

LITERATURE REVIEWS

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TWO SIDES OF SEVERAL QUESTIONS

THE GENESIS DEBATE. 1986. Ronald Youngblood, editor. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 250 p.

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Ronald Youngblood, professor of Old Testament at Bethel Seminary West, San Diego, and editor of the *Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society*, has brought together a unique collection of 22 essays on the most frequently debated topics concerning the interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The essays are organized under chapter headings in a question format.

1. Were the days of creation twenty-four hours long?
2. Are the events in the Genesis creation account set forth in chronological order?
3. Was the Earth created a few thousand years ago?
4. Was evolution involved in the process of creation?
5. Is the doctrine of the Trinity implied in the Genesis creation account?
6. Was Cain's offering rejected by God because it was not a blood sacrifice?
7. Were there people before Adam and Eve?
8. Did people live to be hundreds of years old before the Flood?
9. Are the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 angels?
10. Did Noah's flood cover the entire world?
11. Does Genesis 9 justify capital punishment?

For each of the eleven topics there is a YES response, printed in the upper portion of the page, and a NO response, printed with contrasting boldface type in the lower portion of the page. Extensive footnotes and references for both YES and NO essays are given at the end of each chapter.

The principal professional association of each of the 22 authors of these essays is given with the list of contributors in the introductory section of the book.

Any collection of essays by 22 authors on a range of controversial topics would not be expected to be of uniform quality. Editor Youngblood is to be commended for his accomplishments in securing competent writers and obtaining lucid presentations. Regardless of previous bias, the careful reader may expect to gain fresh insights from both the YES and the NO responses.

It is unfortunate that the YES response in Chapter 3 was written by a theologian and biblical scholar whose scientific competence appears to have been obtained from an uncritical reading of creationist literature, rather than by a broadly competent scientist who has confidence in the historical validity of the events described in Genesis 1-11.

According to my assessment, many readers would find Chapter 4 both more pleasing and more useful if the NO response had been principally analytical and less polemical.

Neither the YES nor the NO response in Chapter 7 makes a contribution to a careful grammatical-historical reading of Genesis 1-11. The cavil “Three people do not make a city” ignores the possibility that Moses may have referred to a city built by Cain during his later years, hundreds of years after the death of Abel.

The NO essay in Chapter 8 presents numerical patterns in the patriarchal age data of Genesis 5 and 11 that some readers will find intriguing. It would be unfortunate for a reader of the YES essay in Chapter 10 to be left with the impression that tsunamis offer the best available explanation for a universal inundation of the continents. Tsunamis probably contributed to the universal devastation described in Genesis 7, but the major factor most likely was continental subsidence and ocean floor uplift that returned the planetary surface to a condition similar to that which existed before Day Three of Creation Week.

The outlines of thought and evidence given in these 22 essays, together with their accompanying references, make *The Genesis Debate* a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in a correct understanding of the first eleven chapters of the Hebrew-Christian scriptures.