

~~Do only 1 side~~
~~Bibliog is now attached~~

~~needed for your reading~~
~~was 2/6~~

Rt. 2, Box 808
Oakland, MD 21550
January 30, 1992

Fanciful Bible-Science Stories as Harmful

I appreciate the thorough work of Edward B. Davis in tracing down the fallacies of the 19th-century story of James Bartley's supposed experience in the stomach of a whale (December 1991 Perspectives, pp. 224-237). I agree that we should expose and warn against the use of such unfounded stories in teaching the relation between the Bible and science. But to me, a much more current and burning question is that of the many totally unsupported stories regarding the supposed means by which our earth's crust was formed. These have been accepted by large numbers of conservative Christian workers as useful in their ministry. The group of stories or scenarios to which I refer has been created in the minds of the "scientific creationist" leaders in order to argue that God created all the "heavens and the earth" only a few thousand years ago. By now they have confused untold numbers of honest Christians who want the truth and do not really want to pass error on to others. Such erroneous myths--now widespread in the English-speaking world--have disgraced the Bible in the eyes of a high percentage of the educators and scientists in the United States, Canada, and England.

So, I would ask what we of the ASA are doing and can do to expose such stories. What can we do to warn conservative ministers and other Christian leaders who are wanting to be careful regarding the materials they recommend, yet who do not have the scientific background or the study time to identify the erroneous origin and nature of the stories?

Listed below are some of the best-known and most misleading of the "scientific creationist" stories which possess neither the support of scientific data nor an appreciable amount of biblical support. These fallacious explanations of the origin of parts of the earth's crust have been enthusiastically taught to pastors, evangelists, youth workers, Christian day-school teachers, and Bible college teachers as "good science" which is supposedly in agreement with the Bible.

1. The origin of the great coal deposits of the world-- The story usually says that all these were formed from plant material that was floating on the seas during the Flood. Unknown forces caused the plant material to collect in great, broad mats and then to rapidly sink to the bottom and be covered over with uniform

layers of sediment. This story reaches the point of total absurdity when we realize that in most coal fields there is a vertical sequence of beds of coal, one above the other, separated by several thick strata of sedimentary rock of different types, including limestone. In some coal fields certain of these limestone strata are of freshwater origin, and others are of marine origin, with marine fossils. Some sequences of coal beds alternating with other types of rock strata possess thirty or more coal beds.

2. Dinosaurs and mankind-- According to this highly popular story, the Bible is said to teach that the entire great era of the dinosaurs occurred during the life of the human race. Beautiful story books and coloring books portraying the supposed relation of human beings and dinosaurs living in close proximity to each other are now abundant in Christian day schools, church libraries, and Christian homes.

3. Stories which attempt to explain the vast deposits of marine fossils in the strata of the earth's crust and sea floor-- These fossils are supposedly not arranged in an orderly sequence which reveals the extinction of many, many species during successive ages. And the fact that immensely thick sequences of progressively younger, Mesozoic strata of rock yield many totally new species, families, and orders in several geographic areas is ignored.

4. Stories which make the claim that most plants and many animals, especially marine animals, were able, before the Flood, to grow and reproduce dozens or scores of times faster than they can now-- Thus, great coral reefs and immense reserves of fossil shells could be produced, awaiting the event of the Flood. The plants allegedly made this rapid growth in violation of many known laws of biological growth, including going far beyond the rate limits of assimilation of food and oxygen, chemical metabolism, and excretion--all of which are based on divinely-established physical laws such as diffusion and chemical reaction rates. *omit hyphen*

5. Stories of how the great, layered formations of limestone and other types of rock seen in roadcuts and in petroleum drilling cores were produced-- The shale layers in these formations are usually said to have been formed by rapid settling and hardening of fine clay particles from the waters of the Flood. The limestone formations are usually said to have arisen by rapid precipitation and lithification of calcium carbonate from the sea water. But there are no known physical laws which would have allowed anything like these amounts of calcium carbonate to be derived

from the waters in so short a time. There are of course many other barriers to these hypotheses; e. g., the origin of the fossils and other biogenic components usually found in the limestone, and the great amounts of time required for lithification by cementation. The amounts of time required for the diagenetic changes in the limestone are also immense.

6. The story of how, in the Grand Canyon region, thousands of layers of different kinds of sediments were laid down rapidly by the waters of the Flood-- While the sediments were still soft, the run-off from the Flood allegedly cut the steep-walled canyon. Strangely, the mile-high stacks of unlithified sediments on each side of the canyon remained intact! The immense weight of the sedimentary column did not even cause the distinct layers to mix or amalgamate with each other! The story is made even more intriguing--and ludicrous--by the fact that the possible sources of some of the types of sediments are completely unknown and difficult to imagine.

One variation of this story has the sediments lithifying suddenly, almost like commercial concrete. This ignores the complement of substances in the rock layers and violates all of the many known processes of lithification of the types of sedimentary rocks which are found in the Grand Canyon.

7. The beautiful, imaginative story of the deposition of fossil communities by "ecological zoning" during the Flood-- This story is told and taught without regard for the fact that such a process could do no better than explain a deposit of fossil-bearing strata approximately three or four meters thick. It is utterly illogical for explaining the fossil communities buried in the many sequential formations of great areas where the earth's sedimentary rock cover is a few miles thick.

8. The story that the entire geological column of the earth's sedimentary strata, from the Cambrian on up, is merely an imaginative creation of the minds of unbelieving scientists-- The many competent field geologists who made careful observations of the different types of strata and compared them worldwide were supposedly only imagining that they saw order and reason in the sequences of strata.

9. The story of how the earth's magnetic field has allegedly undergone a simple, rapid process of decay over a period of approximately 10,000 years-- The large number of magnetic reversals that are permanently recorded in the strata of so many rock

skelminsky added "This ^{that} assumes just after the title"

not needed, with the "this assumed"

formations of the world are said to be meaningless with regard to the age of the rock formations, or of the earth.

10. The story of how, before the Flood, the carbon-14 content of the atmosphere was supposedly very small-- Just after the Flood, a rapid buildup of atmospheric C-14 is said to have occurred--because the hypothetical "vapor canopy" was gone. This supposed rapid increase of the supply of C-14 is said to invalidate all C-14 dates before 5,000 B.P.

I believe that the biblical flood was a real event. But the fact that so many data-rejecting stories such as the above are told for absolute truth and as obligatory for Christians is troubling. This open disregard for careful scientific research has disgraced the Christian cause, and has produced serious mental conflicts in students' minds. Fallacious scenarios purporting to describe how the entire earth, with all its fossil-bearing strata, was formed in only a few thousand years have been unwarily accepted by great numbers of honest Christian workers. Likewise, practically the only kind of Bible-science materials recommended in the Christian bookstores of America is that which makes these same hypothetical claims. (The proofs had a slight, but good change.)

made by good change

Consequently the conservative evangelical community is being taught, year-after-year, that the proper Christian stance is to reject practically all research data which are derived from the work of earth scientists, paleontologists, astronomers, and physicists. But substituting unsupported Bible-science stories for research data is no way to make friends with public educators, or to help the students themselves.

proofs omitted Council (OK)

What can ASA members do to help their Christian brethren in this problem? It appears that, to this point, most of us have thought that there is not much that can be done. I submit that this is a wrong approach. Most extreme creationist leaders are adamant, ignoring practically all earth-science research reports; but a non-belligerent dissemination of scientific information to the conservative evangelical ministers, youth leaders, and teachers of our nation can have a strong impact if we seek God's help in the effort. For example, we have not produced and distributed an appreciable amount of written or visual material presenting standard earth-science, research information in the language of laymen. Such information would at least enable high school students and Christian workers to begin some evaluating of the extremist claims which are presented to them.

she used "allow", but "enable" more accurately expresses the idea, i.e., they would then have information on which to base their evaluations

Daniel E. Wonderly
Rt. 2, Box 808
Oakland, MD 21550

copy

The Bibliog for ASA "Communication"

From Dan Wonderly, April 4, 1992

For Mrs. Patsy Ames, Managing Editor, ASA
P. O. Box 668, Ipswich, MA 01938

Bibliographic sources to be added at the end of the Communication, "Fanciful Bible-Science Stories' Harm: A Call to Action"

Suggested Heading:

"The following is a sequential list of reference sources which will supply reliable data regarding the ten topics covered in the above discussion"

1. COAL DEPOSITS

Cross, A. T., 1971, The Geology of the Pittsburgh Coal. West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey, Report of Investigations no. 10, 99 pp.

Madden, D. J., 1989, Stratigraphy, Depositional Environments, and Paleogeography of Coal-Bearing Strata in the Upper Cretaceous Mesaverde Group... Garfield County, Colorado. U. S. Geological Survey Professional Paper no. 1485, 45 pp.

2. DINOSAURS

Norman, D., 1985, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs. Crescent Books, 208 pp.

Benton, M. J., 1990, Vertebrate Palaeontology. Unwin Hyman Academic, 246 pp.

3. MARINE FOSSIL DISTRIBUTION AS ORDERLY

Lehmann, U. and G. Hillmer, 1983, Fossil Invertebrates. Cambridge University Press, 350 pp.

Wonderly, D. E., 1987, Neglect of Geologic Data: Sedimentary Strata Compared with Young-Earth Creationist Writings (Chapters 6 & 7). IBRI (P. O. Box 423, Hatfield, PA 19440), 140 pp.

(The address is needed because IBRI is probably not yet listed in standard lists of publishers.)

4. LIMITATIONS ON BIOLOGICAL GROWTH RATES

Gordon, Malcolm S., 1982, Animal Physiology: Principles and Adaptations. Macmillan, 4th ed., 610 pp.

Eckert, R., et al., 1988, Animal Physiology: Mechanisms and Adaptations. W. H. Freeman Co., 3rd ed., 816 pp.

5. ORIGINS OF LIMESTONE STRATA AND OTHER TYPES OF SEDIMENTARY ROCK

Blatt, H., et al., 1980, Origin of Sedimentary Rocks. Prentice-Hall, 2nd ed., 782 pp.

this is singular

Reading, H. G., et al., 1986, Sedimentary Environments and Facies. Blackwell Scientific Publications, 2nd ed., 615 pp.

6. ORIGINS OF THE GRAND CANYON STRATA

Beus, S. S. and M. Morales, editors, 1990, Grand Canyon Geology. Oxford University Press, 518 pp.

7. THE ECOLOGICAL ZONING HYPOTHESIS

Wonderly, D. E., 1987, Neglect of Geologic Data: Sedimentary Strata Compared with Young-Earth Creationist Writings (Chapter 7). IBRI (P. O. Box 423, Hatfield, PA 19440), 140 pp.

8. HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF THE EARTH'S COMPOSITE GEOLOGIC COLUMN

Fritz, W. J. and J. N. Moore, 1988, Basics of Physical Stratigraphy and Sedimentology. John Wiley & Sons, 341 pp.

9. EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD

Tarling, D. H., 1983, Palaeomagnetism: Principles and Applications in Geology, Geophysics and Archaeology. Chapman and Hall, 320 pp.

Larson, R. L., 1991, "Geological Consequences of Superplumes." Geology, v. 19, no. 10 (Oct.), p. 963-966.

10. THE CARBON-14 CONTENT OF THE ATMOSPHERE

Taylor, R. E. and R. A. Muller, 1992, "Radiocarbon Dating," in McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology, 7th ed., vol. 15, p. 123-130. (In the 6th ed. it is vol. 11, p. 328-335.)