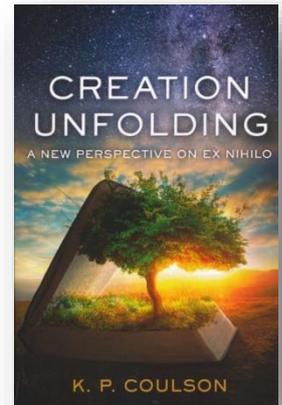


Review of *Creation Unfolding:* *A New Perspective on Ex Nihilo*

By John Mackay and Diane Eager

This review is our response to the following question sent to Creation Research: What do you think of the book *Creation Unfolding* by Ken Coulson? Is it evolutionist?

Below is our answer



Creation Unfolding: A New Perspective on Ex Nihilo by Ken. P. Coulson, was published by Phaneros Press in 2020. The core idea of Ken Coulson’s work is that he has devised a new explanation of creation, which he calls Supernatural Formative Process Theory (SFPT). The claimed benefit of Supernatural Formative Process Theory (SFPT) is that it solves the problem of trying to connect ‘observable evidence’ for an old earth with a Biblical chronology of six literal creation days. He also applies his theory to the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles as he delivers some 10 chapters and 195 pages of work (references included).

A “New Perspective”?

One church attendee asked; “How can anything written on creation be new?” So whilst it’s unusual to tackle a book title, in this case it is necessary since the church attenders question is a good one in light of the fact that for almost two millennia, Christian scholars have mined the Bible for truth while anti-Christ academic intrigues have twisted the same Biblical contents every which way plus loose, making it a virtual certainty there are no ‘new perspectives’ on Scripture. Furthermore, the Scripture itself for the past 3,000 years has boldly stated: “...what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 1:9) Try finding a new PhD topic for a theological study if you really want to experience what the writer of Ecclesiastes labels “a chasing after the wind”.

Attitudes

Throughout his whole book Coulson draws a very obvious dividing line between those using the modern scientific method and those who don’t. The scientific group is usually presented as an objective, reliable and independent source of accurate observation and information regarding a major focus of his work - the age of things. Coulson’s constant claim is “much evidence exists in nature that supports the antiquity of the earth, the solar system and the universe” and then he emphatically states “evidence *does* exist supporting the antiquity of the earth”. (p6, emphasis in original)

His treatment of the second or non-scientist group is clearly seen in his following statement: “Many Christians just assume that God spoke, and *poof*, out came a planet or a star or a tree. The main reason for this straightforward approach is because most people are not scientists. They are just normal people who are either unaware or uninterested when it comes to how

science interacts with God's supernaturally created universe." (pp45-46, emphasis is original)
Most of these type statements seem to be aimed at mainstream young earth creationists.

But can we really dismiss "normal people" as being so ignorant, because if we do then how do we treat the writer of Psalm 33, who stated clearly: "For He spoke and it came to be, He commanded, and it stood firm"? (Psalm 33:9) Perhaps it pays us to visit what knowledge actually is.

The Nature and Limits of Human Knowledge

From cover to cover we do not encounter one instance throughout the SFPT book where Coulson asks the question one young unchurched teenager put to me recently as we discussed "What effects sin has had on both our longevity and our intellectual capacity, from Adam to the present?" For a 17-year-old that was a profound question. The absence of a similar inquiry in the work of a PhD physical scientist is alarming, and it is a question we strongly recommend Ken Coulson needs to ask. The answer literally is mind shattering!

We live in a 21st Century world where science is defined by Authorities for the high school teacher as – "any naturalistic explanation without reference to God" (*The Science Teacher* (USA) Nov 2003, Vol 70 No.8, p.34). But if you make this a) your *modus operandi* in science it will determine b) the type of observations the scientist goes seeking, which c) determines the conclusions they may reach, which then d) become neither independent nor objective. In fact, we have to stop pretending they are even neutral, because the definition makes them inherently atheistic. Be brave enough to realise that consequently such a world view makes such a scientist's data or conclusions (or both) of no great value in telling us about the age of the earth, six-day creation, or evidence for Noah's flood, etc.

Consider the first man Adam at his prime, created in God's image untainted by sin - an innocent reflection of the living all-knowing Creator God. Yet even Adam was never an autonomous source of information, for that newly created Adam was always less than God. He never could know everything, let alone all the questions that could be asked. We his descendants still don't.

Yet in a world where at best you get only the answers to the questions that you ask, we must all realise that if you ask the wrong question, you should never expect the right answer. An atheistic world view or a 'man is autonomous' world view, are sure ways to reach the absolutely logical yet totally incorrect conclusions.

The first Adam could never have concluded God made the universe and all that was in it in the previous 5 1/2 days. (Think carefully about that one.) Once Eve had been made for him during that first Friday afternoon (the sixth day), he certainly knew from experience the Creator could make people in a relatively short time, but no certain observation about where man came from. Add to that the fact that he also would have had no external or independent information about how long it takes to make an earth, or stars, etc. It was only by revelation that anyone could know the Most High God had created in six days, as described in Genesis 1. Its clearest statement being when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments where it is recorded: "God spoke all these words, saying ... for in six days the lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all this is in them and rested on the seventh." (Exodus 20:1, 11)

There was, however, one observation all people could make from Adam's sin through to Moses' tablets, just as we can today – time destroys things! Natural processes may run on, but they inevitably run down, and they never create *ex nihilo*. Adam's world was completed by God in a fully functional and very good state, but ever since man's sin, all created things have been running downhill, and that includes man's intellect – a rather big spanner in the work of any scientist or layman.

A Revealed Good World

Dr. Coulson also seems to have a rather weak view of what God meant when He said everything He made was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Coulson writes: “Consider Adam's skin. Skin requires regular bouts of sunlight to protect it from burning. Rather than create Adam with *perfect* skin, it may be that God “exposed” Adam to “sunlight” so that his skin developed to the same extent as other 20 to 30 year old men. This exposure may have left his skin less than perfect (whatever that means anyway), having darker spots, blemishes and even wrinkles.” (p29, as original)

As a former lecturer in Medical Biology and a woman I (Diane) suggest Coulson's fallen thinking shows up badly here, as he should have consulted a woman as to whether spotted and/or wrinkled skin can ever be placed in the ‘very good to perfect’ categories. Perhaps he should also have considered the New Testament's use of spots and wrinkles as a negative in Paul's marriage teaching in Ephesians 5:26-27 where spots and wrinkles are listed as a blot on a wife, as well as on the church bride, which Jesus' love came to remove by the washing with his Word.

In the present fallen world we sadly experience wrinkles, spots and blemishes that are a well-known and proven result of damaged skin and are not very good, especially the ones we label melanomas. However, a very good God making a very good man, would easily have made Adam's skin fully healthy and self-sustaining, with just the right amount of melanin to let sunshine in to stimulate the skin to make vitamin D and yet act as a protective filter excluding excess sunlight which does damage skin cells, causing wrinkles, spots, etc.

Bad Tree of Knowledge?

Another example of a seriously misguided view of life in the Garden of Eden is found on page 134, where Coulson refers to the tree of knowledge of good and evil when he writes: “Why put this bad tree in a very good creation?” A bad tree? Why so Dr Coulson?

That tree was made by God on Day 6, before Adam was put in the garden and prior to the making of Eve, and before all (including this tree) were pronounced not just good, but “very good” (Genesis 1:31). There never was anything intrinsically bad about this tree. Coulson's comments reveal a gross biblical ignorance on this point

God's provision for man is seen in the fact he had made millions of trees they could access, but only one tree they were not to eat from, which is clearly identified. The Creator was Generosity personified. No, there was no bad thing in God's very good world until Adam and Eve defied God's command about not eating from the tree. It was Adam's and Eve's disregard of God's command that was bad, not the tree. The result was inevitable - the Creator did what he had told them he would as their maker and now their judge. He cursed the ground as part of His judgement on them, and dying, they began to die! (Genesis 3)

Humans Know What?

Ken Coulson (p2) makes the bold statement, "... humans know by experience that planets, stars and solar systems do not form in six days using *known* rates of natural change". (emphasis in original). But Ken, do humans really know that? Based on what? If you mean we haven't seen a planet form in six days, or a star in three or four, you're absolutely correct, but that is a statement of what we don't know, not a statement of what you or I do know!

Perhaps even more importantly, is what is implicit in Coulson's statement about "using known rates of natural change". Whether he intends it or not, he utilizes the atheistic evolutionist assumption that 'natural change' itself can actually produce planets and universes in spite of the fact no one has ever observed natural processes or rates of change produce planets, stars or anything biological from scratch *ex nihilo*.

Nature is What?

At the very best, Coulson's claim about natural rates is a statement of his own innocence or ignorance as to what the creation/evolution conflict is all about, which he compounds by using the term "natural" in a very 'unnatural' way - a way his readers are not 'naturally' thinking. For example, when referring the miracles of Jesus, Coulson states: "SFP always resulted in objects that *retained natural histories*." (p33, emphasis in original)

Is that what actually happened when Jesus turned water into wine, when he created a whole lot of colouring and flavouring molecules that were not there the instant before he spoke, yet were there an instant after? They had no "natural history". Water cannot and will not turn into wine by natural processes. The same applies to the fish and bread made for the feeding of the five thousand, as well as any new tissue made in the bodies of people Jesus healed. Such created fish, bread, or human tissue would never have come into existence by any natural processes, so they didn't need "*retained natural histories*". All known natural processes degrade fish, bread and body tissues. (Remember the old joke, "Old fishermen never die, they just smell that way.")

Coulson's statement about "retained natural histories" will make as little sense to evolutionist readers as it does to us, because it illustrates a serious communication problem due to a reliance on his own definition of the term 'natural'. His readers simply won't be thinking what he is meaning. Coulson seems to have hijacked the 'natural' meaning of these terms in order to build his case, similar to the way Darwin hijacked the meaning of "selection". Rule 1 in communication is to know where your audience is at and don't use words in a way they don't. In the minds of most people educated in the 21st Century "natural" means anything that is part of the physical world, e.g. rocks, plants, animals, or any event that occurs as a result of 'natural' physical and chemical processes, all without any reference to a/the God/gods as Creator, Sustainer or Judge. In that mindset any suggestion of a Creator building histories into nature in the beginning becomes ludicrous.

As to Ken Coulson's actual meaning of 'natural' try as we might we can't find it clearly defined at all. He does seem to use the term "natural" to mean any process involving change over time, e.g. the growth of plants, vs his use of "supernatural" to mean speeded up versions of the same processes, e.g. when describing the creation of plants on the third day of creation he states: "The vegetated world grew from seeds or at least from seedlings buried in the soil and then into fully mature seedbearing organisms." (p51) He goes on to say, "Observing Day

3 unfold would be kind of like looking at a time lapse video.” (p52) So where do you or we get such information about seedlings or pre-created seeds Dr Coulson? We do read it in the work of English Catholic Priest John Needham (1713-1781) who was a promoter of the earlier view that that the ground and the water still had residual creation properties which could continue to spontaneously create life. However, we don’t recommend the use of any view of spontaneous generation no matter how well you may intended it.

We need to read what the text of Genesis actually says, not try to read into it things that are not there. What is Coulson’s problem with God creating fully formed plants? If God could create seeds and seedlings in the beginning He could create mature fully functioning plants, as the text plainly says (Genesis 1:11-13).

History is All of It, Please

A major geological criticism we have of Ken Coulson’s book is that it sadly demonstrates a profound ignorance of the pathway geology travelled to arrive at “Destination Old Earth”. Let’s illustrate briefly via the question: ‘How can anyone with a doctorate in geology actually write a book referring to the history of geology without once bringing in Charles Lyell?’ This omission is beyond our comprehension. But why?

When I (John) did my geology degree at Queensland University (Australia) we spent a whole term on Lyell as the founding father of modern geological thinking and who was also Charles Darwin’s mentor. Lyell’s most famous inroad into geological thinking was to replace catastrophism (Creation and Noah’s Flood based concepts) with uniformitarianism – the belief that observed long slow ‘*natural rates of change*’ were key to understanding all rock and fossil formations and therefore the history of the planet. The shorter version of Lyell is the more popular pragmatism that “the present is the key to the past.” This Lyellian concept was certainly responsible for trainee clergyman Darwin claiming the rocks cried out the praises of ‘*the known rates of natural change*’ which enabled his explanation of origin of all life forms by evolution without any reference to God.

Lyell’s primary concept is applied these days to dating methods, all physical and biological sciences, astronomy etc, and it does result in the conflict that so concerns Ken Coulson. Yet if you dig deeper you soon discover a more important conflict – Charles Lyell’s theory of uniformitarianism had a hidden agenda: “to free the science from Moses” (Charles Lyell, Letter to George Scrope, 14 June 1830). Coulson’s dependence on the ‘*natural rates of change*’ concept from Lyell *et al*, certainly seems to have reaped a harvest of confusion in his thinking.

We also suspect Coulson’s PhD training at the small USA Seventh Day Adventist University has been a victim of Boston Tea Party Syndrome, which threw much of European history into the harbour along with the tea. One sad academic result is that American Education has historically and naively ignored the real history of the rest of the world, where geology existed long before American educators eliminated most things outside the USA.

Lyell was and is responsible for the deeply embedded mindset of modern science that the processes we observe at work in the world have always been working in the same way, and therefore by measuring the ‘*natural rates of change*’ processes occurring today, we can ‘calculate accurately’ how long it has been at work. The resulting long ages Coulson accepts

as facts coming from ‘the resulting truth of honest research,’ is the dilemma he invented his SFPT to reconcile.

Coulson claims: “It makes sense, then, that the processes we see at work within the earth today were the very processes that God used to build it in the first place. This means we can investigate God’s creation using the processes that currently sustain it to find out how it ticks.” (p55) This is classic Lyellian uniformitarian thinking, so in spite of the lack of references to Lyell, Coulson’s theory is in fact the result of applying Lyell’s, anti-Biblical theory to Genesis. And it will never work.

Coulson should take notice of the Apostle Peter, whom (to be consistent) Coulson would have to class as one of the ignorant “normal people”, but whom Christ approved as a writer of Holy Scripture. Peter reminds us that in the last days, “scoffers will come” claiming that “all things continue since the beginning of creation” because they deliberately ignore the facts of Creation and Noah’s Flood (2 Peter 3:1-7). In a world where we experience neither six day creation of a very good world, nor Noah’s Global flooding, limiting your data base to such events and processes that are happening now provides no basis for full comprehension of what happened in the past.

Fossil Evidence from Stromatolites

For the non fossil collector, stromatolites (stroms for short) are mound-like deposits of layered lime formed by a group of water-dwelling bacteria (Cyanobacteria), often labelled blue-green algae. They feature on page 53 where Coulson tries to justify the need for his SFP theory in explaining evidence for a long age/old earth view of the fossil record. He refers to the need to rationalise the “many horizons of stromatolites buried one atop the other in some of the earliest rocks on earth”. He claims this implies that “during Creation Week communities of cyanobacteria grew and died multiple times (as they were buried and replaced by new cyanobacterial communities) all over the world.” (p53, parenthesis in original)

As a person who has been a fossil collector for some 60 years, and who has one of the largest private strom collections downunder, I (John) have to take task with Ken’s claim. I have personally collected strom fossils from the so-called oldest fossil layers in central Australia, as well as having many present-day living ones which also still live in Australia. Plus I have collected them in the USA, Canada, UK etc and have swapped/traded, etc. for any remaining stromatolites from virtually every fossil layer around the planet

Stroms certainly are intriguing but they neither needed vast ages nor Noah's flood to produce their first fossils. They are in a very real sense – living fossils, as the cyanobacteria that make them use rock forming calcium minerals as they both grow and continually trap layers of sediment. They literally bury themselves as rock-solid living fossils. And in the immediate post-creation world where conditions in the ocean were ideal both temperature and mineral content (remember the 'good' concept), their rock-like growth would have been one of the first major widespread pre-flood ‘fossil forming processes’ on the planet. They didn’t need a flood to achieve that. (See illustration of stromatolites on following page)



A little knowledge of strom behaviour goes a long way towards eliminating the claimed 'observed evidence' of vast ages, as well as destroying any claim to evolution. Stromatolites have recognisably and undeniably reproduced their own kind. This becomes all the more significant when you realise there were over 1600 years after creation week for stromatolites to grow at ideal rates and be self-buried, prior to Noah's flood.

Timeless Miracles

Coulson's tries to relate his theory to the New Testament miracles when he refers to the man lame from birth but able to walk straight away when Peter told him to rise and walk. (Acts 3:1-10). Coulson writes: "The ability to walk is both physical and *learned*. We all know that it takes many years for toddlers to master this ability, and much the same time frame is required for adults who have had to relearn to walk after an accident. Yet this man in Acts was not only healed, he was somehow infused with a *time-dependent, learned* skill. Adam and Eve must have been infused with similar learned skills." (p39, emphases in original)

Infused? What does that mean? As the same Creator Christ who made Adam and Eve is the one who healed the lame man, there is no need at all to invoke 'infusion'. Jesus already knew what nervous system circuits were needed to function in the brain and spinal cord for a person to walk, so he could place them there instantly.

In fact, toddlers do not learn to walk by watching, experimenting and working it out, nor by being “infused” with anything. As a Medical biologist I can firmly state babies have the brain circuitry and nerve connections required, but must wait for their bodies to gain strength, and their nerve fibres to gain the insulating coverings needed to make the nerve signals work fast enough. At the personal level, observations of children around the globe reveals that some kids seemingly don’t walk or won’t walk by choice until one day they just get up and go. “Infuse” is a very poor description, Ken.

Coulson also applies his SFP theory to the man born blind (John 9:7) and states “a man’s long dead and atrophied retinal cells are regenerated.” (p33) However, it took more than new eyes for the man to see immediately. A lot of new circuits and storage facilities had to be made in his brain to enable him to understand what his newly healed eyes were detecting. Sight without image interpretation mechanism as well as memory is useless, so it had to all happened at once. There was no learning or “infusing”. Jesus created the healthy eyes and the new brain circuits in an instant, just as he did for the first man Adam, who was able to see his way around his garden home, recognise different kinds of animals and give them names, and recognise a woman when God brought Eve to him.

Who Will Be Helped?

In spite of Coulson’s claim that SFP theory will “provide a platform from which Christian astronomers, astrophysicists, and geophysicists can interface with the *secular* scientific community” (p8, emphasis in original), we predict Coulson’s theory will neither challenge sceptics nor Christians to take the Bible seriously. Any theory labelled “Supernatural Formative Processes” will be instantly dismissed by atheistic sceptics on the basis of the word “Supernatural” alone, especially when they only want to utilise ‘*natural rates of change.*’ Neither will this book encourage Christians to grow in their faith. Rather we suspect the opposite will happen in many cases, where it will produce people asking “Did God really mean six days?” And when people ask that question, the devil boasts with glee, “Got ya!”

Both Sceptics and Christians know what the implications of a literal creation are, so why not start on common ground when talking with them, and refer to Christ as Creator, and to his acts of creation?

The Real Problem

Coulson has fallen for the ultimate false dichotomy in the creation/evolution debate, i.e. the issue is science versus religion, or valid scientific thinking vs ignorant layman religious explanations. But the bottom line is the conflict is actually truth versus error, or the revealed record of the infallible Creator who was there, versus the opinions of fallible scientists and theologians who were not.

In spite of Coulson’s insistence he is a Bible-believing Christian believing in six days of creation, we get the impression he really accepts that the current secular theories of the age and formation of the earth are factually based, and his book is an attempt to manipulate such long-age secular theories into Scripture ‘*naturally*’. Perhaps he’s trying to be a young earth creationist who does not want to publicly bear that label, presumably for fear of being dismissed by academic scientists and theologians?

Conclusion

Finally, to answer the original question: No – the book *Creation Unfolding* is not evolutionary, but it is certainly not Biblical Creation either! Coulson’s theory may be enjoyed by academic theologians having philosophical discussions about origins, but out in the practical real world, it does not help people with real questions and who need real answers. *Creation Unfolding* unfolds a roadmap leading nowhere. We recommend back to the drawing board Ken!

APPENDIX: COULSON ON EVOLUTION

Ken Coulson also has a poor understanding of what the word “evolution” means. Below is an article written by Coulson, posted on his Facebook 22 April 2020

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/kenpcoulson/posts/>

Is "evolution" a dirty word?

Many Christians tend to dismiss the idea of significant biological change over time (also known as evolution). Yet interestingly, significant biological change does occur, and sometimes very rapidly.

Consider the two dog skulls below. The smallest belongs to a Chihuahua, and the largest to a Great Dane. Both dogs belong in the same species yet notice the variation in their skulls. The most obvious difference is in the size of the skulls. The Chihuahua’s head is tiny in comparison to that of the Great Dane. Other major differences are readily apparent. The muzzle in the Great Dane is far longer, while in the Chihuahua it's barely noticeable. Perhaps one of the most important contrasts is found in the cranial bones. Notice the external sagittal crest of the Great Dane compared to that of the Chihuahua. The crest is completely absent in the Chihuahua (which actually has a hole in its very round head!).

These changes become even more dramatic when we consider the rate at which most dog breeds diversified—over a period of about 300 – 1000 years. It is true, this isn’t natural selection, it is breeding, but when we conceive of such dramatic change in such a short period of time, the possibilities are intriguing.

Scientists have taken account of the astonishing rate of dog evolution. Secular researchers Drake and Klingenburg (2010)* concluded that shape variation for the skulls of domestic dogs and Carnivora (all cats, bears, and, hyenas) is comparable! Yet Carnivora, as a group, supposedly evolved over a period of 42 million years!

Christians should be excited about this kind of rapid change within organisms! Many creationists now believe that most of the mammal families we have with us today “evolved” from very different looking ancestors that disembarked the ark just a few thousands of years ago.

When creationists denigrate “evolution,” they are maligning the amazing genetic diversity that God Himself ordained from the very beginning. And no, I’m not condoning that man evolved from apes. That kind of accusation is often a knee-jerk reaction to a perceived attack on the Bible. The Bible says nothing about “evolution” in its simplest form, “change over

time.” It does provide criteria that limit evolutionary change (e.g., ape to man), but it is most definitely not “anti-evolution.”

So, let’s embrace radical change over time (evolution?), being careful to keep within the bounds of Scripture, but not so careful that we deny observational science.

*Drake, A.G, and Klingenburg, C.P, 2010, Large-Scale Diversification of Skull Shape in Domestic Dogs: Disparity and Modularity, vol. 175, no. 3, The American Naturalist

(End of Coulson’s article. Items in brackets in original. Illustration of dog skulls not included here for copyright reasons.)

Our Comment: This is the same misuse of the word “evolution” that is used by atheists to deceive people into believing all life formed evolved from a single cell billions of years ago, apes turned into people millions of years ago, and there never was one created man, Adam, who brought sin into the world. By calling small observed changes, e.g. large dog to small dog, “evolution,” they convince people that large un-observed changes, e.g. reptiles to mammals, must have occurred.

The changes described by Coulson are a combination of variation within kind and, most significantly, degeneration of different subgroups within one kind.

For more details see the question:

DOG EVOLUTION? Dogs have undergone many changes since people have been breeding them. Surely this is evolution? Answer [here](#).