

If it is objected that using present-day observations of sediment and fossil deposition, and of lithification processes, is a mere uniformitarian extrapolation of the present into the past, we are now in a strong position to refute such an objection. Neither Bible scholars nor scientists have any reason whatever for denying the principle that God created the natural laws of this earth as stable--not erratic. For example, we must avoid the temptation to say that the physical laws which control the precipitation of various minerals out of solution have changed from time to time. Such precipitation laws govern many phases of lithification, and also some phases of deposition, but there is no evidence whatever that these laws have been unstable at any time since the original creation--and the Bible gives us no hint of such a change.

Thus, various disciplines of earth science have clarified an immense number of formerly-unknown factors regarding the laying down of the layers of the earth's crust, and the lengths of time required for their deposition and lithification. This is very comparable to the benefit we have received from the science of biblical archaeology, in understanding the many formerly perplexing problems of ancient history which are related to the Bible. Those who insist that the first chapters of Genesis have grammatical and other linguistic characteristics which leave no room for long periods of time forget that many high-quality, inerrantist, evangelical Bible scholars with at least as much background in Hebrew and other Semitic studies as they, have had no trouble in finding grammatical and other linguistic evidence that the Holy Spirit who inspired the creation account did not put such time limits into those chapters. It is ~~it is~~ completely improper for modern, extremist teachers to publicize the erroneous idea that the work of Bible-believing 19th century and early 20th century scholars is invalid. There have been no important discoveries regarding Hebrew grammar or other aspects of language which change the meanings, since the works of those scholars.

So, conservative evangelicals should do all that they can to assure each other and the unbelieving world that God did not set up contradictions between the Biblical revelation of creation and what we find in the natural record of the rocks. If we are going to exercise this caution, we must avoid the temptation to insist that we always know what the true interpretation of each part of the Scripture is. And, where there is genuine uncertainty among evangelical Old Testament scholars we should be thankful for the light which scientific research has shed on many of the problems of origins--similar to the help we have received from the science of biblical archaeology.

ENDNOTES

1 Georges Cuvier, Essay on the Theory of the Earth. Edinburgh, Wm Blackwood, 1817.

2 Very readable condensations of some of the most significant research work in this area are presented in the book, Sedimentary Petrology, an Introduction, by M. E. Tucker. Halsted Press, John Wiley & Sons, 1981, 252 p.

Similar helpful summaries, with references to many original field-research projects, are found in the chapters on the origin and diagenesis of sandstones, mudrocks, limestones, dolostones, chert, and iron-rich rocks, in Origin of Sedimentary Rocks, by H. Blatt, G. Middleton, & R. Murray. Prentice-Hall, 1980, 782 p.