

WHY WAS THE ANTI-CREATIONISM MOVEMENT ABLE TO ARISE SO RAPIDLY FOLLOWING THE
ARKANSAS CREATION TRIAL? --by Daniel E. Wonderly, July 1990

I. INTRODUCTION

Creationists now have the image of being obscurantists who avoid most of the data of scientific research. We are accused of choosing only the kinds of data which we want, in order to obtain the kinds of results we have previously decided should be found. In the 1970's the situation was considerably different. At that time many public educators were honestly trying to listen to creationists and to figure out a way by which they could cooperate with them, e. g., in California, Arkansas, and several other states. (Many of the educators realized that there are serious weaknesses in evolutionary theory and that many parents do not approve of evolutionism.)

Then at the Arkansas trial of December 1981 and January 1982 the whole picture was changed. In that trial, creationists went on record as either rejecting or ignoring large bodies of carefully collected geologic, oceanographic, and astronomic data. Most of the data which the creationists were improperly rejecting or ignoring had to do with the age of the earth and universe. They were revealing their rejection of not only the evidence from radiation dating, but also the great array of non-radiometric evidences from sedimentary geology, stratigraphy, and other successful forms of study of the actual nature of the earth's crust. Thaxton and Buell (1986, p. 2) state concerning this weakness of the creationists at the trial:

The issues in the trial had been so narrowly defined that creation science, as it was called, was acceptable to only a small percentage of the theistic community. Many theists had difficulty with the narrow version of creation science.... So the intramural struggle within theism concerning origins was seized by naturalists to achieve a major metaphysical coup. (Dr. Thaxton is the senior author of the book The Mystery of Life's Origin, Philosophical Library, 1984, and is a well-known defender of special creation.)

II. EARLY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS IN EXPOSING THE FAULTS OF "CREATION SCIENCE"

The evolutionary biologists and other evolutionary scientists took the Arkansas creation trial as an opportunity to mount a massive attack against creationist teaching. They now had abundant testimony that creationists--at least most of the Arkansas ones and the ones quoted in the trial--ignore and lightly dismiss immense amounts of carefully collected scientific data in the fields of geology, oceanography, physics, and astronomy.

From the beginning, a high percentage of the newspaper articles reporting on the Arkansas trial emphasized the claim being made by the creationists that