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Reflections of an Evolutionist on the "Bryan '89" National Conference on Biblical Origins

Frank Lovell

The 1989 National Conference on Biblical Origins was held at William Jennings Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee on August 10 through 12, 1989. The conference was co sponsored by the Bible-Science Association (BSA) as one of their biannual national creation conferences. I attended with Bob Schadewald, a veteran of these affairs. We were joined by Scott Faust, graduate student in biology, and Glen Kuban of Paluxy River fame.

The "Bryan '89" conference began Thursday morning, August 10, but Bob and I arrived about 6:00 p.m. Wednesday. The Bryan campus and the dorm facilities are quite pleasant, an excellent site for any multi-day meeting. When we checked in at the Admin Building, we ran into Kurt Wise, who had recently joined the Bryan faculty. Wise is an apparent young earth creationist with a Ph.D. from Harvard in geopaleontology earned under Stephen Jay Gould.

The conference was organized in two concurrent "tracks," one "technical" and one "non-technical." I had come to hear the technical presentations, hoping for a glimpse of the science in "creation science." On Thursday morning, we set out to attend our first of eight technical presentations scheduled for the next two days.

Ker Thomson on Straw Men

The first creationist we heard was Ker Thomson, Professor of Science at Bryan College. Thomson's background appears to be primarily mining engineering. His abstract in the guide simply said: "Dr. Thomson presents a simple overview of background information necessary to understand the creation/evolution debate." As I listened, what he presented struck me as information necessary to *mis*understand the creation/evolution debate! You've heard of a Turkey Shoot? Thomson's presentation was a Strawman Shoot.

Dr. Thomson said (correctly) that *theism* and *naturalism* form a true dichotomy regarding origins; from this he implied (falsely) that *God or evolution* was also a true dichotomy. He called natural selection and chemical selection "random" processes. He said the geologic record provides no PreCambrian evidence of biological processes (what of the pristane and phytane found in ancient cherts? I wanted to ask). He said "chemical chirality is an impasse" for evolution. Thomson said DNA had to have enzymes to arise, yet those enzymes had to have DNA to arise (he seemed unaware of the recent publications regarding catalytic RNA). He cited Kerkut (don't they all?) and said because of him, "we have *some* honesty among evolutionists!" He said natural selection is a tautology, a "deceitful act," and proclaimed Darwin's work "riddled with logical errors."

see Bryan '89 p. 14

NUCLEUS

From the Editor

NCSE Reports has undergone a transformation over the past year. Not only was the name changed from *Creation/Evolution Newsletter* to the present name, but Frances Roelfs, who took over as editor with the January/February 1989 issue designed a new format. Unfortunately, Frances had to resign because of health problems, and Eugenie Scott and Liz Hughes then put together several issues at the NCSE national office. I accepted the job of editor with some trepidation, as it is both a great responsibility and a time-consuming task. I hope I can uphold the traditions established by my predecessors, particularly Karl Fezer, who edited this newsletter for so long.

This issue, my first as editor, is atypical in that two special reports and an article deal with the Bible-Science Association's biannual national creation conference, held in early August. Long-time readers know that I've attended these conferences since 1983, and I usually write a lengthy report. This year, I attended with Frank Lovell, Liaison of the Kentucky CC. Immediately after he got home, Frank wrote a long report and distributed it privately. Informal and highly personal, Lovell's report was not intended for publication, but it was too good not to pass along. The lead article is a condensed version of it, and my own supplementary report appears elsewhere. One of the conference events also inspired my article "Love Thy Neighbor."

Barring something unforeseen, the next issue will be a more conventional newsletter. Several on-going stories will be covered. By then, the state of California may have acted on the Institute for Creation Research's application to continue granting advanced degrees in science. (ICR seems to be assuming that they will be denied approval. They know how their site visit went; we do not.) Speaking of science degrees, Glen Kuban will report on credentials claimed by Paluxy River researchers Don Patton and Carl Baugh. Eugenie Scott will review a new book creationists hope to get into public schools as a supplementary textbook. We hope to

have a report on how ICR got one of its evangelists into several public schools in Illinois.

Interesting times lie ahead. As several articles in this issue show, organized creationism is currently undergoing changes in strategy, tactics, focus, and personnel. We'll try to keep you informed. In turn, we hope you will keep *us* informed. Send in those clippings and reports, please!

Submissions

NCSE Reports needs articles and reports. We especially need short reports on local stories involving evolution education, Committees of Correspondence, or creationist activities. Articles should be *double-spaced* and typed on one side of the paper with one inch margins all around. Computer users, please use a *nonproportional* ten or twelve pitch font such as Courier. If possible, please include a 360K 5-1/4" IBM-compatible diskette with the text in WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, old-fashioned WordStar (version 3.3 or earlier), or ASCII.

No submissions will be returned without a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Follow-up to "Retracking Those Incredible Mantracks"

Glen J. Kuban

Regarding my article in *NCSE Reports* 9(4), I wish to note that Don Patton has objected to my use of the term "free hand" in relation to the overlay drawings of the Taylor tracks discussed in the article, maintaining that they were "traced" from projected images. My use of the term was meant to indicate that they were not made by any mechanical or automated means, which is the case, although "by hand" may have been a better term. I also meant to convey that the drawings involved subjectivity, since they included noticeable discrepancies with the actual contours in the rock. Patton insists that the drawings were made from photos of dry tracks. However, the drawings in many cases suggest boundaries that are not present or clear in the rock itself, and yet often do appear to match water boundaries in his photos.

Members Respond to Request from India

NCSE thanks members Frances Vandervoort, Fr. James Skehan, and Norman D. Newell, who all sent books to V.A.M. Ashrof, of the Thinker's Library in Kerala, India. Ashrof requested books on evolution or the creation/evolution controversy to counteract literature he had received from creationists (see *NCSE Reports* 9(3):5). If you have books to forward, the address is Thinker's Library, Valiveetil, Ward : 3, Edavanakad, 682 502, Kerala, India.

Evolution Challenged in Alabama Text Hearings

Committee of Correspondence liaison John Schweinsberg and University of Alabama-Birmingham geologist Scott Brande defended evolution before the Alabama State Textbook Committee on September 12, 1989, but they were somewhat outnumbered by 18 Eagle Forum supporters. Like modern anti-evolutionists in Texas, California, and elsewhere, creationists did not seek an outright ban on evolution. "We do not question to teach students about various theories of evolution. What we do question is the way in which those ideas are taught," said Joan Kendall, education chairwoman for the Eagle Forum, as reported in the *Birmingham Post-Herald* (9/13/89:B-1.) Kendall said the purpose of a good education is to produce thinking people who can distinguish between fact and theory, people "who are able to evaluate, modify and even replace a theory in the light of new facts." This of course happened when the "theory" of sudden creation was replaced in the light of new facts during the 19th century. Kendall's statement begs the question of why we should teach children views we know are inaccurate.

Textbook critics stressed their concern with treating evolution as fact, rather than theory, and they proposed presenting "opposing theories" in the books. According to the *Birmingham News* (9/13/89), Kendall wanted textbooks that included intelligent design "as another point for students to consider in studying mankind's development. Too many textbooks used today, she said, treat evolution as a fact and not theory."

Schweinsberg, speaking in defense of evolution and against creationism, said, "These are simply pseudo-scientific type arguments that the scientific community has looked at and rejected all of the major scientific organizations in the country are on record as saying evolution is the only currently accepted explanation," (*Birmingham Post-Herald*, 9/13/89). He also criticized the over-qualification of evolution in textbooks, when this is not done in other science topics.

Alabama Textbook Selection in Context

Last summer, the Alabama State Board of Education, after much vacillation, required for the first time that evolution be included in the state curriculum guide. That was the good news. The bad news was that, for political reasons, a statement was sent out to teachers saying, "Consistent with the expressions of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Edwards v. Aguillard*, teachers shall have the freedom and flexibility to supplement the curriculum with the presentation of various scientific theories about the origins of life, if done with the secular intent of enhancing the effectiveness of science instruction." Because creationists claim that a sanitized version of Genesis-taken-literally can be made scientific, they applauded the statement. (Textbook critics Mel and Norma Gabler have promoted this "Supreme Court approved" view in Texas, California, and Ohio; see "What Did Justice Brennan Mean?" *NCSE Reports* 9(2):14.)

This statement shows where the antievolutionists at the Alabama textbook hearing were coming from. It calls for *scientific* theories, and because of the beating creationism has taken in the courts, terms such as "scientific creationism" or "creationism" in any form is to be avoided. The new strategy is to use euphemisms like "intelligent design," or "evidence against evolution," or "theories of evolution", all of which are code-terms for "scientific" creationism (see "Creeping Creationism," *NCSE Reports* 9(2):15).

The enthusiasm for "intelligent design" was doubtless stimulated by an Eagle Forum workshop held in April, 1989. Charles Thaxton, principal author of the new creationist book *Of Pandas and People*, was the keynote speaker. *Pandas* contrasts evolutionary explanations with "intelligent design" as explanations for the natural universe. The book was submitted for adoption in Alabama, but it was not available at the several sites where copies of books up for review were supposed to be available to the public. As a result, evolution

CC UPDATE



Congratulations

... to NCSE member Tom McIver on the completion of his dissertation, *Creationism: Intellectual Origins, Cultural Context, and Theoretical Diversity*, at UCLA. Copies of dissertations are available through University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

supporters did not see the book before the hearing and could not comment upon it. At this writing, *Pandas* is neither approved nor rejected; it is in a limbo-like state from which it may be retrieved by the Alabama State Board of Education.

NCSE is following the story and will update this report in a future issue. A review of *Of Pandas and People* is scheduled for the next issue.

Creationism in Ontario

Creationism is alive and well in Ontario. J. Richard Wakefield of the Ontario Association for the Support of Integrity in Science Education (OASIS is the Ontario CC) reports in the Fall 1989 *OASIS Newsletter* that the Science Teachers Association of Ontario (STAO) will feature presentations by Lambert Dolphin and Robert Gentry at their 1989 meeting.

Dolphin, formerly with SRI International, is one of the foremost U.S. promoters of Barry Setterfield's hypothesis that the velocity of light has slowed radically in the past few thousand years. He spoke at the 1988 STAO meeting. Gentry is well known for his claim that polonium halos in granites and other rocks are in essence the Creator's signature. Wakefield has exposed the absurdity of Gentry's argument in *Creation/Evolution* and the *Journal of Geological Education*.

According to Wakefield, the real mystery is how Gentry got on the program after the deadline for the submission of papers had passed and a list of speakers had been published. The presentations by Dolphin and Gentry are both sponsored by the Creation Science Association of Ontario, which obviously has more than a little clout with STAO.

Wakefield is following the situation and will no doubt report later. Stay tuned...

KEEPING TABS

Creationism in Flux

Robert J. Schadewald

With the Supreme Court decision on the Louisiana "equal time" law receding into the past, one might think that organized creationism would be stabilized again, perhaps in a new mode. In fact, it is more in flux than at any time in recent memory. Part of it is simply the changing of the guard, but part seems more basic.

Those of us who have followed creationism for some time will recall when the Institute for Creation Research consisted of Henry Morris, Duane Gish, Thomas Barnes, Harold Slusher, Richard Bliss, and Gary Parker. Barnes, Slusher, and Parker are long gone. Several sources affirm that Henry Morris, Duane Gish, and Richard Bliss will all retire "soon." John D. Morris, son of the founder, has already been anointed successor. What kind of ICR he will preside over — and where — is uncertain at present.

Most readers know that the ICR Graduate School's authorization to grant degrees in science in the state of California was up for renewal last year. A visiting committee of five made a cursory review of ICR's programs, voted 3 to 2 for approval, and then reconsidered and voted 3 to 2 against. (N.B. Two members of this committee were long-time personal friends of Henry Morris!) ICR requested reconsideration, and another committee visited during the second week of August. At this writing (6 October), the committee's report still has not been issued. From a hysterical press release distributed by ICR, however, it can be surmised that things did not go well. ICR seems to be preparing its supporters for the worst. If they are indeed denied authorization to grant science degrees, ICR could still issue degrees in creationism—which the state of California suggested as a compromise long ago.

But ICR may have other plans. As reported elsewhere in this issue, I was in Dayton, Tennessee for the National Conference on Biblical Origins the week the committee visited ICR. The keynote address on Friday evening, 11 August, was supposed to be delivered by Henry Morris. At noon that day, an errand took me to the registration desk, where I encountered Dr. Preson Phillips, a chemist from Tennessee Temple University in Chattanooga. Phillips told me (incorrectly) that the site visit committee had just rejected ICR, and that Morris had canceled his address so that he could help prepare ICR's response. Phillips also told me that Tennessee Temple University had offered ICR land on which to rebuild, and that Morris was supposed to discuss this possibility with them while in Tennessee. Presumably, Tennessee's standards for granting science degrees are somewhat less stringent than California's.

Will ICR leave California? Probably even they don't know at this point. But Students for Origins Research (SOR), a smaller creationist group, left California for Colorado more than a year ago.

SOR has been a shoestring operation with a volunteer staff since it was founded about a decade ago with seed money from ICR. Originally, SOR tried to build a network of chapters on campuses across the country. Most of these died soon after they blossomed, and SOR became essentially a closely knit group of insiders who published *Origins Research*, an increasingly scholarly tabloid, twice a year. Though less well known than some other creationist publications, *Origins Research* slowly gained a reputation as the most credible of the lot. SOR recently decided that, as one insider said, "it was time to fish or cut bait." Electing to fish, they hired Mark Hartwig, formerly Managing Editor of *Origins Research*, as full-time Executive Director. It remains to be seen whether they can become a major player in the creationism game.

As for the Bible-Science Association, I noted in a previous issue (*Reports* 9(3):18) that a transformation began early this year, when Keith Hedges took over as president and most of the old staff was dismissed. One of the goals Hedges mentioned to

me in February was improving the scientific quality of the *Bible-Science Newsletter*, which has been notoriously dreadful. (To give a recent example, the August issue prints four of the most completely refuted and pathetic young-earth apologetics — salt in the sea, dust on the moon, human population, and slowing of the earth's spin rate — within eight column-inches!) Hedges is establishing an Editorial Board to review potential articles. Kurt Wise will be a member, and Paul Nelson (a.k.a. Peter Gordon) and Charles Thaxton are possibilities. If *BSN* articles are screened by these or similarly knowledgeable creationists, the publication will change radically for the better.

Love Thy Neighbor

Robert J. Schadewald

Dayton, Tennessee is best known as the site of the 1925 trial in which John Scopes was convicted of teaching evolution in a public school. The final event of the 1989 National Conference on Biblical Origins was a tour of the Rhea County courthouse and a lecture on the famous trial in the very courtroom where Scopes was tried. Frank Lovell, Scott Faust, and I attended, hoping to gain insights about the trial.

Robert W. Spoede, Professor of History at Bryan College, delivered the lecture, but the Scopes trial was largely a pretext. His message was that evolution is the cause of racism, anti-Semitism, and Naziism. Spoede didn't argue this directly; rather he told stories about racial prejudice, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Nazis, each carefully linked to evolution. He even passed out photocopies of a racist passage from an old biology textbook. His presentation, delivered with intense conviction, was a masterpiece of innuendo, scapegoating, and guilt by association.

It is true that, especially in the late 19th and early 20th century, eugenicists and other racists justified their doctrines with appeals to evolution. Imperialists and robber barons appealed to "Social Darwinism." Later, Nazis and other anti-Semites used evolutionary

Webster Case on Appeal

Mr. Ray Webster has sued the Chicago-area New Lennox School District for his right to teach creationism on first amendment, freedom of speech grounds (see *C/EN* 8(2) and 8(3).) Under consideration since March, 1988, the case was finally dismissed by the US District Court. Creationists are appealing, however, and we will carry the full story in our next issue.

arguments to justify their doctrines and attack the Jews. Some scholars even argue that Nazi racial theories drew upon a well-established scientific tradition. But that is not the whole story. Indeed, an anti-Christian half-truth peddler could easily select a different set of facts.

Many lessons could be drawn from this. I will mention one. Human beings — and especially those driven by hatred — often seize upon whatever arguments they think will justify their views

In the 19th century, black inferiority was generally assumed in America. Defenders of slavery argued that the Bible condones it throughout, and racism was typically justified from Scripture. Some Christians claimed blacks descended from Ham through Canaan and were condemned to be slaves in Genesis 9:25 ("Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren"). Others, including Louis Agassiz, claimed the races were separately created. Extremists in this camp held (and *still* hold) that the term "beast of the field" (Genesis 2:19 and *passim*) refers to blacks, who are a separate created kind that survived the Flood because Noah took them into the Ark with the other animals.

When the eugenics movement arose, it tried to provide an evolutionary justification for the racism already endemic. Modern science took more than a generation to purge this vicious nonsense, and real steps toward political equality for black people began only after World War II. Many segregated southern fundamentalist churches actively obstructed civil rights efforts, and whites-only "Christian" schools sprang up like mushrooms. Needless to say, modern racist groups often have names such as the New Christian Crusade Church.

Christian anti-Semitism goes back to the early church, when Fathers such as John Chrysostom railed against the

Jews. In partial remission during the Dark Ages, anti-Semitism metastasized after the Crusades, permeating Christianity by the 16th century. Until modern times, Germany's most influential anti-Semite was Martin Luther. *On the Jews and Their Lies*, one of his last works, is vicious and venomous almost beyond belief. Luther's expressed purpose was to advise the governmental powers of his day on how to deal with the Jews, and he spelled out a seven point plan: (1) Burn their synagogues and schools, (2) raze their houses, (3) confiscate their prayer books and Talmudic writings, (4) forbid their rabbis to teach on pain of death, (5) deny them safe conduct on the highways, (6) forbid them to lend money at interest (one of the few professions then open to Jews) and confiscate their cash, and (7) force them to work at hard labor. Franklin Sherman, who edited *On the Jews and Their Lies* for the 57-volume Fortress Press edition of *Luther's Works*, wrote, "It is impossible to publish Luther's treatise today ... without noting how similar to his proposals were the actions of the National Socialist regime in Germany in the 1930's and 1940's." Indeed, the Nazis added only a final point to Luther's proposed solution of the Jewish Problem.

Nazi anti-Semitism was largely a secularized version of the traditional Christian anti-Semitism, and some Nazis sought to give it "scientific" (evolutionary) justification. (Others were creationists; Alfred Rosenberg, official Nazi philosopher, believed that God created separate races.) Most Christian churches in Germany either collaborated with the Nazis or (at best) did nothing to save the Jews. During World War II, many leading American anti-Semites, including Rev. William Bell Riley, Rev. Gerald B. Winrod, and Elizabeth Dilling, were Christians. Anti-Semitism is presently making a comeback in the form of Historical Revisionism, which denies that the Holocaust occurred. Revisionism started out secular, but recently old-line fundamentalist anti-Semites began coming out of the woodwork. The *Christian News*, a staunchly creationist Lutheran publication, now promotes Revisionism in nearly every issue.

The Bryan College historian mentioned none of this. During the question period following the lecture, Scott Faust tried to make a point about the history of racism, and Spoede cut him off with a sneer. Frank Lovell got the same treatment when he objected to Spoede's implication that unbelievers are inherently unethical. As for the fifty or so fundamentalists present, Spoede was preaching to the choir. They applauded warmly when he finished, and Rev. Paul Bartz reports in the October *Bible-Science Newsletter* that many considered it "the highlight of the day."

I did not applaud. When I got home, I wrote to Spoede, making many of the preceding points. In his reply, he neither disputed any point nor claimed I misunderstood him. It seems that I read him loud and clear, and he is proud of his message.

So are other creation evangelists. Spoede's presentation was especially

shameful because he is a professional historian, but his brand of hate-mongering is common practice among leading creationists. Henry Morris is a master of the trade, and so are televangelist Rev. D. James Kennedy and *Bible-Science Newsletter* editor Rev. Paul Bartz. Some creationists recognize these attacks as distorted, unfair, and irrelevant, but I am not aware that *any* creationist has ever criticized them in a public forum.

Many lessons could be drawn from this. I will mention one. Human beings — and especially those driven by hatred — often seize upon whatever arguments they think will justify their views. Racists and anti-Semites, depending upon their persuasion, have often appealed to the Bible or evolution for support. In like manner, some who hate evolution are willing to pervert history to propagate their hatred.

John Morris vs. the Truth Patrol

Frank Zindler

*(Editor's note: In February 1989, Frank Zindler discussed creation science with ICR's John Morris on AM Indiana, an Indianapolis television talk show. Morris made several remarkable statements on the air, and afterward Zindler asked him to substantiate some of them. Zindler later described this experience in a handout entitled **Truth-Patrol Report on John Morris**, which he distributed at a lecture Morris gave in Yellow Springs, Ohio. The following paragraphs are extracted from the handout.)*

While trying to substantiate his absurd claim that humans and dinosaurs once coexisted, and that the dragons of legend were in fact dinosaurs, John Morris stated matter-of-factly, during our debate, that "Alexander the Great has a very sober history of an encounter with a dragon, and most of the historians of the day list dragons as if they were real."

Unfortunately for Morris, no writings of Alexander have survived. The historians Plutarch and Arrian quote from alleged letters of Alexander, but the

letters do not tell of any meeting with a dragon.

In an effort to discredit radiometric dating, Morris said: "In the Grand Canyon there are two different lava flows that can be dated by the radiometric dating methods. The one is at the very bottom, one of the oldest rocks, and is probably, you know, one of the very earliest rocks down at the way bottom of the canyon. And the other lava flow is on the very plateau, ... And it is thought by normal dating methods that that should be just a couple million years old. But with the dating methods, down at the bottom, we've got a whole slew of dates, but basically they — now, by using the best methods of geology today, the rubidium-strontium methods, they dated that at 1.1 billion years. Using that same method, the very same method, the same technique, same accuracy, they dated the one at the top at 2.6 billion years."

Later, in a telephone conversation with me on May 10, 1989, Morris gave the age of the upper lava as 2.5 (not 2.6) billion years. After considerable prompting to give a reference for this astonishing item, he said that the

"Arizona Geological Survey" had published a list of all rubidium-strontium dates for Arizona.

"Alexander the Great has a very sober history of an encounter with a dragon, and most of the historians of the day list dragons as if they were real."

— John Morris

As nearly as I could determine, Morris had in mind the *Compilation of Radiometric Age Determination in Arizona* by S. J. Reynolds and colleagues (*Bulletin* 197; 1986; Arizona Bureau of Geology and Mineral Technology). When I checked that source, I found no date of 2.5 (or 2.6) billion years — by any method of dating — for any formation in the entire state of Arizona. The lavas in question date from 0.01 million to 1.18 million; and those are potassium-argon dates, not rubidium-strontium dates.

(Morris is not the only ICR faker who distorts information about the Grand Canyon lavas. In the April 1989 issue of ICR's pamphlet *Impact*, Steven A. Austin implies that radiometric dating has shown the upper lavas to be 1.5 (not 2.5) billion years old; and he cites data published by W. P. Leeman, in 1974, in the *Bulletin* of the Geological Society of America. In fact, however, Leeman reported no such finding. The false age of 1.5 billion years has been calculated by Austin and is based on only six of twenty data points that Leeman showed on a graph. Worse yet, the six points picked by Austin represent samples for which Leeman presented conclusive evidence of contamination!)

Early in our *AM Indiana* debate, I asked Morris for details about the fossiliferous sedimentary rocks which, in his book *The Ark on Ararat*, he had falsely claimed were to be found near the top of Mount Ararat and were proof that this volcanic peak had once been under water. To my great astonishment, Morris denied that he had

ever written such a thing:

"I have never said that those fossils were on top of Mount Ararat," he declared. "Those fossils are *in sight* of Mount Ararat." When I disputed his denial, he continued: "I reported that in 1969 a glaciologist claimed he found a fossil layer about the 14,000 foot level. The fossil layers I've studied are some ten miles away."

Morris's denial was false. On pages 10 and 11 of *The Ark on Ararat* — written by Morris and the preacher Tim LaHaye, and issued in 1976 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. — we find:

"A great deal of evidence exists indicating that not only was Mt. Ararat once covered by water, but it even erupted while submerged under great depths of water. In common with many mountains around the world, Mt. Ararat exhibits fossil-bearing strata. Sedimentary rock (by definition laid down by flood [*sic*] waters) containing the fossilized remains of ocean creatures has been found as high as the snow line, approximately a 14,000-foot elevation. Furthermore, on the exposed northeastern face, layers of lava are intermingled with layers of sediments."

I copied that passage, sent it to Morris, and again asked for documentation. He replied, in a letter sent on March 15, that the supposed discovery was the work of creationist Clifford Burdick and had been described in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*. According to Morris, Burdick "conducted a rather extensive geologic survey over the space of several summers. He not only has written that he discovered fossil-bearing strata, on the west flank of Mt. Ararat, but he has told me so personally.... The discovery was included not only in Burdick's *CRSQ* articles, but also in the official report by the Archaeological Research Foundation to the Turkish Government, resulting from their expeditions in the 1960's."

Because creationist journals are not carried by legitimate science libraries, I sent Morris a \$5 bill and a request for a photocopy of Burdick's report. (I did not mention the fact that Morris, in his letter to me of March 15, had tacitly admitted that he *had* writ-

ten about fossils on Mt. Ararat.) Morris returned my \$5, on May 4, 1989, with a rude note: "Keep your money. The materials you requested are part of the public record and available in many places. I have no intention of doing your work for you."

Suspecting that Morris was trying to hide something, I eventually obtained a copy of the Burdick article to which Morris was evidently referring: "Ararat — the Mother of Mountains," which had appeared not in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* but in the Society's 1967 *Annual*. As I read it, I saw why Morris had not wanted me to get a look at it. Nowhere in the article did Burdick claim that there were fossiliferous, sedimentary layers on Mt. Ararat! He simply gave a list of fossils found in 1845, by one H. Abich, in sedimentary rocks that were at least ten miles from Ararat.

To sum up: John Morris falsely wrote, in *The Ark on Ararat*, that Mt. Ararat exhibited fossiliferous rocks. Then he falsely said, during our debate, that he had not written that. Then he falsely claimed that fossiliferous rocks on Mt. Ararat had been reported in an article by Clifford Burdick. If Morris were limited to telling the truth, how far would he get in his efforts to gull unsuspecting people with his pseudoscience?

Bacon on Bible-Science

Robert J. Schadewald

Henry Morris thinks he can make creationism credible by arguing that some great thinkers of the past were creationists. (One of these days, I'm going to make a list of great thinkers of the past who were flat-earthers.) High on Morris's list is Sir Francis Bacon, who Morris credits with formulating the scientific method. In *Men of Science — Men of God* (p. 35), Morris quoted Bacon as follows:

"There are two books laid before

us to study, to prevent our falling into error; first, the volume of the Scriptures, which reveal the will of God; then the volume of the Creatures, which express His power."

Morris gave no source for the Bacon quote, but it is plausible. One should not infer from it, however, that Bacon would approve of Morris's "creation science." Indeed, we need not speculate about what Bacon might have thought of it, because he addressed the matter in Book 1, Aphorism LXV of *Novum Organum*, published in 1620:

"[N]othing is so mischievous as the apotheosis of error; and it is a very plague of the understanding for vanity to become the object of veneration. Yet in this vanity some of the moderns have with extreme levity indulged so far as to attempt to found a system of natural philosophy on the first chapter of Genesis, on the book of Job, and other parts of the sacred writings; seeking for the dead among the living: which also makes the inhibition and repression of it the more important, because from this unwholesome mixture of things human and divine there arises not only a fantastic philosophy but also an heretical religion. Very meet is it that we be sober-minded, and give to faith that only which is faith's."

Three and a half centuries later, Bacon's characterization remains on target. Long after filing away this quotation, I learned I was not the first to recognize its relevance to creationism. In his 1830 Presidential Address to the Geological Society of London, Adam Sedgwick blasted a shoddy work by an unnamed Scriptural Geologist and gave an abbreviated version of the above:

"This vanity merits castigation and reproof the more, as from the mischievous admixture of divine and human things, there is compounded at once a fantastical philosophy and an heretical religion."

Sedgwick also quoted Bacon's Latin, and he presumably translated the passage himself. In neither translation does Bacon sound like someone Henry Morris should appeal to as a proponent of Bible-science!

Examples of Creationist Methodology

Eugenie C. Scott

The Society for Creation Science is an East Lansing, Michigan-based creationist organization headed by David Skjaerlund. It presents a 10-week creationism course entitled "Creation-Evolution: Understanding the Issues at Hand" both in the U.S. and overseas. The April 1989 newsletter has an article by Skjaerlund, a frequent contributor to the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, on "Understanding the Issue of Origins." Skjaerlund makes an unusually large number of errors (even for a creationist) in explaining the nature of science and the creation/evolution controversy.

A favorite creationist argument is that evolution is not a scientific discipline because the origin of life occurred only once and, therefore, it cannot be studied scientifically. Science is equated with authoritarian "proof," and subject only to direct experimentation. "If an idea is out of the reach of experimentation, it cannot qualify as a theory." False parallels are drawn between special creation and evolution: "Scientists cannot redemonstrate the evolution of an amoeba into a monkey. Likewise, we cannot expect God to reenact Genesis on the moon. Because the origin of life cannot be repeated or has never been directly observed by man, evolution cannot establish it as a valid, proven scientific theory of nature."

One scarcely knows where to begin. The origin of life is not central to evolution, though it is an interesting problem. Whatever the cause of the beginning of life, whether purely materialistic or supernatural, it has no bearing on whether evolution occurred, or the mechanisms by which it took place. Evolution is the concept that living forms are related through common descent from earlier forms; that is, change through time has taken place, a descent with modification, in Darwin's words. Special creation is the concept that living things were created in their present forms, as independent "kinds," and have not changed through time.

The answer to the question of how life began tells us nothing about whether dinosaurs gave rise to birds, or *Australopithecus* gave rise to *Homo*.

Evolution is, of course, an historical science, and there are events that are not strictly repeatable. Rats and mice shared a common ancestor, and their divergence occurred only once; it is not going to be repeated. But even though the same species are not going to re-evolve from ancestral forms, the processes that produced modern rats and mice can be observed, evaluated, tested, rejected, or provisionally accepted.

Ideas of how theories are developed show the creationist preoccupation with certainty. Theories, to them, are "proven," and because you cannot "prove" either creation or evolution, neither are scientific. Actually, theories explain natural phenomena: they can be corroborated or disproven, but they are never "proved." To "prove" a theory or explanation would require that you could test it under every circumstance possible in the universe — and how could that be? On the other hand, a theory can be disproven if it fails to explain a phenomenon under some newly discovered set of circumstances. To speak of "proof" of theories speaks of ignorance of how science works. A theory is only the best explanation we have at a given time, and if it is replaced by a better explanation, so be it.

Current Contents of Creationist Literature

Impact on Archaeopteryx

Impact, September 1989, "As a Transitional Form *Archaeopteryx* Won't Fly," by Duane Gish. Ignoring the scholarly consensus that *Archaeopteryx* is the quintessential transitional form, Gish marshals selected facts and quotations from the literature to argue that claims of reptilian characteristics have been refuted, and it is a true bird. In his penultimate paragraph, however, Gish cites Hoyle and Wickramasinghe's claim that *Archaeopteryx* is a faked-up

reptile as yet *another* threat to its transitional status! In summary, *Archaeopteryx* is 100% bird — or maybe 100% reptile!

All the Old Favorites

Bible-Science Newsletter, August 1989. The lead article, "God's Young Earth Signature," is a paean to Robert V. Gentry by Charles Cook, Director of Creation Studies Ministry. Cook ignores criticisms of Gentry's work by J. Richard Wakefield and Kurt P. Wise (if he ever heard of them), and he trots out young-earth chestnuts including salt in the sea, dust on the moon, human population, and the earth's spin rate. Pathetic!—"Evolution and Racism Today" by Trevor Major, Director of Scientific Research for Apologetics Press, ignores the fundamentalist record of racism but is benign compared to the usual *BSN* discussions of racism.—The "World View" section is an interview with Wayne Frair, herpe-

tologist and president of the Creation Research Society. Included is a list of 32 of Frair's publications on turtles.

Creation Down Under

Bible-Science Newsletter, September 1989. The lead article, "Miracles of Evolution?—Or Creation?" is by A. W. Mehlert, an Australian creationist. New apologetics based on fauna from Down Under.—The "World View" section is an interview with origin-of-life-researcher-turned-creationist Dean Kenyon.

A 14-Year Summary

Creation Research Society Quarterly, June 1989. "More Creationist Research (14 Years)—Part II: Biological Research" by Duane T. Gish reviews significant creationist biological research since 1975. Only 18 references! — "A Demonstration of the Mixing Model to Account for Rb-Sr Isochrons" by Larry S. Helmick and Donald P.

FROM THE GRAPEVINE

The Second International Conference on Creationism (ICC) will be held at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh on July 30 through August 5, 1990. It is being sponsored by the Creation Science Fellowship, the same Pittsburgh group that organized the 1986 ICC. Once again, besides the Technical Symposium (\$185), there will be lower-level Basic Creationism and Educational tracks (\$95). Again, the conference theme is the Age of the Earth; this time the sponsors are determined to have a debate on the theme. (They were embarrassed last time when they set up such a debate between Gish and Ken Miller, only to have Gish refuse to defend the young earth.) Steve Austin of ICR will take the young-earth position, and they want an old-earth creationist (or perhaps an ASA type) to oppose him. Davis Young reportedly turned them down, and they are still searching.

The 1990 ICC will not be the last, but it will probably be the last at Duquesne. The Creation Science Fellow-

ship thinks Duquesne (a Catholic school) charges too much for the facilities. Besides, they would prefer to hold their conferences in more congenial surroundings. One of Kurt Wise's duties at Bryan College is organizing creation conferences. Expect the next ICC to be

The National Association of Christian Educators (NACE), a California-based fundamentalist organization, is attempting to infiltrate the Greece, New York public schools with its religious agenda. NACE is holding a meeting at the Greece Assembly of God church on November 18. Concerned citizens should contact Martha Laties, P.O. Box 10296, Rochester, NY 14610-0296.

NACE reportedly has at least two more public school projects in New York state. It is organizing the Pittsfield school district in Monroe County and in the Syracuse area. In Syracuse, NACE may be operating under the name of its parents' organization, Citizens for Excellence in Education.

Bookwatch Reviews Back Issues

In addition to regular subscriptions, *Bookwatch Reviews* back issues are now available individually or in special sets. Single issues (\$2.00) are of particular interest to teachers who are using a particular book, and would like information on how to use it most effectively.

Special back issues collections are also available, at a discount, in Biology, Life Science, and Earth Science sets. They should be of use to those selecting a text in one of those fields. The Biology set costs \$10.00; Life and Earth Science cost \$9.00.

Biology — Scott, Foresman (1988), Prentice Hall (1987), Holt Modern Biology (1989), Merrill (1988), Addison-Wesley Systems Approach (1988), Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1989)

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Earth Science — Heath (1987), Addison-Wesley (1987), Prentice Hall (1988), Heath (1989), Scott, Foresman (1990)

Radio Show Tapes for Loan

As was mentioned in the last issue of *NCSE Reports*, tapes of Executive Director Eugenie Scott's appearances on two Christian radio shows are available on loan from NCSE. See ad at left.

On 26 June 1989, Dr. Scott discussed creationism with Hugh Ross (Reasons to Believe Ministries) on the *John Stewart Live* show, KKLA radio in southern California. Ross supports special creation, but not of the ICR young-earth variety.

Talk Back with Bob Larson is a two hour show, claiming an audience of two million. On 14 August 1989, Dr. Scott appeared on the show entitled "The Dinosaur Dilemma." Although the discussion had little to do with dinosaurs, the teaching of "scientific" creationism in schools and other topics were covered.

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RESOURCES

NSTA Panel Discussion

NCSE Board Members Fred Edwards and Jack Friedman will present a panel discussion "Creationism — It's Not Over" at the Atlantic City Area Convention of the National Science Teachers Association, December 14-16, 1989. The panel will bring teachers, supervisors, and administrators up to date on the latest from the religious right.

Bookwatch Reviews Works!

We were pleased to read geologist Scott Brande's testimony before the Alabama State Textbook Committee on September 12, 1989. Dr. Brande commented that he hoped a certain textbook publisher would heed criticisms published in NCSE's *Bookwatch Reviews* on accuracy of scientific context, saying, "That such criticism of a major textbook could eventually be constructive is illustrated by similarly critical statements by qualified scientists in the publication *Bookwatch Reviews* of Scott Foresman 1987 *Life Science*, Heath's pre-1989 *Earth Science*, and Addison Wesley 1987 *Earth Science* texts. Perhaps these scathing reviews, and the publicity they generated, prompted the publishers to revise their products. I compared the critical comments published in *Bookwatch Reviews* to the new editions of these texts, and nearly every critical detail mentioned had been fixed."

NCSE publishes *Bookwatch Reviews* to help teachers select the best books available, and to assist them in getting the most out of the books they use. We are pleased that publishers also use it to improve their products.

Does your school library subscribe to *Bookwatch Reviews* (\$15, 12 issues)? If not, write NCSE/ *Bookwatch Reviews*, P.O. Box 9477, Berkeley, CA 94709.

Bryan '89

cont. from p. 1

Thomson also said that the Second Law of Thermodynamics prohibits chemical complexity from arising from the less complex in nature. I asked him about this during the question and answer period. Referring to Stanley Miller's apparatus, which he had shown in a viewgraph, I asked him whether he thought a flask containing a mixture of methane, ammonia, water and hydrogen being zapped by electricity was a chaotic system of simple molecules. He agreed that it was. I then asked him how it is, if the Second Law prohibits chemical complexity from arising from chemical simplicity, that Miller obtained more complex molecules such as amino acids? He answered that, well, chemical complexity *can* arise from simpler substrates without violating the Second Law—but "only within *certain narrow limits*." He did not specify these "limits," but he suggested that I attend Thaxton's presentation. I thanked Thomson for acknowledging before his audience that chemical complexity *can* arise from simpler chemicals in nature after all.

Gentry on Gentry

Robert V. Gentry is well known for his claim that polonium haloes found in certain rocks he calls primordial are nothing less than the Creator's signature. I had looked forward to hearing Gentry, but I heard more than I really wanted to hear. He ran 45 minutes past his allotted time in the single longest presentation of the conference, but he said almost nothing new. Gentry mostly projected viewgraphs of front-sheets of his various journal publications and excerpts from the Arkansas trial transcript, mostly about G. Brent Dalrymple's testimony. If I could have titled his talk for him, I'd have called it, "Look What They've Done To Me Lately." How ironic that modern creationism's most published researcher (with respect to relevant papers in the scientific literature) is also its main self-proclaimed victim of "scientific censorship."

Nearly everything Gentry presented is found in his book, *Creation's Tiny Mystery*. I had hoped he would attempt a scientific rebuttal of Wakefield's disclosure that some uranium-free

polonium-halo-containing samples (some of Gentry's included) come from material that is clearly intrusive. But Gentry dispatched Wakefield (without actually mentioning him) quicker'n you can say *omphalos*: "Many kinds of rocks were created during creation week," and "God could create a great variety of rocks."

No doubt.

Charles Thaxton on Intelligent Design

Charles Thaxton is principal co-author of *The Mystery of Life's Origin*, worthwhile reading, in my fallible opinion. I appreciated his presentation, and I found no flaws in the science he presented. Thaxton did not attempt a scientific argument *per se*. Rather, he made a philosophico-aesthetic argument for "intelligence" behind biochemistry, setting it against the background of our scientific ignorance. And he did it without once invoking thermodynamics!

I suspect that if "scientific" creationism ever does produce a compelling scientific case for special creation and/or against evolution, it will be Wise (or someone very like him) who will do it.

Thaxton pointed out (correctly) that science can neither confirm the existence of the supernatural nor confirm that there's nothing but the natural. He argued that even if we cannot speak in science of something being "created," we ought to be licensed to characterize certain things (like DNA) as being products of "intelligence." His appeal is not without problems. For example, is that putative "intelligence" natural, supernatural, or illusion? His argument has some philosophico-aesthetic merit but no scientific merit.

Much of Thaxton's presentation can be found in his book. I was lucky to be able to chat with him several times during the conference, and I found him

Speaking of Polonium Halos ...

For the physicists' answer to the polonium halo mystery, see "Giant Radiation- Induced Color Halos in Quartz: Solution to a Riddle," *Science* 246:107- 109.

candid and personable, a thoughtful man who tries sincerely to not misuse or abuse science.

Kurt Wise on Punc Eq

Kurt Wise, a Harvard/Gould educated geopaleontologist, spoke on "Punctuated Equilibrium Creation Style." It was one of the best explanations I have heard of what "punc eq" (as he humorously abbreviated it) is and is not. Wise appears to be a young-earth, flood-geology creationist. He didn't come right out and say this, but I inferred it from comments in his presentation. He used phrases such as "differential deposition," and he suggested that observations in the fossil record may be consistent with the results of "one big catastrophe." These are not things Wise is presently claiming he can support scientifically, but they are the objectives of work he plans to do.

I suspect that if "scientific" creationism ever *does* produce a compelling scientific case for special creation and/or against evolution, it will be Wise (or someone very like him) who will do it. Gould would not graduate a man who had not mastered his subject, and Wise has clearly done it! He is dynamic, humorous, candid, and accurate. He is now on the faculty at Bryan College, and I envy those fortunate students who will take his classes.

I didn't see the "...Creation Style" in his presentation, except for his aspirations for future research, and there's nothing wrong with his having those. When he finished, I went up and shook his hand, explaining that if *all* creationists were like him, I could have spent my vacation fishing rather than attending a creation conference. Wise has my sincere good wishes. He also has my sympathy, for he has a very tough challenge ahead, one I think will give the proverbial "rock and a hard place" new, special, and painfully intimate meaning for him!

Reverend Paul Bartz's Theology

On Friday morning, I decided to attend Rev. Bartz's nontechnical presentation rather than the technical presentation scheduled opposite it. I had written to Bartz late last year criticizing

the egregious science and logic of an age-of-the-earth article he published in the *Bible-Science Newsletter*. He hadn't responded, and I was curious about him.

Bartz's presentation was interesting and essentially theological. It gave me additional insight into the tenacity with which fundamentalists cling to Genesis-read-literally. Unfortunately, it provided no insight — none whatever — into why they subvert their intellectual integrity by calling literal Genesis "scientific" against the great preponderance of current scientific knowledge. I filled five pages with notes, but here will say only that Bartz is a good speaker and seems quite consistent in his theology. He would do well to stick with theology.

Panel Discussion: Teaching Origins in the Public Schools

On Friday afternoon, Kurt Wise moderated a panel discussion aimed at developing ideas for "teaching origins" in the public schools. The all-creationist panel had the following members:

- John Eidsmoe—Constitutional attorney
- Wayne Frair—President, Creation Research Society
- Mel Gabler—Texas textbook information provider
- Thayer Martin—President, Nashville Bible-Science Association
- Lawrence Puffert—Seattle public school teacher
- James Barth—Director of Services, Bryan College, and former school board member

John Eidsmoe opened the discussion with an update on the legal history of the creation/evolution public education controversy. Eidsmoe thinks too much effort has been spent trying to show that creationism is scientific rather showing that evolution is religion. His ideas on how best to teach origins in public schools are to implement the two-model approach and teach creationism in comparative religion classes. Eidsmoe advocated bringing outside speakers on creationism into public school classrooms to avoid putting faculty members in legal jeopardy. He thinks teaching "abrupt appearance" in

public schools would likely survive legal challenges. He also advocated home schooling. According to Eidsmoe, "We are living with the moral results of teaching evolution."

Mel Gabler said he did *not* advocate the two-model approach. Rather, he advocates teaching evolution "honestly" by presenting all the relevant scientific evidence, that which favors evolution and that which stands against evolution. Gabler went on to add that this requires presenting more than one theory of evolution, giving punctuated equilibria and panspermia as examples. He didn't specifically mention "special creation." Later he said parents should attend school board meetings to express their concerns and "speak wisely." If I understood him correctly, his ranking of education alternatives was home schooling, Christian schools, and public schools.

James Barth advocated the "infiltration" of school boards by creationists.

Thayer Martin said creationists should focus on reaching pastors. "Teaching the gospel is the responsibility of pastors," he said. I quite agree with him. I took a sincere liking to this man, and we talked more about this later. He told me that he really did not want religion taught in public schools, and I believe him.

Lawrence Puffert said public education should focus on clearly answering the questions "What is science? What is a law of nature? What is a fact?" He said there's factual science in creationism, though he did not identify any. Puffert suggested workshops for parents to educate them about creationism.

Wayne Frair believes that "God *should* be in science" and that distinctions between primary causes (supernaturalism vs. naturalism) and secondary causes (such as abrupt appearance, modification within "kind," and macroevolution) must be made clear. I agree, but I can't help wondering how a good scientist like Frair can so profoundly misunderstand science's inherent limits. Frair also advocated home schooling.

Kurt Wise added that simple teaching of "abrupt appearance leaves God out," suggesting that he believes it is appropriate to inject God into public science education in pluralistic America.

Wise also advocates home schooling. (If all parents were as well-equipped to educate their kids as Wise, I, too, would advocate home schooling!)

The one suggestion I thought would be most appropriate (and surely a more realistically met challenge than whole-sale home schooling) was that parents and pastors should together supplement their children's public school education with philosophico-religious guidance given in the home and church. But this suggestion wasn't explicitly made by the panel. Thayer Martin did suggest this role for pastors, but he didn't mention this as a parent's role or as the most appropriate way for creationists to deal with secular information presented in public schools. The absence of this specific suggestion makes me wonder whose children the creationists are most concerned about protecting from evolution education. *Theirs? Or mine?*

Saturday Morning: Jonathan Henry

Jonathan Henry's "technical" presentation on Saturday morning was entitled "A Unifying Model for Catastrophes." It was the last of the conference for me. Like the first presentation by Thomson, it was a strawman shoot. Throwing in an occasional Bible verse, Henry presented examples of fossils formed by "rapid burials" as if no geologist had ever noticed that floods had occurred in history. He said faunal succession is a myth and there is no fossil evidence of interzonal climate. He said *Archaeopteryx* was clearly a bird—or maybe a fraud! Henry said the Meister sandal print "has never been attacked or refuted, just ignored." He gave examples of geological features that appear to be relatively new, arguing that the earth itself therefore must be young. And Henry referred to the principle of uniformitarianism as "the doctrine of uniformity!" When I asked him what the doctrine of uniformity was and how it relates to modern geology, he said it is the principle, still embraced by geologists today, that processes in the past proceeded at the same uniform *rates!*

Henry said all that and more, and the audience *loved* it, *flat ate it up!* Now I ask you, what can a humble, peace-loving evolutionist like me do when

faced with all that? Placing my business card on his podium, so he could mail me promised documentation, I fled the building to regain my composure, that's what! I had to keep reminding myself that this was their show, and the creationists could present whatever they wanted. It was tough, biting my tongue, but if I was to influence these folks at all, losing my cool would not do it. With Henry I had had enough, however, and I cut the last two technical presentations of the conference.

Informal Discussions

We (Bob Schade-wald, Scott Faust, and I) had numerous small-group and one-on-one discussions with creationists all through the conference. These were both gratifying and insightful for us, and I think profitable for the creationists we talked with. (We didn't see much of Glen Kuban outside of the formal presentations until Saturday afternoon when the conference was over; Don Patton did, but that is Glen's story!)

Although I did my best to avoid theological discussions (I came to discuss science), Scott Faust is very adept in discussing that area. Bob Schade-wald is formidable in philosophy and epistemology. All three of us knew the relevant science, so we made a good team, and I think we were effective in influencing folks. Not that we made any converts to evolution, but we sent many off scratching their heads. Between us, I don't think there was one offering of scientific evidence or argument we didn't convincingly refute. Many times we heard the reply "I didn't know that" when we explained what was wrong with an argument. We left everyone's self-image intact, and nobody got angry with us (except perhaps one fellow in the banquet food line).

What little most creationists know about evolution and evolutionary thinking does not come from evolutionists, but from other creationists. There we were, in mid-1989, asking creationists to give us their best evidence for a young earth, and they gave us moon dust, human population growth, ocean salts, and geomagnetic field decay—all arguments that have been refuted for *years*! Obviously, creationists dedicated

enough to come to a creation "science" conference are *not* dedicated enough to seek out published refutations of the "scientific" evidence for a young earth! We explained the problems with their arguments every chance we got. Whenever one of them said "I didn't know that," we tried to make him see (if only for a moment) how he'd been misled by those in the creationist movement in whom he had misplaced his trust.

What little most creationists know about evolution and evolutionary thinking does not come from evolutionists, but from other creationists. There we were, in mid-1989, asking creationists to give us their best evidence for a young earth, and they gave us moon dust, human population growth, ocean salts, and geomagnetic field decay — all arguments that have been refuted for years!

We all tried to get these folks to understand that "modern creationism" has raised *not* issues of genuine science, but rather only issues of creationist scholarship, integrity, and trustworthiness. We tried to get them to understand the importance of getting the case for evolution *from evolutionists*, not from other creationists. We explained that our concern was not about those who examine all the diverse evidence for evolution and, having done so, reject it. We are concerned about those who reject evolution on the basis of misinformation, disinformation and lies.

Whether the points we made will stick, I don't know. Most likely we were too late with too little. But we took the best shot we could every chance we got. I think our effort was worthwhile.

The last official conference activity was a tour on Saturday of the Rhea County Courthouse, site of the John Scopes trial. I looked forward to being in this historic place where the creationists won their first (and last) court battle against public evolution education. After

entering, though, I really couldn't work up a "romantic feel" for the place. When Robert Spoede, Professor of History at Bryan College, began to lecture us, I thought maybe he would warm me up to it. He did warm me up, but in ways I hadn't anticipated or wanted.

Spoede's speech was less about the trial than a "guilt by association" indictment of evolution on the basis of perversions of evolution theory by racists, anti-Semites, and Nazis. It is difficult to characterize Spoede's speech charitably. Aside from his (for an historian, unforgivable) failure to recognize that racism and anti-Semitism, the soils in which Naziism is rooted, were with us long before evolution was discovered, his indictment struck me the same way *my* indicting Christianity because Ku Klux Klanners regard themselves as Bible-believing Christians and justify their racism from Biblical passages would strike *him*—as ignorant nonsense and logical *non sequitur*! What a double standard creationists like Spoede apply! His blast of unrepentant contempt for logic and fairness provided a most bitter end to the conference for Schadewald, Faust, and me. Most sad was that the 50 to 60 good creationists who heard Spoede's speech with us appeared to share or approve of his sentiments. At least, he received many laughs and approving head-nods throughout his speech and warm applause at its conclusion.

If there is a god, I wonder, *what* must She have thought of *that*?

The Good News

The good news in all this is that associated with the Bible-Science Association are some such as Charles Thaxton and Kurt Wise who sincerely try to not abuse or misuse science to support their theology. And there are others, such as BSA president Keith Hedges and his predecessor Russell Arndts, who seem genuinely concerned about the integrity and image of the Bible-Science Association. After the conference closed, Bob and I were privileged to join these gentlemen at Kurt Wise's house to continue informal discussions begun earlier. They did not invite us there to argue. They wanted to

hear what we had to say. We had *much* to say.

*... they listened and took note.
To me, that is good news!*

For example, I said that "scientific" creationism has raised issues *not* of science, but of integrity. If there is an honest scientific case for creation and against evolution, no one can possibly see it, because it has been obscured by the pervasive agenda of persuasion-by-any-means that has characterized the creationist movement for the last 25 years. False logic, false science. I don't want to believe that there are devout Christians who imagine that their god will be pleased by converts born of misinformation, disinformation and lies, but the entire modern "creation science" record stands as a colossal testimony to the fact that *there are Christians who do so imagine!*

When I made this speech, they thanked me for it! Bob expressed similar sentiments and much more, punctuated with examples from the *Bible-Science Newsletter* and Bartz's scientifically bankrupt editorial scholarship. They didn't argue; they thanked Bob for it! Now, I'm not pretending that they agreed with all we said, but they didn't argue or become defensive; they listened and took note. To me, that is good news!

Keith Hedges seems genuinely concerned with cleaning up the BSA's image, and with the help of folks like Wise and Thaxton, he might manage it. I hope he can. If he can pull that off, and particularly if ICR and CRS could be influenced to follow suit, maybe I *can* start using my vacations for fishing trips again!

Ah, yes... It's said that a pessimist is an optimist with experience. But what happened in Dayton that Saturday afternoon was so improbable that I simply cannot help being uncharacteristically optimistic. Nevertheless, I shall not buy a new fishing rod; rather I shall save my shekels for next July's trip to Pittsburgh and the Second International Conference on Creationism.

The 1989 National Creation Conference

Robert J. Schadewald

The 1989 National Conference on Biblical Origins was held at Bryan College, Dayton, Tennessee, on August 10 through 12. I attended with Frank Lovell, chemist and liaison of the Kentucky Committee of Correspondence. Frank drove down from Louisville, and he picked me up at the Nashville airport along the way. We were subsequently joined by Scott Faust and Glen Kuban.

This was my sixth national creation conference and, despite having sworn off creation conferences after 1987 in Seattle, my interest was piqued. The historic significance was attractive, with Dayton having been the site of the Scopes Trial in 1925. Kurt Wise, a friend from former creation conferences, had just joined the Bryan College faculty. The Bible-Science Association (BSA), cosponsor of the conference, was in a state of flux, with new president Keith Hedges determined to put the organization on a more scientific basis. Don Patton, a rising star in the Carl Baugh school of creation science, was reporting on the latest from the Paluxy River. If these attractions were not enough, Henry Morris was scheduled to give the banquet address.

William Jennings Bryan College was founded in memory of the Great Commoner, who died shortly after his Pyrrhic victory in the Scopes Trial. Beautifully situated on a hill above Dayton, the nondenominational school has fallen upon relatively hard times, despite the fundamentalist boom. Many potential students are reportedly being lured away by Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, and enrollment is around 300, while capacity is more like 800. The facilities easily housed the 150+ conference attendees.

In years past, I have always written extensive reports on the creation conferences I attended. This year, Frank Lovell beat me to the punch with a long and excellent report that he circulated privately. As the new editor of *NCSE Reports*, I have better things

to do than reinvent the wheel. I therefore made Lovell's report (somewhat condensed) the cover story and wrote the remarks that follow to complement and/or supplement his material.

Ker Thomson and Fossilized Straw Men

Ker Thomson, a geophysicist at Bryan College, was the first speaker. Before he began, he asked a local lady to sing a song she had written for the occasion. This sincere farm wife, who has probably been bamboozled by antievolutionary preaching since childhood, introduced her song by saying that the mockingbird makes a mockery of evolution, and she wondered how they can put such lies in books. She could not pronounce "*Archaeopteryx*" or several scientific terms, but her song was clever, an anti-evolutionary parody of "Listen to the Mockingbird." It was better than Thomson's lecture.

Jonathan Henry claims the earth was created perfect, so defects such as the craters of the moon could hardly be created. Moreover, the Fall of Man afflicted the entire cosmos. Some past catastrophes may be related to angelic conflicts, but most can probably be explained by physical scenarios such as his own.

Thompson began by saying that there are two possible views, creation and naturalism, and that "evolution is a libel on the character of God." He then began a recitation that could have come straight out of a Morris book or the pages of the *Bible-Science Newsletter*. He argued, for example, that you do not buy a car and have it evolve into a Rolls Royce — heavy, intellectual stuff like that. He also read the usual quotes endlessly recycled by creationists — Harold F. Blum, Cecil Waddington, Pierre Grasse, Colin

Patterson, and Stephen Jay Gould ("Marxist, evolutionist").

Some of Thomson's more interesting remarks were on human evolution. Thomson claimed that Nebraska Man got into the hands of the international paleontological community, and they rebuilt Nebraska Man from one tooth. In case anyone missed the point, he reiterated that this was done by the leading members of the international paleontological community, and he accused scientists of "outright fakery." Outright fakery is a good description of Thomson's account of Nebraska Man, but I suspect he lifted this fantasy, like virtually everything else in his presentation, from another creationist.

There was much more — vestigial organs, recapitulation, age of the earth (he thinks it is probably young), the velocity of light, polonium haloes, and the angle of the earth's axis to the ecliptic. He said Adolph Eichmann claimed that every church in Germany taught theistic evolution before the war, and that he was just carrying out God's plan. He quoted Jerry Bergman's *Criterion* regarding discrimination against creationists, and said he himself had been discriminated against. (Thomson was reportedly driven out of Baylor, apparently a discriminating Southern Baptist university.)

Robert Helfinstine on the Paluxy River

The second presentation was by Robert Helfinstine, the Minneapolis engineer who heads BSA's Paluxy River Task Force. His talk was a preliminary report on the task force's findings (they hope to have the final report out by the end of the year). Helfinstine said they believe in the young earth and creationism, and that a universal flood resulting from divine judgment laid down the Cretaceous strata in Texas and elsewhere. They think the post-Flood environment differed radically from the pre-Flood. He noted that our expectations can influence our perception, and we sometimes see or don't see things because of biases. Thinking is the key, he said.

Helfinstine reviewed the story of Glen Kuban (and Ronnie Hastings) noticing the saurian features of the

Taylor trail as shown by coloration features of the rock. He said BSA had a vested interest in finding out what was going on. Upon reinvestigation, there was no question. He said the dinosaur features are evident in a 5-second segment of *Footprints in Stone*, if you know when and where to look. Regarding accusations of fraud, there is no way the tracks could have been doctored. Core samples reveal that the infilling material is different.

Tracks at the so-called McFall II site are a different matter. Helfinstine discussed a series of tracks called the Clark trail, after Dr. Marlyn Clark, who worked the site with "Dr." Baugh. He said the stride of the man who made the Clark trail was about 60 inches. His illustration showed one alleged human print, and he says another is covered by a dinosaur track except for a heel print. They also have another toe print. Clark is doing a contour analysis of one of his tracks, and he will compare it to a contour analysis of one of Mary Leakey's tracks.

Baugh's famous fossil tooth was discovered in June 1987, while trying to follow the Clark trail. Helfinstine personally showed the it to three dentists, including his own dentist, and they all identified it as human. They did some genetic tests on it, and the microstructure of the tooth enamel was compared to human and fish teeth. The tests were somewhat ambiguous, and their conclusion now is that it is inconclusive! That is interesting, as Patton and Baugh acknowledged some months ago that the tooth is not human.

At one point, Helfinstine held up a cast of the famous Caldwell print, saying it is so nearly perfect that they are using it as a basis for comparison. He said they have another print very much like it. During the question period, I asked Helfinstine whether he knew that the Taylors claim the Caldwell footprint is a carving. He replied that he rejects their claim, and he apparently considers his opinion sufficient grounds for concealing this significant and relevant allegation from his audience.

I also asked Helfinstine why he had not mentioned Ronnie Hastings' fish tooth, which is very similar to Baugh's tooth. Don Patton, who was sitting near

me, chimed in to say that Ronnie's tooth is nothing like Baugh's. I asked Patton why they had shown their tooth to dentists instead of to physical anthropologists. I noted that physical anthropologist (and NCSE Executive Director) Eugenie Scott, who did her Ph.D. thesis on human teeth, has said that Baugh's tooth does not look human in the photos. Patton replied that she doesn't know anything about human teeth! Neither, for that matter, does the head of paleontology at Texas Christian University, who said immediately that Baugh's tooth isn't human. Apparently, the only people who know anything about fossil teeth are Patton, Baugh, and dentists.

Charles Thaxton on Origins

Charles Thaxton coauthored *The Mystery of Life's Origin* with Roger Olson and Walter Bradley. The book, which takes a skeptical look at origin of life research, is comparable to Robert Shapiro's acclaimed *Origins: A Skeptic's Guide to the Origin of Life*, but Thaxton *et al* published first. Also, their last chapter essentially appeals to the Argument from Design for the origin of life.

Thaxton thinks a case for creation can be made, but it is a philosophic or metaphysical distinction. Accordingly, much of his presentation was philosophical. Science cannot be blamed for not seeing the supernatural, he said, because it has no way of seeing it. Neither can science affirm naturalism; it must be assumed. He thinks his case can be made within the range of things scientists will accept.

Aristotle said science is the search for causes, and Francis Bacon said much the same thing. When dealing with reproducible phenomena, creationists and evolutionists agree that natural causes must prevail. We identify causes on the basis of our experience. Science incorporates the idea that the laws we are dealing with are uniform across space and time.

His main argument seemed to be that in science the proper alternative to a natural cause is intelligence, not supernaturalism. Natural causes are what we recognize from experience, he

said, and he showed a picture of Mount Rushmore. There the cause is intelligent design. He showed a picture of the alleged face on Mars. Does that mean there is intelligence there? He said the space face could be a natural phenomenon, but we need more information.

If the misinformation level remained depressing, there were encouraging exceptions.

He argued that science can deal with intelligent causes, citing the search for extraterrestrial life. We could conceivably detect a radio signal we would recognize as intelligent. He then argued that DNA has a structure that fits the pattern of intelligence because it fits a pattern our experience tells us comes from intelligence.

Thaxton took care to defend science against several common creationist charges. He said a tremendous amount of good science has been done in the origin of life field, and creationists do everyone a disservice when they fail to recognize that. Contradicting standard creationist mythology, he said that very, very few of the NASA scientists expected to find life on Mars. They did, however, expect to find organic molecules, an expectation based on considerable laboratory experience. (As it happened, they found neither.)

He discussed how order can be generated naturally from chaos, using as an example the swirls sometimes formed by cigarette smoke. The words "second law of thermodynamics" did not escape his lips during his technical presentation. At his popular lecture on Saturday, a questioner asked him about the second law. He gave a simple, Prigogine-inspired example of order arising from disorder, concluding, "I don't think thermodynamics is a problem."

Jonathan Henry Unifies Catastrophes

Jonathan Henry is Chairman of the Department of Mathematics and Science at Tennessee Temple University

in Chattanooga. His paper, "A Unifying Model for Catastrophes on Earth and in the Solar System," proposed a "heating model" for cosmic catastrophes. Basically, he argued that certain celestial bodies blew up due to internal heating, and their debris became asteroids, meteors, comets, and planetary rings.

Henry claims the earth was created perfect, so defects such as the craters of the moon could hardly be created. Moreover, the Fall of Man afflicted the entire cosmos. Some past catastrophes may be related to angelic conflicts, but most can probably be explained by physical scenarios such as his own. He proposed to account for a laundry list of astronomical observations.

Citing Gamow's old proposal that the asteroid belt was the remains of an exploded planet, Henry argued that such an idea best fit the evidence. But what could cause a planet to explode? Some planets still radiate more heat than they receive from the sun. Perhaps internal heating is the answer. Internal heating caused a catastrophe on earth when the fountains of the great deep broke up to cause the Flood. Heat is still released from the earth.

Henry claimed the fact that no presently acting heating mechanism is adequate should not be a stumbling block. He suggested that ancient rates of radioactive decay could have been high enough so that a planet failed to dissipate its heat. Perhaps a computer study based on planetary orbits and known asymmetrical cratering could establish the planetary positions when the explosions occurred.

The foregoing discussion does not do justice to Henry's presentation. If he had done any more hand-waving, he might have gotten airborne. The only creationist visibly disturbed by this was Kurt Wise. During the question period, Wise asked several pointed questions, all of which Henry brushed aside. For example, Wise noted that long-period comets (such as Kohoutek) can have periods in the millions of years. Thus, they could not possibly be returning fragments from a nearby explosion a few thousand years ago. Henry insisted that claims of long period comets are based on the Oort Cloud hypothesis,

which he dismissed as metaphysical. Wise could only shake his head.

(Henry gave a related presentation at the miniconference on Saturday, and Frank Lovell attended. See his report for details.)

Don Patton and the Paluxy River

Don Patton, a nondenominational evangelist associated with Reverend Carl Baugh, made a presentation on his latest findings at the Paluxy River near Glen Rose, Texas. An intense, hard-faced man with a blow-combed preacher haircut, Patton fairly radiates hostility to conventional scientists, whose motives, honesty, and competence he frequently questions. His presentation was similar to one he gave at the Twin Cities Creation-Science Association last winter. Patton and Baugh now acknowledge that the Taylor Trail was made by a dinosaur, but they claim that a man walked behind, stepping in each track!

Glen Kuban attended Patton's Friday presentation, and he reported on it in the last issue. Readers who missed it should consult his "Retracking Those Incredible Mantracks" in *NCSE Reports* 9(4).

Morris Skips the Banquet

Friday night was the banquet. One of the things that attracted me to this conference was the advertised banquet speaker, Henry Morris. If "Mr. Creationism" has ever addressed a BSA national creation conference, it was not in recent memory. Besides, I was curious to hear what Morris would have to say about ICR's battle with the state of California. Unfortunately, Morris didn't make it. No announcement was made until the banquet itself, where disappointed creationists were told that business related to ICR's reapproval to grant graduate degrees in science in California had caused Morris to miss his plane, and it was too late for him to take another flight. Thanks to a chance encounter with a creationist with inside information, I had known since shortly after noon that Morris wasn't going to show. I can only speculate as why the people who paid \$20 for banquet tickets weren't told that until they got to the banquet. In any

case, creationist attorney John Eidsmoe spoke instead, bashing the New Age and linking it to evolution. Silly and boring. Frank and I listened briefly and then bailed out.

Don Patton Revisited

Saturday morning was the mini-conference intended for the general public, and I started out at Don Patton's presentation on the Paluxy River. As usual, Patton cast aspersions on scientific integrity, arguing that there is a philosophical necessity for evolutionists to deny his evidence. He ridiculed (as he always does) the geologic column, arguing that it involves circular reasoning and displayed a quote from *"Encyclopedia Britannica"* to justify that claim.

About then, I started getting that burned-out feeling, and I left for some fresh air. Soon afterward, I was joined on the lawn by Frank Lovell, who had just over-dosed on Bible-science with Jonathan Henry. Normally mild-mannered Frank was so infuriated by Henry's incessant misinformation that it took him some time to cool down. We both decided to forsake science for history. We would skip everything else but the last event, a tour of the Rhea County courthouse and lecture on the Scopes trial. For a report on this lecture, see "Love Thy Neighbor" elsewhere in this issue.

Miscellaneous Observations

All in all, Bryan '89 was one of the more interesting creation conferences I've attended. While these events have evolved a bit since my first one in 1983, some things have not changed. The average creationist attendee (including most of the speakers) "knows" evolution mainly as the assemblage of straw men created and publicized by propagandists from the Institute for Creation Research and the Bible-Science Association. As veteran creationist-watchers know, this "science" is riddled with nonsense that believers spout by rote when you push their buttons. Any scientifically literate person familiar with this stuff can easily demolish it. Frank Lovell, who is as articulate as he is knowledgeable, moved among these

innocents like a lion in a den of Daniels. Some were intense, some were tentative, all started out confident. By the time they finished talking to Lovell, most had some understanding of how they had been duped by those they trusted. Scott Faust joined in

The average creationist attendee (including most of the speakers) "knows" evolution mainly from the straw men created by the ICR and BSA. As veteran creationist-watchers know, this "science" is riddled with nonsense that believers spout by rote when you push their buttons.

some of these conversations and was also very effective. I mostly listened, tossing in two cents worth now and then. I don't recall any creationist offering an original argument from evidence in these conversations. It was all the same old thoroughly refuted ICR/BSA nonsense.

If the misinformation level remained depressing, there were encouraging exceptions. Kurt Wise and Charles Thaxton made presentations of a caliber rarely heard at BSA events, and both seem to be increasingly influential in BSA affairs. President Keith Hedges wants to raise the scientific level of the next biannual conference, and he expects Wise to help him. Indeed, BSA's 1991 conference will again be at Bryan College, and this time Professor Wise will have an important role in organizing it. Their combined efforts should bring a quantum leap in quality.

Most encouraging was what happened after the conference was over, when Frank Lovell and I were invited to Kurt Wise's house for a discussion. I have little to add to Lovell's account of that meeting in his report elsewhere in this issue. I can only say that (so far as I know) it was unprecedented, and I think it marked an important beginning. If creationists start taking criticisms to heart, maybe I'll take up fishing and invite Lovell to come to the Land of 10,000 Lakes for a vacation.

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