

F. O. Box 777
Winona Lake, Indiana 46590
July 1974

To: ASA Members
Re: The young-earth misunderstanding

Dear Colleague,

We of the ASA have an unusual and important opportunity at the present time. I refer to our opportunity to help clarify the anti-science misunderstandings which are rapidly multiplying due to the dissemination of young-earth dogma. The issue of creationism in the public schools has produced innumerable occasions for promoting misguided ideas, and thus erecting additional barriers between conservative Christianity and the scientific world. (We of course do not object to a judicious teaching of creation in the public schools.)

In my opinion, each of us should consider submitting at least one good article on the subject of the relation between the Bible and science to a Christian magazine this year. Those who are very deficient in their knowledge of God's natural record of the past are submitting articles on this subject regularly, and many of them are being accepted. The magazines are interested in publishing materials on creationism because of the widespread resurgence of an interest in the subject. Several of the editors would be at least as willing to receive materials which are both scientifically and biblically sound, as the one-sided articles which are being sent to them.

Some of the most common misguided ideas on the subject of science and the Bible which are now being widely disseminated are listed below. Each of us should make attempts to supply helpful answers to some of these. Of course, not all of those who hold to the young earth hypothesis embrace every one of the ideas in this list. However, in my numerous contacts with strong proponents of this position on the campus of Grace College, where I taught for seven and one-half years, I have found that the average young earth theologian or theological student holds to most of these points.

1. That the Bible is the only reliable source of information on the prehistoric past. Scientific observation is said to be unreliable except in matters relating to the time span of actual human history. The ancient strata of the earth are said to possess little if any intelligible order or arrangement.
2. That natural laws of the universe are not necessarily stable, and some of them may have been vastly different before the time of the Flood and immediately subsequent to the Flood.
3. That general or natural revelation can go no further than to inspire the observer to see God's wisdom, majesty, and greatness.
4. That evidences for natural events and processes of the past are always in error if they point to an age greater than 15,000 or 20,000 years.
5. That all forms of radiometric dating are invalid, being based on assumptions which can never be demonstrated.
6. That the best scientific research has now shown that practically all, if not all, deposits of fossils and sedimentary strata were formed by the Biblical Flood. The details of this scientific research, and the documentation of it, are of course always lacking. (Bibliographic references given in such writings merely refer to other authors making the same claim, or to scientific sources which are believed to contain errors of one sort or another.)
7. That no death, except the death of plant cells, plant embryos, and certain kinds of invertebrates which are supposedly less alive than other animals, could have occurred before the Fall of man.