

Evolutionary Creation by Denis Lamoureux – A Brief Introduction

I recently finished reading [Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution](#) by Denis Lamoureux. I was so impressed with the book that I sent an e-mail recommending it to several of the speakers from the International Apologetics Conferences. John Oakes replied, asking if I might be interested in preparing a more formal review for posting on his website. I have such a high regard for the book that I agreed to do so. Before getting to the review; however, I believe it is useful to share some background information that explains why I consider Lamoureux's book to be so important.

Having been an enthusiast of apologetics for many years, I developed a keen interest in the creation/evolution controversy. After hearing John Clayton in the mid 1980's, I made a transition from [Young Earth Creationism](#) to [Old Earth Creationism](#). I later became a proponent of [Intelligent Design](#) (ID). Although I readily accepted [microevolution](#), I never accepted [macroevolution](#) or [Common Descent](#). Everything changed after I read [The Language of God](#) by [Francis Collins](#), director of the [Human Genome Project](#) (HGP). After encountering the evidence from the HGP, I concluded that common descent was inescapable. Several other books reinforced this conclusion, including [Coming To Peace With Science](#), [Saving Darwin](#), [Only A Theory](#), [Relics Of Eden](#), and [Random Designer](#) (all of which were written by proponents of [Theistic Evolution](#), aka Evolutionary Creationism).

Denis Alexander, director of the [Faraday Institute for Science and Religion](#) and author of [Evolution or Creation? Do We Have to Choose?](#), summarized the evidence for common descent in the following quote from his lecture at the [2007 ASA Annual Meeting in Edinburgh](#).

"Our common descent from the apes is about as certain as anything you can find in biology. The signatures of our evolutionary past are indelibly inscribed within our genomes. We are all walking genetic fossil museums, with some 45% of our DNA comprising transposable elements, including many copies of endogenous retroviruses, which have been integrated into our genomes as permanent passengers, providing irrefutable evidence for our common descent from the apes." (See this [link](#) for a transcript of the lecture)

During a 10/17/06 radio interview with several staff members of the [Reasons To Believe](#) (RTB) ministry, Francis Collins commented on some additional ramifications of the HGP as they relate to the question of human origins.

"Certainly, when I look at the genome of humans today, all the six or seven billion of us on the planet, it is not consistent with our having descended from a single pair of individuals. It is consistent with our having descended from a larger group of perhaps 10,000 or so ancestors."

Dr. Dave Rogstad of RTB acknowledged that it has not been proven that humanity's origin can be traced back to a single gene sequence, but pressed Dr. Collins as to whether or not such a conclusion is excluded by the genetic or biological evidence.

Dr. Collins responded, *"I think it is, actually... There's no way you can get where we are today from that original set of four copies (based on two individuals). It really requires you to postulate that there was a larger group of ancestors than just two. Again, I'm not sure I want to put this forward as the answer I wanted, but it is the answer I see from the data."*

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Even [Michael Behe](#), author of [Darwin's Black Box](#) and arguably the leading scientist within the ID movement, has acknowledged the validity of common descent in his most recent book, [The Edge of Evolution](#). The HGP has essentially put the “nail in the coffin” of the case against common descent.

In his 1/24/08 [review](#) of *Relics of Eden*, Cliff Martin, author of the [Outside the Box](#) blog, offered the following comments:

“Whether believers are comfortable with it or not, biological evolution is an issue that is not going away anytime soon. As the very strong case for common descent settles down upon the church in the coming years, many will be deeply troubled by its implications. To dismiss the issue as inconsequential ignores the impact it will have on the faith of many. The head-in-the-sand approach of many believers who refuse to study the question, choosing to hold on to their long-held beliefs strikes me as dangerous.”

My attempt to reconcile the evidence for common descent with biblical revelation is reflected in the following two papers I wrote for John Oakes’ on-line apologetics course in 2007.

[Implications of the Human Genome Project on Modern Apologetics](#)

[Interpreting Genesis 1](#)

I revisited the issue in the class on [Integrity in Apologetics](#) that I taught at the 2008 Apologetics Conference in Chicago. Although there have been a number of books that have been written to help Christians recognize the reality of evolution, there are not many resources addressing the [hermeneutics](#) of reconciling the “Book of God’s Works” (nature) with the “Book of God’s Words” (scripture). This point is illustrated by one of the comments of an Amazon reviewer of *Saving Darwin: How to Be a Christian and Believe in Evolution*, by Karl Giberson.

“Doesn't deliver what the subtitle promises. Karl Giberson's book is a very enjoyable history of the "Darwin wars," particularly in America. Near the end of the book, he makes a short but convincing case for the theory of biological evolution, summarizing the evidence from the fossil record, biogeography, comparative anatomy, developmental similarities and genetics. However, he does not address the theological implications of biological evolution. He is, after all, a scientist, not a theologian.”

I think that is a fair assessment. Denis Lamoureux has an advantage in this area. He is both a scientist and a theologian, having PhD’s in both biology and theology. I believe *Evolutionary Creation* fills a much needed gap by actually answering the question of “how to be a Christian and believe in evolution”, that is, how to reconcile General Revelation (nature) with Special Revelation (scripture). It goes far beyond the scope of [Beyond the Firmament](#) (another good book addressing the reconciliation of science and scripture) and actually tackles the practical hermeneutics of not only Genesis 1-11, but also the corresponding themes in the New Testament as well (sin, death, the “Fall of Man”, atonement, etc.). Personally, I consider *Evolutionary Creation* to be the definitive guide to harmonizing an evolutionary understanding of human origins with scripture. Make no mistake. Lamoureux is no liberal like [Michael Dowd](#), the author of [Thank God for Evolution](#). Lamoureux is a conservative Christian who believes in the historical resurrection of Jesus and also that “the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created the universe and life through an ordained, sustained, and design-reflecting evolutionary process” (from the preface to the

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book). It's no wonder that Douglas Jacoby consulted with Lamoureux during his preparation for his recent [debate](#) on creation and evolution with [Michael Shermer](#). Additional information about Lamoureux's position is available in his on-line presentation, [Beyond the "Evolution vs. Creation" Debate](#) as well as in the [audio](#) and [slides](#) from his presentation at the [2008 ASA Annual Meeting](#).

The book is divided into the following chapters.

- 1) Introductory Categories
- 2) Beyond the "Evolution" vs. "Creation" Debate
- 3) The Creator in a Designed and Evolving Creation
- 4) The Ancient Science in the Bible
- 5) The Bible and Science: Beyond Conflict and Concordism
- 6) The Ancient History in Genesis 1-11
- 7) Genesis 1-11 and History: Beyond Conflict and Concordism
- 8) A Christian Approach to Human Evolution
- 9) Coming to Terms with Evolution: A Personal Story
- 10) Final Thoughts and Reflections

Chapter one addresses the false origins dichotomy that is perpetuated by creationists and atheists alike with regard to casting belief in God and belief in evolution as mutually exclusive perspectives. Lamoureux re-categorizes the term evolution to include both teleological (planned) and dysteleological (unplanned) interpretations. Likewise, he challenges the assumption that the term "creation" must be limited to a representation consistent with a literal interpretation of Genesis 1. Finally, he examines the concept of "concordism", a popular interpretive approach to the Bible that suggests there is a correspondence or alignment between scripture and modern science.

Chapter two provides clarification of the various perspectives on creation and evolution, including the categories of Young Earth Creationism (YEC), Old Earth or Progressive Creationism (PC), Evolutionary Creationism (EC), Deistic Evolution, and Dysteleological Evolution. The detailed analysis of each category is very helpful in refuting the false dichotomy many perceive regarding creation and evolution.

Chapter three examines various categories of divine action; further exposing the false dichotomies advanced by YEC's and PC's alike with regard to the issue of creation. The author illustrates the distinction between EC and Deism, addresses the "God of the Gaps" problem, and discusses the interrelationships between EC and intelligent design as well as the [Anthropic Principle](#).

Chapter four explores the use of "accommodative language" in terms of the "science of the day" that is reflected throughout the scriptures. The author introduces the "Message-Incident Principal" whereby he distinguishes between the divine message (which is inerrant & infallible) and the incidental vehicle of communication (which reflected the accepted understanding of the day).

Chapter five expands on the discussion introduced in chapter four, exploring the implications of the use of "ancient science" in scripture, particularly as they relate to such topics as biblical interpretation, literalism, historicity, literary genres, and an "incarnational" approach to inerrancy and infallibility.

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In a manner similar to the analysis of “scientific concordism” that was presented earlier in the book, chapter six introduces the analysis of “historical concordism”, particularly as it relates to Genesis 1-11. Topics explored include oral traditions, ancient [epistemology](#), ancient [motifs](#), written sources and [redaction](#), etc. The chapter also includes a comparison of biblical and Mesopotamian flood accounts ([Sumerian](#), [Epic of Atrahasis](#), and the [Epic of Gilgamesh](#)).

Chapter seven expands on the discussion introduced in chapter six, exploring the interrelationships between [historiography](#), ancient motifs, and divine inspiration. The author examines the implications of these factors on the proper identification of the literary genre represented in Genesis 1-11 and the corresponding hermeneutic that is appropriate.

In chapter 8, the author builds on the material presented in the previous chapters to provide a practical hermeneutic for reconciling the perceived discrepancies between evolution and scriptural revelation. Topics include the manifestation of the image of God, human sin, suffering and death, New Testament themes related to the “Fall of Man” and atonement, etc. Other issues addressed include [theodicy](#) and the [typological](#) use of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

Chapter 9 recounts the author’s own journey from Catholic to atheist, to YEC, to PC, to EC. Lamoureux details how his study of “The Book of God’s Words” in pursuit of his PhD in theology, coupled with his study of “The Book of God’s Works” in pursuit of his PhD in biology led to his embracing of EC.

Chapter 10 provides the conclusion of the book, addressing such issues as the implications for apologetics, hermeneutical considerations, pastoral guidance with regard to the issues of creation and evolution, etc.

The book carries endorsements by Francis Collins (director of the HGP), Kansas State geology professor [Keith Miller](#) (editor of [Perspectives on an Evolving Creation](#)), and Harvard astronomy professor [Owen Gingerich](#) (author of [God’s Universe](#)). Gingerich offers the following advice to readers:

“As with a good detective story, it’s no fair here to peek at the end without first considering the clues.”

Gingerich’s comment is directed to Christians who may read on-line book reviews and find some of Lamoureux’s conclusions to be unsettling and be tempted to dismiss the book without actually working through all of the reasoning (one Amazon reviewer actually referred to the book as a “workout”). I consider Gingerich’s advice to be very sound indeed. Personally, I consider *Evolutionary Creation* to be one of the most valuable apologetic resources I have ever read. It actually delivers where other books have come up short; namely, it shows the reader “how to be a Christian and believe in evolution”. I can’t recommend it highly enough.

John Lang
Indianapolis, Indiana
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