

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

*Readers are invited to submit reviews of current literature relating to origins. Mailing address: ORIGINS, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, California 92350 USA. The Institute does not distribute the publications reviewed; please contact the publisher directly.*

### NEW AND IMPROVED?

**Origin By Design.** Harold G. Coffin, Robert H. Brown and L. James Gibson. 2005. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 464 p. Cloth, \$29.99.

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*Origin by Design* is a well-written, well-illustrated review of the scientific evidence supporting the young Earth, flood geology, creation worldview. Each of the 33 chapters in this 464-page book can be read as a stand alone brief review of the specific topic being covered. The chapters cover a broad range of subject matter, are not oversimplified, and are accessible to educated non-specialists, providing excellent background information to explain the issues involved. Both creationist and Darwinist perspectives are treated respectfully and professionally with heavy reliance on the scholarly literature. Arguments are rarely overstated and are illustrated with hundreds of photographs, graphs, and drawing — unfortunately, though, no color was used.

All of the authors are scientists who are presently, or were in the past, associated with the Geoscience Research Institute which also publishes *Origins*. Their expertise is reflected in several chapters on geology and geochronology that discuss strengths and problems with both conventional understandings and evidences for a young Earth. Other chapters deal with paleontology and biological change, and one features Coffin's own research on Yellowstone Petrified Forest. A final section on biological change covers the problem of Darwinism, biological similarity, evidence for design in life, and the problem of speciation.

The overview of paleontology is especially good. Darwinists claim that the fossil record is one of the most persuasive evidences of macro-evolution. The most important conclusion from the fossil record noted was that the evidence supports the sudden appearance of complex animals, a topic discussed in some detail (see p 204-269). Common theories that

try to explain this problem for Darwinism were reviewed. This section also discusses problems in interpreting the evidence, as illustrated by past mistakes in paleontology — such as putative worm trails that turned out to be tracks produced by particles or pebbles (p 263), or even the claim of a new fossil species that was later shown not even to be an organism!

The origin of humans is covered in some detail and included an especially useful discussion of fossil putative human ancestors. Textbooks and popular books often give the impression that the hominid fossil record is adequate to draw clear conclusions, and that unanimity of opinion exists about its interpretation. But the authors note that the scientific literature gives a far different picture — controversies exist everywhere. Newly discovered fossils regularly result in the claim that a complete rewrite of the evolutionary history of humans is required. The study of human origins is much more interesting when one is aware of the controversies and different experts' interpretations.

This text is not only a valuable reference and a summary of the field of origins from a creationist perspective, but also could be used as a text for Sunday school — or Bible school. It references the Scriptures where appropriate, usually not as proof texts, but to help explain the Scriptures. The major evidence relied on, by far, is the empirical findings as reported in the scientific literature.

My main complaint is that the book should have covered the topics reviewed in more depth. Areas not covered include a review of the work done utilizing biochemical comparisons to determine evolutionary trees, the concept of irreducible complexity, discussions of Intelligent Design, and the wide variety of problems that have been discussed extensively in creationist literature, including apoptosis, telomerase, transpositions, Junk DNA, and similar. Of course, this requires another volume. The discussion of mutations, although brief, was very useful (p 414-416).

One frustrating aspect of the book is that references for quotations frequently lack page numbers. For example, on p 270 a quote from G. G. Simpson was given. I was only able to locate the quote by reading Simpson's "History of Life" chapter in his *The Evolution of Life* starting on p 117 until I came across it on p 149. A few sections were also misleading, such as p 388 which underestimates the early support for Darwinism by church leaders and understates the hostility from biologists. I noticed very few mistakes (which, unfortunately, are far too common in books on creation). I also found very few typographical errors — and those I did note were minor — such as one on p 388 that incorrectly cites

the date of Darwin's *Origin* book as 1959. The references give the correct date, 1859 and a 1958 reprint (p 395).

*Origin by Design* is one of the best general reviews I have read on this topic. For those wanting to give a single book on young-Earth creationism to a neophyte (or a person seeking a good general review of the topic), I would highly recommend this volume.