocates of evolutionary creation, and Reasons to Believe (RTB), advocates of old-earth creation. I liked the structure of this book. Each chapter begins with an introduction and questions by a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) moderator, followed by responses from a representative of each organization. Then there is a redirect by the moderator with specific follow-up questions for each respondent, followed by their responses and a conclusion by the chapter moderator. Topics covered include biblical interpretation and authority, the range of viable positions concerning Adam and Eve, natural evil, divine action, the scientific method, biological evolution, the geological evidence, the fossil evidence, the biological evidence, and the anthropological evidence. The purpose of the book is to “help lay readers identify science-faith issues, comprehend what the two organizations stand for, understand the nature of their dialogue and what the two organizations hope to achieve through it, and appreciate how they and the church at large can benefit from the conversation.” (p. 6)

BioLogos is committed to the following core doctrines: (1) Humans are created “in the image of God, with a special relationship to God and a role to play in God’s creation, (2) All humans who have

ever lived have sinned by rebelling against God's revealed will, and (3) God has dealt with sin through Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and promised return. (p. 50) Within that commitment, BioLogos suggests four potentially viable scenarios for interpreting Genesis 2-3 that could be consistent with both biological evolution and their core doctrines. In response, Ken Samples of RTB concisely states the traditional case for a historical Adam and Eve as the progenitors of all humanity. RTB's objections to the creation of mankind via biological evolution focus on both the theological difficulties and the biological evidence. Loren Haarsma of BioLogos presents a good discussion of the interaction of science and biblical interpretation, including the observation that, "BioLogos does not believe that science trumps theology or biblical interpretation, but we do believe that theology and biblical interpretation can draw useful insights from scientific discoveries." (p. 50) Darrel Falk of BioLogos points out that "many of us who subscribe to evolutionary creation do believe in a historical Adam and Eve. It is important to emphasize that mainstream science does not imply that Adam and Eve did not exist, just that they could not have been the only two progenitors of the human race." (p. 136) The most interesting chapters are the two where BioLogos and RTB disagree the most, namely interpreting the evidence for biological evolution (Chap. 7) and interpreting the anthropological evidence for the uniqueness of humans (Chap. 11). The brief final chapter "What is the Next Step?" has a very promising title but contains very little meat to chew on. It is no surprise that the SBC moderators tend to side with the RTB position whenever it differs from the BioLogos position. It is also no surprise that I tend to side with the BioLogos position. RTB is very good in the area of cosmological evolution but leaves a bit to be desired in the area of biological evolution. Fazale Rana, the VP of research for RTB, demonstrates in the book that there are a number of things that he doesn't accept about biological evolution, including the Cambrian explosion and convergence in evolution. Perhaps this explains why RTB has such a problem with biological evolution. This book provides the clearest-yet description of the positions of these two organizations as well as a clarification of their differences. I can recommend it to Christians who want to learn more about the intersection of biological evolution and Christian theology.

Among scientific topics, perhaps none is more contentious than the question of the origins of the universe and the emergence of life. We know about Christians who believe the world was created in literal 24 hour days a few thousand years ago. But there are also Bible-believing Christians who believe a variety of other theories about origins. In *Old Earth or Evolutionary Creation: Discussing*

Origins with Reasons to Believe and BioLogos, scientists and theologians from two organizations, Reasons to Believe (RTB) and BioLogos, and scholars from Southern Baptist seminaries, debate and discuss their perspectives and beliefs. The first thing to say about this book is that it's refreshing to see a congenial, enlightening conversation among Christians with such differing viewpoints. While they share the same faith in Jesus, their disagreements on certain points about the natural world differ, sometimes greatly. Yet neither group came across as disparaging or belittling their intellectual foils. The two organizations, BioLogos and Reasons to Believe, vary in their goals and beliefs about the origins of life. The scientists of BioLogos embrace the evolutionary model that dominates mainstream science, while embracing biblical theism. They insist that "the science of evolution does not require an atheistic worldview." RTB's mission is "to develop and proclaim a biblical creation model that is testable, falsifiable, and predictive." The creationism they champion is not a young earth six 24 hour day creationism; they hold to an old earth creationism. In each chapter scholars from the two groups discuss a particular topic, moderated by a seminary scholar. Covering topics such as Adam and Eve, evil in the world, biological evolution, geology and fossils, and anthropology, the chapters wrestle with the contrasting perspectives of the two groups. As an interested layperson, I felt like I had jumped in with both feet into material that I had little understanding of. Don't get me wrong; the book is definitely accessible to the layperson. But readers will have to be more motivated than I was to really understand and appreciate the nuances of the arguments. What I did come to understand and appreciate is the commitment both of these groups have to reconciling historic Christianity to scientific inquiry. It's so easy for people to say science and religion are irreconcilable. These writers would argue otherwise, in fact proclaiming, in different ways, that scripture and the natural world do not contradict one another. RTB especially sees science as an evangelistic tool. Any scientist or scientific-minded layperson who is convinced that their conclusions about origins are irrefutable should pick up this book. Old Earth or Evolutionary Creation should be read with humility and an open mind. While the question of what actually occurred in the first moments of creation may never be settled in our mortal lives, here is what I think this book can settle: Some reasonable scientists believe that the biblical account of creation is an actual account, and they can provide a scientific basis for their conclusions. Some committed Christians believe that evolutionary models best describe the origins and development of life, and they do not believe this contradicts their belief in the Bible. The reality is that both of these groups represent Christians who hold to historical theological perspectives, and scientists who practice accepted scientific inquiry. One can't simultaneously agree with everything each group says, but this book will help you understand them. Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for the

complimentary electronic review copy!

This book does an excellent job of fairly presenting the respective merits of old-earth creationism and evolutionary creationism. Its dialogue format allows representative advocates of each view (from Reasons to Believe and BioLogos) to present their case and charitably offer criticisms of the alternative view. The book clearly delineates to the reader the old-earth creationist and evolutionary creationist positions on biblical interpretation, the identity of Adam and Eve, natural evil, the scientific method, and the geological, fossil, biological, and anthropological evidence, among other topics. In sum, this book is a must read for any Christian trying to decipher or evaluate her or his own view of biological origins.

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