

A Christian Perspective on Origins: A Plea for Civility



© Dr. John Robert Schutt
Taylor University Fort Wayne



A Few Background Statements

1. A Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the presenter and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of God.

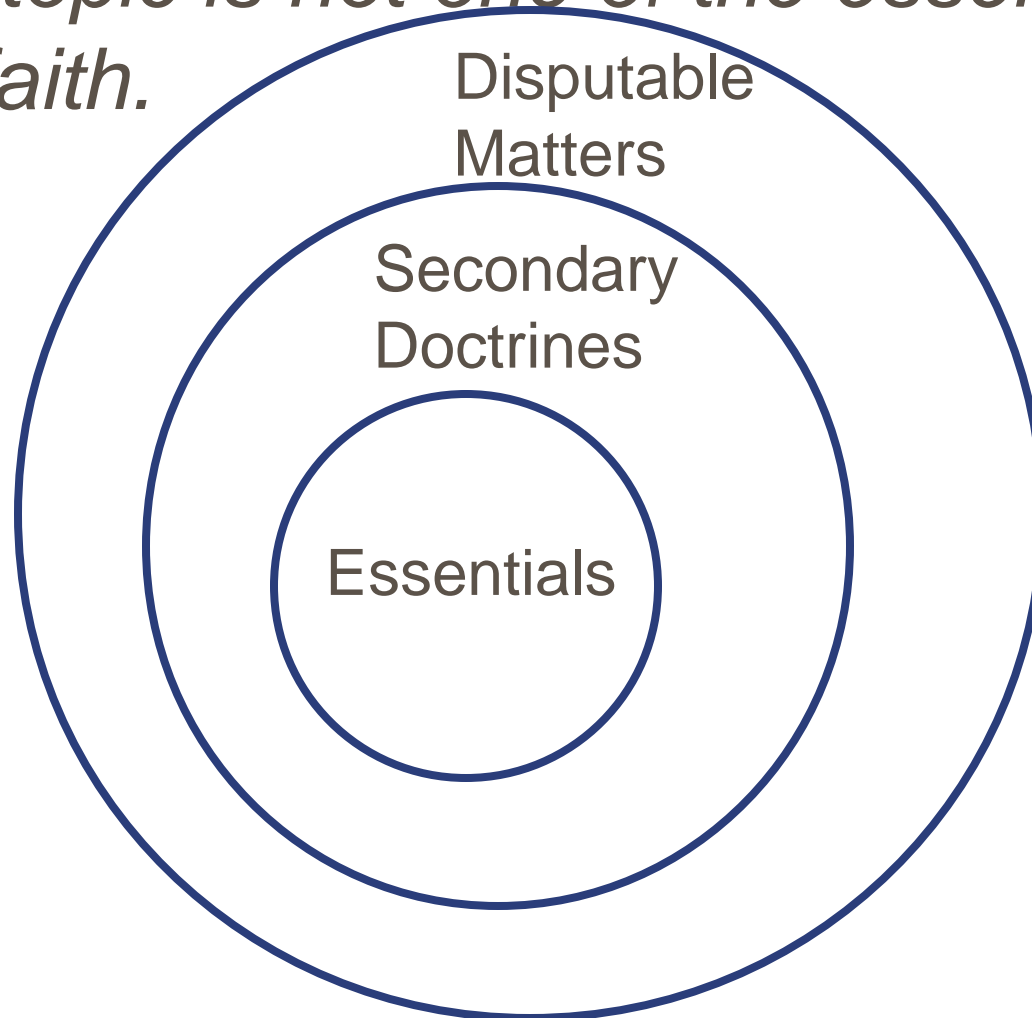


A Few Background Statements

2. Think of this talk as a primer.

A Few Background Statements

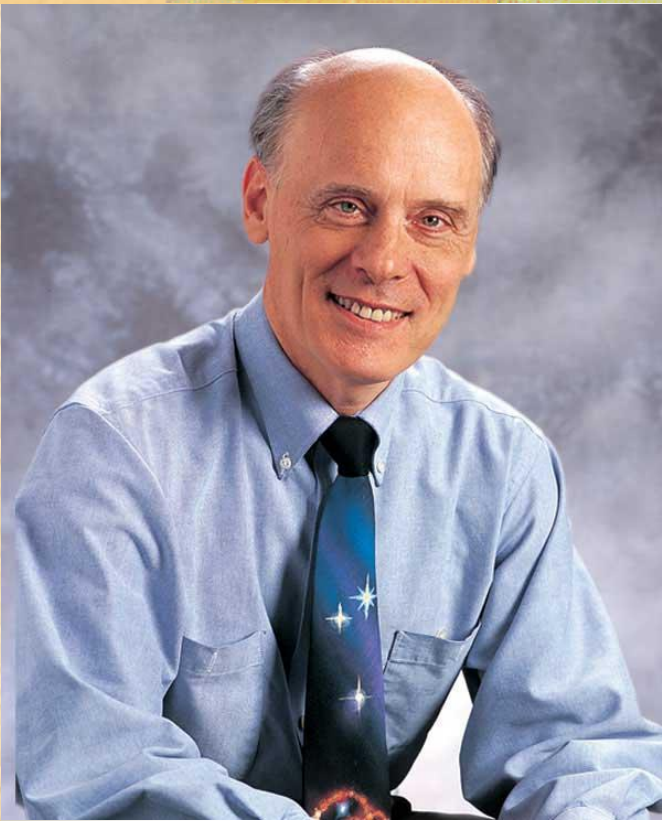
3. *This topic is not one of the essentials of the faith.*





A Few Background Statements

4. *In my opinion, it is important to know the academic background of the author/presenter*



Hugh Ross

Education:

University: BSc Physics, University of British Columbia

University: MSc Astronomy, University of Toronto

University: PhD Astronomy, University of Toronto

Postdoctoral Research Fellow:
Caltech, studying quasars and galaxies.



“Dr. Dino”
Kent Hovind

Education:

High School: East Peoria High School,
East Peoria, IL (1971)

University: Illinois Central College
(1972, dropped out)

University: BA Religious Education,
Midwestern Baptist College (1974)

University: MA Christian Education,
Patriot University (1988)

University: PhD Christian Education,
Patriot University (1991)

What is his science education?



“Dr. Dino”
Kent Hovind



Front view of the Patriot Bible University in Del Norte, Colorado taken on November 22, 2006.



“Dr. Dino”
Kent Hovind

Patriot Bible University

Founded 1979 in Dallas, Texas.

Listed as a Christian diploma mill in Steve Levicoff's *Name It and Frame It? New Opportunities in Adult Education and How to Avoid Being Ripped Off by "Christian" Degree Mills* (1995).



“Dr. Dino”
Kent Hovind

Patriot Bible University

Lack of accreditation. This institution is not accredited by standard accreditation bodies -- those recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Instead, it sports an "accreditation" from the American Accrediting Association of Theological Institutions, which for \$100 will issue "credentials" for an institution that could not pass muster under CHEA guidelines.



“Dr. Dino”

Kent Hovind

Kent Hovind ... was convicted of federal tax offenses and related charges, for which he is currently serving a 10-year sentence.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_hovind

“There but for the grace of God, go I.”

(The original is, “There but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford.”)



John Bradford
(1510 - 1555)



A Few Background Statements

4. In my opinion, it is important to know the academic background of the author/presenter

Who is Dr. Schutt?

Christian testimony:

Growing up...

I love Jesus! I am one of His children.

Science training

BA, Biology, McDaniel College

MA, Botany, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ph.D., Ecology, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville



A Few Background Statements

5. I think that this is a topic where VERY FEW people change their mind.

- I think that, typically, discussions generate more heat than light.
- After brief early exposure to the topic, people often suffer from “hardening of the categories.”

A Few Background Statements

6. I have a question for you. . . .

CHARLES DARWIN

On the **Origin**
of **Species**

By Means of Natural Selection



- How many of you have ever read (at least an abridged version of) Darwin's Origin of Species?
- Many/most Christians that I know are "against" Darwin. I find few Christians who have actually read his work.

How do Christians Usually Present the Topic of Origins?

Evolution

Science

Scientists

(Pagan atheists)

Bad guys

Creationism

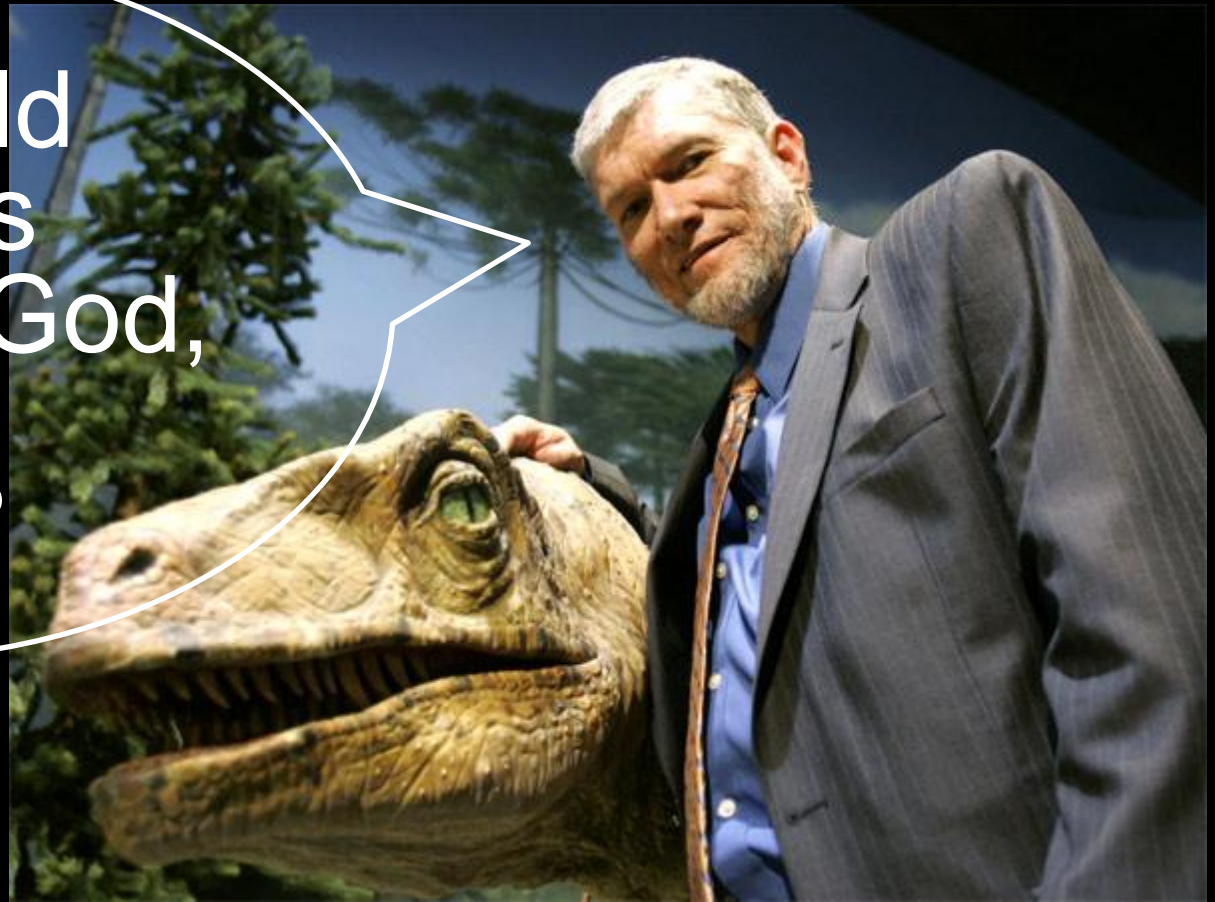
God/ the Bible

Believers

Good guys


It is my opinion that when Christians portray the topic of origins this way, they are simply driving the wedge between God and unbelievers. People who do this are putting stumbling blocks in front of unbelievers.

Who should
you always
trust first, God,
or the
scientists?




Ken Ham

Bachelor's, Applied Science ,
Queensland Institute of Technology
Diploma of Education, University of
Queensland

A decorative header at the top of the slide. On the left, there is a large, stylized yellow star with a green outline. To its right, there is a landscape scene with green hills and a blue sky. On the far right, there is a blue sky with white clouds and a yellow sun or moon partially visible.


**Augustine (November 13, 354 – August 28, 430),
The Literal Meaning of Genesis, translated and
annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 2 vols.
(New York: Newman Press, 1982).**

Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience.




Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 2 vols. (New York: Newman Press, 1982).

Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn.




Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 2 vols. (New York: Newman Press, 1982).

The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that people outside the household of the faith think our sacred writers held such opinions, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men....



Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 2 vols. (New York: Newman Press, 1982).

... Reckless and incompetent expounders of Holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by these who are not bound by the authority of our sacred books.



Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 2 vols. (New York: Newman Press, 1982).

For them, to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon Holy Scripture for proof and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position, *although they understand neither what they say nor the things about which they make assertion.* (pp. 42-43)



There is a Better Way to Talk about Origins!

To start, separate the worldview question of the “Who?” of creation from the science question of the “How?” of creation.

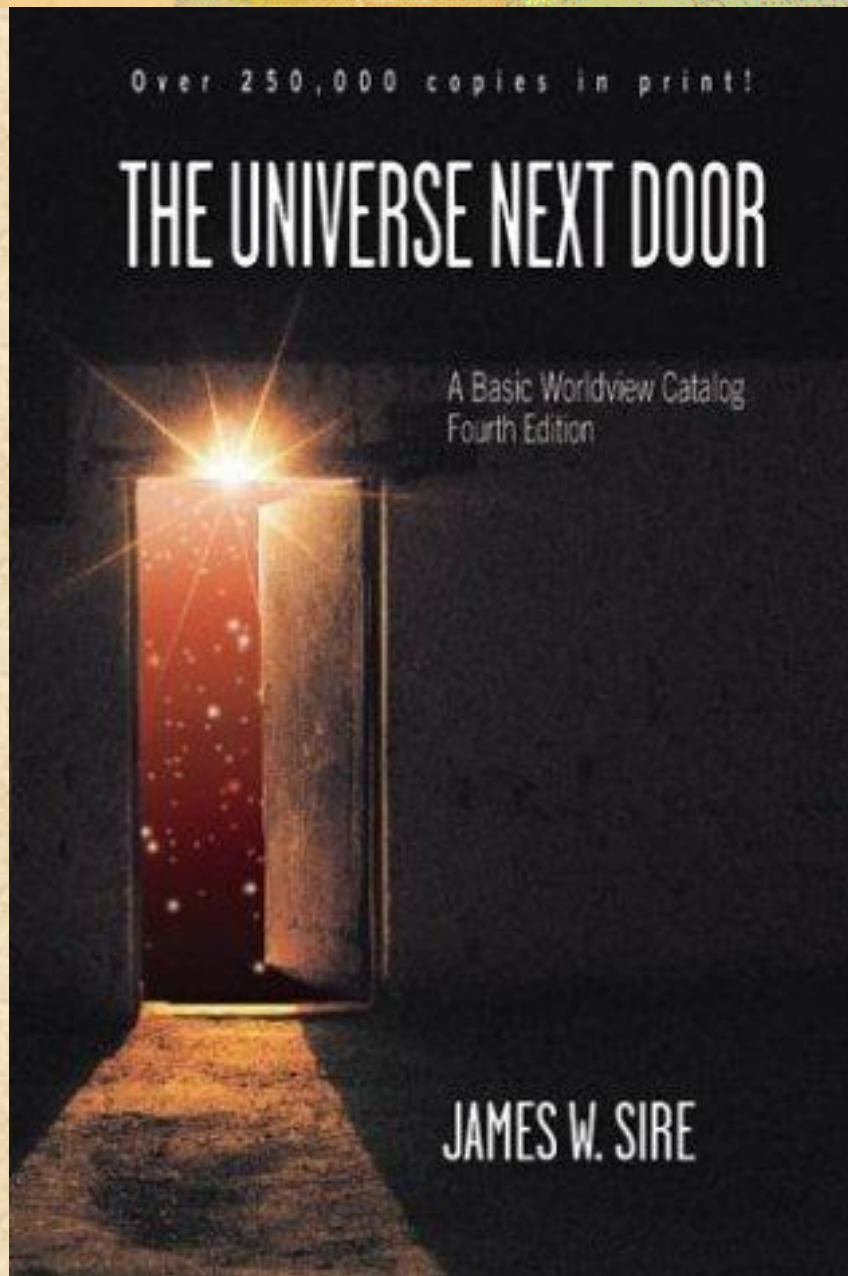
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THE UNIVERSE NEXT DOOR

A Basic Worldview Catalog
Fourth Edition

JAMES W. SIRE

“A worldview is a **commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions that may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our reality.**”



Worldviews covered in this book:

- Theism
- Deism
- Naturalism
- Nihilism
- Existentialism
- New Age philosophy
- Marxism
- Secular humanism
- Postmodernism



With Unbelievers, Talk about the “Who” of Creation – Not the “How”

Evolutionism (worldview)

Like any other “ism,” it is a worldview.

Evolutionism is a subset of naturalism.



With Unbelievers, Talk about the “Who” of Creation – Not the “How”

- Naturalists, by definition, deny God’s existence.
- You will never convince a naturalist of any creationist view on origins.




With Unbelievers, Talk about the “Who” of Creation – Not the “How”

- I don't think that arguing helps. I think that it only drives the wedge deeper.
- If they insist on talking about the topic, then I'd suggest that you say, “Christians have LOTS of different views on this topic. Whatever you believe, there is probably a Christian who holds that viewpoint. That's really not the issue.”



With Unbelievers, Talk about the “Who” of Creation – Not the “How”

- The ONLY important issue for an unbeliever is for them to answer the question, “Who do you say that Jesus is?”



There is a Better Way to Talk with Other Believers!

Acknowledge that God works through miracle and through process.

Process: God usually works through “rules” that He ordained.

Jeremiah 33:25-26a “This is what the LORD says: 'If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, [26] then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant . . .’”



There is a Better Way to Talk with Other Believers!

Miracle: When God sets aside His “rules” and does something “outside” of them.

With Christians, the question really is, “How much of God’s creative activity was done through miracle and how much was done through process?”



What is Evolution?

Scientific Theory

Scientific definition vs. common definition

Evolution - Scientific Theory about the origin and change of “things” over time.

Paradigm shift – Thomas Kuhn

Good Science is the process of “thinking God’s thoughts after Him.”



Evolution Covers Three Questions

- How old are the universe and earth?
- How did life begin?
- How much have living things changed?



How old are the universe and earth?

These are the questions of cosmology and the question of geological evolution.

Two Christian views:

Young (6-15,000 years)

Based on a reading of “yom” as 24 hours
Bishop Ussher’s (1654) dating system -
October 23, 4004 BC

Old (13.7 billion/ 4.56 billion)

Based on physical evidence.



How Did Life Get Begin?

This is the question of abiogenesis or chemical evolution.

All evidence shows that life could never have arisen from “time and chance.”



How Much Have Living Things Changed?

This is the question of biological evolution.
There are three sub-questions:

1. Does change occur within species?
2. Does change occur within “kind?”
3. Does change occur across “kind?”



How Much Have Living Things Changed?

1. Does change occur within species?

This is called microevolution

This is the observable aspect of
biological evolution

No one questions that this happens.



How Much Have Living Things Changed?

2. Does change occur within “kind?”

Kind = “Bara” (created) + “min” (kind)

This is macroevolution or speciation.

Darwin’s finches

We were not there. We do not know.



How Much Have Living Things Changed?

3. Does change occur across “kind?”

Did all life come from one or a few common ancestors?

What about man’s origin?



A Note from a Former Student

I am not writing this to be self-aggrandizing!

Dr. Schutt – I have enjoyed your class SO much! I appreciate your honesty in examining with integrity the issues of origins, etc..., and I appreciate that you have never tried to “indoctrinate” me, but have rather guided me to find the answers for myself. My position on evolution is still not resolved, as I said, but I see much more clearly than I ever did.



A Note from a Former Student

Just to encourage you – I had the opportunity to share Christ with a friend of mine this summer whose greatest objection to Christianity is its insistence on an absolute denial of certain scientific facts (i.e. evolution).



A Note from a Former Student

She said that she had never met a Christian who actually thought about these things, rather than just accepting what they've always been told. I just thought that might be of interest to you, and to encourage you to keep up the good work! Thanks.



My Personal Views?

- A. Cosmology/Geology: The earth is old. I used to hold the young earth position.
- B. Abiogenesis: God started life. There is no way that it could have started without Him.
- C. Biology:
 - 1. We can observe microevolution.
 - 2. It is possible that God allowed the original “kinds” to speciate.
 - 3. Change across “kinds” did not happen.



Conclusions

- I was not there. I do not know.
- Neither do you.
- The “How” of creation has **NOTHING** to do with salvation.
- Do **NOT** make this a stumbling block when witnessing to unbelievers. If you are asked, I suggest that you affirm that Christians differ on the “How” but not on the “Who.”