Myth and Reality in the Life of William Buckland

John K. Reed*

Abstract

William Buckland is the prototypical "Christian-finds-science" straw man of secular propaganda. He appears as a pre-incarnation of Henry Morris, wrestles with geological facts that contradict the Flood, sees the light, and finally repudiates the Flood—just another tragic zealot finding true enlightenment through "science." The false moral is clear; Christians who open their eyes convert to secularism. Like many other secular myths, that view of Buckland is absurd. The real Buckland was an elite geologist with a brilliant career, receiving accolades from society and peers. The real tragedy was not an imaginary psychological conflict between science and religion, but the long road of compromise that marked his career, and the real moral is the necessity of fidelity to Scripture.

Introduction

Recent scholarship in the history of geology has unveiled a new layer of deceit by secularism. Around the core errors of that worldview is wrapped a protective wall of mythology depicting the history of geology as the triumph of science over superstition.

> In the introduction to *Bursting the Limits of Time* I mentioned briefly why this kind of historiography has long been abandoned by historians, although it remains popular in the modern media, and above all in the rhetoric of those self-appointed spokespersons for "Science" who are, in effect, atheistic fundamentalists. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 5)

Although these myths are still propagated—despite the demonstration of a more complex reality (Gould, 1987; Laudan, 1987; Mortenson, 2004, 2006; Rudwick, 1997, 2005, 2008)—truth is seeping through. We now know that geology did not originate with James Hutton, but decades earlier with continental naturalists—men who scoffed at his deistic geotheory. We know that Lyell was no brave empiricist, overthrowing organized religion. We know that Georges Cuvier was not a Christian apologist for the Flood.

Another key myth has been built around another key character in this secularist farce—William Buckland. For many decades, he was a significant propaganda tool—the troubled Christian who gradually saw the light of science, cast off superstition, and embraced secular geohistory. He remains a symbol of the supposed struggle between the darkness of religion and the light of secularism. For example, Laudan (1987, p. 170) categorized Buckland as a "biblical" geologist:

> Of course, some biblical geologists lingered on, particularly in Britain. But the more reputable of these, such as William Buckland, laid the onus of their reconstruction on the rocks, not on the Bible.

Extreme caricatures of Buckland elicited Rudwick's (2008, p. 426) condemnation:

* John K. Reed, PhD, Evans, GA, reed4004@gmail.com
Accepted for publication October 19, 2011

> The artist captured his [Buckland's] deeply serious character, which belies his later and unwarranted dismissal as a mere buffoon.

So at best, he was a "reputable" biblical geologist, and at worst, a buffoon. This popular depiction of Buckland is doubly deceitful because (1) Buckland was not a proponent of biblical history, and (2) Buckland readily compromised biblical truth for current theories of geology. He was not simply a "more reputable" edition of the scriptural geologists, who were young-earth creationists (Mortenson, 2004); rather Buckland opposed them, helped by compromising clerics such as William Conybeare and Adam Sedgwick. Needless to say, the secular naturalists of the day were unanimous in their condemnation of the scriptural geologists. Given the contemporary appeal of compromise, Buckland's *real* life and errors are instructive examples of how easily entangled Christians can become in secularism once they relinquish the authority of Scripture. Buckland's career is not a morality tale rebuking creationists, but one for Christians who think they can integrate secular prehistory into the Bible's teaching.

Figure 1. William Buckland was a pioneer of English geology. From nndb.com (March 2011).

Summary of Buckland's Life

William Buckland (Figure 1) was a dominant figure in British science in the early nineteenth century. He was an accomplished and competent field geologist and honored as such throughout his career (Figure 2). Born in 1784 in Devon, Buckland entered Oxford shortly after the turn of the century, earning BA (1804) and MA (1808) degrees. He was ordained into the Anglican clergy in 1809, the same year he was made a fellow of Corpus Christi College at Oxford.

Like many clerics of the time, his interest was in science and natural history. He became a Reader in Mineralogy in 1813 and was appointed a Fellow in the Royal Society in 1818, having already achieved prominence in the Geological Society of London, founded in 1807. During the 1820s he achieved international prominence built on productive work. In 1820, his *Vindiciae Geologicae* established him in the top tier of geologists in England. He attained international prominence with his 1822 paper that reconstructed the natural history of Kirkdale Cave in Yorkshire—a paper that earned him the Royal Society's Copley medal. "Buckland's fame was rising rapidly, and not only in Britain" (Rudwick, 2008, p. 80).

He could accurately be described as a disciple of Georges Cuvier (the French paleontologist and comparative anatomist), although Buckland probably had a closer affinity to orthodox Christianity than his French mentor. Following Cuvier, Buckland took a catastrophist view of history. In 1823, he summarized his ideas about a geological "deluge" in his *Reliquiae Diluvianae*. The following year, he presented a paper on a fossil dinosaur, which he called the "Megalosaur," and was elected president of the Geological Society, a position he would again hold in 1840.

Continuing his work on caves in the 1820s, Buckland's next big find was at Paviland cave in Wales, which included a human fossil, called the "red woman." In 1829, he identified fossil feces, coin-

1784	Born
1804	BA Oxford
1808	MA Oxford
1813	Reader in Mineralogy at Oxford
1818	Fellow, Royal Society
1819	Reader in Geology
1820	*Vindiciae Geolgicae*
1822	Kirkdale Cave Paper; Copley Medal
1823	*Reliquiae Diluvianae*
1824	President, Geological Society (one year)
1826	Paviland Cave, "red woman"
1836	*Bridgewater Treatise*
1840	President, Geological Society (one year)
1847	Trustee, British Museum
1848	Wollaston Medal, Geological Society
1856	Died

Figure 2. Timeline of William Buckland's life and career with famous publications in italics. Note the honors and awards indicating high professional regard by his society and peers until his final illness.

ing the term "coprolite." In 1836, he published one of the eight Bridgewater Treatises on the relationship between geology and natural theology. By then, he had reached the height of his career and its accompanying international prominence. During the 1840s he was appointed to the Deanery of Westminster and Islip, appointed a trustee of the British Museum, and awarded the Wollaston Medal by the Geological Society. In 1849, he contracted a tubercular infection that led to his death in 1856. In short, Buckland was one of the most prominent practitioners of the new science of geology, with a reputation across Europe as a competent and successful savant, despite the critics of his "diluvial" theory.

Like Jean Andre de Luc in the previous century, Buckland discovered quickly that defending even a watered-down version of the Genesis Flood brought many opponents. Rudwick cannot fathom why a scientist of Buckland's stature would attempt to integrate biblical belief with science. Note how he implies that Buckland's diluvial research was a separate, inferior project to his "regular" scientific research.

> All this work established Buckland as a competent field geologist in the mainstream of the new research; his work on the Stonesfield Megalosaur fitted into this stratigraphical framework, while extending it in a zoological direction that depended crucially on Cuvier's expertise. *On the other hand*, Buckland's famous inaugural lecture at Oxford [1819], focusing on the problems of the Superficial deposits and interpreting them as the physical traces of the "geological deluge" that he identified as the biblical Flood, represented a *distinctly different line of research*, carried on in parallel with his other work and *only loosely linked* to it. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 73, emphasis added)

However, it is clear from Buckland's work and writings that a universal aqueous catastrophe was an integral part of natural history, just as gradualism was for Lyell. The key to understanding Buckland is not the hackneyed "faith versus science" mantra of atheists but his conception of the "deluge" in the context of earth history and the rock record. However, his idea of a geological deluge was not the Genesis Flood, and secular critics who link him to modern creationists only reveal their ignorance.

Buckland's Geological Deluge: Not Noah's Flood

How did Buckland's geological "deluge" differ from the Genesis Flood? Buckland's "deluge" view differed in four significant ways from Genesis: (1) Its primary source of truth was geology, not Scripture, (2) it was an event on an old earth, (3) it was limited in its effects to the surficial deposits of the rock record and topography, and (4) it was one of many catastrophes, the rest of which predated Adam (Figure 3).

Buckland was no young-earth geologist.

> For Buckland, as for de Luc before him, the religious value of the biblical writings was dependent on their reliability *as history*. Like many earlier savants, he had no hesitation in interpreting the Creation story in Genesis in a non-literal way, allowing for a vast prehuman antiquity of the earth. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 82)

His "geological deluge" was limited to the superficial deposits, as illustrated by his classification of cave-fill fossils as "antediluvian.

> Strictly speaking, the fossil bones of Kirkdale and other caves were not themselves "relics of the deluge", but traces of an earlier or "antediluvial" period that the deluge had brought to an end. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 82)

Finally, the "deluge" was only the

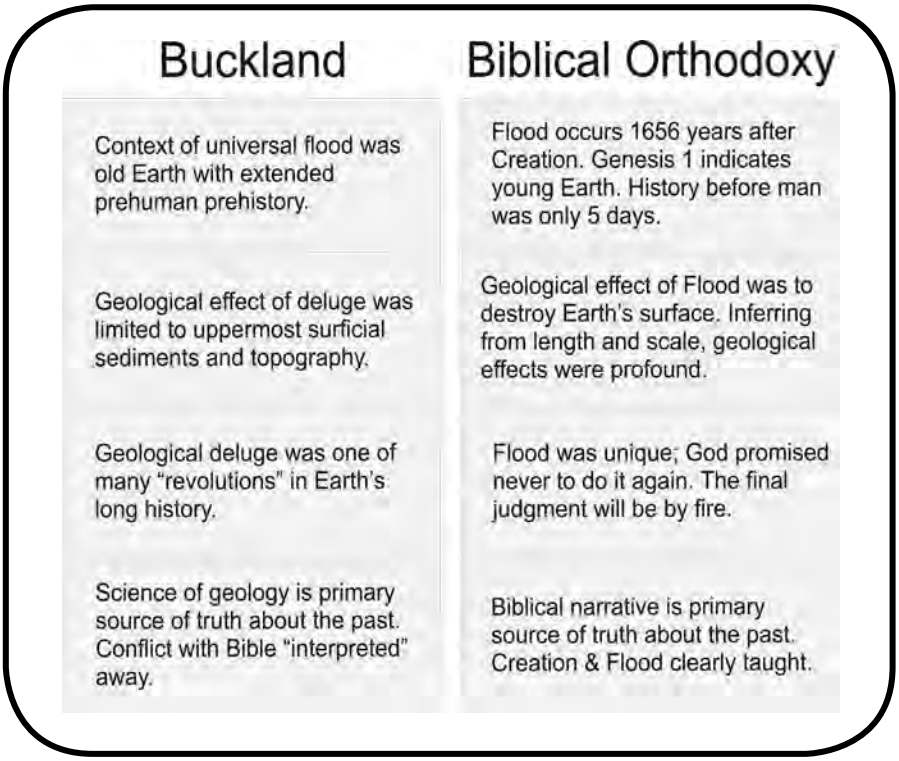

Figure 3. Buckland's geological deluge only superficially resembled the Genesis Flood because his primary source of information was geology, not Scripture. Other errors flowed from that initial mistake.

last of many "revolutions" in earth history.

> All this research had reinforced his [Buckland's] Cuvierian argument that a drastic and widespread diluvial event in the geologically recent past had been the last of the earth's occasional "revolutions." (Rudwick, 2008, p. 75)

In contrast, Genesis eliminates prehistory with its first three words. The "human age" began five days after Creation. The real Flood was a hydraulic catastrophe that destroyed earth's surface, and Buckland vastly underestimated its potential for geological work. Its deposits include most of the rock record, not superficial, unconsolidated sediment. Finally, it was a unique event, never before seen and never again to be repeated.

Buckland also erred in following men instead of the Bible. He was especially influenced by Cuvier—arguably the most prominent naturalist in early nineteenth-century continental Europe (Rudwick, 1997). Buckland emulated Cuvier's methods, identified with his ideas, and sought his aid with fossil discoveries in England. Both believed in an old earth. Both believed in an abrupt transition separating the "ancient world" from the "modern world" and that the transition could be linked to the biblical story of the Flood, though neither accepted the narrative as a literal and accurate account. To them it was simply another ancient legend, a remnant in human memory of an ancient catastrophe. Buckland's position was not far from that of a modern neocatastrophist who happens to be a Christian.

> Buckland's reconstruction of a vanished ecosystem in recent geohistory … was seen at the time as a sensational foretaste of what the great Parisian naturalist Georges Cuvier had eloquently set out, just ten years earlier, as a worthy and attainable goal for the new science of geology. "Would it not be glorious", Cuvier had asked rhetorically, for geologists to "burst the limits of time", just as astronomers had "burst the limits of space"? (Rudwick, 2005, p. 1)

Buckland's advocacy of Noah's Flood was quite different from that of the scriptural geologists of his day or modern creationists. Instead, if alive now, he would likely prefer the company of compromising Christians like Hugh Ross and Davis Young. But Buckland put geology's authority before that of Scripture; his unquestioning acceptance of secular prehistory before the "deluge" was seen in his conventional view of stratigraphy (cf. Mortenson, 2006).

> Buckland's remarkably effective correlations—using fossils in the Smithian manner [William Smith's use of index fossils to provide relative dates of strata] that was already becoming routine—contributed to the widespread sense that the English sequence was indeed worth treating as a standard of reference. … Conybeare and his friend Buckland helped ensure that the British sequence, which was already well known and seemed to be exceptionally complete, came to be treated as a useful reference standard for the whole of Europe and even, more tentatively, for the rest of the world. (Rudwick, 2008, pp. 41, 45–46)

Of course, the only way to have known that the British sequence was both complete and was an exemplar of global stratigraphy was to first assume a global geologic column (Reed, 2008).

Buckland's limited "geological deluge" is seen in his acclaimed reconstruction of a paleoenvironment from fossils found in the Kirkdale cave (Buckland, 1822). Rudwick summarizes:

> Buckland's "diluvial" research was hugely enhanced by the chance discovery of Kirkdale Cave in Yorkshire, with its rich haul of fossil bones. These were … confirmed by Cuvier in Paris; but this indoor museum work on comparative anatomy was complemented crucially by Buckland's own outdoor fieldwork on the geological context of the cave itself. Combining the two sources of evidence, he constructed the sensational "hyaena story" that he presented to the Royal Society in 1822, and for which he received the Copley medal. … He interpreted the cave as a former den of large extinct hyenas, scavenging a varied diet of animals ranging in size from mammoths to water rats and including both carnivores and herbivores. … Buckland argued that they demonstrated that the den had been occupied at a geologically very recent period, and that the hyenas had been wiped out no more than a few millennia ago, a time compatible with any of the varied dates … traditionally computed on textual grounds for the biblical Flood. … Buckland's "hyaena story" based on Kirkdale made him not only well known in savant circles in London but also more prominent than ever in his university. (Rudwick, 2008, pp. 73, 75)

Buckland's discovery was captured by a cartoon drawn by fellow Anglican cleric and geologist, William Conybeare, in 1821, shown in Figure 4.

Investigation of this geological (but not necessarily biblical) "deluge" was Buckland's primary interest in the 1820s, reinforced by subsequent work.

> Buckland's interpretation of Kirkdale Cave … was buttressed by several other lines of research. In earlier fieldwork … he had used telltale pebbles to track a "diluvial current" that … had swept from the Midlands plain up over a watershed and down into the Thames valley … in a way that was quite inexplicable in terms of the ordinary action of the present rivers. Likewise, he had interpreted the topography on the south coast as evidence that the valleys had been scoured out by a rapid current. … All this research had reinforced his

Figure 4. Cartoon of Buckland's "discovery" of an antediluvian hyena den in Kirkdale cave near Oxford. Drawn by William Conybeare in 1821. The candle in Buckland's hand represents the light of science penetrating the past. From historyofgeology.blogspot.com (April 2011).

> Cuvierian argument that a drastic and widespread diluvial event in the geologically recent past had been the last of the earth's occasional "revolutions." (Rudwick, 2008, p. 75)

In 1823, Buckland published his *Reliquiae Diluvianae*. In 1826, another cave discovery at Paviland provided more fodder for the "deluge" interpretation. The cave even included a human skeleton, but Buckland's reaction illustrates the primacy of secular geohistory in his thinking.

> By far the most important discovery at Paviland was apparently made by Buckland himself. In addition to the usual "antediluvial" mammal bones, an incomplete human skeleton was found lying close to the surface of the deposit on the floor of the cave. Since Buckland identified the "geological deluge" as the biblical Flood, it might have been anticipated that he would be delighted … to find a human victim of that event and hence to have the date of the geological deluge confirmed as falling within the human period. But Buckland took his cue from Cuvier, who with good reason had been highly skeptical about all such alleged human fossils. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 77)

In other words, Buckland accepted the views of secular naturalists over the Bible. He was happy if the Bible supported his beloved geology, but the geology clearly took precedence. This mistake opened the door for two other errors: (1) the "geological deluge" only produced superficial deposits, and (2) human fossils could not be antediluvian, even though it could be argued that they had the same cause as the "antediluvian" mammal fossils in the same cave fill. Ironically, in the case of the "red woman" fossil, instead of "taking his cue" from the field evidence, he took it from his mentor, Cuvier. Then he found a convenient way to attempt to integrate his "scientific" conclusion with Genesis.

> Buckland had good reason to stay on the side of caution and Cuvier, and to conclude that there was still no evidence that early humans had spread as far as Britain by the time that the deluge overwhelmed the country. For him, as for Cuvier, this did not weaken the case for identifying the geological deluge as the event recorded in Genesis. Both savants assumed that human life had been far more restricted geographically before the deluge than it became with the rise of civilizations after the event. It had long been conventional to locate the likely area of origin of the human species somewhere in Asia. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 79)

British and continental diluvialism abandoned the Scripture's description of the Flood for imaginary theories such as "mega-tsunamis." Buckland embraced these secular theorists:

> He particularly recommended those who doubted his interpretation to study the work of Hutton's friend Sir James Hall (1761–1832), who had reconstructed just such violent currents in the Edinburgh region and had explained them explicitly by analogy with modern tsunamis. Hall's research showed, as Buckland put it, that "the surface of the earth owes its last form not to the gradual action of existing causes, but to the excavating force of a suddenly overwhelming and transient mass of waster." (Rudwick, 2008, p. 80)

But even a "secular" version of the Flood was spurned by most of Buckland's contemporaries. They chose a clear break with Christianity, allowing no possibility of a link between the Bible and geology. That is why the "scriptural geologists" were the object of scorn of both Buckland and his gradualist opponents.

> In the *Edinburgh Review* … Fitton … conceded that the new work [of Buckland] was strictly scientific, and quite distinct from the increasingly popular genre of "*scriptural geology*." But since he and other geologists regarded the latter as scientifically worthless, he regretted that Buckland had not kept geology and Genesis more clearly separate. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 84)

Fitton, therefore, rejected any possibility of truth from the Bible. Why else would he want to separate the "purity" of science from the "contamination" of Genesis? It is amazing that this proto-positivism so easily deluded otherwise intelligent men.

There is little doubt that Buckland found a more ready audience among the educated public in England than on the continent. England was one of the last nations in Western Europe to abandon Christian continued orthodoxy. The fight over the Bible and history had already been lost on the continent:

> Buckland's analysis of … caves was designed, then, to support an underlying historical claim: that the catastrophic "geological deluge" was so recent in date that it could be identified as the biblical Flood. This claim to have particular resonance in the British context, owing to its perceived implications for the reliability of the biblical documents as a whole, and hence for the wider issues of the relation between church and state. On the Continent, where the political situation was quite different, the British preoccupation with issues of "geology and Genesis" left many savants amused, or at least bemused. (Rudwick, 2008, pp. 82–83)

So the continental savants were able to laugh off the Flood. In England, the possibility of defending Scripture from secular assaults drove Buckland's British critics to anger, instead. As seen today, the Genesis Flood triggered irrational reactions from supposedly "open-minded" empiricists. "Buckland's critics balked, however, at the second component of his diluvial theory … that the geological deluge was recent enough to be identified as none other than Noah's Flood (Rudwick, 2005, p. 83). This national differential in spiritual decline explains the differences between Buckland and Cuvier.

> Buckland … focused exclusively on the ancient textual testimony of Genesis. This served Buckland's purpose of giving the science of geology legitimacy and respectability in his local academic environment, while also bolstering the role of religious authority generally; but conversely it laid him open to criticism by those who had their own agendas for undermining that authority. (Rudwick, 2005, p. 83)

This religious animosity of the English deists and secularists explains the deep dislike of Buckland's work by Fleming, Scrope, Lyell, and others. Secular historians generally have little interest in church history, and so they fail to associate the rise of secular natural history with a period of spiritual and theological weakness in the church. Instead, they follow the paradigm of "the rise of geology" and the mantra of "science versus religion." In doing so, they miss an important factor in the events of the early 1800s.

Secular historians have propagated the myth that the ascent of Christianity in Europe led to the "Dark Ages," which were relieved only by the rebirth of pagan classicalism in the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Stark (2003), among many others, demonstrates the inaccuracy of this view, noting that technological and social progress in the "Dark Ages" exceeded that of Rome. Glover (1984) also notes the Christianization was not an immediate phenomenon; Europe was not predominantly Christian until the late "Dark Ages." Social reform exploded during the Reformation, and theological renewal occupied people of all social strata, though it was led by academics like Luther and Calvin. This stands in stark contrast to later Christian renewals.

The Wesleyan revivals of the 1700s—fighting against the rising tide of deism and secularism—were primarily a phenomenon of the lower and middle classes in England and America, leaving the "high" Anglican Church much less affected. From an academic viewpoint, the "intellectuals" of the day were, unlike their Reformation forefathers, given over to heresy. Orthodox Christianity had lost its appeal to the British intellectual class. It is no surprise, then, that the new secular earth and life sciences were dominated by men holding the post-Christian worldview of naturalism.

That trend was manifested in John Fleming.

> Another well informed critic … took issue with Buckland's assumption … that only a sudden and drastic physical event could have wiped out a whole fauna of well-adapted animals. John Fleming (1785–1857) was a highly competent naturalist who had been closely associated with Jameson in Edinburgh before becoming a Church of Scotland minister in the rural parish of Flisk in Fifeshire. … In response to Buckland's *Reliquiae*, Fleming concluded his article with a vehement attack on the English geologist's "indiscreet union of Geology and Revelation", which in his opinion deserved Francis Bacon's classic censure for having led to "*Philosophia phantastica, Religio haeretica*". The criticism showed that not all ordained ministers of established churches approved of Buckland's deployment of Genesis in scientific debate. (Rudwick, 2005, p. 84, 85)

Instead, Fleming's criticism showed the extent to which heresy had spread. Rudwick misinterpreted the acerbic response of the heretical Fleming as representing a diversity of legitimate

opinion within the clergy. In doing so, he failed to take into account the classic Reformation distinction between the visible and invisible church; the former being a mixture of believers and unbelievers, and, as Jesus noted in Matthew 7:15 (KJV), "false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Had Rudwick simply read the confessional documents of the Church of Scotland at that time, he would have clearly seen Fleming as one of the "wolves."

Compromise Leads to Compromise

William Buckland occupied a unique position at the end of his career. He was a highly respected member of England's scientific elite, yet his main ideas had been cast aside in favor of Lyell's almost static gradualism. Secular propagandists have long portrayed Buckland's "capitulation" as the epitome of the victory of science over religion, contrasting Buckland's strong diluvialism in the early 1820s to his later retreat in his 1836 Bridgewater Treatise. But the reality is that Buckland, who had already compromised on the authority of science, an old earth, and a flood of little geological consequence, simply moved a little closer to the logical conclusion of that position.

> This gradual withdrawal—by geologists—from any simple correlation between geological deluge and biblical Flood culminated, in effect, in Buckland's concession that his own earlier claim that they were identical now needed dramatic revision in the light of more recent research. A footnote in his Bridgewater Treatise showed the wider public that he, like Sedgwick before him, had now abandoned the equation. He described the event that had entombed the diluvial fossils as "the last of many geological revolutions that have been produced by violent irruptions of water, rather than the comparatively tranquil inundation described in the Inspired Narrative [in Genesis]." (Rudwick, 2008, p. 427)

Despite having abandoned the historical reality of the Genesis Flood, Buckland, like many modern compromisers, continued futilely to try to square the circle. It is no surprise that he came to advocate a local flood based on a restricted area of human population.

> Buckland's revision severed the last link between his own "diluvium" and the *biblical* "deluge" or Flood. The historical reality of the latter could still be maintained, however, simply by adopting the interpretation that biblical scholars in any case preferred … restricting the universality of the Flood to whatever limited area the human species had occupied at that time. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 427)

This is precisely the excuse used by Glenn Morton (1999) in his attempt to integrate an old earth with the Bible. The numerous problems with this position have been documented in Sarfati (2004), for example, as they were by Whitcomb and Morris (1961). Buckland's path has been followed closely by contemporary compromising Christians. All rest their case on the geologic timescale and the secular stratigraphic interpretation of the rock record. Buckland was in the vanguard of this movement.

> Buckland's main argument, no less than Lyell's, depended necessarily on a factual foundation of stratigraphy. Unless the sequence of formations was reliably established, no inferences about time and geohistory could be regarded as secure. (Rudwick, 2008, p. 428)

So the real story of William Buckland is not that of the conversion of a "biblical geologist" to secular truth but that of small compromise leading to larger compromise on the path to secularism. Buckland first compromised the authority of Scripture by making geology the final arbiter of historical truth. After that fateful step, succeeding compromises multiplied. The first was the acceptance of a prehuman prehistory, despite man's creation in the earth's first week. Facing an old earth and a prehistory open only to science, Buckland had to find a way to save the Flood. Cuvier had pointed the way by drawing a sharp distinction between the ancient world and the modern world based on his paleontological research in the Paris Basin. His geological "revolution" could be linked to Genesis in an offhand manner, but as time showed, both Cuvier and Buckland stood ready to jettison the Bible in favor of secular natural history.

This untenable position forced Buckland to limit the geological extent of the Flood. Since the bulk of the rock record was a relic of the ancient world, he was forced to confine the Flood to the uppermost surficial sediments, like cave fill, complete with their "antediluvian" fossils. Had he used his clerical training to exegete Genesis 6–8 carefully, he would have realized the impossibility of such a flood being compatible with the Genesis narrative. So one step at a time, the Flood was divorced from the rock record; Buckland's "diluvium" was later largely attributed to glaciation. Secularists crowed at the dismissal of the Flood, not realizing that the falsification of Buckland's position was as good an argument for the scriptural geologists' position as it was for the uniformitarian one. And of course, the real lessons of Buckland's work could be applied to today's Christians who claim fidelity to the Bible while ignoring the detailed and clear message of the text with regard to the extent and impact of the Flood.

Conclusion

Enlightenment secularists used the "religion versus science" argument with great success for many years. Today, most recognize the argument as propaganda, but

in the heady days of the 1800s, it seemed like nothing more than common sense, and Enlightenment propagandists used it to distort the history of geology. William Buckland is a case in point. From being a member of Britain's geological elite, he quickly descended, as Rudwick noted, to the status of a "buffoon." That Enlightenment distortion fit well with the story of the overthrow of Genesis by geology but has little correspondence to reality. Instead, Buckland's compromises conceded doctrine after doctrine to secularism, making him an odd choice for the secular straw man.

Buckland was no "biblical geologist," struggling against science. Rather, he was a perfect example of how compromise leads to more compromise and finally to ridicule and defeat for Christian orthodoxy. The real message of Buckland's career, and one sadly ignored by many Christian geologists today, is that there is no way to square the circle between secular natural history and the clear teachings of Scripture. If a man of Buckland's intelligence and accomplishments failed, then it seems unlikely that his intellectual children will succeed.

Creationism is ridiculed by secular scientists and compromising Christians. In that regard, little has changed since the early nineteenth century. Secular naturalists and compromisers like Buckland both reserved their true animosity for the scriptural geologists. It is worth wondering, if Christianity's teachings on the afterlife and judgment are true, which group is standing in God's favor—Buckland, Sedgwick, Conybeare, and the other clerical compromisers or the scriptural geologists? Although the former have by now learned the error of their ways, their modern counterparts have not.

> The many [geologists] who were also religious believers saw no conflict between geology and their understanding of the Creation stories of Genesis; they had long since learned that it was a *religious* mistake to treat biblical texts as if they were scientific sources, because an inappropriate literalism deflected attention away from religious meaning. It is true that some of these geologists, particularly in England, had to confront vocal critics—the self-styled "scriptural" writers—who relentlessly pursued a literalist line on matters of "geology and Genesis." But this, like the modern and peculiarly American phenomenon of creationism and other forms of religious fundamentalism, was a contingent feature of a particular time, place, and, above all, social location. (Rudwick, 2005, p. 5)

A more accurate assessment of today's compromisers is found in Heard (1985):

> *Years of error leave a trail;*
> *And still we walk it, meaning well. …*

References

Buckland, W, 1820. *Vindiciae Geologicae: or the Connexion Between Geology with Religion Explained, in an Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford, May 15, 1819, on the Endowment of a Readership in Geology by His Royal Highness, the Prince Regent*. Oxford, UK.

Buckland, W. 1822. Account of an assemblage of fossil teeth and bones of elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, bear, tiger, and hyaena, and sixteen other animals, discovered in a cave at Kirkdale, Yorkshire, in the year 1821: with a comparative view of five similar caverns in various parts of England and others on the Continent. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 1822:171–236.

Buckland, W. 1823. *Reliquiae Diluvianae; or, Observations of the Organic Remains Contained in Caves, Fissures, and Diluvial Gravel, and on Other Geological Phenomena, Attesting the Action of a Universal Deluge*. London, UK.

Buckland, W. 1836. *Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology*, 2 vols. London, UK.

Glover, W. 1984. *Biblical Origins of Modern Secular Culture*. Mercer University Press, Macon, GA.

Gould, S.J. 1987. *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Heard, M. 1985. It Will Not Be Like This Forever. *Mosaics*. Home Sweet Home Records, Dallas, TX.

Laudan, Rachel. 1987. *From Mineralogy to Geology: The Foundations of a Science, 1650–1830*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL

Mortenson, T. 2004. *The Great Turning Point: The Church's Catastrophic Mistake on Geology before Darwin*. Master Books, Green Forest, AR.

Mortenson, T. 2006. The historical development of the old-earth geological time-scale. In Reed, J.K., and M.J. Oard (editors), *The Geologic Column: Perspectives within Diluvial Geology*. Creation Research Society Books, Chino Valley, AZ.

Morton, G.R. 1999. *Foundation, Fall, and Flood*, 2nd ed. DMD Publishing, Dallas TX.

Reed, J.K. 2008. Toppling the timescale, part II: unearthing the cornerstone. *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 44:256–263.

Rudwick, M.J.S. 1997. *Georges Cuvier, Fossil Bones, and Geological Catastrophes*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Rudwick, M.J.S. 2005. *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Rudwick, M.J.S. 2008. *Worlds before Adam: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Reform*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Sarfati, J. 2004. Refuting Compromise. Master Books, Green Forest, AR.

Stark. R. 2003. For the Glory of God. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

Whitcomb, J.C., and H.M. Morris. 1961. *The Genesis Flood*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, PA.