

CREATION UNFOLDING CONTROVERSY

By John Mackay, Diane Eager and Joseph Hubbard

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Background to this Controversy

The controversy over the ‘New Creationist’ movement has expanded as AiG UK’s Simon Turpin reposted AiG USA’s (Ken Ham’s group) [critical reviews](#) (January 2023) of what is being touted as a new perspective on creation. Both add to what we have already stated on this issue, so first a little history. Following publication of the book *Creation Unfolding: A New Perspective on Ex Nihilo* by Ken Coulson in 2020, John Mackay and Diane Eager were asked by many what we thought of it. We wrote a critical review and eventually published it on the ‘Ask John Mackay’ site and promoted our review via our email newsletter on 20 October 2021.

Dr Ken Coulson, is a graduate from the Seventh Day Adventist University at Loma Linda USA. His book *Creation Unfolding* was published by Phaneros Press and made available on Amazon with promotional commendations by Pastor Craig Lloyd from Brisbane, Australia. Craig Lloyd is senior Pastor for the group of churches to which Ken Coulson’s church belongs, and Ken Coulson’s fellowship is led by Pastor Dave D’Amour. Coulson is also part of a group who call themselves New Creationists.

After receiving very negative reactions from pastors Craig Lloyd, Dave D’Amour and author Ken Coulson to our first review, Diane Eager and John Mackay met with them in August 2022. At their request we agreed to re-examine our review and correct any factual errors. As part of this process we voluntary removed the article from the Ask John Mackay site. We have since examined the original review and concluded that apart from correcting some minor typographical errors and grammar it did not need changing. As such, we stand by our original critique of the book as do our colleagues Joseph Hubbard, who leads the UK Creation Research work, and Craig Hawkins who leads the work in Tasmania.

During the re-review process we decided to publish a further critique of the other serious issues in the book. This review includes commentary on the extensive quotes from Craig Lloyd in the book. This second review was initially sent confidentially to our expert contacts across the globe, but not published on any of our websites or in other media. Confidential copies were also supplied to Ken Coulson and the two church pastors.

Throughout this process Craig Lloyd, Dave D’Amour and Ken Coulson have claimed our criticism should have been dealt with privately within the church. However, since *Creation Unfolding* has been openly published and sold through Amazon since 2020, neither we nor any reviewers (e.g. Answers in Genesis) are under obligation to have it privately vetted by Ken Coulson’s church leaders.

Our final updated review is below, and our original review can be accessed [here](#).

A FURTHER REVIEW OF *CREATION UNFOLDING*

By John Mackay, Diane Eager and Joseph Hubbard.

December 2022, updated January 2023

Background to this Further Review.

The book *Creation Unfolding: A New Perspective on Ex Nihilo* was authored by Ken. P. Coulson, and published by Phaneros Press, in 2020. We published our first review of this work on our Creation Research QnA site October 2021.

The book's essential points are: Those who argue there is real evidence the world is very old and that evolution is based on observed evidences fossil, biological etc, actually do have a case for claiming they could not believe a literal reading of the Genesis six day creation. Yet Ken argues many could be persuaded to believe in six days of creation and a young earth if they could see there is a natural way to explain the evidence better than the concept that 'God spoke and it was' (Psalm 33:9).

So Coulson argues that God created life on the earth by a process he has labelled Supernatural Formative Process, (SFP) which in essence claims God has only ever used the natural processes which evolutionist old earthers currently observe in action, yet at creation such processes were speeded up by the Creator.

One example of Coulson's dealing with Day 3 of Genesis will suffice to illustrate for this introduction.

When God said 'Let the earth bring forth plants!' Coulson argues God initially put seeds in the ground which His command caused to sprout, but instead of taking the normal time we see today where fruit trees can take five years to mature or a pumpkin vine three months, God's SFP sped the natural cycle up to achieve maturity in less than a day.

The New Creationists

Fact and faith connections are key to dealing with Ken Coulson's claims so let me summarise what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Cor 15: 12- 19 (in particular v14); 'If it's not true that Christ has risen from the dead your faith is in vain and you are lost in your sins and your foolish faith is to be pitied!' Why? Because Christianity is a fact based faith! Without facts – there is no faith that saves! Saving faith is a gift from the Creator for sure. It is a free gift not based on our own works. But it is a valid gift because of the fact that Jesus actually died and factually rose again, plus was historically seen by many, many witnesses. It was the factual works of Jesus which make our faith without works possible!

Coulson and others now form a loose amalgam known as the New Creationists.

The New Creationists are analyzed in an article by Biology Professor Joel Duff, a known contributor to *Biologos*, who first graduated from Calvin College, then obtained his PhD from the Uni of Tennessee. Joel Duff features Ken Coulson with approval on his list of New Creationists, which also includes people long known to us to be on the edge of creationism such as Kurt Wise PhD (Paleontology) from Harvard University, now Professor of Natural History and Director of the Center for Creation Research at Truett McConnell University near Atlanta. I (John Mackay) have known Kurt since his days in Tennessee where our USA Creation Research HQ still is. I met Kurt along with my fellow Creation Research geologist,

and now retired member of the Tennessee division of Geology, Bob Powell. The interaction was extremely negative as we clashed primarily over the authority of science vs scripture. And we still do!

Duff who is an old earther and evolutionist, has also [listed](#) with approval some distinctive characteristics he considers the New Creationists have, including their acknowledgement there is “plenty of evidence from biology, the fossil record, genetics, biogeography, and other areas that support the process of evolution; it cannot be thrown out entirely.”

Duff also states “they are more comfortable applying an academic approach to questions which entails application of testing and criticizing ideas **reducing their susceptibility to fideistic tendencies** and creation dogmatism.” (emphasis added)

<https://newcreation.blog/building-a-creation-model/>

So don't be surprised we will review their fideism as well as its theological connections, Ken Coulson's in particular.

Since the publication of our first review of *Creation Unfolding* we (John and Diane), were asked to meet with Ken Coulson, along with Craig Lloyd and Dave D'Amour, both Pastors of Grace Bible Churches in Brisbane, Australia. John has attended one for decades, and Ken attends the other. The purpose was to discuss our criticism of Ken Coulson's book and his lengthy email response to our criticisms. We were asked to read Ken's rebuttal and reconsider our critique.

Since that time Ken and John have had a brief meeting in John Mackay's office where Ken further expressed his concerns. I (John) gave only one bit of advice to Ken at that time i.e. his book was sadly in need of the one thing that could protect him from what he believes is invalid criticism – an accurate index.

Ken was emphatic when he visited me (John Mackay) that he could never agree with my geology, and Pastor Craig is on record to myself long before this saga that he no longer considered the six days as that important.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the first enquiry as to what we thought of Ken's book came from within Grace church membership, from those concerned about the book's contents. The second source of questions came from Creation groups around the globe who requested our critique, followed by similar inquiries from individuals across the planet.

As explained to the Grace group at that first meeting, in response to their attitude that our criticism should first have been discussed within Grace church circles prior to publishing, we replied that Ken's book had been available to the public for at least a year to be read by all. That fact alone made it open to public critique by anyone, and critics including ourselves were under no obligation to meet with anyone to discuss our critique prior to its release. Therefore, our first review was posted on our Ask John Mackay site, which Craig, Ken and Dave objected to. After the above meeting with them, we offered to take our review down for our further consideration, where it has remained in limbo until we have had opportunity to complete that review. John, Joseph and Diane have now further studied Ken Coulson's book along with Craig Lloyd's quoted contributions to it and Ken's rebuttal. The results are below. The pastors also asked us to give Ken some positive encouragement, but in all honesty we can only say we admire the enthusiasm with which Ken promotes his theory as he seemingly tries to get it universally accepted.

Regarding Ken's response to our critique there is one particular reaction that deserves our comment. It deals with his position regarding the nature of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil from Genesis 2:9ff. On p134 Ken wrote; "Why put this bad tree in a very good world?" We were very critical of this because the tree was made before the Creator declared all his work 'very good' on the sixth day, so there never was any bad thing built into the garden. Nowhere through the book can we find that Ken corrects or withdraws his bad tree question. Perhaps an Indexing problem? Ken's response included his way overused statement that our criticism was 'a personal attack on me.'

Thus, we stand by our original comments about there being no bad tree in a very good world. Ken Coulson and Craig Lloyd accept the belief that the created world may have been very good (Genesis 1:31) but was not perfect (p96). We concede that in Coulson Speak, a very good world may not have been so good after all. Perhaps Ken could suggest a Sliding Scale of Perfection – from bad to good to very good to perfect?

Overall, the book is sadly confusing and poorly written with a rather strange style of stating a case in a fully absolutist way (p45-46) where he divides readers into either "normal" or 'scientific people' which whether Ken admits it or not, this actually does insult ordinary people by creating an inclusion/exclusion zone to which criticism you again respond by claiming a later denial/explanation is to be found many pages and chapters away where you feel your position was better defined e.g. (p167-168). Yet a quick check shows p167-168 seem to have nothing to do with your scientist/non-scientist categorization, but with spiritual warfare. What's the link Ken? We can't see it. Or are we just too normal?

We cannot overstress to Coulson that any possible misreading can be easily prevented by use of a cross referencing index, easily done even on self-published books using an indexing computer program. So we don't mean to be unkind, but you need to grow up and stop claiming any criticism is a personal attack instead of a serious critique of what you have actually said, even when you don't think you have.

Such critical reviews may in the end be the most valuable lesson the Lord Jesus, who is the Word, may choose to use this saga for to show how much your skill at written word communication needs to improve.

The Real Origins of Old Earth Geology

It is very evident from reading Coulson's book that his agenda is to persuade those who claim there are millions of years of fact-based evidence, to accept a creationist framework which does explain the claimed 'old earth' evidence. For example, on page 172 he writes, "Since SFP theory suggests all rates, everywhere were the same, *relative to each other*, during Creation Week as they are in the present, and since it strongly suggests that these rates were accelerated billions of times, then Creation Week systems should be stamped with vast amounts of process, interpreted by the secular scientific community in terms of billions of years." (p72, emphasis is original) He then lists a number of long ages based on astronomical and physical dating systems. See also pages 3, 25-26, 32.

However, he fails to deal with the fact that no old earth concepts have their origin in physics, chemistry, astronomy or radioactive dating, etc, but are primarily derived from pre-evolutionist stratigraphic beliefs used in constructing the geological column. It is those

stratigraphic concepts which become the root cause of belief in the geologists' long-age earth and the consequent evolution theory, despite it being a creationist who devised the rules of stratigraphy.

To give a brief background, readers need to understand the geologic column did not begin with American geologists, but is almost exclusively based on the principles of the one man regarded as 'Founding father of stratigraphy' - Nicolas Steno (1638-1686). Steno's principles currently underlie all geological thinking, and are so widely accepted that few professionals or laity in any fields ever begin to question them. When you do here is what you find.

Steno's principles include the concepts that strata are firstly laid down horizontally, and that the bottom layer got there first with all layers above being sequential in deposition. Steno's contemporaries John Ray and Robert Hooke soon concluded that if Steno was correct the world was much older than the Bible would allow, which nails the real problem to the door. There is something seriously amiss with Steno's principles and therefore with all that has come from them, including the geological column with its corollaries – an old earth and eventual evolution.

This inherent old earth factor in Steno's work was the principle recognized and used by anti-Christian Lawyer Charles Lyell (1797-1875) who had not only concluded that if the bottom layer formed first, then the creatures buried in that layer must have lived and died before the ones in the layers above. Hence the sequential geological strata represent the constantly accumulating pages of a book of real history. Add to that Lyell's now famous uniformitarianism concept that 'the present is the key to the past', thus his very old earth resulted from the sum total of fossil lifespans, added to the slow present-day processes of rock formation. All of which led him to invent a new method of stratigraphic classification: rock layers were to be classified by their percentage difference in fossil content, because the sequence of layers was intrinsically and essentially an actual historic record of life. He concluded the world and all that was in it was too old for the Biblical record to be valid or true. After all, geologists claimed to be dealing with a real book of life and real fact, not just a faith based theological account.

His claims of the vastness of time became key to Lyell the lawyer's methodology for his real aim of getting rid of the influence of Moses from all fields – geology, science, history and law. We see this in his letter of 1830 to one of his political colleagues: "I am sure you may get into Q.R. [Quarterly Review] what will free the science [of geology] from Moses, for if treated seriously, the [church] party are quite prepared for it. ... I conceived the idea five or six years ago, that if ever the Mosaic geology could be set down [put aside] without giving offence, it would be in an historical sketch, and you must abstract mine, in order to have as little to say as possible yourself."

Charles Lyell: Letter to George Scrope, 14 June 1830 In Lyell, K. [Lyell's sister-in-law]. *Life, Letters and Journals of Sir Charles Lyell, Bart. I:268-271*, John Murray, London, 1881. [Items in square brackets added for clarification]

Lyell's efforts brought forth their most successful fruit as he mentored future evolutionist Charles Darwin, who went one step further than Lyell with his theory that the percentage difference in strata fossil content could best be accounted for by the life forms in lower layers, not just living and dying in historic order, but also disappearing as they evolved (over millions of years) into new life forms in the upper rocks. As a result, Darwin the trained

theologian, eventually rejected the total Genesis account of, firstly Noah's Flood, then 6 days of creation, the young earth, and finally the Creator Christ. Darwin would eventually go on record as commending Lyell to his son for being "most firmly convinced that he has shaken the faith in the Deluge etc far more efficiently by never having said a word against the Bible, than if he had acted otherwise." (Charles Darwin, Letter to his son George H Darwin, 21 Oct 1873). Darwin clearly understood that Lyell's aim was to undermine belief in the Bible.

Therefore, we predict that anyone who tries to find a strata level where you could pinpoint the start or end of Noah's flood within the accepted geological column will fail – simply because the column is a Lyellian, anti-Noah, anti-Biblical construct overlaid by Darwin. We need to see clearly that those who constructed the geological column, and those who promote it now, have a-priori rejected the historicity of Noah's Flood thence creation and all of God's Word. My professors at University of Queensland in my first week of doing a Geology degree were emphatic about this conflict.

Note well at the risk of overstatement - the column is not evidence! It was one of the first successful reconstructionist histories. Coulson's or his New Creationists Colleagues' attempts to encourage unbelievers as to where to locate the flood in an anti-flood construct will end up crippling belief in the Bible and defeating Christian faith just as Lyell set out to do and succeeded in doing.

Defining The Geologic Column

To borrow a Coulsonism, let me define what we mean by Geologic Column so you can be certain what we mean by the term. Let's start with the textbooks supposedly best example of it, the very Grand Canyon?

A previous President of the British Geological Association and winner of the Lyell Medal for prestigious Earth Science Research, Geology Professor Derek Ager wrote in his book *The New Catastrophism* (Cambridge University Press 1995):

"Nowhere in the world is the record, or even a part of it, anywhere near complete. Even in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River and the adjacent sections along the Little Colorado River, surely the finest record of geological history anywhere on Earth, there are huge breaks." (Ager, *New Catastrophism*, p14)

Like Ager, I (John Mackay) have been there, walked the canyon, analysed the fossil content and photographed every layer top to bottom many times. On my calculation there is some 95% of the supposed time record missing if we go from the base rocks in the Vishnu Schist (supposedly 1,500 Million years old), up to the rock the tourists stand on at the Permian lookouts, dated some 225 million years old. The column is mostly gaps – defined as believed missing rock and fossils.

No wonder Ager went on to write: "It may seem paradoxical, but to me the gaps probably cover most of earth's history ... It was during the breaks that most of the events probably occurred ... this was when most animals and plants lived out their short lives or evolved into new forms." (Ager, *New Catastrophism*, p14)

Now to have evolutionary evidence confined to the missing layers should obviously be a furphy, but to then admit the percentage of time that is missing means Ager and ourselves are right to ask 'what column?'

There is one location often claimed to represent a complete Geological Column; the Hunt Estate Larson No. 1 Oil Well, Section 10 Township 148 N. Range 101 W. North Dakota USA. Here you find that from the base of the Cambrian to the top of the Tertiary, you have supposedly 600,000,000 years recorded by around 15,000 feet of rock. If we ask how much rock would have been laid down each year if the time scale is true then the answer is an average deposition rate of less than 1 molecule of oil per year. Therefore, either the layers were deposited much faster than claimed or a huge chunk of time/layers are missing, or most likely both.

Again, as Ager stated: “We are always faced with a contradiction between rates of deposition and the known thickness of rock for a particular geological time.” (Ager *The Stratigraphical Record* p44)

So in full: the Geologic Column is an interpretive construct patched together from many locations and evolution is an interpretation based on that, from which the objective and honest student must conclude there is no evidence for evolution, and little for vast ages preserved in the rock record.

Therefore, we must be blunt about those who hold the column as real and accept those who investigate it as ‘experts without prejudice’. If there is one thing the history of science reveals, it is the popular but erroneous insistence that science is self-correcting, and since most scientists don’t have the same attitudes or conspiratorial mind-set of Lyell, Darwin, etc. their work can and will achieve correct answers based on evidence alone. Yet the reality is that all scientists knowingly or unknowingly operate inside the framework or paradigm of the received text - the “authorised version” of long ages and evolutionary

Ken, Craig and Dave, *et al*, it is time to realise that ‘honest’ Old Earthers or evolutionists have not based their views on ‘evidence’. For it never was evidence in the first place, therefore it can never be explained by Coulson’s sophisticated SFP ideas.

Lyell and colleagues were not interested in combining their concepts with the Bible – they wanted to replace the Bible with their own ideas. So let us repeat at the risk of boredom, trying to give a biblically related explanation of the self-proclaimed ‘evidence’ for Lyellian geology and Darwinian evolution is doomed to fail.

In a slightly guarded version the Apostle Paul warned Timothy, and therefore the church, to “guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge”, for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:20-21 ESV)

This warning was more bluntly expressed in the Authorised King James version: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:20-21 AV)

In the 17th century, when the King James Version was translated, the word “science” meant knowledge of any kind, not just the natural sciences. Therefore, the translators rendered the Greek word “gnosis” in v20 as “science” for use in a world which is on record as widely accepting Aquinas’s view that ‘Theology is the Queen of the sciences!’ (Summa Theologica 1265-74)

Lyellian old earth geology is false science - a false knowledge which has led many generations to reject the authority of Scripture, and therefore reject the Creator and Saviour who inspired the Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16). It will do the same in the method Coulson uses as well.

Natural, Naturalistic, Naturalism?

One of Ken's common practices when he is accused of error is to reply; 'But I didn't mean that.' This was particularly true when we originally accused him of using the same uniformitarian naturalistic Lyellian thinking that lead to Darwinism and old earth in the first place. It can be seen repeatedly in Coulson's insistence that modern-day, naturalistic processes are the key to understanding how God created. To avoid mis-representing his argument, we should point out that many times throughout his book, Coulson emphasises his definition of naturalistic differs from the standard secular understanding of the word. Instead, Ken claims that 'naturalistic refers' to "rhythms of regularity in nature" (pg.11).

However, as we look deeper into what Coulson claims throughout his book, we find his definition of naturalistic is not too dissimilar to the claims of theistic evolutionists – Creation by a natural process initiated by a supernatural power (Dennis Alexander, *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* Monarch books, 2008).

Even his term 'rhythms of regularity' points toward a uniformitarian naturalistic philosophy. Take, for instance pgs 6-7 of Coulson's book where He explains the current thinking behind continental subduction, as evidence for the "antiquity of the Earth" and states:

"By estimating the current volume of the Earth's continental rocks, and then extrapolating back at the current rate at which these rocks are being formed, one can easily approximate a timeframe for the Earth's formation in the millions and billions of years." Coulson pp 6-7

This is classic Lyellian thinking; taking current rates and processes, then assuming they have remained constant in the past (you could almost call them 'rhythms of regularity'), in order to explain all of geology. Ken reaffirms this philosophy throughout the book:

"Current processes are all that is required to perceive that this planet was not formed in a single day, week, year, or even a thousand years." Coulson p25

In sympathising with Old Earth Creationists:

"...the Earth does seem to have a long history associated with it, as does the universe..." (Coulson pp 25-26)

In claiming the need for supernaturally-rapid sediment deposition:

"At today's rate it would take tens or hundreds of years for the finest of those sediments to settle out of the water column" (Coulson p40)

"It makes sense, then, that the processes we see at work within the earth today were the very same processes that God used to build it in the first place." (Coulson p55)

There are many other instances throughout the book. The premise of Coulson's argument is that since God has always used the same processes then the present is the key to the past, and modern processes extrapolated are the explanation for historical geology, therefore God must have supernaturally accelerated these rates in order to fit the vast periods of time into a few thousand years. The entire argument hinges on the belief that the anti-God, Lyellian

philosophy of uniformitarianism is accurate and based on objective evidence – even though a short history lesson tells you otherwise, and the Apostle Peter specifically warns us against it. Indeed, the last quoted statement sounds remarkably similar to the arguments of theistic evolutionists, such as Alexander, who claim that God, “Initiated a universe that could create itself”. Alexander believes that the evidence for evolution is akin to the evidence for deep time, and is simply another ‘rhythm of regularity’. He believes that evolution is a process at work today, and was the very same process that God used to build the world in the first place. See the similarity?

The point is simple: If you take a pagan inspired, anti-God philosophy and apply it to the world around you, don’t be surprised when there appear to be contradictions to God’s world and Word. All Coulson’s arguments for the apparent age of the world and universe are based on this uniformitarian philosophy, which has no real basis in reality. So what advice would we give to the geophysicist whom Coulson describes on page 63, who can’t just accept God created the Earth in six literal days when Coulson disallows ‘You just need to believe?’ Our advice to anyone is to deal with the real issues here and get rid of the Lyellian thinking that underpins so much of modern geology, geophysics etc, and reject the false principle of superposition that lends itself to deep time so effectively, whether Steno intended it or not. It would do us all good to take on board the advice of Martin Luther to the Papists:

“If you cannot understand how this could have been done in six days, then grant the Holy Spirit the honour of being more learned than you are. For you are to deal with Scripture in such a way that you bear in mind that God Himself says what is written. But since God is speaking, it is not fitting for you wantonly to turn His Word in the direction you wish to go.” *What Luther Says. A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian*, compiled by Ewald M. Plass, Concordia, 1959, p93.

Time to admit it, given the number of times Coulson uses the Lyellian concept, in a Lyellian way such that no other reading is possible, we will continue to state that usage of, and context for this naturalistic phrase denies any non-Lyellian meaning you claim. This book is uniformitarian whether it was intended or not!

We urge Christians everywhere whether geologists, theologians and others to take seriously Peter’s warning to the church about such a philosophy when he wrote:

“... scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” (2 Peter 3:3)

This ‘things continue from the beginning as they were’ attitude is what we see throughout Coulson’s book, and whether he likes it or not, it is directly linked to worldly naturalism and anti-God paganism, as history shows us.

A Vital Biological Inconsistency

The events of Day 3 are described in Genesis as follows (both NKJV and ESV shown) Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that

yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day. Genesis 1:11-13 (NKJV)

And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. Genesis 1:11-13 (ESV)

Did you spot the problem? Coulson’s supernaturally time lapsed plants came from pre-formed and pre-planted seeds blessed by God the Creator, whose command ‘to sprout’ actually sped up the seeds’ growth, so that by the end of Day 3, the resulting plants even possessed fruit with seeds in them as the text above indicates.

The serious issue here is that if Coulson wants God to use natural processes for the creation of plants, albeit with supernaturally increased speed, he should note well that nothing in biology works in isolation. Living things are part of symbiotic and mutualistic systems. Plants grow in soil, which is not just grains of minerals. Soil contains organic matter, microbes, fungi and small invertebrates to keep it healthy and sustaining for plants.

Presumably Coulson concedes that God created the organic matter and microbes and fungi that have symbiotic relationship with plants at the same time as He created the seeds. John’s experience growing orchids reveals there are many seeds that will not germinate without the action of fungi e.g. tree-orchids, and ‘ground orchids’ that grow using underground ‘arms-length’ fungal linkage to tree roots by which they exchange food and by-products in both directions. However, the small invertebrates such as worms and various other “creepy crawlies” would not have been created until the 6th day.

One of the most significant biological mutualistic system is plants and pollinators. This is especially significant for Coulson’s plant growth by SFP. The vast majority of plants depend on insect, bird and animal pollinators in order to naturally set seed and produce fruit.

However, such pollinators were not created until the 5th and 6th days of creation according to Genesis, but fruit with seeds in it is mentioned on Day 3. Coulson does not mention this issue in his book at all and hides his lack behind an arbitrary reason – expanded below.

Most readers accept that the plain text meaning of Genesis is that on Day 3 God created fully mature plants, complete with both fruit and seed. Such plain meaning is so obvious, even to David Attenborough, Richard Dawkins and Discovery Channel who delight in mocking Genesis from atop their evolutionary old earth throne. Yet Coulson’s view is neither the plain meaning nor even consistent. To argue God could create seeds with DNA ready to go, within a ‘created’ soil which had no pre-existing plants, means the Creator certainly possessed the power and knowledge to create plants with fruit containing seeds. So why not believe the plain meaning of Genesis that God created “vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind” (Genesis 1:12 ESV) without needing or using any high speed “formative processes” to take them from miniscule seeds in the ground to fully formed Dandelions, Daisies or Dragon Fruit replete with seeds and fruit. It was all done in less than a day, and totally minus any naturalistic means of fertilization at all, supernaturally speeded up or not.

Now let’s expand this to include something Coulson glosses over – the other creative act involving plants on the 6th day, when God planted the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve to

live in. Eden's garden did not involve creating any new kinds of plants, but it did involve the creative act of placing mature plants, including fruit trees, into an orderly formation to provide food and habitat for the first humans and the birds and animals that lived alongside them. Coulson notes that he can see no way this could have happened by his SFP method, and then proceeds to explain the problem away. Remember that Adam and Eve arrived on the sixth day into a world replete with mature fruit, vegetables and herbs ready to go and put in place on that same day. The difficulties of using an SFP approach are horrendous. Let's investigate.

As mentioned above nothing in biology in the present world works in isolation. By Day 6 potential pollinators had been created but a reminder of what would be involved in producing a fruitful garden could help us here. A garden consists of plants that produce and receive pollen, including some that have male and female flowers that bloom at separate times, insects and birds for pollination, and mature ripe fruit containing fertile seeds. All these would need to be speeded up as well as coordinated.

As a long-time vegetable gardener and beekeeper John Mackay has observed some of the mismatches that would need to be overcome. For example: bees do not become ready for their pollinating role until around 14 days after they emerge as adults in the hive. Pumpkins grow from seed to flowering in about 8 weeks then firstly produce abundant male flowers, but no female flowers for at least 7 days after that. Then after bees do their bit the fertilised fruit will take at least three to six months to mature and contain seeds.

Coulson's work reminds us of the Ptolemy vs Copernicus conflict. As a NASA mathematician friend shared after John spoke to the NASA Engineers, 'The real reason Copernicus won is that his system was just so simple compared to the convoluted contorted stories of Ptolemaic Astronomy.' So in a Coulson vs Plain Meaning of the text contest, the plain meaning will have the victory. No wonder Coulson doesn't tackle the Day 6 garden with SFP, and sidesteps it with a disclaimer about the SFP process possibly terminating on day 5 (p54 – expanded below). His disclaimer does him no good as all the same Day 6 features would be needed on Day 3.

Coulson may also dismiss a belief in "mature creation apologetics", (p46) i.e. that God created fully formed living creatures, but states he believes Adam was created as a fully formed adult, not a baby who grew up by any fast-forward Supernatural Formative Process. (p58) with the possible exception of God speeding up of Adam's skin maturation (p29).

Coulson also seems to admit his time lapse idea for the rapid development of plants does not work (or was not needed?) for animals and people. Therefore, he glosses over what happened on the 5th and 6th days with the creation of animals. Instead, he makes the following statement: "The arrival of animals on Days 5 and 6 may be the end catalyst for *exponentially decreasing rates* of change allowing the animals to grow at rates that would soon be consistent for the earth as it entered normal history." (p54 emphasis in original)

But what does 'catalyst' mean in this context? Normally a catalyst is something that facilitates a process without being changed by the process, e.g. enzymes in biochemistry speed up chemical reactions but take no part in the chemical reactions. Does Coulson mean the arrival of animals slowed down the process of change he believes happened on the previous four days?

How fast any of Coulson's changes were happening, it is biologically impossible for animals to arrive as adults by time-lapsed development. Plants may start out as seeds in the ground and grow where they are planted by themselves (although without producing seeds and fruit), but birds and animals must start as a fertilised cell that then grows inside an egg or as embryos within their mother and cannot survive on their own. At what stages in life could birds and animals have been created in order to go through their time lapsed development? Genesis 1:20 refers to "flying things" (ESV) or "fowl that may fly" (KJV), the plain reading indicating such creatures could already fly when they were created. The SFP impossibility should be self-evident so why make up such a fantasy of time-lapsed development for a Creator who can make fully mature birds to order? Our God actually did make the chicken before the egg, but Coulson's scheme would leave us with a rather bizarre version of the old egg and chicken problem.

We meant what we said when we called Coulson's idea a fantasy, as the idea of time-lapsed creation at whatever rates anyone wants to impose, is not found in any plain reading of Genesis 1. Coulson may refer to the Hebrew term *yāšā'*, translated as "brought forth" in Genesis 1:12 to justify his idea (p50), but the same word is found in verse 24, referring to the land animals which cannot, for reasons stated above, have been made by 'supernatural' time-lapsed development from some immature state. A much more straightforward understanding of this term is that God created fully formed plants (day 3), flying creatures (day 5) and land animals (day 6) from the substance of the earth. Thus, the flying and walking creatures were truly brought forth from the earth, but did not grow out of it through some speeded up "natural" process.

Overall, we still recommend Coulson scraps this whole idea, goes back to the starting line and begins again.

Days of Forming and Filling

On Page 95 Coulson quotes rather lengthily from Pastor Craig Lloyd on the issue of the earth being formed before the sun, moon and stars. In dealing with this Craig brings up the concept of 'days of forming and days of filling', i.e. Genesis 1 consists of two parallel lists with the first three sections (days) telling us what parts of the creation God had made, and the second three sections (days) showing us what God made to function within each of these parts. Craig states: "What is formed on Day 1 is filled on Day 4, and the same for Days 2 and 5, and 3 and 6." (p95)

According to this idea, on Day1 God created the heavens and earth and He created light. If we make the Heavens, the earth and light as the Forming section on Day 1, then on Day 4 God created the sun, moon and stars in space which can be regarded as the Filling for the Day1 heavens. However, it soon becomes obvious that there is no filling for Day 1 earth which remains in its Day 1 state until changes occur on Day 3.

Likewise, sun, moon and stars may have become the means of shining light on the earth or have been given rule over the day and night that already existed, yet they cannot in anyway be regarded as filling the Light of Day 1. After all the earth already had fully functional day/night determining light from the beginning.

Likewise, Days 2 and 5 are not strictly forming and filling. The Day 5 swimming creatures may be a Day 2 ‘waters below’ parallel, but the flying creatures made on that same day, live neither in the Day 2 waters above nor inhabit the layer between Day 2 ‘waters above and below’. They live on land and in trees, and whilst they may fly in close confines to the earth, the vegetation they depend on for their food and habitat are a Day 3b filling of a Day 3a event, the lifting up of the dry land.

This forming and filling concept is neither a new idea nor a very old one either, with the date of the first appearance of ‘Forming and Filling concepts’ being the 1920s with possible tenuous links back to the late 1800s (post Lyell and Darwin). Its increasing popularisation since then gives the game away regarding its aims.

It is based on a superficial symmetry in the days of creation, however closer study always reveals that none are strictly parallels and some are total mismatches, which raises a more serious question. What is the point of suggesting a ‘forming and filling concept’ also known as the Framework Hypothesis? The commonest use is to make Genesis 1 a Literary Device rather than actual history. This Device becomes a framework which is then used to display the Theology of God’s power and purposes, without having to hold Genesis 1 or 2 as a literal historical account of creation.

Consider one of its Australian uses in the Pathway Bible Guides publication *Beginning with God, Genesis 1 – 12*, by Gordon Cheng, Matthias Media, 2006, where on page 53 the author makes the following statement: “The way the story is written suggests either that the account is not meant to be strictly literal, or even if it is, there are more important points being made.” Matthias media is a publishing arm of Sydney diocese Anglicans, and is associated with Moore Theological College, who are implacable opponents of six day creation and young earth creationists. Speaking as an Anglican author Diane Eager knows this opposition firsthand.

This forming and filling hypothesis has long been used to facilitate those who deny the historical six days, and its promotion postdates acceptance of long ages and Darwinian evolution (the 1920’s) when theologians began to look for a way to retain acceptable academic credibility so as not to be lumped with the increasingly scorned literalist fundamentalists. So it is time to be honest and admit that the forming and filling concept opens a crack which allows acceptance of both the old earth millions of years and their corollaries of evolution instead of creation. Its basic acceptance results in acquiescence to the geological column, which historically has been used to deny Noah’s flood because that’s what it was designed to do!

Craig Lloyd’s noticeable support and promotion of Coulson’s SFP theory, with his long quotes (p95, 96 referenced only as “unpublished” by Lloyd), as well as his Amazon sales promotion for the book, make us doubt he could really expect people to think both he and Coulson want people to unambiguously believe in six days, a young earth, a global flood or anything else in scripture where the facts matter to the faith, especially since both are committed to the opt out of ‘Saving Grace of God Given Ambiguity’. See below.

For a more detailed critique of the Framework concept on the Ask John Mackay website, see the Question: GENESIS DAYS? Are they 2 parallel symbolic lists of 3 days of forming and 3 of filling? |Answer: <https://askjohnmackay.com/genesis-days-2-parallel-symbolic-lists-of-3-days-forming-3-days-filling/>

Less Than Perfect?

It is very evident that Ken Coulson and Craig Lloyd both hold to the belief that Genesis teaches God created the universe 'very good', (Genesis 1:31) but they add a caveat that 'very good' did not mean it was perfect (p96). Whilst we can find a few who promote this view, it is definitely not the plain reading of Genesis 1:31, especially when you consider Paul's full statements in Romans 1:20 that God has stamped His Nature on the whole creation. Since Paul is also emphatic that all things were made by Christ (Colossians 1:16) yet he also (used above) stresses that the fallen believer, who is less than perfect and not very good, is being restored to the perfect 'Image of Christ'. (Colossians 3:10)

One of the Reformation heroes, John Calvin touches on the perfect creation in his commentary on Deuteronomy 32:4 where scripture describes God with the words: 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.'

Calvin writes: "The general statement is indeed true in itself, and may be applied to various purposes"... and having already dealt with the primary application of this teaching on God's perfection in judging the rebellious Israelites, a few sentences later Calvin applies this teaching to the whole of creation when he states: "God's work is spoken of, not only with reference to the creation of the world, but to the whole course of His providence; as if it were said that nothing could be discovered in God's works which could be found fault with."

So we suggest both Craig and Ken consult Jesus Christ the Creator as to whether His nature is very good, meaning less than perfect, which would be your only possible justification for the distinction you suggest, which is so vital to Ken's use of Craig's quoted philosophies. Our observation is that those who resort to such 'less than perfect' exegesis, either intentionally or innocently allows a foot in the door where proponents of non-definitive views on creation or Creator can and do slip through to wreak havoc.

Biologos is the best example of this. Their usage of this concept has opened a crack in scriptural authority, and their teaching on a less than perfect creation has so widened this crack, that they happily promote evolution with millions of years of death and suffering as worthy of God's pronouncement of "very good". They are fast being followed by the Gospel Coalition's degenerated God and Theistic evolution flavouring.

Both Craig and Ken really actually are guilty of what Dr Jake Herbert states in his article on the ICR website: Jake Hebert, Ph.D. 2020. *Is Creation Evidence Ambiguous?* Acts & Facts. 49 (8). <https://www.icr.org/article/is-creation-evidence-ambiguous/> (See references to Coulson 4 & 21)

Herbert and others argue the number one issue with a Coulson-like framework is an apparent adherence to the philosophy of what we will coin as 'Sovereignty Fideism', which is the belief that true faith requires ambiguity of fact, a philosophy becoming increasingly popular with those who claim to take a literalistic young-earth view of the Bible, but still wish to gain favour in the sight of academia and the world's wisdom.

Proponents of Sovereignty Fideism claim God made the earth appear old, and He uses the apparent evidence for evolution in order to get us to trust him using faith alone, not evidence. Such Fideistic ideas were certainly around pre-reformation - in the writings of Tertullian (AD160-230), as well as in Medieval Catholicism where it updated the old Greek pagan ideas

regarding fossils, which Catholicism moved from pagan-god-tricks to deceive, and made them Created tests of faith to believe the Christian God. In the present day post reformation world Fideism is usually found as one extreme of Sovereignty concepts.

Coulson even argues (pp139-143), that the Creator God deliberately built such ambiguity into His creation in order to show mercy to the rebellious. They reason that the condemnation of the unregenerate would be more severe if everyone knew there was a God, so He deliberately made the fact of His existence obscure or uncertain.

Coulson's claim that the earth is young but ambiguously and factually looks old (pp, 25-26, 32) leads to his belief that both evolutionist and old earthers base their conclusions on real evidence that must be explained by Creationists, hence his SFP theory attempt to do this.

Coulson claims that such evidence-based ambiguity results from God NOT stamping a 'Made by Me' signature on His creation. But Romans 1 tells us that is exactly what the Creator God did! And He did it so unambiguously and clearly that there are legal, moral, psychological and spiritual consequences to denying what is clearly visible and factually able to know. Paul writes that all who deny God are without excuse because God stamped his 'Made by Me' declaration in His attributes which are clearly seen and understood by all in the creation (Paul's words) so therefore all humans can see, and they do know and they actually understand – fallen or not. There is no ambiguous non-statement as to the nature of the evidence and/or who did the actual creating. It was the same God who revealed Himself through the stars, the earth, living things and the Word, who will hold us to account because of this.

Sadly, the use of "purposeful ambiguity" means people do have a lawful awful excuse for ignoring Him. Furthermore, it makes the Creator Christ an "ambigant" at best, and a liar at worst. You can never trust someone whose track record is only and always ambiguity.

It is our conclusion is that such Sovereignty Fideism 'faith alone' results in both Craig and Ken opening a door to any and all philosophies or theories that weaken any stand on the infallibility of the Scriptures and all that is in them, from Christ creating in 6 days to His resurrection from the dead, about which the scripture states 'If it's not true that Christ rose from the dead then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain ...and you are of all people to be pitied.' (1 Corinthians 15:13-14, 17-19)

Warning to the Church.

Any doctrine that holds or promotes the doctrine of a Sovereign God who implants ambiguity into His creation is dangerous. We encourage both Ken Coulson and Craig Lloyd to abandon the type of Sovereignty Fideism seen in this book. Calvin certainly didn't hold to that! And no, you can't deal with this book without dealing with the big picture philosophies involved behind the scenes. Be careful your human constructs don't become more important than the Lord and Saviour Christ. None of us can lock God into a Calvinist box nor nail Him to an Arminian cross! Let the reader beware - unity depends on truth, but truth rarely results in unity.