

Bone of Contention – its history and influence

Sylvia Baker

During my time as an undergraduate at Sussex University, in the late 1960s, I became convinced that the theory of evolution was not supported by the evidence and that the Bible could be fully trusted when it taught of a 'six-day' creation.

Having obtained a BSc from Sussex, I went on to obtain a higher degree in biology from London University and to undertake research for two years in a neurobiology laboratory. It was at this point that I was asked, in 1971, to give a series of five talks at the church I was attending at the time, Thornton Heath Evangelical Free Church. The plan was that I should give one talk per month and the pastor, Harry Waite, suggested some of the topics. In the end we agreed that the talks should cover the history of the rise of evolutionism, the fossil evidence, the genetic evidence, the age of the earth and the biblical approach to the origins issue.

In preparing the talks, I had very little creationist literature to consult, except *The Genesis Flood* by Henry Morris and John Whitcomb, which had been published in the UK in 1969, together with one or two other sources. The talks certainly benefited from *The Genesis Flood* but our chosen topics covered a wider range than the scope of that book. For much of my material, I relied on evolutionist sources.

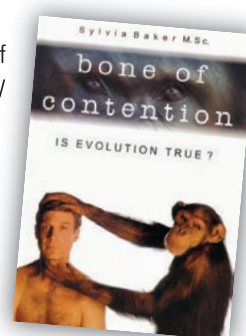
The talks went ahead throughout 1972 at roughly monthly intervals. For each one, I prepared some comprehensive notes on what I intended to say, had them typed out and duplicated and handed them out to those who attended the meetings. A year or two after this, Rev. Robert Horn, the editor of the monthly newspaper *Evangelical Times*, began attending my church and someone gave him the series of notes of the talks. He

soon approached me, saying that with very little editing they would be suitable for publication as a series of articles in the newspaper. Those articles, each one corresponding to one of the talks, appeared in *Evangelical Times* from June to October 1975.

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The articles generated a lot of interest and soon Bob Horn was approached by several publishers who wanted to publish them as a book. In April 1976, the first edition of *Bone of Contention – Is Evolution True?* was published by Evangelical Press.

It had been decided to use a magazine format as the book was intended for a wide readership.



The talks that gave rise to the book were designed for Christians, to encourage them to realise that the scientific evidence did not contradict the Bible, as was so often claimed. The book itself, however, was often given to non-Christians, to those who would like to have faith but who sincerely

believed that 'science had disproved the Bible', and even to complete sceptics. Before long, I began to hear of those who had come to faith in Christ as a result of reading it.

In 1986, the second edition was published and editions one and two together sold more than 250,000 copies, selling widely in Australia and the US as well as the UK. The book was also translated into ten languages. In 2002 the third edition was published, this time by the Biblical Creation Society. As I write in 2007, more than 30 years after it first appeared, *Bone of Contention*, the book that I had never intended to write, continues to sell. ■



Bone of Contention author, Sylvia Baker.