

persons who have had little or no training in sedimentary geology. In fact, the primary source of the currently-popular "Flood geology" teaching was the doctrines of Seventh-Day Adventism, a religious denomination or sect which has long held that an essential part of their statements of faith must always be that the earth is only a few thousands of years old. Dr. Ronald L. Numbers, Professor of the History of Science in the University of Wisconsin, has written a helpful article which includes information on this (Numbers, 1982). Dr. Numbers grew up as a Seventh-Day Adventist and was trained in some of the schools of that denomination. In his 1982 article he clearly outlined the influence of Seventh-Day-Adventist G. M. Price on the development of the "Flood-geology" doctrine among fundamental Christians (p. 539-542). Price was a high school principal in Canada who, shortly after the turn of the 20th century, was so profoundly influenced by the writings of Ellen White, one of the main founders of Seventh-Day Adventism, that he began to read geological literature. (Ellen White "claimed divine inspiration for her view that the Noachian flood accounted for the fossil record...." (Numbers, 1982, p. 539).) Price had neither formal training nor field experience in geology, but continued to read some on the subject, and by 1923 had written several books which set forth the doctrine of "Flood geology." Because of his convincing style and his claim that "Flood geology" could be used to refute evolutionary theory, many protestant fundamentalists, as well as Seventh-Day Adventists, adopted his view. (Numbers, 1982, p. 540-541.)

Even though Price did not seek or obtain a solid background in geology, Henry Morris took a strong liking to his writings. Dr. Numbers relates how Morris came to begin using Price's works, and shows how they were a major influence on Morris's writings (p. 541-542). Many of the ideas (hypotheses) which had arisen only in the imagination of Price, concerning deposition and lithification of sedimentary strata, became a part of Morris's system of "Flood geology." Thus, a whole series of unverified hypotheses, some by Price and some by Morris, became a part of the system. These were then written into Morris's descriptions of the Flood and what it supposedly accomplished in forming the sedimentary cover of the earth.

We will now cite some of these fallacious ideas which many young-earth creationists have assumed to be demonstrated scientific principles. It is of course permissible to advance hypotheses concerning the origin of various types of sedimentary strata, but these hypotheses must not be regarded as scientific principles until they have been demonstrated by scientific research. It is standard procedure for research scientists to advance one or more hypotheses concerning a problem which they want to investigate, but they do not adopt those hypotheses until and unless they are verified by data collected. A misunderstanding of this rule of scientific research is one of the main places where young-earth creationists--including many teachers in Christian schools--have gone wrong. They tend to think that if a group of knowledgeable people think carefully about, and discuss, a given hypothesis--or even a model--and find that it "sounds plausible," then it can be regarded as likely and taught as science. This is an entirely unscientific practice, and a very misleading error; and yet it has been widely used among young-earth creationists during the past 15 years.

(1) A common error in "Flood-geology" teaching in our schools is the assumption or belief that great thicknesses of soft sediments, with many distinct, thin layers in the sediment mass, could be pushed up and folded at steep inclinations without amalgamating the layers, and without crushing the shells of delicate, thin-shelled animals to be fossilized. Several proponents of "Flood geology" visualize this as occurring near the end of the Flood year, to form many hills and mountains which are composed of steeply dipping and folded strata of rock.