

## CREATIONIST SCIENCE: A CHALLENGE FROM PROFESSOR YOUNG

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*The recent book, **Creation and Flood**,<sup>1</sup> by Dr. Davis A. Young, may be considered an example of a position which many have adopted: that of trying to have Christianity and science each autonomous in its own realm. However, such an attempt, when examined closely, shows many weaknesses in respect to both theology and science. Some aspects of the matter are discussed here.*

*It will be understood that this article is not intended as an attack on Dr. Young, nor on his book. Rather, it is a critical investigation of a notion which has been around for some time, but of which Young's book is one of the latest expositions.*

### Introduction

There are three ways of handling the present controversy between modern naturalistic science and the Bible. One way is to fit both science and theology under the naturalistic presupposition; this method is by far the majority opinion in the intellectual world today. Another way is to fit both science and theology under the supernaturalistic presupposition; this is the method of present creationism. A third way is to place theology under the supernaturalistic presupposition but leave science under the naturalistic presupposition; this approach has had many proponents within evangelicalism and is followed, in spite of denials, by Dr. Davis A. Young in his new book, *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution*.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Young is an associate professor of geology at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Not only is Dr. Young competent in geological matters, but he shows good theological training as the son of the late renowned Old Testament Reformed scholar Professor E. J. Young of Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia. Because Dr. Young's new book has necessarily raised complex inter-disciplinary questions involving both theology and science, the present reviewers believe that their comments ought to be more comprehensive than the usual book review.

This review begins by surveying the three-fold set of solutions to the Bible-science controversy. Then the discussion proceeds to an analysis of Young's basic position in the light of the three-fold nature of the debate. Finally, to support the present analysis of his basic position the review notes details in Young's Biblical exegesis and geological stance.

### The Three-Fold Debate

All thought has a starting point. It is the Christian position that the thinker must begin with God or with man. If one begins with God, then the Bible as His Word necessarily stands prior to all intellectual pursuits whether such activity occurs in arts, music, science, or theology. To properly interpret the trees in the Garden of Eden, for example, man had to be supernaturally informed not just with respect to their ultimate cause but also with respect to their specific qualities (Gen.

2:15-17). In the Biblical position there has never been a "prehistoric" era devoid of special revelation from God (Isa. 40:21), and this constantly available special revelation has necessarily been inseparably linked to historical, observable events in the physical world (Deut. 4:32-35). Man thus has no escape and no excuse. God's very words have again and again been confirmed in physical happenings to the point that Jesus insisted that his words regarding physical, observable events on earth had to be true in order not to invalidate his words regarding heavenly, unobservable phenomena (John 3:12).

This point does not mean that the Bible offers theoretical constructions for the historian and scientist directly. God told Adam to investigate ("name") the animals for himself and come to his own conclusions without direct special revelation on each detail (Gen. 2:19). Observation and construction of an edifice of knowledge about general revelation is a central part of man's dominion work on earth. Nevertheless, as creationists have pointed out, God's Word, special revelation, does speak *at some points* about the *details* of general revelation as well as ultimate causes and purposes. Two trees in the Garden were unique. Man was created from dust. Death was not present before the fall. Antediluvian mankind (some of them, at least) did live longer than present humanity. There was a global flood. The Bible, then, while not providing theoretical constructions, does provide valuable "eye-witness" observations about past historic events, observations which *must* be taken into account at the beginning of any theorizing.

No scholar in any area of intellectual endeavor, therefore, is left with Biblical pronouncements merely in the domain of ultimate causes. He faces additional Biblical statements in his own academic backyard. The anthropologist, for example, encounters Biblical materials which should be incorporated into his data base. It will not do for him to put forward a theory independently of these materials and then at the last minute baptize it with the pronouncement "God did it."

For this reason the Christian position must be intellectually separate in every scholarly field from the non-Christian humanist. The Christian scholar must, if he is to remain faithful to his Lord, always listen to the Word of God at every point in his investigations. He knows his finite and sinful limitations; he realizes God's omniscience and objectivity. The Christian scholar must ground his very view of truth in the Word of God, and then he must incorporate anything God has said in-

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limits time rates involved in the process. Young is correct in saying these evidences of continental drift show global tectonism, but rather than damaging strict creationist earth history, it merely enforces the idea of rapid catastrophism.

Tectonism is what one would expect from a worldwide flood. Some even think Genesis 10:25 refers to tectonism. The culmination of geophysical stresses on the earth's thin, fragile crust would occur when God's wind blows over the face of the earth at the end of the flood (Gen. 8:1). In fact this action may have been the very mechanism that set the crustal plates in motion. Flood geologists, then, may well have a mechanism for the beginnings of continental drifting—a key problem for uniformitarianism which currently lacks an acceptable trigger for tectonics.

Young's geological interpretations, then, illustrate how he has become enmeshed in the mental framework of autonomous science. Science, especially a paleoscience like historical geology, left to itself to develop naturally will develop in a false idolatrous direction like every other activity of fallen man.

### Conclusion

Dr. Young's book, *Creation and the Flood*, tries to keep theology under the supernatural presupposition but allows science to develop under the naturalistic presupposition. The book does this in two ways. First, it subjects Bible interpretation to verification from study in general revelation. The resulting situation is that the Bible is stripped of any counsel regarding the broad outlines of earth history and thus of any strong assurance that the greatest cataclysms of nature were under God's sovereign control. Second, the book implicitly proclaims the essential correctness of present paleoscience, that no radical Copernican revolutions are possible with new future data. Christians are thus told that they cannot understand the plain text of Genesis without the intermediate priesthood of modern geologists.

Creationists can profit from Dr. Young's work because it presents a very common kind of reasoning encountered in evangelical science circles. For that reason the above comprehensive review was believed to be necessary.

### References

- <sup>1</sup>Published in 1977 by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The volume lacks any indices and provides no bibliography.
- <sup>2</sup>Cloud, Preston. 1977. Evolution theory and creation mythology, *The Humanist*, 37(6):55. Related articles appeared previously in *The Humanist*, 37(1).
- <sup>3</sup>See next section for discussion concerning how creation science is open to both secondary natural causes and divine miracle.
- <sup>4</sup>Young, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
- <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79.
- <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 145.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 144.
- <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 213.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 144.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.
- <sup>11</sup>The non-Christian thinker uses the following syllogism but fails to appreciate his unconscious bias shown in how he reads the term *uniformity*.
- If truth exists, there must be uniformity.  
Uniformity is denied by catastrophism and miracles.

Therefore truth cannot exist with catastrophism and miracles. The major premise is correct but as stated it does not specify what level of uniformity is to exist. Uniformity could exist on higher levels—relative uniformity in broad general laws like the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics and absolute uniformity in the Creator (cf. I Pet. 1:23-25).

- <sup>12</sup>Jones, Arthur. 1971. The Nature of evolutionary thought, *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 8(1):44-49. This excellent discussion by a working biologist as well as other key articles in *CRSQ* over the past 13 years was omitted in Young's work.
- <sup>13</sup>See mathematical development of the error term in such extrapolation in Rodabaugh, David J. 1975. The Queen of sciences examines the king of fools, *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 12(1):15.
- <sup>14</sup>Discussion below notes how Young omits any consideration of the classical passage of II Peter 3:5-7 and holds to the old idea of the Tranquil Flood theory discussed in Whitcomb and Morris. 1961. The Genesis flood. Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., pp. 97-106.
- <sup>15</sup>Young, *Op. cit.*, p. 133.
- <sup>16</sup>Young refers to archeological insights into Israel's history such as Meredith Kline's work on suzerainty-vassal treaties for supporting his idea of the determining role of extra-Biblical general revelation in Bible interpretation. None of these examples, however, have ever altered in a major way Old Testament interpretations developed prior to their discovery. Such extra-Biblical materials have merely confirmed and increased appreciation for the time-honored conservative interpretation of the text.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 46-48. The doctrine of perspicuity of the Scriptures protects the believer against any priesthood intervening between himself and God's World. Hoeksema simply called attention to the implication of saying that Genesis 1-11 has never been understood properly until modern geologists produced their nineteenth and twentieth century models of earth history. Young does not appear to appreciate that his same reasoning applied to, say, modern psychology would argue that personality traits mentioned in the Bible have never been properly understood until present behaviorist and/or existentialist models were developed.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 212.
- <sup>19</sup>Note discussion in: Haber, Francis C. 1959. The Age of the world: Moses to Darwin. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, pp. 71-83; Rupke, N. A. 1967. Prolegomena to a study of cataclysmal sedimentation, Why not creation?, ed. Walter Lammerts. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Nutley, NJ, pp. 141-51; and Clough, Charles A. 1969. Eight years after: the effect of the *Genesis flood*, *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, 6(2):81-84.
- <sup>20</sup>Young, *Op. cit.*, p. 144. Such a position leads Young to resurrect the old Day-Age theory without any extensive interaction with creationist works criticizing the theory. Moreover, he mentions Meredith Kline's "framework" hypothesis (1955,58) which was related to Bernard Ramm's earlier "revelatory days" hypothesis (1955) without noting that one impetus behind these hypotheses was the problem of trying to come to grips with the *literalness* of the Genesis 1 days. Young ignores this work and returns to the Day-Age view, modifying it so there is no essential correspondence between each day's work and progressive development of the earth and its biosphere. Note: Ramm, Bernard. 1955. The Christian view of science and scripture. William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, pp. 218-29; and Kline, M. G. 1958. Because it had not rained. *Westminster Theological Journal*, 20:146-57.
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 173.
- <sup>22</sup>The flood was a major component in the Old Testament apologetic against chaotic nature. For insight into the Ancient Near Eastern dilemma over chaos in nature see Waltke, Bruce K. 1974. Creation and chaos. Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon. For this reason, too, Young's cavalier treatment of the curse in Genesis 3 is deficient. On page 162 he tries to use Keil to support his idea that the fall did not lead to the sudden introduction of death in the animal world when Keil's point in the passage cited explicitly asserts the contrary!
- <sup>23</sup>Young, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-4. This statement seems to imply that the Genesis data are not defined as facts.
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 53-4; 76-8.
- <sup>25</sup>Young's objections against apparent age in geological matters fall with equal force upon the chemist or physicist who might ask amid radiochronometric studies how do I distinguish created molecules from post-creation molecules?
- <sup>26</sup>Kulp, J. Lawrence. 1950. Deluge geology. *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, 2:1-15.

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feast but in a country so richly endowed there would be an abundance of fruit and vegetables.

"As their journey continued the travelers encountered many more centenarians, one of whom was the 140-year-old Vanno Djachiadzi who was pruning his vines outside the village of Telavi. When asked if he had a retiring age in mind he was horrified. His wife he said nagged him quite enough as it was.

"Dr. Pitskelauri of the Gerontological Institute stationed at the Georgian capital Tbilisi told the visitors that in the neighboring Caucasian state of Azerbaifan there dwelt the current title-holder of the longest lived, Shirali Muslimoo, who is 160. Several Georgians met in the course of the journey said they felt 200 should be easy enough to reach. Teb Sharmat, from Dzerda, now 101, told that his reason for marrying a third wife, a 50-year-old, when in his nineties, was that he might well live another 100 years, and he did not think it would be a good thing to get out of the habit.

"The scientists of the Gerontological Institute set up by the Soviet Government in 1959 to study the estimated two million of its citizens said to be over the age of 80, came to some interesting conclusions about factors which favor longevity after analyzing detailed questionnaires which asked the old men and women to tell them what foods they ate throughout their lives, how many children they have had, whether they smoked or drank, and when their sexual powers began to decline.

"An overwhelmingly important point was thought to be the fact that they all lived physically vigorous lives almost entirely free from urban strain—indeed insulated from social upheaval to a large extent. They found that almost exclusively centenarians were people who did manual work and lived in remote areas. Women, they found, more frequently passed the age of 80 than men but are outnumbered, three to one, by men beyond the age of 100.

"One fact the Institute investigators were able to confirm and which agrees with the evidence presented by the Georgians is that sexual frustration is absent from the pattern. Octogenarians and centenarians alike invariably have large families and many have had several marriage partners. Only eight out of 400 studied had never had children.

"Dr. Pitskelauri, the local representative of the Research Institute, remarked that his centenarians always lived extremely regular lives: rising at the same early hour every day, taking three or four meals a day and retiring early at a regular time. All four hundred he had personally studied were of average intelligence or higher, and remarkably stable emotionally. Their diet, although not strictly vegetarian, includes an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables. Although, as we have seen, much strong drink is consumed at a banquet such as that given in honor of the *Sunday Times* magazine travelers, the centenarians on the whole drink and smoke very little. Georgian women seldom drink and never smoke whilst the men, although enjoying any reasonable excuse for some hearty toasting, are hardly ever seen drunk. The centenarians whom the visitors met had all given up smoking in their nineties or soon after, except for three who never smoked.

"Dr. Pitskelauri believes that Georgian longevity is due to a combination of ideal circumstances. Given a near-perfect climate, high altitude, ample fresh and well-balanced foods, plenty of exercise, strong family ties, stable social conditions, reasonable temperance, intelligence and plenty of sleep, there should be nothing to stop almost anybody getting well past 100 he thinks."

Editor's note: This information, along with similar reports from Hunza and from South America, would seem to show that there still exists longevity comparable with that recorded in the Bible from Abraham on.

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<sup>21</sup>Antediluvian topography was not similar to postdiluvian topography as Young indicates (pp. 210-12). Precisely because of the difficulties of correlating Genesis 2:10-14 with present topography W. F. Albright in his classic paper decided it was a mythical place. Albright, W. F. 1922. The location of the garden of eden. *American Journal of Semitic Literature*, 29:15-31. Creationists, of course, explain the discrepancies between Genesis 2:10-14 topography and present topography as a result of the earth-renovating flood as Luther did centuries before.

<sup>22</sup>Young, *Op. cit.*, pp. 177-85.

<sup>23</sup>Carmichael, Ian, S. E. et. al. 1974. *Igneous petrology*. McGraw-Hill Book Co., NY, pp. 5-6.

<sup>24</sup>In this day of fossil-fuel shortages had the creationist-catastrophic mentality of quickly-produced coal and oil controlled the past several decades of research, who could tell what economical synthetic processes might have been discovered by now?

<sup>25</sup>Young, *Op. cit.*, pp. 185-93.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 193-7.

<sup>27</sup>Hyndmann, David. W. 1972. *Petrology of igneous and metamorphic rocks*. McGraw-Hill Book Co., NY.

<sup>28</sup>See context of reference 22.

<sup>29</sup>Young, *Op. cit.*, pp. 198-210.

<sup>30</sup>Northrup, Bernard E. 1977. A critique of the contemporary division/flood model. *Bible-Science Newsletter*, 15(12):2-5.

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that which might be otherwise, is, in so far as it is contingent, not the concern of science. For science works with regularities. But if the world is contingent, its coming into being as it did was a contingent matter. So it was not a subject of science.

The fact is, that those who uphold uniformitarianism assume, often without examination, that the world runs like a clockwork. Thus by "natural" they really mean "going according to something like clockwork". Hence they can hardly bring themselves to admit the possibility of an exception. But such a position is futile. For to be logical they would have to admit that their thoughts proceed in some such way, and hence have no more meaning than the gyrations of a clockwork toy. But if one admits that free will, (which seems to be necessary for logical thought), exists, and leads to contingent things, why not admit that the contingent world could be the result of an act of free will be a sufficiently powerful Being?