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"Scientists Confront Intelligent Design and Creationism" [3]

A spectacular new anthology edited by Andrew J. Petto and Laurie R. Godfrey, [Scientists Confront Intelligent Design and Creationism](#) [4] (W. W. Norton, 2007), described by *Publishers Weekly* as "[a] serious, comprehensive collection of new and revised essays from some of the biggest names in the anti-creationism field," is now available. In a press release, the publisher writes:

Why does "creation science" keep finding an audience, over and over, since the time of Darwin? Is there anything different about the "intelligent design" movement? *Scientists Confront Intelligent Design and Creationism* presents a defense of evolution that is accessible but not simplistic, scientifically sound but not ignorant of sociopolitical reality, and rational without condescension. Moreover, in a time when creationist textbooks continue to appear in classrooms and the president encourages educators to "teach both sides" of the argument, the book presents a blueprint for improving science education in this country to ensure that every student understands the science that grounds our understanding of evolution.

Since science itself makes a point of including minority views, it is not surprising that anti-evolutionists try to cast their ideas as "scientific alternatives." Intelligent design is not science but it is a socially, politically, and rhetorically persistent idea. All sixteen contributors to this collection -- from fields as diverse as atmospheric science, biology, and evolutionary genetics -- have a second specialty. They have spent decades closely observing and advocating for science in society, particularly in education. Their dual perspective makes them uniquely qualified to debunk this latest guise of the anti-evolution movement.

The book's first section traces the historical development of creationism, with special attention toward recent developments in religious fundamentalism that have burst on the

scene since an earlier edition of this book was published in 1983. Anthropologist John R. Cole dissects a founding manifesto of intelligent design, which has driven a wedge between scientists and non-scientists. Next, experts zero in on the "scientific" arguments put forward by the creationists, to wit: "Some creatures are so complex that they couldn't have developed from a series of simple adaptations." Biologist Robert Dorit gives us the ant colony, an efficient system of defense, reproduction, and labor -- all conducted by creatures with tiny brains. With enough simple interactions, complexity, which Darwin called "extreme perfection," arises all the time.

Finally, the editors address the public misconceptions about science itself that are brought to light by the controversy. Here, distinguished professionals deliver an impassioned primer on the scientific method. According to philosopher Helen Longino, science owes its long-term objectivity to two facts: the scientific community is a culturally and ideologically diverse group of people; and sooner or later every scientific theory will be tested against the real world. Intelligent design is neither broad-based nor answerable to the world, but *Scientists Confront Intelligent Design and Creationism* is both. As long as science requires public advocacy, this highly intelligent treasury of scholarship will remain an essential resource for students, teachers, and open-minded citizens.

Andrew J. Petto is a member of NCSE's board of directors, the editor of *Reports of the National Center for Science Education*, and lecturer in anatomy and physiology at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Laurie R. Godfrey is a Supporter of NCSE, professor of anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the editor of [Scientists Confront Creationism](#) [5] (W. W. Norton, 1984).

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