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# Book Reviews

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## Creation and Change: Genesis 1.1-2.4 in the light of changing scientific paradigms

by Douglas F. Kelly  
Mentor (Christian Focus Publications)  
United Kingdom

Reviewed by Carl Wieland

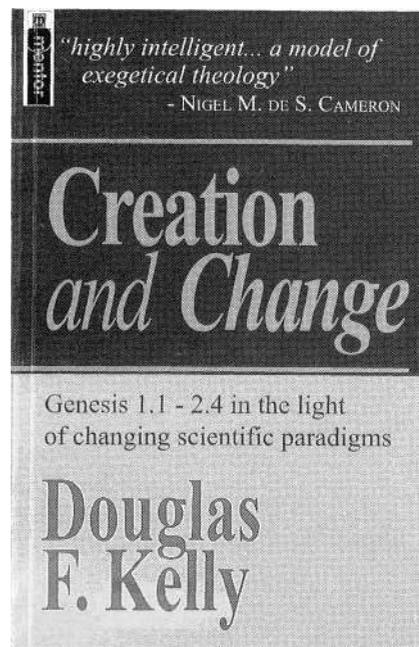
The blurb on the front cover, by Nigel M. de S. Cameron, drew my attention — *'highly intelligent... a model of exegetical theology'*. Knowing De S. Cameron's book **Evolution and the Authority of the Bible**, I knew that this would be a book by a theologian with the courage to 'tell it like it is' — namely, that the straightforward meaning of Genesis is the only one which an honest exegesis allows.

Besides being a qualified theologian, Douglas Kelly also has a good grasp of philosophy and a reasonable one of science, which all taken together makes this an important work — though more care in some areas, including proof-reading, may have prevented some significant annoyances. For example, the author appropriately cites the example of the now-discredited phlogiston theory, but seems unaware that this historical concept referred to oxidation, not light.

The opening chapters deal with some rather 'heavy', but nonetheless important, philosophical issues. The author's introduction recommends that people using this book for group study could skip these. However, I feel that this would be a pity, and in any case, if people could not plough through these successfully, they would be likely to 'bog down' on some of the rest, anyway. I liked the way each chapter was followed by technical and bibliographical notes, even though

these were often like separate chapters in themselves.

The language of Genesis is so overwhelmingly clear and straightforward, that I confess I have at times wondered in less than charitable terms about how certain theologians are able to face themselves in the mirror. I mean, of course, those theologians who, professing to be evangelical, tell us with a seemingly straight face that Genesis is meant to be telling us something other than an account of a real 6-day creation, global Flood and the like. Kelly shows how evangelicals end up in such a bind because their primary authority source is the conclusions of 'science'. Like the liberal theologians, they believe in an old world, millions of years of death before sin, etc. Because they want to retain at least a semblance of Biblical authority, evangelicals feel forced into all sorts of exegetical contortions to 're-interpret' these early chapters somehow. Liberals, on the other hand, have no such problem. In fact, they are eager to testify to the truth, namely, that the Bible really does teach a literal, recent, six-ordinary-day creation. This is because they can then point to 'science' to show that the Bible contains overt myths and campfire stories, which allows them to claim precedent for overruling its authority in any other areas they choose (ordaining practising homosexual clergy, for example).



Kelly rightly says:

*'To assume that the early chapters of Genesis are just "religious" . . . is to relegate the Bible and "religion" to the realm of the unimportant and unreal, and eventually to empty the churches since they are no longer thought to deal with actual truth'*

If it were true that Genesis does not mean what it so plainly says, and if the long-ages view of 'creation' is true, then God would have misled His people for centuries, deceiving them into believing something which was virtually the exact opposite of the truth. Death would not be the penalty for sin, but would be part of the 'normal order' of creation, for example. Among those so cruelly misled and mistaken would be the Apostle Paul and Jesus Himself.

Kelly briefly rebuts the common fallacy that postulating supernatural creation is somehow unscientific by definition. By the second chapter, he moves into his specialty field, and shows how the language of Genesis simply will not allow the fanciful 're-interpretations' so commonly applied.

First, Genesis 1-3 do not represent Hebrew poetry. He quotes an earlier authority as saying:

*'the man who says "I believe that*

*Genesis purports to be a historical account, but I do not believe that account" is afar better interpreter of the Bible than the man who says, 'I believe that Genesis is profoundly true, but it is poetry. \**

As Kelly rightly points out, the approach of the New Testament to Genesis is, or should be, a matter of the 'highest consequence' for professing evangelical exegetes. He says:

*'One can disagree with the New Testament's literal, historical usage of Genesis 1-11, but one cannot honestly find in its pages anything less than a straight-forward reading of these chapters as literal, relevant facts.'*

Nineteenth century theologians, says Kelly, changed their views of Genesis because of what they believed were the facts of science, not because of anything intrinsic to the text. In their rush to 'harmonise' they arrived at mediating positions which, though abandoning the meaning of the text, did not satisfy the science they sought to appease. He quotes a prominent liberal of last century, Professor Marcus Dods, as saying that these attempts to make Genesis say something other than what it so plainly does are 'futile and mischievous' ... that they

*'do violence to Scripture [and] foster a style of interpretation by which the text is forced to say whatever the interpreter desires'.*

The same Dods is also subsequently quoted as saying (and I agree) that

*'if for example, the word "day" in these chapters does not mean a period of twenty-four hours, the interpretation of Scripture is hopeless.'*

Kelly refers to these harmonisation attempts by evangelicals as reflecting the 'exegesis of desperation'. The way forward, he says, is to let the Scriptures speak for themselves, as an authoritative revelation from the Creator Himself, and to look critically at the reigning scientific paradigm in the light of the

Bible, an approach we would wholeheartedly endorse. Unfortunately, although Kelly understandably and strongly points out the biblical deficiencies of the 'gap' theory, he makes an earlier statement on the grammar of Genesis 1 which some gappists could twist to gain comfort.

His foray into the scientific arena, while generally good, falters in places. He appears to be up with the works of 'intelligent design movement' theorists like Behe and Johnson, but unfortunately seems to not have kept up with all the latest information from those who, like himself, presuppose the truth and authority of the Bible. He appears to rely significantly on the work of Scott Huse (he keeps referring to him as 'Hulse'). Huse is a well-meaning creationist writer whose books we at *Answers in Genesis* ceased to stock years ago on account of their being more than occasionally sloppy and out-of-date.

For example, Kelly relies on Huse to list a summary of the 'findings of the empirical fossil evidence'. One item on the list is that *'There are no transitional forms between reptiles and mammals'*. But what about the mammal-like reptiles, which are surely reasonable candidates for an evolutionist to claim, being both stratigraphically as well as morphologically intermediate? Now please don't misunderstand my point. I do not accept them as being true intermediates, and they are one of the very few, if not the only, plausible candidate groups in a record noted for its huge gaps (from an evolutionary viewpoint). Nevertheless, with the heading to this list as quoted above, and considering there are no qualifying comments (such as appear later in the list concerning ape-man intermediates), the reader is entitled to conclude that there have been no discoveries of **any** good candidates for an evolutionist to claim as truly intermediate between mammals and reptile?. We do ourselves a disservice by allowing readers to form such misleading impressions, even if this was not the author's intent.

Recognising that the main issue of controversy among evangelicals is the alleged scientific evidence for an old world, Kelly's seventh and eighth chapters are devoted to this issue. Before dealing with radiometric dating and supplying various evidences for a young world in chapter eight, the seventh chapter is on 'The age of the world and the speed of light'. Like many of us, it seems the author is still tantalised by the several lines of evidence which seemed to independently confirm the Setterfield hypothesis, even though he lists some detailed critical commentary on some of its unsolved problems. He is also aware of Humphreys' relativistic cosmology, and gives it a reasonable hearing. His main point seems to be to get readers to understand that there are a number of possible 'paradigm shifts' which could accommodate the evidence as well as being faithful to the plain meaning of Scripture.

In his list of young-world evidences, he brings up the dust on the Moon issue, showing that he is unlikely to have read the article by Snelling and Rush in the **Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal** (7(1):2-42, 1993). However, it has to be said that he does not appear to be relying only on the now-discredited high influx rate of the evolutionist Pettersson. He quotes the astronomer Lyttleton concerning the dust which he suggested would be created by the high-energy radiation coming onto the Moon's surface (unprotected by an atmosphere). Even though only about ten-thousandth of an inch would form each year, after billions of years this would presumably still add up to a very significant amount more than what was found. However, Lyttleton wrote in 1956 before Pettersson, so Kelly has not kept up to date. Besides, Lyttleton's suggestion has not been taken seriously and has not been supported by any lunar data collected by the Apollo missions.

I particularly appreciated the section on the fourth day, especially where he deals with the claim by Hugh Ross and his disciples that the Sun and

stars and so on were not really created on that day, but only 'appeared' from behind a previous thick covering of cloud. The Rossists do this, of course, because their presuppositions require them to remain at all times in step with the conclusions of cosmic evolutionary teaching, particularly the 'big bang' theory. In these cosmologies, the stars,

including the Sun, must have existed a long time before the Earth. Yet this is most emphatically not what Genesis teaches — according to the Hebrew, the light-bearers were created on the fourth day (as all Bible translators realise).

In summary, a worthwhile book, if somewhat 'meaty' at times, by a

trained and competent theologian/exegete. It is particularly suitable for those who wish to either reassure themselves that Genesis really does mean to tell us what common-sense has always indicated, or to refute the specious arguments of theistic evolutionists or 'progressive creationists' who claim otherwise.

## The Great Dinosaur Extinction Controversy

by Charles Officer and Jake Page  
Helix Books, Massachusetts

Reviewed by Carl Wieland

The idea that a massive impact from outer space was responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs is now very firmly entrenched in the public imagination. This book, written entirely from an evolutionary/long-age viewpoint, makes a fairly overwhelming case that, even within that evolutionary framework, the impact-extinction hypothesis is a complete 'non-starter'.

Officer is a geologist; Page is a science writer who was once the editor of *The Skeptical Inquirer*. Good, for a change, to see Skeptics being sceptical of something within their own camp, I thought.

I must admit, however, that even as a creationist I wondered how they would deal with all the apparent evidence for impact-extinction with which I had become familiar through the mainstream 'general' science journals.

It has been presented so convincingly within their framework; the 'impact which wiped out the dinosaurs' is nowadays referred to in passing, as fact rather than hypothesis.

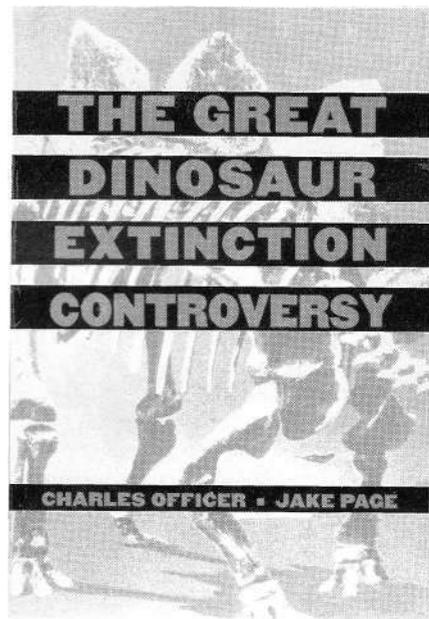
In that which follows, terms like 'Cretaceous' and 'Tertiary' need clarification. The reviewer shares with the book's authors the usage of these

terms as valid categorisations of correlated rock layers containing characteristic fossil assemblages in a particular sequence. Thus, 'Tertiary' rock was deposited on top of 'Cretaceous'. Obviously, I do not share the belief that these layers represent vast ages of deposition. We can agree with evolutionists that there is a time sequence involved here as one traces the layers in the geologic column from bottom to top. However, organisms entering or leaving the record are regarded somewhat differently. Thus, when the authors of this book refer to periods of 'extinction', it needs to be understood that in the short-age framework, this is merely acknowledging the fact that, above a certain point, no further such creatures are found buried.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion here also requires no assumption about where in the sequence of layers one locates the Flood/post-Flood boundary, something still the subject of healthy creationist controversy.

### THE BACKGROUND TO THE IDEA

In the late 1970s, geologist Walter Alvarez found a thin layer of clay in



Italy at the boundary between Cretaceous and Tertiary. This is known as the K-T boundary (K for Cretaceous, also known as the Chalk, which in German = *Kreide*).

This clay turned out to have 9.4 parts per billion of a rare element called iridium. Although this is a tiny amount, it is about 300 times more than what is normally found in earth strata. Iridium (along with other elements such as osmium) is rare on Earth but common in extra-terrestrial objects.

Walter Alvarez made his father Luis a co-author of the original paper. The fact that the elder Alvarez was a Nobel prize winning physicist certainly did the hypothesis no harm, adding some of the prestige associated with the 'hard' or 'exact' sciences.

Discoveries of similar iridium enrichment at the K-T boundary in other parts of the world soon followed. Then grains of 'shocked quartz', said