

Bible colleges of the U. S. and Canada. Conversely, these teachers are encouraged by well known and respected young-earth authors, to believe that the type of data which I have been citing either is scarce or that it is of no real significance.

(4) The Erroneous Nature of the "Ecological Zoning" Hypothesis

During the early 1970's young-earth creationists began to popularize their hypothesis of "ecological zoning" in order to try to explain the worldwide absence of certain kinds of fossils in various strata systems. This hypothesis was obviously of no value in dealing with marine microfossils, but the adherents of "Flood geology" felt that they could use it for explaining the distribution of macrofossils of most of the invertebrate phyla, as well as of vertebrates. It is now a well-known idea among young-earth creationists; and, many followers of young-earth creationism suppose that it has been tested and scientifically verified. Of course such is not the case. The fact that this hypothesis ignores the real extent of the sedimentary cover of the earth--both vertical and horizontal--and also ignores the pelagic, marine microfossils--invalidates any attempts that its adherents might make to test it. Nevertheless, many creationist leaders continue to use the ecological zoning idea as an attempt to dispose of the problems they face concerning fossil distribution.

Thus, Morris and Parker (1982, p. 130) present a neatly arranged diagram of this hypothesis as an explanation of why the fossils appear as they do. This diagram shows a sea shore with swampy land nearby, and higher land farther away from the shore. Different kinds of animals are shown in each of 3 basic kinds of environment: sea-shell animals and trilobites on the sea bottom; amphibians, reptiles, and insects in the swamps; and larger reptiles and mammals on the higher ground. The accompanying explanation tells the reader that the reason we find certain kinds of sea-shell animals and trilobites fossilized only in the deeper, older strata of the earth is that they lived down on the bottom and got buried there by the Flood; and the reason we find amphibians, reptiles, and insects farther up in the strata is that they were living a few feet or meters above the water level, and got buried there; and the reason we find the mammals only in the upper, younger strata of the earth is that they were living higher up away from the swamps. This explanation may sound reasonable at first glance, but it is absolutely contrary to what we see when we examine the rock strata of the earth.

The assemblage of organisms which we have just described, together with the soft sediments and soil in and on which they live, if buried in a great flood, might produce 10 or 15 feet of thickness of sediments. But, what about the vast areas back away from the sea coasts which have 20,000 or more feet of sediments, with thousands of feet of this thickness being highly fossiliferous? Where could all these sediments and fossils--often spread out in broad, uniform layers--have come from? This question becomes especially difficult for anyone who tries to use the ecological zoning hypothesis, because in it the animals are supposed to have been buried at or very near to where they were living. In the 20,000 or more feet of sedimentary layers which cover thousands of square miles in parts of the North American continent, approximately the lower two-thirds of the strata have only the old types of marine animals and plants. (Nearly always, at least a few thousand of this 13,000 feet consists of limestone which contains a high percentage of biogenic components from shallow-water, marine sea floors.) Then the upper 7,000 feet (approximately) of sedimentary rocks include nonmarine, brackish, and marine deposits with different Mesozoic and Cenozoic forms of terrestrial, swamp, and marine fossil types.