

HOW SEDIMENTOLOGY WAS DEVELOPED WITHOUT THE YOUNG-EARTH CREATIONISTS' PAYING ANY ATTENTION TO IT

(A part of a recent letter I wrote, showing that Morris and Whitcomb formulated their ideas about the origin of sedimentary rock layers without being aware of the disciplines of sedimentology and sedimentary petrology which had their main beginning about the same time that Morris and Whitcomb wrote their Genesis Flood. (Before the establishment of these two disciplines geologists had done very little investigating of the processes which are now known to be necessary for the forming of the various types of sedimentary rock layers.))

¶ The young-earth creationist literature left you wondering if there are or are not data which demonstrate great age. Probably the greatest basic problem is that the CRS and ICR both start from the premise that there can not be any data which demonstrate great age--and that, therefore, there is no use to examine the crust of the earth with a view to discovering any. Many conservative evangelicals like yourself have unknowingly supposed that the young-earth leaders really have made a careful study of what the sedimentary cover of the earth is like. But they have not done so. In fact, Morris and Whitcomb wrote their Genesis Flood when the branch of geology (sedimentology) which deals with how sedimentary rocks actually become rocks was still in its infancy. Back in the 1940's and 50's there was the science of stratigraphy, but the questions of how sediments actually become rocks--and also many of the questions of how the sediments were deposited--had to wait for the great upsurge of sedimentological research in the 1960's and since. This upsurge came about almost entirely through the activities and financing of the petroleum industry, and has produced a truly immense body of clear evidence on the processes by which sedimentary rocks were and are formed. It is significant to realize that almost none of this research was carried out with any intention of confirming evolutionary theory, and most of it depends very little on radiometric dating. The research has been carried out because such a high percentage of petroleum is found in particular kinds of sedimentary rock, and a knowledge of the internal characteristics of those rock layers, and of the types of environment in which they were produced, is a tremendous help in predicting where oil will be found and how much can be expected in a particular type of rock formation. The study of such rock formations is almost entirely by non-radiometric geologic methods, so they are not refuted by creationist denials of the value of radiometric dating.

But Morris and Whitcomb had already made up their minds as to what the sedimentary cover of the earth is like before any significant amount of this research had been done--and they have ignored that research ever since. When I was teaching science at Grace College in Winona Lake, Indiana (1966-73), I began to realize the great loss that conservative evangelicals were already suffering, due to this "blind spot" in creationist teaching--and that it would eventually bring disgrace on our teaching of the Bible (which, as you probably know, it has). I had had a fairly thorough grounding (and degrees) in conservative biblical studies and theology before going on for another (research) graduate degree in science, so I had no inclination whatever to adopt any form of evolution other than the microevolution which the CRS and ICR accept today. But I saw that the creationist leaders were absolutely ignoring almost all of the non-radiometric research relevant to their position on the nature and origin of the earth's crust. I communicated at great length and rather frequently with Dr. Whitcomb on this deficiency, but he finally let me know emphatically that he did not consider it necessary or appropriate for Christians to study petroleum geology research reports and related material.

I must not burden you with details of the events of those days, but I will say that ever since that time I have been heavily involved in the study of sedimentology and in efforts to inform conservative evangelicals of the dangers of trying to explain the origin of the earth's crust without careful examination of what is "out there in the rocks."

— By Dan Wenderly, 1988