

Personal paths of persuasion

A review of
*Persuaded by the Evidence:
True Stories of Faith, Science,
& the Power of a Creator*
by Doug Sharp and
Dr. Jerry Bergman,
Compilation Editors
Master Books, Green Forest,
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The journey begins

This book is a collection of autobiographies, or perhaps more accurately, testimonies, describing how thirty-nine people came out of the darkness of evolution to the light of a God-centered, recent, six-day creation. (Four of the accounts are actually biographical sketches rather than autobiographic and are clearly marked as such.) Many of these people made this journey during their studies of science while pursuing a science degree. Many made the journey out of evolutionism before they became Christians—Christianity only provided the answer, in the form of a Creator-God, to questions that originated in their rejection of evolution. In some cases, this road took decades to travel:

“While still just a young man, Adler had read a collection of articles by different authors in a book titled *Evolution and Modern Thought*, which he said caused him to be ‘puzzled’ by the ‘conflicting points of view’ expressed by the different authors” (p. 284). “Only in 1984 when he became 82 did he become a Christian ...” (p. 288).

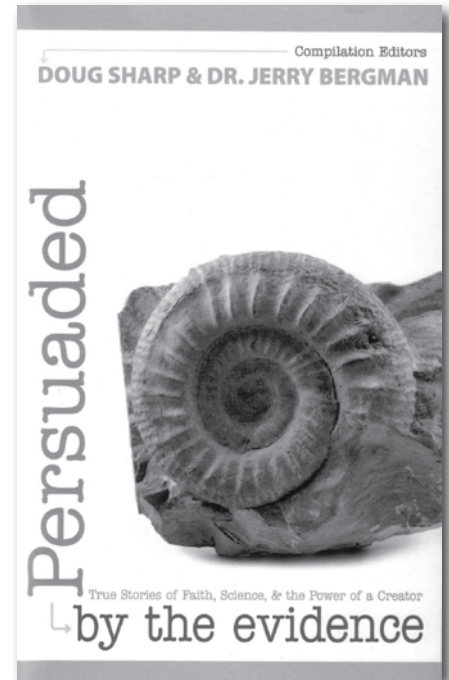
The book presents each testimony as a separate chapter written

in the style of each person—which appears to indicate that minimal editing was performed by the editors and each person is allowed to tell his story in his own words and in his own way. Each of the people represented has made contributions to the advance of the modern creation movement, though many of them are names that few would recognize while others are well known to both creationists and evolutionists alike. The accounts of the unknown people are significant because they serve as a reminder that God is a personal God that desires to work person-to-person. An epitome of this personal aspect, one testimony states,

“If someone is a believer, we can share a common joy. If someone is an unbeliever, I have an opportunity to share this joy with him or her, in case he or she is ready to receive it” (p. 153).

The Table of Contents employs a seldom-seen format that is very useful and effective. Each chapter listing in the Table of Contents includes the person’s name and a title for the chapter and is then followed by a brief (one or two sentences) abstract describing the main theme of that testimony. This abstract is very useful to the reader who follows Mortimer Adler’s advice¹ to “study the table of contents”—good advice that, unfortunately, few readers follow. Taken as a whole, the Table of Contents thus provides a good summary of the entire book, especially useful for locating a piece of information at a later time.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part is a collection of testimonies including a description of how each person came to reject evolution and accept creation. The names of many of these people would not be recognized by most readers; though a few would be known to the



more knowledgeable creationists. The second part is a collection of testimonies of some of the well-known founders of the modern creation movement (Henry Morris, Duane Gish, A. E. Wilder-Smith, *et al.*). The third part is a biography of Mortimer Adler, for many years the chairman of the board of editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the *Great Works of the Western World* series (few would seriously doubt his intellectual abilities) and who, because of a late-in-life conversion, became a tremendous apologist for Christianity and creation.

Multiple roads

In reading the book, I looked for a common theme or themes underlying all the testimonies. About a third of the way through the book, I realized that—other than coming to accept creation and Christianity—there was no common theme. I also realized that my expectation was foolish (or at least misguided) because these are testimonies of individual people who are all different. Represented in the book are people with varied backgrounds (both Christian and non-Christian). They come out of an assortment of cultural backgrounds: one grew up

as a missionary kid in Hong Kong (chap. 11), several are South African (chaps. 13 and 20), one comes out of a Hindu Brahmin family (chap. 15). They have achieved varied levels of education: one person possesses three Ph.D.s (chap. 38), one is a doctor of veterinary medicine (chap. 24), one has a Ph.D. in engineering (chap. 20). They have various religious backgrounds: one from a Jehovah's Witness family (chap. 4), several came out of atheism (chaps. 2 and 25), one spent time at a Tibetan Buddhist commune (chap. 27), one was educated in a Roman Catholic school (chap. 3). They have achieved various professional affiliations and accomplishments: one worked on the Manhattan Project developing the atomic bomb (chap. 12), one is the inventor of the medical MRI scanner (chap. 30), one has made contributions to plant genetics that have improved agriculture around the world (chap. 25). They have all contributed to the modern creation movement on various levels: one person is acknowledged as the father of the modern creation movement (chap. 34), two have worked to produce over 400 episodes of a video creationist program (chaps. 5 and 6), one is a chaplain at a corrections institution (chap. 27).

However, from these starting points and the different roads each one took, the destination is the same—deep faith in a Creator God, based on extensive study. Each of these testimonies is a frank discussion—an opening of their heart—of how that person thought, studied, struggled, and finally arrived at that destination of belief. One testimony states,

“Does creation play a part in my philosophy of science? No it does not play a *part*; it plays the lead role. My greatest single scientific discovery was not a machine or a physical principle. To me, the highest purpose a man can find for life is to serve the will of God. This is what motivates my work as a scientist: exploring and applying the laws of nature and nature's

God for the benefit of mankind” (p. 190, emphasis in original).

The reader can get to know each of these people in a very personal way through these testimonies. The variety of experiences and the frankness of these people is perhaps the strongest feature of the book. Perhaps if I had more carefully read the introduction written by editor Doug Sharp, I would have noticed that he wrote,

“What's amazing about all these stories is that they are all different, and yet God individually tailored the evidence for each person's personality, causing a defining moment that persuaded him to consider his spiritual life” (p. 15).

One destination

One common thread in a number of the testimonies is that through serious academic study of science, many became ‘Darwin doubters’ with a nagging sense that something was wrong with the ‘standard theory’ of evolution. This doubt came before they had any personal connection to Christianity. That nagging doubt caused them to look objectively at the evidence with an open mind—a brain fully engaged, not simply ‘left at the church house door’ as is often the accusation made by evolutionists (a hollow accusation when there was, as yet, no church house in their lives). Through relentless pursuit of a study to resolve the issue—at least to their own satisfaction—they followed the data to what seemed a logical conclusion: evolution doesn't work. From there, a personal need for a satisfactory solution drove them to realize that life had to have come about through the actions of an intelligence—not blind, random processes. After that, it was a small step (but a giant leap) to realize that the required intelligence is actually the God of the Bible. Faith followed.

A few minor detours

There are a few improvements that would have made the book more useful

and interesting. The book is lacking an index. It may be said that an index would be of minimal use in book of this format and style, but a simple index would be helpful in finding common threads in the testimonies. Also, the testimonies presented are all of men. Certainly there are many women who have a testimony at least as interesting as that of the men who are included. The inclusion of at least a few women would have provided some balance and attracted female readership. (Perhaps this hints at a possible sequel—a book of the testimonies of women who have been persuaded!).

The challenge of the journey

Overall, this book is a must-read for several groups of people. For anyone struggling with reconciling their faith with science—it will challenge you to persevere and perhaps push you down the right (and logical) road. For those who have already found their path to accept creation and who want to be inspired by the testimony of others who have reconciled faith and science and have been spurred on by it to action in spreading the creation worldview—it will challenge you to act on your faith and perhaps provide some new ideas for witnessing. If you are an atheist or an agnostic who is studying science and have some nagging doubts about evolution—it will likely challenge you to look deeper and to pursue the data wherever it leads. If you are a die-hard evolutionist and perhaps atheist or agnostic—it will challenge you to understand that the beliefs of creationists do not necessarily come from ignorant, blind religion. If you are *not* looking to be challenged, then *don't* pick up this book.

References

1. Adler, M.J. and Van Doren, C., *How to Read a Book*, Simon & Schuster (A Touchstone Book), New York, p. 33, 1972.