

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Is There Ambiguity in Creation?

### ANSWERS IN GENESIS

*The idea that God created a young earth that looked old has insurmountable problems.*



1

Would God create the earth so that scientific investigation would yield seeming evidence of evolution and millions/billions of years? Is the evidence for creation and biblical history ambiguous? In his book *Creation Unfolding*, Ken Coulson, a young-earth creationist (YEC) of San Diego Christian College and author of the *Creation Unfolding* blog and contributor to the *New Creation* blog, argues in the affirmative. Coulson, who has a PhD in earth science from Loma Linda University, believes that God created life on the earth by a process he has labeled Supernatural Formative Process (SFP).<sup>1</sup> Coulson is offering a new mature creation apologetic that basically says that God has only ever used “natural”<sup>2</sup> processes to create, but during creation week he sped up those processes.<sup>3</sup> Coulson uses post-creation miracles (e.g., [John 2:1–11](#)) to understand the processes at work in creation week.

### Is There a Problem with Young-Earth Creation?

At the outset of the book, Coulson lays down his concern regarding the YEC movement.

I have become increasingly aware of some glaring problems within mainstream young-Earth creationism that stem from what I believe is an overly suspicious

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Coulson, *Creation Unfolding: A New Perspective on Ex Nihilo* (Coppell, TX: Phaneros Press, 2020), 32, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Coulson says he uses the word “naturalistic” to refer to “God’s providential rhythms of regularity in nature” (Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 11).

<sup>3</sup> Coulson takes issue with classical YEC functional mature creation apologetics: “One of the problems with classic mature creation arguments is that they make no room for processes that were at work during Creation Week. Many Christians assume that God spoke, and poof, out came a planet or a star or a tree (classic appearance of age and/or mature creation apologetics)” (Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 45–46).

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

approach to conventional science. Exacerbating the problems are a plethora of online young-Earth creationist (YEC) websites that are hosted by well-meaning Christians who are neither scientists nor theologians. These websites claim that scientific evidence abounds for the youth of the creation, and that a belief in millions of years is nothing more than propaganda cooked up by biased evolutionists out to wantonly deceive the world at large. In their minds, a YEC interpretation of nature is *obvious*, and only a fool would fall for the secular view that believes the Earth is 4.6 billion years old.<sup>4</sup> (emphasis in original)

It is easy to attack nameless websites hosted by neither scientists nor theologians, but the content on the Answers in Genesis website is reviewed to be both scientifically and theologically sound. We are not suspicious of conventional science, but we do recognize the difference between the sort of operational science that investigates present phenomena and historical science which seeks to explain non-repeatable events in the past. Furthermore, the conclusions of most secular scientists regarding origins (historical science) only allow for naturalistic interpretations of the evidence because their naturalistic methodology rules out belief in [God](#) a priori.

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## Does the Earth Look Old?

Part of Coulson's solution to remedy this issue is to "first acknowledge that evidence *does* exist supporting the antiquity of the Earth"<sup>5</sup> (emphasis in original). Given Coulson's claim to be a YEC, this statement will be surprising to many YECs. How can a YEC believe there is evidence for the antiquity of the earth? Coulson comes to this conclusion by considering the geophysical processes that presently sustain our planet.

By estimating the current volume of the Earth's continental rocks, and then extrapolating back the current rate at which these rocks are being formed, one can easily approximate a time frame for the Earth's formation in the millions and/or billions of years.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 5–6.

<sup>5</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 7.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Coulson affirms this elsewhere in his book when he differs as to the place of mature [creation](#) explanations in modern YEC [apologetics](#). Coulson believes YECs should realize the issue for old earth-creationists (OECs) is not so much radioisotope dating but the vast amount of time required for large structures like earth to form. He states,

A big number, like 4.6 billion years, is irrelevant to any discussion on the age of the Earth because, quite simply, it is not about the age. *Current processes* are all that is required to perceive that this planet was not formed in a *single day, week, year, or even a thousand years . . .* it is the measurable processes at work within the Earth that, when extrapolated backwards, logically require millions or billions of years to form a mature planet . . . the Earth does seem to have a long history associated with it, as does the universe . . .<sup>7</sup> (emphasis in original)

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Without the lens of Scripture which shows clearly that God created in six days (cf. [Exodus 20:11](#))—and in [an order in opposition to evolutionary models](#)—Coulson believes that these current processes only lead to an evolutionary view of earth's history. Coulson gives an example of new continental crust that is being made through processes taking place today (20 cubic kilometers per year). Coulson states, “extrapolating back the *current* rate at which these rocks are being formed, one can easily approximate a time frame for the crust's formation in the billions of years”<sup>8</sup> (emphasis in original). Coulson cites YEC geophysicist John Baumgardner to argue that the geophysics of continental crust formation is good observational science. If natural processes are enough to make new continental crust, and the rates of the natural processes indicate millions of years, how does Coulson account for supernatural creation? He uses his SFP mature creation apologetic and suggests that these processes occurred at accelerated rates during creation week.<sup>9</sup>

Mainstream biblical creationist scientists account for this so-called problem by distinguishing between historical and observational science. There is no need to capitulate to long-agers or concede that their interpretation of the evidence is better than it really is.

## Ambiguity and Creation

Part of Coulson's SFP apologetic is to argue that there is ambiguity embedded in creation; this is needed for his creation apologetic to work. Coulson does rightly point out that God does save through the foolishness of the cross rather than through human intellect (cf. [1](#)

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<sup>7</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 25–26.

<sup>8</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 48.

<sup>9</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 49.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

[Corinthians 1:21](#)) and that general revelation cannot lead man to a saving knowledge of God ([Romans 1:19–20](#)). But when it comes to the created universe, Coulson believes “it makes perfect sense for God to construct a universe *without physical evidence* of the miracle that brought that universe into existence”<sup>10</sup> (emphasis in original). Coulson’s belief in ambiguity in creation comes from the fact that he believes that God did not put an official stamp on every one of his creatures.

Think about it; if God really wanted to prove, *without a shadow* of a doubt, that He was the Creator, then He could have stamped, “Made by the God of the Hebrews” onto the buttocks of every child ever born using the language of every nation that ever existed. This would be *unambiguous*. It turns out that there are many theological reasons why God has chosen to veil His authoritative title as Creator.<sup>11</sup> (emphasis in original)

But God has shown that he is the Creator by stamping knowledge of his existence on his creatures! Part of being made in the image of God ([Genesis 1:27](#)) means that mankind inescapably knows God ([Romans 1:18–23](#)). It’s not that mankind knows that a “god” exists but that they know of the one true Creator God. However, the problem is that fallen man does not submit himself to the knowledge of God but suppresses the truth in unrighteousness and worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator ([Romans 1:18, 25](#)). Mankind’s denial of God’s existence is not done in ignorance; rather, it is evidence of his suppression of the knowledge of God within him. This is why we are, as Paul says, without excuse for denying God’s existence ([Romans 1:20](#)). Furthermore, embedded in every living creature is DNA—a coding language that specifies the physical form and functioning of that creature.

Coulson even believes ambiguity in creation is so widespread that Christians exercise more faith than materialists.

Everyone has some measure of faith because they were not there to witness the event. Even so, I do believe it is the Christian who must exercise more faith. That is because the materialist rests on his daily experiences to interpret past events and predict future ones.<sup>12</sup> (emphasis in original)

But does the materialist show less faith than the Christian? No! When the materialist does science, he takes it on perfect faith that what he observes, tests, and measures is real, reliable, and not imaginary. In fact, the materialist has no objective way of knowing if the

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<sup>10</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 138.

<sup>11</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Coulson, *Creation Unfolding*, 145.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

world around him is real (he takes this purely on faith) and therefore has no real reason to trust his daily experiences or that any future event he predicts should come to pass.<sup>13</sup> By overstating ambiguity in creation, Coulson is separating faith from reality. The scientific method needs biblical faith to work (cf. [Hebrews 11:1](#)). Furthermore, to say that the materialist exercises less faith than the [Christian](#) implies that God's revelation in creation is not clear enough in what it reveals about him to hold all people accountable for rejecting him.

It seems strange to claim that the [Bible](#) teaches a young earth as Coulson believes and yet to say the evidence for this is ambiguous, even suggesting an old earth. This would even make it possible to accuse God of dishonesty! The evidence of creation testifies to God's existence, not only to those who have faith but also to those who suppress that knowledge and are therefore condemned ([Romans 1:20](#)).

## Created Maturity vs. Implied History

Coulson uses the analogy that Adam was created as a mature adult to argue for his SFP view. In fact, Coulson even says, "Consider Adam's skin. Skin requires regular bouts of sunlight to protect it from burning (Seigel 2014). Rather than create Adam with *perfect skin*, it may be that God 'exposed' Adam to 'sunlight' so that his skin developed to the same extent as other 20 to 30 year-old men." He also believes an archaeologist could not differentiate Adam's bones, miraculously created mature, from those of other ancient humans who developed starting at fertilization then within the womb and all the way through adulthood. But children have growth plates in their bones that fuse when development is finished. Adam's skeleton probably would not have had these characteristics because he never had to grow from a baby to an adult. And we can use other of Adam's physical characteristics on day six as a way to differentiate created maturity vs. characteristics that would imply a history that didn't take place. Adam would have an adult male physique, developed brain, and mental capacity (likely far greater than we have in a fallen world!). However, he would not have a scar on his knee from scraping it during childhood, nor would he have skin damage from 20ish years of sun exposure. In fact, he would not have a navel, which is the scar from the attachment of the umbilical cord to the infant's body. And he most certainly would not have had fabricated memories of a happy childhood with his nonexistent parents! But Coulson's geological view seems much more a version of Adam created with scars, skin damage, a navel, and fond memories with parents.

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<sup>13</sup> See Jason Lisle, "Are Scientists Really Biased by their Presuppositions?" Answers in Genesis, July 13, 2007, <https://answersingenesis.org/presuppositions/are-scientists-really-biased-by-their-presuppositions/>.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Probing the Mind of God

Scripture repeatedly tells us that God's mind is above what we can comprehend. We can understand what he reveals in Scripture because he communicated it to be understood by us. But God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" ([Isaiah 55:8–9](#)). God is outside of time; therefore he does not have a process of learning where he conceives of things in his mind, puts them together, considers them, and so forth. If there is one mental thought, then another after that, then there is a differentiation in time for a timeless being—something that cannot happen in a timeless state! God acts within time with respect to his creation, but God himself is eternal and unchanging, including in his thoughts.

However, Coulson speaks of "'processes' that occurred in the recesses of God's mind." In fact, he boldly says, "I would like to propose that a fully functional, conceptual universe, already 'existed' *in the mind of God* prior to [Genesis 1:1](#)." He further postulates that this mental model in the mind of God is "at least in some sense, *real*." He goes on,

Given these caveats, I propose that the conceptual universe God formed in his mind looked something like the one we presently observe. We can confidently use this as a starting point, perhaps winding things back a little to allow for colliding galaxies and exploding supernovae . . .

Concisely, without a conceptual universe, a Christian cosmologist committed to a Day 4 creation of the sun cannot consider a Big Bang cosmology. Given the *possibility* of a conceptual universe, however, and the Christian cosmologist has the freedom to explore *all* the alternatives, including several YEC models, such as Lisle's anisotropic synchrony convention, Humphreys' time dilation model, and Faulkner's *dasha* theory. A conceptual universe allows YEC cosmologists to keep a number of theoretical irons in the fire, while at the same time providing a benchmark from which to do cosmological research at the *secular* level. (emphasis in original)

There is more, but this quote is sufficient to critique his thinking on this. It is hard to overstate the hubris involved in trying to probe God's mind and even postulate a model of the universe and how that might interact with possible creationist research when nothing in Scripture even hints at what might be in God's mind.

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# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

Scripture says, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God” ([Deuteronomy 29:29](#)), and we tread on dangerous ground if we try to search out things about God that he has not explicitly revealed to us in Scripture. Coulson goes further than that, however, and proposes to build an entire edifice on top of his ideas about the mind of God!

Coulson’s apparent eagerness to find a way to allow for big bang cosmology is also disturbing, especially since [many secularists are abandoning the big bang](#). Simply put, a conceptual universe does not give us any extra intellectual freedom. Creation cosmologists have been able to come up with a variety of ideas to explain how the observed evidence fits within a biblical framework, as is shown by Coulson’s reference to the work of creation scientists like Lisle and Faulkner. Furthermore, starting from a flawed premise would hinder our pursuit of truth. God has told us everything we need to know about him in order to effectively study his creation, and that does not include conceptual universes. Finally, how would positing a conceptual universe in the mind of God make creationist science more acceptable to a secular audience that rejects him?

## The Need for Creationist Humility

When we investigate the aftermath of one-time, non-repeatable events in history, like creation or the global flood, all biblical creationists agree that our starting point must be Scripture. However, the sufficiency of Scripture also means that Scripture provides not only our starting point but our boundary. Humans have been given dominion over the earth, which means we are free to investigate any natural processes we want. However, **when we speak about how God created, this is theology, and we have not been given dominion over God. Therefore, we must stick closely to what is clearly revealed in Scripture, which is sufficient for us, even if sometimes we’d like to know more than what we’ve been given.**

Coulson’s belief that he has the solution for problems that he believes he uniquely sees in the creation movement raises some red flags, considering the many talented scientists and theologians who have made significant contributions. But his attempt to explain God’s mind is far, far worse. As [Romans 11:33–34](#) says, “Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’”

Once again, we have an example of a creationist who claims a young-earth-creation position yet presents ideas that give credence to long ages and evolutionists. By the very nature of what he does, it can give people the idea that young-earth creationists are grasping at straws (which they are not) to try to explain away the evidence that supposedly supports an old earth and universe. As we’ve stated before, we are concerned

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

that the average churchgoer will be confused by seeing someone who claims to be a young-earth creationist yet is accepting of evolutionary assumptions in conflict with Scripture—and unnecessarily! Therefore, we feel compelled to warn people about this to stop the opening of a door that starts with questioning God's Word concerning origins and can lead to outright rejection of it entirely as we've sadly seen time and again.

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\* Featured in *Should Biblical Creation Become More Like Evolution?*

© Answers in Genesis, February 24, 2023. Retrieved February 27, 2023.

<https://answersingenesis.org/young-earth-evolution/is-there-ambiguity-in-creation>