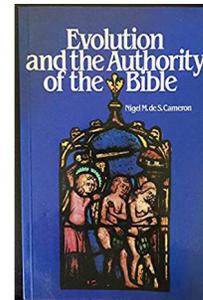


## Book Review: *Evolution and the Authority of the Bible*<sup>a</sup>

by Nigel M. de S. Cameron, 123 pp., Paternoster Press, 1983 (paperback)

Reviewed by [Tony Garland](#)<sup>b</sup>

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Some time back I was watching an interview of a church historian discussing the impact of evolution upon church history. During the interview, he recommended Cameron's book: *Evolution and the Authority of the Bible*<sup>d</sup>, which I dutifully added to my reading list. The book appears to be out of print, but I was able to locate a used copy.

Cameron presently serves as [president of the Center for Policy on Emerging Technologies](#)<sup>e</sup>, and has authored [numerous books](#)<sup>f</sup> on aspects of Christianity and on technology—an uncommon combination.

Although a relatively short work, Cameron addresses his topic with clarity of insight coupled with solid logic and delivers great value with an economy of words. The primary thrust of the book is to consider the authority of the Bible's account of origins in light of the competing popular paradigm of evolution.

Cameron's emphasis is not so much on whether evolution is true (it isn't) as whether evolution can be wed with the biblical teaching on origins (it can't). Along the way, the book serves as an excellent primer on topics such as inspiration, inerrancy, interpretation, and the influence of the rise of uniformitarian geology and Darwinism on the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis. The book closes with an appendix, written by Dr. Chris Darnbrough of the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Glasgow, concerning "Biblical Authority and the Facts of Science" which discusses biological discoveries in the light of neo-Darwinian theory.

While reading a book, I typically keep an eye out for what I view to be the most insightful quotations for possible citation in my own teaching and writing. I can't recall encountering as many well-stated snippets in any other work of similar length. I've included a few below to give a flavor of Cameron's skillful insight and presentation.

### Concerning the importance of evolution:

"For whether or not Darwinian (or neo-Darwinian) evolution actually happened, it must be admitted on all hands that without the theory or some equivalent the modern secular world would be quite unable to give an account of itself. Its whole self-understanding rests on the idea that there are natural processes that will account for all present phenomena. The atheist and the agnostic recognized will enough that the theory of evolution *must* be true, and in consequence—as some eminent men have actually said—whatever the difficulties in believing the theory (and it has faced and does face strong challenges, for instance of a mathematical nature, which evolutionists acknowledge) they are incomparably less than the difficulties involved in rejecting the theory, since that would imply special creation; and special creation would imply God." (p. 14)

"We are not discussing simply some scientific theory that may or may not be true but that does not have any practical relevance. We are discussing *the* great hypothesis of modern science that has become *the* source of man's secular self-understanding. It may be true, it may be false, but it *matters*." (p. 15)

"Quite simply, evolution is much more than 'science'. In the sense that 'science' is concerned with experiments that can be carried out in a laboratory, it is a highly specialized subject in which a man must be highly qualified before his opinion can carry weight. But the theory of evolution is not that kind

of 'science'. Evolution is really a theory about history—historical science, to be precise. . . . A chief reason that some scientists are unhappy with regarding evolution as a theory like other scientific theories is that it cannot be tested. No one can set up an experiment to try it out and see if it works. But, more than that it is concerned not simply with events long ago—which cannot be repeated—but with events of which the Bible speaks.” (p. 16)

### Concerning biblical inspiration:

“It is quite possible for ordinary, unaided men and women to write, on a given occasion, a narrative which we might properly describe as ‘infallible’ : completely free from mistakes. There is nothing magical about infallibility! Most human authors—whether of letters to their parents or of learned treatises—*aim* at infallibility; they do all they can to be honest and careful in what they say. At their best, they succeed. Why is it thought strange that, with the special help of the Holy Spirit, the writers of Scripture should have reached this standard, as God required?” (p. 29)

“The idea, therefore, that there is something inherently impossible about the Bible’s being ‘infallible’ is mistaken. The divine providential over-ruling can ensure that at each point where the human *might* make a mistake, if left to his own devices, he does not. He is wholly accurate, and yet his work is still his own literary production.” (p. 41)

“In order to be an ‘infallible rule of faith and practice’, the Bible must be ‘without error in all that it affirms’: the two hang together. Error would distort the picture of God and his will, ‘historical’ error no less than ‘spiritual’ or ‘moral’, because of the historical fashion in which the Bible reveals God.” (p. 31)

### Genesis and Evolution?

Cameron avoids getting bogged down by the various flavors of “Christian Evolutionism”—creative approaches which Christians use in an attempt to wed biblical revelation with evolution—and focuses on issues which are central to any attempt to reconcile the theory of evolution with biblical revelation. This allows him to focus on the essential points of difference between Darwin and Moses (e.g., the nature of ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31), the meaning of ‘death’ in Genesis 1 and as understood by Paul in Romans 5) to reach what should be an obvious conclusion: that evolution and biblical revelation are incompatible at their very core:

“. . . At the end of the day, the Bible is not reconcilable with the theory of evolution. Every attempt at harmony has failed, and must fail, because the Bible simply gives a different account of things. The widespread assumption that there is basically no problem in holding the theory while believing the Bible is not only mistaken but pernicious, since it implicitly compromises the authority of the Bible and renders its subject not so much to science as to secularism and its view of man.” (p. 17)

“Christian theistic evolution is incoherent and a contradiction in terms. This may be demonstrated with respect to man and his liability to death, and the sufferings of the animals.” (p. 64)

Cameron describes the no-man’s zone occupied by compromising Christians who attempt to meld evolutionary theory doing a favor to neither:

“. . . conservative writers, in trying to make the Scripture acceptable to current scientific thought, have not only mis-interpreted it in a way which abandons the actual meaning of the text, but have succeeded only in coming to a mediating position supported neither by Scripture nor by science. . . . men like Driver also made very clear what the choice actually is: between accepting the Genesis narratives in an essentially ‘literal’ sense—as teaching what they plainly intend to teach—and rejecting them as teaching anything about the origin of the world. The middle ground, which evangelicals then as now desired to occupy, is untenable.” (pp. 82-83)

I highly recommend this book for anyone who is interested in issues surrounding biblical authority, interpretation of the bible, and the ongoing torture of the early chapters of Genesis in an attempt to make them confess “evolution!”

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**Links Mentioned Above**

a - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0853643261>.

b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.

c - See [http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/reviews/tony\\_garland/review\\_of\\_evolution\\_and\\_authority\\_of\\_bible.pdf](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/reviews/tony_garland/review_of_evolution_and_authority_of_bible.pdf).

d - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0853643261>.

e - See <https://cbhd.org/content/nigel-m-de-s-cameron-phd>.

f - See <https://amazon.com/Nigel-M.-de-S.-Cameron/e/B001H6GWYO/>.