

Origins 2020 Online!

Origins is the annual conference of the Creation Biology Society (CBS) and Creation Geology Society (CGS) and had been due to take place this summer in New York State, USA. Instead, from 22-25 July it went online, which allowed many people to take part who would not have done so otherwise. It's a technical conference, at which research papers are presented, but over one hundred people tuning in, including some from the UK and even Australia, made for a record attendance in the event's 20-year history.

It is to the credit of CBS president Dr Matt McLain and his students from The Master's University, who had organised everything at quite short notice, that it all ran so smoothly: pre-recorded talks released at set times were interspersed with interactive Zoom sessions including a small-group meet-and-greet on the first evening. Regular Q&A slots allowed for some lively and useful discussion too.

One of this year's highlights was a special announcement by Dr Jeremy Lyon of Truett-McConnell University: the launch of a brand new Creation Theology Society (CTS). With a board of seven theologians and textual experts committed to young-age creationism, CTS aims 'to develop a community of biblical scholarship that initiates and undergirds interdisciplinary creation research'. Another board member, Hebraist Dr Steve Boyd, kicked off with a detailed study of the language of time in the Flood account, while theology student Doug Smith surveyed all references to plants in Genesis 1-11, as instruments of both blessing and curse. Check out the CTS website here: <https://creationtheologysociety.org>.

Palaeontologist Dr Kurt Wise (Truett-McConnell) gave a foundational talk on the philosophy of science (besides presentations on genetic redundancy and chromosome 2 fusion) while Dr Todd Wood of the Core Academy of Science in Tennessee surveyed the history of creationism in response to recent criticisms from theistic evolutionists, concluding that we are 'native' rather than 'post-creationists' – applying what we've learned to new challenges. Students working under biologist Dr Jeremy Blaschke (Union University) gave two papers on parasitism, one of which used the

small number of species in most of the parasite lineages investigated, as evidence of a relatively recent transition from non-parasitism, consistent with creationist models.

A whole day was devoted to baraminology, the relatively new science of the created kind, as mentioned in Genesis. It seeks to identify discontinuities between groups of living things using multiple criteria. A new statistical cluster analysis method was introduced and baraminology studies were presented on fish hybrids, pareiasaurs, rabbits and hares, and fossil whales.

As for the geology, research presented covered modelling of Flood tectonics, the chemistry of Flood-deposited rocks and the analysis of large-scale sedimentary sequences that span the continents. Dr John Baumgardner looked at how the Flood sediment record was formed, while meteorologist Michael Oard dealt with how the Greenland and Antarctica ice sheets fit into biblical history and climate change effects on ice cores.

More general talks included Dr Steve Austin on the formation of Grand Canyon, suggesting that ‘spill-over lakes are all it takes’, while Dr Ken Coulson considered God’s use of process in creation. Particularly well-received was Biblical Creation Trust’s Paul Garner, who wove his personal story into a look at hard problems in creation geology, such as granite formation, sharing both encouragements and existing challenges.

Origins is an unique opportunity to engage with the cutting edge of creationist research at its most positive – building young-age creation models rather than simply criticising evolutionary ones – and plans are already being made for 2021. Meanwhile, you can read the abstracts in the open access *Journal of Creation Theology and Science*:

Biology: <https://coresci.org/jcts/index.php/jctsb/issue/view/26>

Geology: <https://www.coresci.org/jcts/index.php/jctsc/issue/view/27>

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