

F. O. Box 777  
Winona Lake, Indiana 46590  
July 1974

To: ASA Members  
Re: The young-earth misunderstanding

Dear Colleague,

We of the ASA have an unusual and important opportunity at the present time. I refer to our opportunity to help clarify the anti-science misunderstandings which are rapidly multiplying due to the dissemination of young-earth dogma. The issue of creationism in the public schools has produced innumerable occasions for promoting misguided ideas, and thus erecting additional barriers between conservative Christianity and the scientific world. (We of course do not object to a judicious teaching of creation in the public schools.)

In my opinion, each of us should consider submitting at least one good article on the subject of the relation between the Bible and science to a Christian magazine this year. Those who are very deficient in their knowledge of God's natural record of the past are submitting articles on this subject regularly, and many of them are being accepted. The magazines are interested in publishing materials on creationism because of the widespread resurgence of an interest in the subject. Several of the editors would be at least as willing to receive materials which are both scientifically and biblically sound, as the one-sided articles which are being sent to them.

Some of the most common misguided ideas on the subject of science and the Bible which are now being widely disseminated are listed below. Each of us should make attempts to supply helpful answers to some of these. Of course, not all of those who hold to the young earth hypothesis embrace every one of the ideas in this list. However, in my numerous contacts with strong proponents of this position on the campus of Grace College, where I taught for seven and one-half years, I have found that the average young earth theologian or theological student holds to most of these points.

1. That the Bible is the only reliable source of information on the prehistoric past. Scientific observation is said to be unreliable except in matters relating to the time span of actual human history. The ancient strata of the earth are said to possess little if any intelligible order or arrangement.
2. That natural laws of the universe are not necessarily stable, and some of them may have been vastly different before the time of the Flood and immediately subsequent to the Flood.
3. That general or natural revelation can go no further than to inspire the observer to see God's wisdom, majesty, and greatness.
4. That evidences for natural events and processes of the past are always in error if they point to an age greater than 15,000 or 20,000 years.
5. That all forms of radiometric dating are invalid, being based on assumptions which can never be demonstrated.
6. That the best scientific research has now shown that practically all, if not all, deposits of fossils and sedimentary strata were formed by the Biblical Flood. The details of this scientific research, and the documentation of it, are of course always lacking. (Bibliographic references given in such writings merely refer to other authors making the same claim, or to scientific sources which are believed to contain errors of one sort or another.)
7. That no death, except the death of plant cells, plant embryos, and certain kinds of invertebrates which are supposedly less alive than other animals, could have occurred before the Fall of man.

8. That recently developed methods of biblical exegesis demonstrate that the authors of the Bible were really declaring the earth, all life, and the entire universe to have been created in six literal days, without any parts or organisms having been formed preceding those days.
9. That effectively objective scientific observation is practically non-existent, and can hardly be distinguished from theory or hypothesis; except that if the observer is a Christian who has already adopted a completely literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, he can then observe, using the literal account in the Bible as a guide, and end up with what can somehow be called an objective observation.
10. That a recognition of any large amounts of time by a Christian is automatically a compromise with evolutionary doctrine, because evolutionary theories require large amounts of time. Also, that the easiest way to combat evolution is to try to show that long periods of time never existed.
11. That both the gap and day-age theories of creation are inherently evolutionary.
12. That any attempt to reconcile the biblical account of creation with the scientific evidences for long periods of time is sinful, and dishonoring to God.
13. That practically all earth scientists, astronomers, and biologists are either dishonest or prejudiced to the extent that they continuously misrepresent the facts, and often secretly discard or "lock up" evidence which is not in favor of their evolutionary and long-age views.
14. That complete abstinence from the study of scientific evidences for age is usually the best and safest policy for a Christian. If he should, for some reason, feel that he must study such materials, he should do it with extreme caution, and only after settling in his mind that he will never accept them.

These are some of the misconceptions (obtained from very recent lectures and writings of young-earth leaders), which we of the ASA can help to clear up. It is true that most of them seem absurd and naive, but we nevertheless have a responsibility to assist Christians who have no valid sources of information on these points. However, our efforts to help in this misunderstanding should be based on a sympathetic realization that nearly all of the people who hold these views sincerely believe they are glorifying God in doing so.

Two further points which should be of help in writing articles for Christian magazines are: (a) Nearly all of the founders of fundamentalism in America, during the first half of this century, recognized the necessity of dealing with God's revelation of time in nature, and willingly proposed methods by which we can reconcile the biblical account of creation with the scientific evidence for long periods of time. (b) We must, in a spirit of love, show the ultrafundamentalists that we are not traitors to the cause of divine truth. We should show them that we use and respect the Bible, and that we have a true concern for the great issues of life. A willingness to give the Bible the high position which it deserves needs to be very evident in the articles which we write relating to this problem.

If by chance you are unable to write a regular article to submit to a Christian magazine, you can do a valuable service by writing a constructive letter to the editor on the subject. Even if the letter is not printed it can be a help in assuring the editors that the young earth hypothesis has not been verified, and that caution should be exercised. So, let's not be guilty of just "cursing the darkness"; let's give out some candles.

Dan Wonderly

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