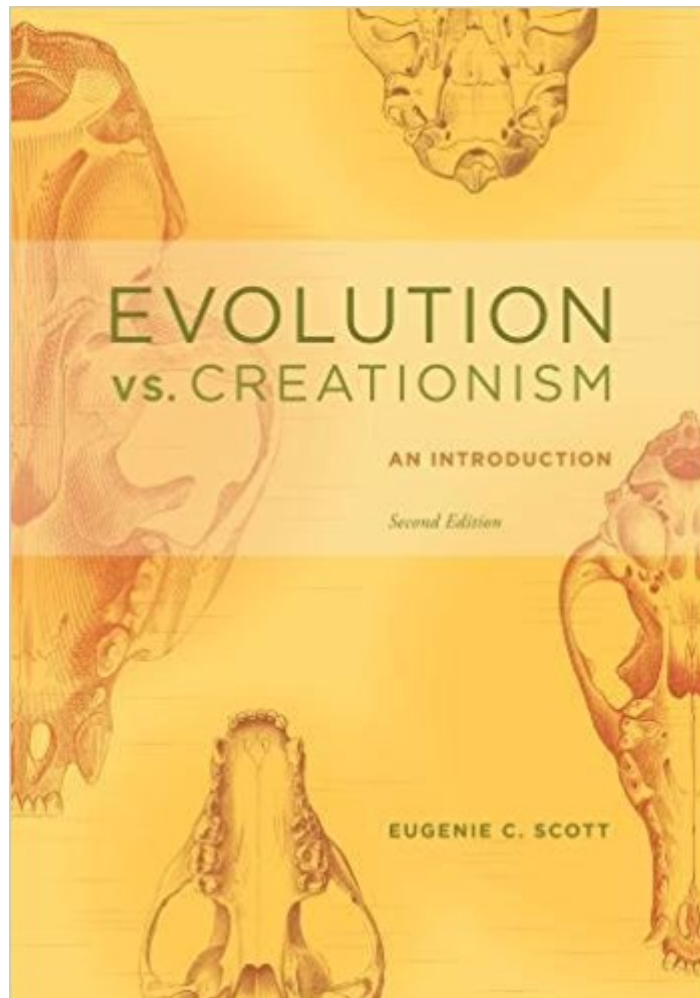




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# Evolution Vs. Creationism: An Introduction



## Synopsis

More than eighty years after the Scopes trial, the debate over teaching evolution continues in spite of the emptiness of the creationist positions. This accessible resource, now completely revised and updated, provides an essential introduction to the ongoing disputeâ€™s many facets; the scientific evidence for evolution, the legal and educational basis for its teaching, and the various religious points of view; as well as a concise history of the evolution-creationism controversy. This second edition also contains a discussion of the legal history, updated to include the seminal case of *Kitzmiller v. Dover* as well as a new chapter on public opinion and media coverage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"No book does a better job than *Evolution vs. Creationism* of covering with the entire evolution-creationism controversy. Evolution is one of the greatest ideas of modern times. If you want to defend evolution, read *Evolution vs. Creationism*." - Springer --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Eugenie C. Scott is Executive Director of the National Center for Science Education. She has written extensively on the evolution-creationism controversy and is past president of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. Scott is the 2010 recipient of the National Academy of Science's Public Welfare Medal.

Eugenie Carol Scott (born 1945) is an American physical anthropologist who has been the

executive director of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE) since 1987; she is also the author of *Not in Our Classrooms: Why Intelligent Design Is Wrong for Our Schools*. She wrote in the Preface to this 2004 book, "This is not the only available book on the creationism/evolution controversy... So why another book on the subject? There are books that look at this complex controversy from historical, legal, educational, political, scientific, and religious perspectives---but no single book that looks at the controversy from ALL of these views. For those needing an introduction to the creationism/evolution controversy, [the book] provides 'one-stop shopping.'" (Pg. xvii) She notes that "I have included excerpts from the creationist literature as well as rebuttals...

Unfortunately, proponents of Intelligent Design (ID) Creationism... refused, en masse, to grant me permission to reproduce their works... Their ... response mirrors the refusal of Discovery Institute fellows to participate in the 2001 NOVA television series, *Evolution* on PBS, on the grounds that they wanted the hour-long episode addressing the creation/evolution controversy to focus on ID's perspective, objecting to sharing the time with proponents of Creation Science." (Pg. xviii) She notes, "In January 1987, a young Australian evangelist, Ken Ham, came to work for the ICR... the 'Back to Genesis' program relied heavily on Ham. The more evangelistic focus of its meetings may be due to the fact that Ham lacks a background in science, unlike most other ICR professional staff. By all accounts, the former teacher was a popular and successful evangelist, and the 'Back to Genesis' programs began to play a larger role in ICR activities." (Pg. 102) She explains about radiometric dating, "Radiometric dating is based on the half-lives of the radioactive isotopes. These half-lives have been measured over the last 40-90 years. They are not calibrated by fossils." (Pg. 155) She continues, "There are a number of parameters which, if extrapolated from the present without taking into account the changes to the Earth over time, would seem to suggest a somewhat younger earth... Some examples of these categories are the decaying magnetic field (not mentioning the widespread evidence for magnetic reversals)... while these arguments do not stand up when the complete picture is considered, the case for a very old creation of Earth fits well in all areas considered." (Pg. 155-157) This book will be of great interest to anyone studying the Creation/Evolution controversy.

For many years the author of this book, Eugenie C. Scott, oversaw the activities of the National Center for Science Education. In that capacity she battled all manner of ridiculous ideas relating to science ranging from denial of global warming to the presumed dangers from genetically-modified foods to the belief that autism was caused by vaccines. None of those battles, however, was ever as wild, and as broad as the denial and denunciation of evolutionary biology. Scott ranges broadly

over the landscape of the evolution/creationism debate, filled as it is with polemics attacking evolution and advancing the cause of creationism/intelligent design, or vice versa. The manner in which scientists hesitantly accepted the theory over its first 50-75 years has been told and retold. The reaction to the evolutionary idea from the religious community has also been documented, whether it be rejection, accommodation, or otherwise. Many people of faith observed that scientific findings in geology, biology, astronomy, and other disciplines seemed to assault the traditional ideas of Christianity. For centuries most people a part of Western Civilization had believed that the Earth had been created by God about four thousand years before Christ, often applying the dating system developed by Bishop Usher to record biblical generations. Aside from a few cataclysms, some of which were divinely induced such as the "Great Flood," the Earth had remained pretty much the same from the time of that creation. Humanity, as well as all of the other creatures on the planet, had been specifically created by God and that humankind held a special place in this creation as being in the image of God. Geological studies were the first to challenge these assumptions. James Hutton was an exceptional amateur geologist who was the first to put together a compelling explanation of the age of the Earth. He first raised the issue that the Earth must be far older than the 6,000 years usually thought in 1785 and elaborated on this in his two-volume *Theory of the Earth, with Proofs and Illustrations* in 1795. Charles Darwin's ideas did for biology what Hutton's had done for geology. He argued several key premises based on incontrovertible observational and experimental evidence. But Darwin also demonstrated the nature of change over time in species and made clear the connection between *The Origins of Species*. This book is an attempt to explore the history of this debate and, most importantly, to debunk all of the major arguments used by creationists against evolutionary theory. Scott does so with some humor, some biting wit, and some pointed rebuffs. As Scott lays out the case, she also calls attention to sources that may be used to parry the creationist thrust. It is very much a "battle book," designed to arm those who debate creationists. Of course, it is fundamentally "young Earth creationists" who are at issue here. Most of the people of faith in the Christian world accommodated to Darwin's ideas more than a century ago. That accommodation was accomplished by using quite interesting, ingenious, and complex arguments to support a convergence of scientific evolution and religious creation. They tended to accept the ancient origins of the Earth as geologists laid out the timeline "as well as the record of cataclysm and change over the eons" by questioning time as stated in the Bible. How long was a day in God's sense, an entity that stood outside time and space? They developed a "day-age" theory that allowed for eons to pass for a day in God's time scale.

They offered a series of possibilities in reconciling the Genesis account with scientific knowledge. Some also argued for a "gap" theory of "ruin and restoration" theory that included multiple cataclysms in the history of the Earth with matter and life created repeatedly. This allowed for fossils and extinctions. This might also have been followed by an Edenic restoration. At sum, the religious response to Darwinian thought could be predicated on the higher criticism of the Bible then emerging from universities and theological schools of the latter nineteenth century. In such a climate, biblical literalism could be overturned and replaced with a perspective that viewed the book more as a work of revealed truth but not necessarily one containing absolute truth. They argued over the search for truth, whatever that meant and if it could ever be known. They found reinforcement everywhere and took comfort in the exchange recorded in the Bible between Pontius Pilate and Jesus Christ two millennia ago. Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" Those versions of "truth" not accepted are often called "myths," as Pilate obviously thought about the truth espoused by Jesus, but they might have relevance nonetheless. They have given and continue to offer meaning and value to individual human lives and to create a focal point for explaining the sufferings and triumphs of humanity. "Young Earth creationists" have never sought to accommodate their religious ideas to scientific knowledge and with this the stage is set for battle. It is far from over as Eugenie Scott makes clear.

Nice and clean. A wonderful book.

Scott's book is a good summary of everything in the so-called "debate", possibly the best that can be found in one 254-page book. There isn't much detailed evolutionary theory in there, but what I found valuable was the summary of the legal history of Creationism in the schools and the discussions of the methodology of science, especially the role of naturalism in the historical sciences. She tries to be fair in dealing with religion but is quite firm in stating that Evolution is science and Creationism is not. The second half of the book is a selection of readings from both sides and its success is mixed. Partly that is due to the representatives of Intelligent Design refusing to let their writings be reprinted. As a result, Scott has to give a summary of them. What "does" get reprinted are some writings of the old-style Creationists, (with responses from real scientists) so some might argue that is in not a fair representation. Interestingly, there are a couple of physics howlers that somehow got by the editors. On p. 13 she says "Newton's law of gravitation has to be modified ...under conditions of a vacuum." (Say what? It's the air that messes up clear observations of the effects of gravity! Newton's law is fine in a vacuum!) On p. 120 she seems to think that the

monthly phases of the moon are due to the shadow of Earth falling on it. Now, those are silly statements, but here's the difference between Eugenie Scott and the Creationists: If she is shown evidence that those statements are wrong, she will change her mind.

Good!

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