

# A detailed rehash of all the canned anti-creationist shibboleths

***God's Word or Human Reason?  
An inside perspective  
on creationism***

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John Woodmorappe

The title of this book borders on intellectual dishonesty. It is not an inside perspective on creationism at all, as the unsuspecting reader is apt to think. It is a slick repackaging of old anti-creation claims—some of them several decades old now—along with several oft-recycled sob stories of former creationists. All the authors claim to be former Young Earth Creationists, but now apparently two are atheists, two are Christians, and one is a deist.

This book machine-guns so many issues that it is impossible to analyze more than a fraction of them in one review. On first impression, it seems scholarly, as it is extensively packed with information. However, to the discerning reader, it soon becomes obvious that the ostensibly impressive technical information goes along with rather superficial reasoning.

The geologic arguments against the Flood are the same-old, same-old (e.g. purported mud-cracks). I confess to an element of weariness in addressing them over and over and over again—as in the case of my recently published rebuttal book review.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the arguments in this book cover recently made evolutionary

claims—many of which have already been answered in recent issues of *Journal of Creation*. For instance, there is the one about the ‘mutation’ that enables bacteria to eat nylon, which has been examined by creationist scholars and found wanting.<sup>2</sup>

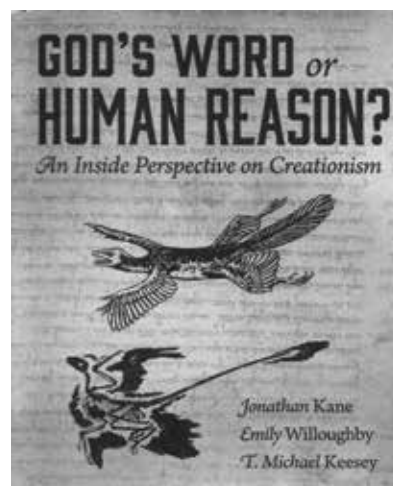
There are also many criticisms of the findings of the RATE (Radioactivity and the Age of The Earth) Project. These, too, have been answered.<sup>3</sup>

## Admitted evolutionary propaganda by the media

One of the few sensible features of this book is its candour about the way the media handles evolution. The authors quip:

“The problem is often exacerbated by journalists, with their desire to present every discovery as a major news story. Stating that a discovery overturns everything we knew about our evolution always makes for an attention-grabbing headline, even when in reality only a small part of our understanding has been modified. Before taking an overblown headline at face value, it’s always worthwhile to look up the original paper it discusses” (p. 234).

The authors do not take this far enough. Could the much-lamented fact that a large fraction of Americans do not believe in evolution, and do not trust the media, stem in large part from the fact that Americans sense that they are being propagandized?



## Ah, those ex-creationists—yet again

What about those who claim that ‘the evidence’ forced them to abandon creationism? Being intimidated by a scientific challenge can point to nothing more than an inflated sense of the authority of autonomous human reason, a lack of scientific imagination, and/or, unfortunately, a lazy unwillingness to confront the challenge.

Glenn Morton, featured in this book, is instructive. While a professing creationist, he was so locked into a uniformitarian mindset that almost all he wrote about was the impossibility of creationist models. At the first International Conference on Creationism (1986: I was there and I personally heard him), Morton was dismissive of suggested solutions to the problems he found with creationism. So, once Morton abandoned creationism, he was not showing his true colours. He had already shown his true colours long ago—in fact, from the very beginning. More on his ‘Mortoniana’ below.

The old horror stories in this book (which I have tried but been unable to verify), of numerous creationist geologists losing their faith upon joining the oil industry (asserted, for example, by Glenn Morton), are,

predictably, undocumented as well as selective. What about professional geologists who were and who remain committed creationists? Consider also those geologists who were once doctrinaire uniformitarians but who became diluvialists (I know some).

Baron Cuvier began to think of many ‘revolutions’ in Earth’s history because he could not imagine how a single Flood could account for all the different fossils and formations. In like manner, quite a few ex-creationist geologists had started out as neo-Cuvierists. They had drifted into insisting that large fractions of the Phanerozoic fossil record must be pre-Flood or post-Flood, because, after all, such-and-such requires a special non-Flood explanation, and/or such-and-such needs a very long time to form. As this mental cancer grew in their thinking, there was, before long, no place for the Flood at all. Not surprisingly, the authors of this book have, fairly using basic logic, exploited the neo-Cuvierists as ‘proof’ of the entire impossibility of the Universal Deluge (p. 49).

The same mental bug can infect scientists in non-geologic fields. I once interviewed a prominent then-professing creationist physicist who insisted that both the dendrochronological and C-14 records must be correct, going back at least 10,000 years, because they agree with each other. He simply accepted a published article as gospel truth, without so much as a glimmer of divergent thinking. I asked him if he had personally studied the crossmatching of tree rings, or examined the raw C-14 data himself. He freely admitted that he had done neither. When I then asked him why he was not withholding judgement until he had at least done *something* along these lines, he summarily brushed it off. He also insisted that “Attempts to overturn this have failed.” But there had been no serious efforts to do so up to that time! So I asked him if he

had, at bare minimum, tried to come up with an alternative explanation for the evidence. He indicated that he had not. With this kind of abjectly defeatist mentality, the writing on the wall was clear, and I was hardly shocked when he soon abandoned creationism entirely and vanished from the scene.

### **Creationism discredits Christianity—yeah, right**

This time around, this timeless compromising evangelical chestnut is seemingly backed up with surveys (p. 292) that purportedly indicate that, of those who left the church, some 30% stated being ‘turned off’ by creationism, or reckoning the church ‘anti-science’, as one of the reasons behind their departure. To begin with, this was an option that could be checked off in a survey so, at least in part, it was a leading question.

Excuses, excuses. They are so easy to make, especially when abandoning the church. What if I were to drop out of church and, as my excuse, said that I was tired of its lack of resolute stand against evolution, its lack of support (with *very rare* exceptions) of creationist scholarship, and its overall superficiality, timidity, and lack of fervour?

Let us say that the survey is accurate. For someone already rejecting the authority of part of the Bible, why is it supposed to be so difficult to proceed to the rejection of the authority of the *entire* Bible? For someone so obviously conformed to this world (Romans 12:1), and moreover sufficiently in love with the world’s system to leave the church, as did Demas (2 Timothy 4:10), why should it be remarkable that he/she would also dislike challenges to evolution—the very icon of the world’s system?

An abandoning of faith and practice, to one degree or another, is nothing new and nothing remarkable. Jesus Christ never used His power to force his

followers to continue with Him (John 6:66–67), and the individual has always been confronted with the choice of following man-made devices (idols of some sort, including—yes—evolution) or following God (Joshua 24:14–15).

Western Europe, the nest of higher criticism and Darwinism, provides an instructive test of the creationism-discredits-Christianity accusation. There, creationism barely registers at all, and evolution is more universally believed than just about anywhere else. So, therefore, Christianity should be more esteemed, and more vibrant, in Western Europe than just about anywhere else. Precisely the opposite is true. Christianity is virtually dead, and even so-called cultural Christianity is waning.

The foregoing also applies at the personal level. Whoever heard of an atheist who, having become impressed with Christians spurning the Bible and accepting evolution, chose to reconsider his atheism?

This whole silly creationism-discredits-Christianity escapade reminds me of American atheists who say that, were oral prayer to be re-introduced into US public schools, it would only hasten the demise of Christianity. Were that true, or were they sincerely convinced that it was true, American atheists would then be the biggest champions of prayer in schools instead of its most bitter enemies. Likewise, if creationism indeed discredited Christianity, atheists would be the first ones lining up and militantly demanding that it be taught in classrooms alongside evolution!

### **A rehash of all the standard compromising evangelical and modernist memes**

This book trots out the old line that creationism and the young Earth make God out to be a deceiver. In reality, we are the ones that deceive *ourselves* when we confuse our interpretations of

nature with the facts of nature, and even more so when we disbelieve God's plain teachings in Scripture.

The authors try to minimize the significance of creationism and the Universal Deluge by stating that Cyrus Ingerson Scofield and Benjamin B. Warfield, despite their high view of Scripture, variously doubted the literalness of the seven days and did accept organic evolution. But, beyond showing the fallibility of human teachers and the deficient conception of biblical inerrancy held by Scofield and Warfield, what else is this supposed to prove?

Interestingly, the authors claim that the Hebrews got the seven-day week from the Sumerians. (p. 286). If true, so what? Far from undermining the seven-day Creation, it actually reinforces it. An ancient Hebrew, seeing that the Sumerian, despite having long forgotten the One True God, nevertheless observes the seven days, would see the seven days as very concrete and fundamental (recognized even by some pagans), and would be all the less likely to think of the seven days as mere literary devices, metaphors, or side issues!

The line between compromising evangelicals and totally apostate churches is getting blurrier and blurrier, and this book continues the trend. It accepts JEPD as fact (pp. 282–on), and repeats the standard modernist line on the many 'errors' in Scripture. As of 2016, over 13,000 Christian clergy, of many denominations, have signed a declaration of support for evolution—a declaration largely initiated by Unitarian Universalist communities (p. 275).

### Those testable predictions—whose?

The authors identify some failed evolutionistic predictions (p. 175). But note the special pleading: When evolutionary predictions pan out, it

is powerful evidence for evolution, but if they fail, then—oh well—that just goes to show the self-correcting nature of science. Heads I win, tails you lose. Evolutionary hypotheses or deductions can and are being falsified, but evolutionary theory itself is always protected from falsification.

The authors claim a fulfilled evolutionary prediction when it comes to the similarity of human HIV and chimp SIV (p. 177). This argument attests to human-chimp similarity but begs the question about the *origin* of this similarity. Common sense alone would generally predict that the engine of a car could more likely successfully be swapped with that of a like-sized car than that of a truck. But this elementary deduction hardly means that the two like-sized cars diverged from a common ancestor more recently than either did from that of the truck. Still less does it indicate that either cars or trucks arose by evolution in the first place.

The HIV/SIV argument is intellectually dishonest. There is nothing in evolutionary theory *itself* that specifically predicts, *in advance*, the biomedical compatibility (or, for that matter, incompatibility) of particular chimp features with humans. Whether arising from evolution or special creation, these can only be determined by experimentation!

But let's play along, for a moment, within the evolutionist's mental box. He still loses. Biomedical considerations are not limited to evolutionary cousins. For instance, porcine organs have experimentally been xenotransplanted into non-human primates with considerable success,<sup>4</sup> even though the two are not close evolutionary relatives at all. In fact, they belong to separate orders (Artiodactyla and Primates).

Let us now look on the other side of the aisle.

A recurrent complaint in this volume is the one that creationism

makes no predictions, and has otherwise contributed nothing to enhance our understanding of the natural world. I beg pardon.

To begin with, if God had been involved in nature, what could possibly be a more important contribution to science than freeing it from its rationalistic prison?

Must we be reminded, yet again, of the many pioneering scientists who made pivotal discoveries, and who were active creationists? Think of Newton, Linnaeus, and Mendel, to name a few.

Now consider the recent decades. For the longest time, evolutionists had dismissed the discontinuities in the fossil record as artefacts of an incomplete fossil record, insufficient sampling, etc. By eventually adopting the punctuated equilibrium concept, evolutionists have come around to tacitly admitting that the creationist prediction—about the reality of the discontinuities—was in fact correct.

Let's extend paleontology to cladistics. By abandoning the old view that ancestor-descendant relationships could be inferred from the fossil record, evolutionists have come around to adopting what creationists had been saying all along (that it is meaningless to speak of ancestor-descending relationships among fossil organisms), though of course not as separately created living beings.

For the longest time, evolutionists emphasized vestigial structures, and countless needless appendectomies (including on my grandmother) have been performed. Creationists predicted that functions for them would eventually be found. That is exactly what happened.

The foregoing applies also to the molecular level. Evolutionists kept telling us about the uselessness of their so-termed junk DNA, and the assured dysfunction of pseudogenes. Creationists predicted that ignorance of function is not synonymous with

an absence of function, and, more and more, their predictions are being proved right.

So much for biology. Consider geology. Creationists had warned about the tentativeness of stratigraphic ranges of fossils, and their predictions have been validated. Although the geologic ages are never questioned, stratigraphic-range extensions of fossils—not a few of them spectacular—have become almost the norm.

Classical Lyellian uniformitarianism had long taught that geologic changes almost always occur very slowly. Catastrophism was all but a naughty word—an ignorant throwback to pre-scientific thinking. Creationist geologists, on the other hand, had predicted the ubiquity of rapid geologic change. Now conventional geology has redefined uniformitarianism to encompass frequent catastrophic changes (including global catastrophism), although of course still within the standard framework of the geologic column.

For the longest time, conventional geology had repeated the mantra that coal and oil take countless millions of years to form. Creationist geologists had predicted that these could form

rapidly, and were eventually proved correct.

Finally, evolutionists pay tribute to creationist predictions even when they would not be caught dead admitting it. Consider intelligent design and specified complexity. Evolutionists smugly and summarily dismiss these as appeal-to-ignorance ‘God of gaps’ thinking. Yet that is exactly the way they reason whenever they engage in SETI (the search for extraterrestrial intelligence). As they listen in to radio signals hoping to discern messages coming from extraterrestrial civilization, as opposed to radio ‘noise’, they are thereby validating the factuality and practicality of creationist concepts of intelligent design and specified complexity.

**Evolutionary reductionistic fallacies at the bird-dinosaur and hominid-human junctures**

In this book, the authors variously argue that there is no unambiguous, or even agreed-upon, demarcation between theropod dinosaurs and birds, and between pre-human hominids and humans. The premise itself is, at best, dubious (see below). However, let us say, for the sake of argument, that these

premises are true. The logic is flawed. Shoes and boots grade into each other, and there is no morphologically clear-cut, or even arbitrarily agreed-upon, boundary between them. Does this mean that ‘shoes’ and ‘boots’ are arbitrary categories? Hardly. Must we now rationally accept that boots evolved from shoes, or that both evolved from a common ancestor? An even greater *non sequitur*.

An obvious reductionist fallacy is created by confusing incidental similarities (e.g. those between chimp DNA and human DNA) with substantive ones (the respective capabilities of chimps and humans). As the late Duane T. Gish pointed out, it is like saying that watermelons (98% water) are almost identical to clouds (100% water).

Another layer of reductionist fallacy stems from the constraint on our thinking that is encouraged by the limited morphospace of currently living creatures, combined with the usual evolutionary memes. To take an extreme case to make the point: The reader is asked to imagine that the only known mammals are the whales and the bats. Then humans are discovered, and evolutionists argue about their status. Humans come to be understood

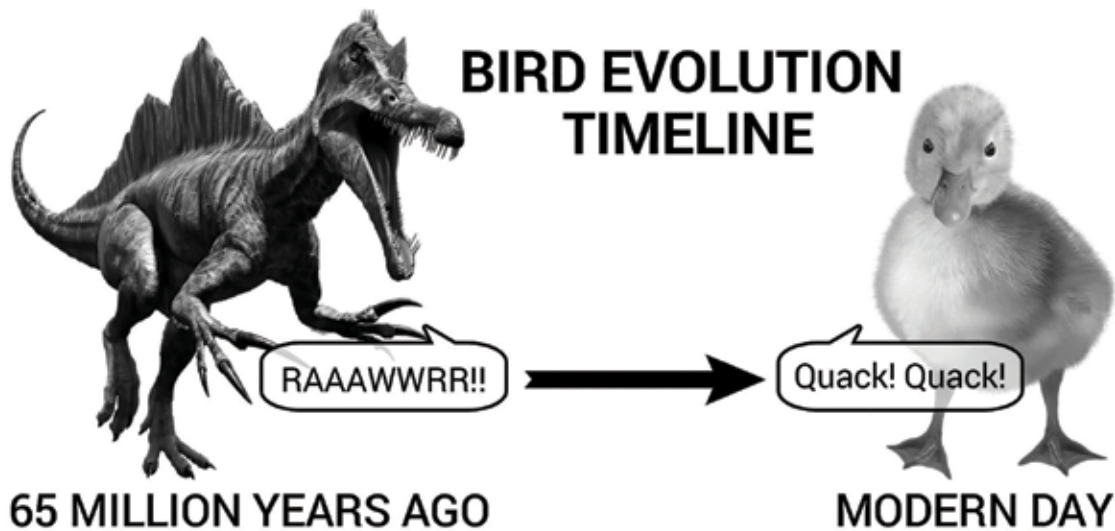


Figure 1. A satire of sorts of the theropod-to-bird evolutionary scenario

as mosaics of whale and bat features, and the disagreements of scientists, about whether humans are essentially whale-like or essentially bat-like, is then cited as proof of evolution in general and for the arbitrariness of the whale-human-bat transition in particular!

Any talk of a blurred bird-theropod or non-human-human juncture, on putative osteological grounds is, at best, disingenuous if not manipulated. Numerous papers that I have published in the *Journal of Creation* demonstrate the fact that the relevant cladograms, upon close examination, feature the following: very common morphological discontinuities between traits; *ad hoc* ‘specialized’ labels for non-fitting traits; trait-reversals (more-crownward features often becoming *less* derived than some of the more-stemward features); violations of stratomorphic intermediacy, etc. This is notably true of the inferred theropod-bird juncture<sup>5</sup>.

Another level of evolutionistic reductionist fallacy involves the confusion of traits as listed with the *integrated functionality* of the traits of an organism. For instance, Australian Aborigines, compared with other modern humans, share a number of features with *Homo erectus*,<sup>6</sup> but only a foaming racist would suggest that native Australians are therefore somewhat less human than the rest of us—as indeed many early Darwinians did. As for fossil hominids, when the traits are reckoned as integrated (as opposed to individual) units, there are in fact clear-cut discontinuities between major groups, at least according to some analyses.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the biggest reductionistic fallacy of all is the one that virtually ignores the numerous, fundamental, non-osteological differences of birds from all other forms of life.<sup>8</sup> This has evidently led to a bit of satire (figure 1).

At least, to their credit, the authors admit the speculative nature of the origins of flight, as they write:

“We do not yet know all the ways that feathered dinosaurs used their wings, or in what order these functions occurred during the evolution of flight, but in some cases it is possible to narrow it down” (p. 156).

So evolutionists clearly know much less than they dogmatically say they know.

The reductionism is even more egregious when it comes to the glossing over of the fundamental differences between humans and non-humans (figure 2). To realize this, the reader is asked to imagine what would happen if the ardipthecines, australopithecines, habilines, erectines, and archaics (p. 234) were all brought to life. Would we see a complete gradational continuum of cognitive, rational, moral, and religious capabilities, spanning (for reference) the extreme of chimps on one end and today’s humans on the other? Of would we still see a clear-cut distinction of humans and non-humans, notwithstanding any real or imagined osteological continuum between them?

### **‘Mortoniana’—re-exhuming 40-year-old discredited arguments**

This book laughably repackages Glenn Morton’s old assertions that misrepresent my position, and—more importantly—misrepresent essential facts. There is the old saw about me “setting out to prove that the geologic column did not exist” (p. 19). This is utter nonsense: I already knew that the geologic column did not exist, and this is not changed by the fact that 1% of Earth’s land surface has representatives of all 10 Phanerozoic geologic systems in place. My work was simply a measurement exercise on the geographic and stratigraphic distribution of Phanerozoic systems.

Another ‘Mortoniana’ asserts that we should expect many missing intervals of strata because sedimentation is not continuous everywhere (p. 21). Morton is openly begging the question—*assuming* the very existence of the very-old steady-state Earth that he is trying to defend!

Now consider Morton’s ‘pan in the bathtub’, wherein the continents and ocean basins are naively compared with a pan, situated at the bottom of a bathtub, covered by a thick layer of water. According to this ultra-simplistic conception of the real world, most of the sediment in the water will fall not on the pan but on the floor of the bathtub. Consequently, the shortage of sediment on the ocean floor is imagined to be a problem for Flood geology.

Now back to the real world. The Floodwaters were only a few kilometers deep—negligible compared with the thousands of kilometres of continental width. Consequently, unlike Morton’s ‘pan in the bathtub’, the free movement of water-borne sediments into ocean basins was very limited. That is, it was much more probable for sediment to be deposited somewhere on the continent than washed out into the deep ocean. And that is not all. Any movement of currents in non-synchronous directions caused ‘traffic jams’ that facilitated the stranding of sediments on continents. In addition, to the extent that the main currents consisted of ocean water flowing onto continents, sediments were all the more likely to remain entrapped on the continents. Finally, the action of geosynclines on continents acted as ‘sinks’ that further entrapped sediments on the continents. For these reasons, and still others that could be mentioned, the ‘pan in the bathtub’ is invalid.

Enough ‘Mortoniana’. Its re-exhumed presence in this work speaks volumes about the shoddy thinking behind the anti-creationist position in general and this book in particular.

### Evolutionistic special pleading—more of the same

Use of embryonic recapitulation (of sorts) as evidence for evolution in general, and more so for a specific evolutionary step, as done in this book (e.g. the theropod-bird junction) is an exercise in special pleading. For instance, given the fact that the unborn human child has a relatively large head, we would have to conclude that we must have evolved from large-headed ancestors. Were this actually believed by evolutionists, the relatively large head in the human foetus would undoubtedly be cited as a powerful evidence for evolution.

This book features an impressive-looking table of anatomical details showing a nested hierarchy of humans, great apes, and ‘lesser’ primates (pp. 229, 301, 305). It conveniently ignores the many convergent (homoplastic) features, including at the molecular level, that violate evolutionary nested hierarchies.

### The irreducibly designed mousetrap

The authors dig up the old mousetrap counterargument on irreducible complexity. The latter is imagined to be nullified by the fact that a triggerless mousetrap can still function as a slingshot or paper clip. At best, this illustrates a single functional intermediate step that nevertheless ignores all the other nonfunctional steps before and after it. Thus, as long as the wooden platform is too thin, the assembly rips apart. As long as even one hinge is inadequately attached, the assembly flies apart. As long as the wire is too thin, it bends or breaks. As long as the spring is too weak, no contraption exists. As long as an otherwise adequately strong spring is mispositioned, there is no clamping or propulsive action possible. So, unless and until *all* these conditions are simultaneously met, there can be no clamp or slingshot that could be preserved and “eventually improved

by natural selection”. In other words, before there can be survival of the fittest, there must first be the *arrival* of the fittest.

Furthermore, the foregoing applies only to a clamp or slingshot. A mousetrap has a vastly more complex function, and it will not work even minimally, so that “natural selection can improve it”, unless and until there is a properly sized, properly shaped, and properly deployed trigger mechanism. Therein is yet another level of irreducible complexity.

### Conclusions

This information-packed book, seemingly impressive at first, turns out to be a big, boring rerun of old anti-creationist claims, many of which had been answered long ago. Having reviewed many anti-creationist books, I must confess to a certain tedium with their redundancy, superficiality, and intellectual poverty.

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**Figure 2.** Fossil hominid skull display at The Museum of Osteology supposedly representing the evolutionary progression to modern humans. This superficial ‘line-up’, if nothing else, completely glosses over the fundamental non-osteological differences between humans and non-humans.