

# An unbalanced perspective

## *Christian Perspectives on Origins*

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Pentecostal churches are generally committed to the authority of the Scriptures so it was with some interest that I undertook to review this small booklet which claimed to give an overview of the various Christian perspectives on the origins debate. Both the authors of this booklet are ordained ministers in the Assemblies of God denomination, are qualified in the sciences, and have taught science at university level in the US.

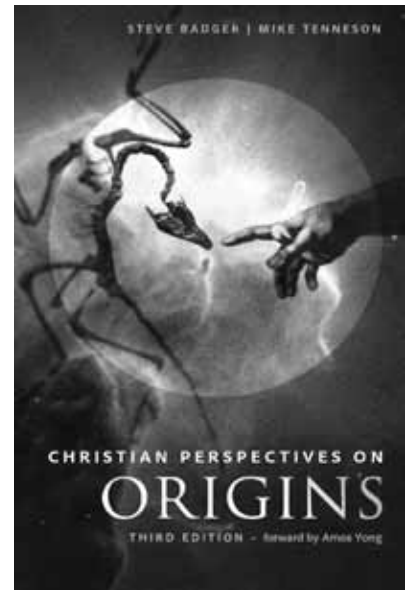
According to the Preface, this little booklet is intended to address the major positions Christians have with regards the question of origins. It purports to provide a philosophical, theological, and scientific examination of these positions and it recommends a reading list for those who wish to investigate further. The authors claim that they are not promoting any one view but are seeking to help the reader understand their own position better and why other Christians may hold a different view. They also recommend their ‘Top Ten’ reading list for those who wish to gain a deeper grasp of the issues so they can “form an opinion based on knowledge, rather than a dogma” (p. 5).

### Misunderstandings of science

Anyone who has studied the creation/evolution debate would appreciate the importance of understanding the limitations of science. The distinction between experimental science and historical science has been well documented<sup>1</sup> and is understood by

creationists and secularists<sup>2</sup> alike. However, nowhere in this booklet is this important distinction made, which leads to inevitable and misleading conflicts. The introduction states, “we pretty much accept most of the findings of modern science” (p. 7) and then gives examples of the achievements of *experimental* science, failing to recognize that it is in the arena of *historical* science that the conflict of belief systems arises. There is no conflict between the *observations* of experimental science and the Bible’s historical record of origins, and nor will there ever be, so long as the data and the interpretation of the data are clearly differentiated.

The authors then pursue a philosophical line, introducing some concepts of epistemology. The definition of evolution is then arbitrarily limited to biological evolution, ignoring the reality that the big picture molecules-to-man story of evolution is what is presented universally in not only popular science but also in university text books.<sup>3</sup> The terms ‘microevolution’ and ‘macroevolution’ make an entry with the associated risk of obfuscating the essential difference between variation and evolution, which relates to the direction of the changes involved.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the authors mistakenly claim that macroevolution “involves the same processes that cause microevolution” (p. 10), which is manifestly incorrect. Microevolution is synonymous with adaptation, which involves sorting or deleting pre-existing genetic information and is an observable process. On the other hand, macroevolution requires the generation of novel genetic information through natural processes, which is entirely bereft of observational evidence and is an article of faith for the evolutionist.



### Gospel disconnected from Creation/Fall

The section on biblical theology generally affirms the Divine inspiration of Scripture, but fails to recognize the authoritative role the Scriptures must therefore have over all disciplines, including (and especially) uniformitarian science. Furthermore, the authors fail to put the case for Genesis as history, which is directly deduced from the text of Genesis itself. The key theological point of the opening chapters of Genesis is the ‘very good’ creation and the subsequent Fall of man, which brought death and suffering into the world. Without this foundation, the theology of redemption as expounded by Paul in Romans<sup>5</sup> and 1 Corinthians<sup>6</sup> is essentially meaningless, and yet this link is omitted from the section on theology and, indeed, from the entire booklet! The primary reason the whole origins debate even exists is the link to the Gospel. If it were not for this, the topic would be little more than a curious side issue.

After a brief excursion outlining five different camps or general viewpoints on origins, the authors declare their hand more overtly with several proposed evidences for macroevolution,

all of which have been thoroughly refuted in biblical creationist literature. These include claims the fossil record reveals transitional forms,<sup>7</sup> including dinosaur to bird transitions,<sup>8</sup> vestigial structures,<sup>9</sup> and homology.<sup>10</sup> Much of the argumentation amounts to appeals to the opinion of the majority of scientists (as if majority determined truth), including the extraordinary statement that the evolutionary story “generally ‘hangs together’” (p. 22).

### What is their authority?

The authors clearly equate the interpretation of the natural world with the special revelation of Scripture, effectively making nature a 67<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible. They misuse Romans 1:20 to bolster their argument but, as pointed out by Andrew Kulikovski:

“Romans 1:19–20 clearly teaches that general revelation proclaims to *all* humanity, past and present, that God exists, that He created the universe and everything in it, and that He is great and powerful. Thus, *the physical world is not a second book of revelation from God, but a signpost pointing to God, the almighty Creator.*”<sup>11</sup>

The problem is that nature has been under God’s Curse since Adam’s Fall, so we need the unfallen special God-breathed revelation of Scripture to understand nature properly. As Louis Berkhoff observed:

“Originally God revealed Himself in creation, but through the blight of sin that original revelation was obscured. Moreover, it was entirely insufficient in the condition of things that obtained after the fall. Only God’s self-revelation in the Bible can now be considered adequate. It only conveys a knowledge of God that is pure, that is, free from error and superstition, and that answers to the spiritual needs of fallen man. . . . Some are inclined to speak of God’s general revelation as a second source; but this is hardly

correct in view of the fact that nature can come into consideration here only as interpreted in the light of Scripture.”<sup>12</sup>

### Straw men

As is so often the case with works which purport to present an even-handed view, the biblical creation position is either understated or misrepresented, and this booklet is no exception. It seems the overall tenor of the booklet is to persuade the reader of the reasonableness of some form of integration of contemporary scientific views on origins with the Scriptures. Such compromise has been shown repeatedly to never work without doing violence to the Scriptures.

The most concerning aspect of this booklet is that it fails to adequately represent the biblical creation (young-earth creation) position and makes no attempt to link the issue of origins to the proclamation of the Gospel. In the Top Ten resources list (p. 33) not one of the classic works presenting the case for biblical creation is cited! Instead, we find references to works from the Intelligent Design movement, Hugh Ross and various evolution-compromising authors. Only two books, *Refuting Compromise* (2004, 2011), by J. Sarfati, and *The Genesis Flood* (1961), by J. Whitcomb and H. Morris, representing biblical creation are referenced later in the bibliography. One can’t help but wonder if the authors actually read those two books. In any case, it is hard to imagine how they could so comprehensively overlook the vast resources of material that powerfully defend the straightforward reading of Genesis.

Space does not permit a comprehensive treatment of the many other errors and inconsistencies in this booklet, so only the key shortcomings have been addressed in this review. The booklet is intended for use by students and others seeking to grapple

with the question of origins but it is at best a poor example of the scholarship necessary to do justice to the subject and at worst misleading in its lack of balance. I do not recommend this booklet.

### References

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