

creation points



Evolution and the Christian Faith

Theistic evolution in the light of Scripture

SECOND EDITION

Philip Bell

DayOne

© Day One Publications 2018
Reprinted 2019
Revised, second edition 2025

ISBN978-1-84625-607-3

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available

Published by Day One Publications
Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ
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Cover design by Kathryn Chedgzoy

Printed by TJ International

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit,
according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of
the world, and not according to Christ.
Colossians 2:8 (NKJV)

Dedicated to
My wife for her tireless support and prayers
during the months of writing.
I thank God for you.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to family members and friends who proofread the manuscript, in whole or in part, and made helpful comments. Special thanks to Dominic Statham, Victor Kuligin and Brian Edwards, whose queries and suggestions for improvement were particularly valuable. Finally, I'm indebted to Keith Weber for his patience and expertise in updating the layout for this second edition. I take the credit for any errors that remain.

Philip Bell
July 2025

About the author

Philip Bell trained in the natural sciences (zoology and geology) in the 1980s, then worked for nine years as a postgraduate biomedical scientist in cancer and leukaemia research in Bath. Following teacher training, he taught secondary school science. His work in creation/science apologetics since 2001 has seen him speak in churches throughout the UK and at numerous venues in many countries overseas. The CEO of Creation Ministries International (UK/Europe) since 2007, Philip is also an occasional lay-preacher. He is married, with five children and two grandchildren.

Foreword

Beyond the clear scientific arguments that undermine the fallacy of evolution, there remains a far more significant area of debate. It is this area that Philip Bell has so masterfully entered.

Here is a defence of biblical creation and an exposé of theistic evolution different from most others. Philip has shown that the attempt of theistic evolution to marry evolution with the Bible simply cannot be done with Scriptural integrity. He deals bluntly, perceptively and often alarmingly, with the way theistic evolution handles the plain message of the Bible—from the Old Testament, the teaching of Jesus and the letters of the apostles. Significantly also, he traces the tragic impact that the ‘universal acid’ of evolutionary teaching has had on society, the church, and the trustworthiness of the Bible.

His wide reading from all sides of the debate enables Philip to show that any form of evolution is a contradiction of a belief in the accuracy, authority and integrity of the Bible—as most secular evolutionists recognize—and that theistic evolution falls into numerous theological and hermeneutical pits.

Evolution and the Christian Faith is a must-read for all who wish to be clear-thinking and loyal to a Sovereign God on the subject of creation. It is masterful, accessible, and faithful to the plain meaning of Scripture. I will go one step further—I would challenge all who uphold theistic evolution to read this book.

Brian H Edwards

Introduction

Why write a book that specifically examines ‘theistic evolution’, a point of view held by many sincere Christians? Is it not an unnecessarily divisive thing to do? I am fully persuaded that it is indeed warranted. Christians who believe that the Bible is the Word of God increasingly confess to having significant doubts about its teaching concerning origins. Not a few have abandoned their former position, of the traditional, historical reading of Genesis 1–11, because of the influence of scholarly science writers or theologians who argued persuasively for an alternative. As Christians we must be absolutely sure of what we believe and certain that it conforms to Holy Scripture. But, with so many different opinions in our scientific age, how dogmatic should we really be about the doctrine of creation?

Even some pastors and missionaries privately admit to having had a change of heart on these matters. For many, it is no longer credible to view the Bible’s early chapters, what we might call its divine prologue, as history. Rather, they prefer to understand it as allegory or poetry, a mythical story perhaps, its primary aim being to teach us spiritual lessons. But are there any knock-on effects of these modified views of Genesis for the Christian faith? Does theistic evolution (or ‘evolutionary creation’) enhance our understanding of origins and related doctrines? Or does it hinder it as some maintain? Our purpose is to explore these questions. It is in the light of Scripture that we must make our assessment.

My main target readership is professing evangelical Christians, those for whom the Bible is the Word of God. While others may benefit from this book (and I hope some will), I assume that my readers will want to affirm that Scripture is without error, or at least that they strongly lean in that direction. I assume that the reader accepts the Bible as a revelation from God himself. We know that Christians do not always agree on details and that in order to maintain Christian unity, we must agree to disagree on matters that are not of primary importance. However, there are other issues which are surely fundamental. On these things, we are compelled to

enter the debate, as respectfully and calmly as we know how! If you believe that a correct understanding of origins is important, this book is for you.

You will not find arguments from science here, even though my own background is in the natural sciences and scientific research. A wealth of excellent material already exists on the scientific questions surrounding the creation/evolution debate (and a few suggested resources will be given in chapter 1). Instead, this book sets out to assess theistic evolution scripturally. Also, since my target readers are believers in God, I make no attempt to refute atheism or to defend theism. That is a noble cause but, again, it is not my purpose here.

Finally, I have written with the layperson in mind. My intended readership is not primarily academic theologians (although I hope some may read it). Consequently, I avoid theological jargon and technical language as far as possible. Whatever view you currently hold, I appeal to you to (re)assess your position in the light of the theological and biblical arguments in these pages. My prayer is that God may be pleased to use this book (whatever flaws remain) to stimulate serious and sober reflection on the part of many Christian readers—even to the changing of hearts and minds.

June 2018

Five appendices of relevant material, written in the years since publication of the first edition, are now included (from p. 295 onwards). New paragraphs have been added to the main text to tie in this supplementary information. For readers wishing to dig more deeply into the issues raised, a bibliography (in six sections) now concludes the book. Scripture references, names, and topics in the appendices have been added to the indices (p. 334 onwards).

All URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) in the many footnotes have been carefully checked, then either affirmed or updated. A few items were replaced entirely where it was appropriate to do so. The main text is largely the same, but quite a few edits have been made to increase clarity, to eliminate ambiguity, and so on.

My prayer is that these alterations and updates will enhance the book's usefulness, both for previous readers and for new readers.

Philip Bell
August 2025

“Once you get an idea in your head,
it can be incredibly difficult to dynamite it out”
(Simon Conway Morris, 2017).¹

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible
(Hebrews 11:3).

Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool;
... All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be,
declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who
is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word”
(Isaiah 66:1–2).

¹ Simon Conway Morris, *Discover* 38(6):12, July–August 2017. He is a Cambridge University paleobiologist.

1. Creation's unauthorised biography?

The opening chapters of the Bible are a biography of Creation, the origin and earliest ages of life on Earth. We might even think of Genesis as an authorised biography since the author is ultimately God the Holy Spirit. How, then, should we read this account? How much liberty should we exercise as we do so? Turning that last question around, just how dogmatic should Christians be when interpreting the meaning of such an ancient text? After all, there are several different views about origins. Surely it makes sense to adapt our understanding of Creation in light of all that modern science has revealed to us? If so, is it not absurd still to be insisting on a literal, historical understanding of Genesis these days?

“You have got to be kidding me—this entire universe in six days? Every single human being related back to Adam and Eve? I suppose you’re going to tell me that you also believe in a talking snake in the garden of Eden; and an actual world-destroying flood, with all the animals going into a big boat two by two! Don’t you believe in science? I mean, come on: you’re using a computer after all, the result of science. Yet here you are denying science; evolution is a fact. Are you people for real? How can you seriously believe that these stories recorded by ignorant goat-herders centuries ago are to be taken seriously today? And you actually teach this stuff to children—Dawkins is right, it’s tantamount to child-abuse.”

This sort of ridicule and criticism does not come solely from unbelievers. Christians who reject ‘young earth creationism’ will sometimes engage in it too.² They argue that a ‘scientific view’ of creation is more sensible,

² I have witnessed it myself. Everyone of the statements in the aforementioned fictional outburst I have heard personally, most of them on multiple occasions.

progressive and contemporary. Is such disapproval and contempt warranted? Are the views which creationists hold so ridiculous in this enlightened, modern age, that they rightfully invite scorn?

Nowadays it is easy to find parodies of those who hold to a creationist position. One such cartoon is titled, "Creationist when given 'just one proof' of evolution" and shows three pictures which depict: 1) a person with his hand over his eyes—"See no evidence"; 2) a person with his hands over his ears—"Hear no evidence"; and 3) someone quoting Scripture—"Spout Bible verses 'till the proof goes away".³ Similarly, a picture doing the rounds shows a young man with his fingers in his ears and his eyes tightly shut. Entitled "Creationists", the caption reads: "I'm right, you're wrong. La-la-la-la-la-la I can't hear you!"⁴ One more example parodies the creationist position as follows: "The Scientific Method: Here are the facts. What conclusions can we draw from them?" versus "The Creationist Method: Here's the conclusion. What facts can we find to support it?"⁵ Again, we ask if there can be any credibility for Christians who deny evolution in this age of reason and science.

On a personal note, it was part way through my university studies of zoology and geology that I realised the need to investigate this crucial subject. Although as a child I had accepted Genesis as simple history, at seventeen I embraced the idea that God had used evolution. Two years later, I reached a crisis point in my faith. I had to wrestle with many questions. Was the evolutionary view of things wrong? If not, did this mean that the Genesis record was wrong, or perhaps it meant something very different from what it appeared to say?⁶ In other words, I was confronted by the possibility that the Creation and subsequent events in Genesis 1–11 had not been historical events as a plain reading of Genesis seemed to indicate. But if Genesis could not be trusted as historically

3 Source: me.me/i/creationists-when-given-the-just-one-proof-of-evolution-hear-5109961.

4 Source: polyskeptic.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/creationistposterfull.png; accessed 6 June 2025.

5 Source: cagle.com/topic/scientific-method; accessed 9 June 2025.

6 Or perhaps both evolution and Genesis were wrong; at that time, I came to the view that both could not be right at the same time.