

The Religion of Science: The Largest Remaining Frontier

# Why Exporting the Age of the Earth Controversy is a Bad Idea

by Ted Cabal

**T**he age of the earth controversy thrives among evangelicals in the United States, but Christian leaders should take care not to export it.<sup>1</sup> Exportation is a bad idea because the issue does not clearly involve doctrinal danger. The debate, however, fuels division between Bible believers of otherwise like mind, with one of the most notable examples being among the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).<sup>2</sup> Too often doctrinal entrenchment, conversational gridlock, and even schism characterizes the relationship between old and young earth evangelicals. Moreover, no clear means to resolve the crisis in this generation appear on the horizon. The debate instead provides an opportunity to teach patience in handling a seemingly intractable controversy.

## *Viewing the Earth's Age as a Matter of Biblical Faithfulness is a Bad Idea*

The Church has never found it easy to know how to discern and when to divide over heresy. Christian leaders with ready access to first-rate historical and theological books and teachers still find the task daunting. Nevertheless, passionate but ambiguous debate regarding the age of the earth has too often provoked ill-advised judgments of opponents. Young earth evangelicals especially have been vocal about the necessity of believing in a young earth.

The issue can be formulated in the form of a question: "Is it necessary to believe in a young earth?" John Morris, president of the Institute for Creation Research, answers that "strictly speaking, belief in the young earth is necessary for a truly Biblical point of view."<sup>3</sup> But just why is it necessary to believe in a young earth? Most likely what Morris means is faithfulness to biblical authority. He apparently does not mean it is necessary to believe certain ideas often attendant to young earth creationism (YEC) such as flood geology, the vapor canopy, or how dinosaurs might have survived on the ark. Though these issues are important to discuss, they would make the question too easy to answer (e.g., "is it necessary to believe in the vapor canopy theory to be faithful to biblical authority?"). The obvious answer is no. Moreover, not all young earth creationists hold to ancillary theories as these. The central issue seems to be the age of the earth itself, usually held by young

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earth creationists to be in the tens of thousands of years rather than billions. So the question might more accurately be restated this way: “Is it necessary to believe that the earth is no more than tens of thousands of years old to be faithful to biblical authority?”

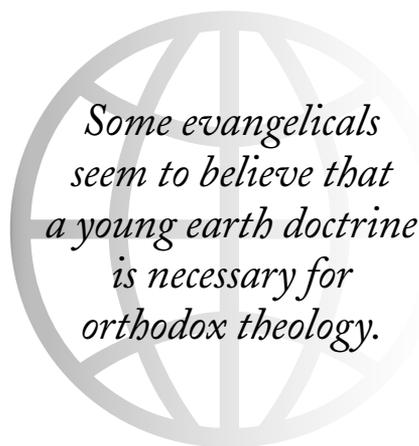
But how should the term “necessary” be understood? Perhaps it is here where there has been so much room for confusion. Clearly there would be no controversy if some young earth creationists did not believe that the doctrine of a young earth is one of the more significant biblical teachings. For instance, someone might argue that to be faithful to biblical authority it is necessary to believe that Jared was the father of the antediluvian patriarch Enoch (Gen 5.18). Now aside from the issue of potential gaps in the genealogy and the fact that few evangelicals would know the name of Enoch’s father, matters like these rarely create controversies in the church. Otherwise, the question might have been: “Is it necessary to believe that Jared was the father of Enoch to be faithful to biblical authority?”

Of course, if the Bible clearly teaches that Enoch’s father was Jared, then to reject this would be an indication of a serious underlying matter. But the importance of the initial question does not have to do with indicators of one’s belief in biblical affirmations of just any sort. The question of the age of the earth itself is regarded as worthy of serious controversy, involving great expenditure of the church’s resources. There is a necessity in the minds of some YECs linking the earth’s age and biblical faithfulness, making it more important than affirmations of any just biblical data. Whereas differing views that historically have led to separate denominations (e.g., baptism, church polity, or Calvinism/Arminianism) are routinely tolerated in most YEC institutions, belief in a young earth in many of these same institutions has become a matter of orthodoxy. Something else must be meant by “necessity.”

I know of no young earth creationist who argues that belief in the earth’s young age is a theologically necessary condition for salvation. More likely the issue for some is that holding to a young earth is necessary for evangeli-

cal fellowship and ministry, as in the case of some in the PCA who consider belief in a young earth a necessary requisite for ordination. Similarly, some evangelicals seem to believe that a young earth doctrine is necessary for orthodox theology. Some evangelical institutional doctrinal statements list belief in a young earth right alongside the great verities of the faith.<sup>4</sup> But I suspect that most young earth evangelicals do not consciously take positions like these, and are indeed pained by those who do.

Perhaps what most frequently fuels the debate is that many young earth



creationists believe abandonment of YEC is *dangerous*, a slippery slope that leads to biblical unfaithfulness. In his very influential book, *The Genesis Record*, Henry Morris admits that the old earth view known as the gap theory was “taught in most of the Bible institutes and fundamentalist seminaries of the United States for the past century.”<sup>5</sup> But the problem with the theory, he contends, is that it attempts to harmonize the Bible with the old earth of contemporary geology, leading to disastrous consequences. He explains that this unfortunate harmonizing

has allowed the evolutionary establishment to take over the nation’s school systems, news media, and most other important institutions of our society. Although very few such “gap theorists” also believe in evolution, the tendency of Bible expositors simply to ignore the whole problem, on the basis of a false sense of security stemming from the gap theory, has had this effect. The geological age system is essentially synonymous with the

evolutionary system. Each geological age is identified and dated by the same fossil record which constitutes the main evidence for organic evolution. Historically, as well as logically, acceptance of the geological age system is inevitably followed, sooner or later, by acceptance of the evolutionary system.<sup>6</sup>

The argument Morris makes that abandonment of a young earth is necessarily dangerous is probably a bit different than that of the rank and file YEC. For him the direct connection leads from rejection of flood geology to the domination of evolutionary naturalism.<sup>7</sup> Though other young earth evangelicals might not specify the necessary link to flood geology, they commonly agree that rejection of a young earth is based on a dangerous scientific delusion with probable links to evolutionary naturalism. Morris exemplifies well the grave concern of some young earth evangelicals that there is a necessary danger inherent in abandoning young earth doctrine because to do so lends credence to an evolutionary naturalistic worldview and erodes confidence in the Bible.

But is such thinking correct? The idea is often asserted, but whether it is backed by a cogent argument is another matter. A matter of such seriousness deserves careful inspection.

In saying the “geological age system is essentially synonymous with the evolutionary system,” Morris seems to mean “synonymous” in the minds of evolutionary naturalists or theistic evolutionists who correlate the geologic ages with various fossil strata, and these strata constitute their main evidence for macroevolution. Morris is, of course, correct about this: the evolutionary naturalist and theistic evolutionist agree that paleontological evidence supports their macroevolutionary view.

But Morris fails to make his central point, that there is a necessary connection between belief in geologic ages (or an old earth) and belief in macroevolution. Note his charge, acceptance of the geological age system is inevitably followed, sooner or later, by acceptance of the evolutionary system.” Of course macroevolutionary theorists believe in an old earth, but to insist that old earth creationism is thereby

evolutionary is to commit the slippery slope fallacy (assuming without justification that a proposed step will set off an undesirable and uncontrollable chain of events). By this same reasoning someone could accuse Morris of lending credence to evolutionary naturalism and eroding confidence in the Bible because he believes in microevolution<sup>8</sup> (small scale changes within gene frequencies that do not bring about new “kinds” of organisms). This microevolution that Morris accepts, the charge against him might continue, is precisely that mechanism classical Darwinists believed led to macroevolution. Thus microevolution “is inevitably followed, sooner or later, by acceptance of the evolutionary system.” Certainly (and rightly) Morris would protest such poor logic! One can believe in microevolution and not macroevolution, but one can also believe in the antiquity of the earth and not “the evolutionary system.”

Young and old earth evangelicals are united in their agreement that the fossil record with its paucity of credible transitional fossils does not reveal common descent. The difference between Morris and old earth creationists is that he views fossils as depositions from a global catastrophe, whereas most old earth creationists see them as artifacts of God’s supernatural creative acts separated by long time spans. Morris views fossils as evidence for the Flood, the old earth evangelical views them as evidence for the Creation. The fact is that old earth evangelicals believe the fossil record reveals an old earth not out of a desire to accommodate naturalism, but because they believe scientific evidence demonstrates its antiquity (e.g., radiometric dating) and because they believe the Bible does not teach against the earth’s antiquity. Indeed, it is well known that the notion of geologic ages was formulated primarily by those who believed in the fixed nature of species before the advent of Darwinism.

Morris claims that old earth creationist views “allowed the evolutionary establishment to take over the nation’s school systems, news media, and most other important institutions of our society.” But not only does Morris present no historical evidence in sup-

port of such a sweeping claim, it is not easy to imagine how such a charge could be historically substantiated. By his own admission fundamentalist ministry training institutions held to the old earth Gap Theory throughout most of the twentieth century and did not capitulate to Darwinism. In fact, they were usually bastions of anti-Darwinism. Morris makes a comprehensive historical claim but with no justification. Has any historian done the detailed research demonstrating that evolutionary naturalism came to dominate American educational and political life because the gap theory was taught in “fundamentalist” schools? One could just as easily claim that evolutionary thought would not have made such advance if more people had listened to and believed the anti-evolutionary Gap theorists.

In a fashion similar to that of Morris, some young earth evangelicals charge that old earth creationism undermines the clear teaching of the Bible by trading its authority for the “changing paradigms of science.” John MacArthur contends

the revelation of God in nature is not as powerful, as enduring, as reliable, as clear, or as authoritative as Scripture. Scripture is a sufficient revelation; nature is not. Scripture is clear and complete; nature is not. Scripture therefore speaks with more authority than nature and should be used to assess scientific opinion, not vice versa.<sup>9</sup>

The matter, however, is not as simple as all this. Certainly scripture is clear, sufficient, and complete regarding many things; and on many issues science simply has nothing to say about what the Bible teaches. Yet not only the creation, but also the Bible needs to be interpreted, and to think that scripture is rightly used to assess scientific opinion on every issue, and never vice versa, is simply naïve and historically forgetful.

The most important example of a paradigm shift in the correlative interpretation of biblical and scientific data was the move away from geocentrism. The Bible could not have seemed more clearly opposed to heliocentrism. Dozens of times it claims that not the earth but the

sun rises, sets, and goes down.<sup>10</sup> On Joshua’s long day, not the earth but “the sun stood still, and the moon stopped” (Josh 10.13). The geocentric interpretation of these passages would have seemed to the original and all subsequent readers the only simple, natural, and straightforward reading. Though some of these texts are found in poetic sections of scripture, most are embedded in historical narrative with no indication that the terms are to be understood metaphorically.

Serious exegesis of scripture alone would never have led anyone to adopt the views of Copernicus. It took further scientific work and a significant passage of time before the majority of exegetes came to a heliocentric understanding of the universe and the Bible. Eventually they were able to understand that neither heliocentrism nor the Bible had been wrong or in conflict: the fault was in their interpretation of God’s word. It is this history that provokes R.C. Sproul wisely to say:

I remain convinced that a person can authentically believe in the inerrancy of the Bible and at the same time be persuaded of alternative interpretations of the [Genesis] text, such as the “framework” hypothesis. Remember Galileo!<sup>11</sup>

### *Viewing Debate about the Age of the Earth as Justification for Inflammatory Language is a Bad Idea*

Because some YECs elevate the issue “to a degree of importance that it does not deserve,”<sup>12</sup> the fires of controversy are stoked by inflammatory and misleading rhetoric. For example, John Morris writes,

it probably takes seminary training to accept the various perversions of Scripture, such as the Day-Age concept, the Framework Hypothesis, Theistic Evolution, and local-Flood theory. Modern Evangelicals are hard pressed to find a major seminary that systematically holds to a historical, grammatical view of Genesis. Most prefer to allegorize it and welcome evolution and/or old-earth thinking into their theology.<sup>13</sup>

Note how Morris refers to old earth exegetical theories (Day-Age,

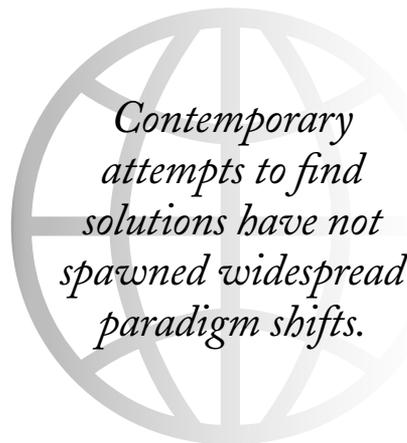
Framework Hypothesis) as allegorical, “perversions of Scripture,” and clumps them with the more controversial local Flood theory and with theistic evolution (or simply “evolution”).<sup>14</sup> Here is not the place to defend these two old earth theories; perhaps they are, in fact, wrong. But in a book contending for a young earth, Morris incriminates old earth exegesis simply by linking it with views having no necessary connection but which his readers will likely find objectionable. Morris would rightly cry foul if someone were to write “it probably takes young earth training to accept the various perversions of science such as the moon dust depth as recent creation evidence, the Paluxy River Bed alleged human footprints, and the rejection of plate tectonics.”<sup>15</sup> Modern evangelicals are hard pressed to find a young earth institution that systematically holds to an objective, defensible view of science. Most prefer to twist it and welcome obscurantism and/or young earth thinking into their science.”

In a December 2001 letter to supporters of ICR, Morris refers to old earth advocate Hugh Ross as a “semi-creationist.” Surely this is unhelpful, and Morris would resent being called a “semi-scientist.” Douglas Kelly claims that progressive creationists can legitimately be termed “evangelical evolutionists,”<sup>16</sup> certainly an incorrect characterization of the term. John MacArthur inculpates evangelicals who adopt an old earth approach as having “already embarked on a process that invariably overthrows faith.”<sup>17</sup> But an appeal to fear, though effective as a rhetorical device, commits a logical fallacy nonetheless. Even if unintentional, such language controls the debate by controlling the terms, but does nothing to provide justification of its claims. More importantly, such serious ungrounded charges threaten the unity of the Church unnecessarily. It is easier to alarm Christians than to settle them once alarmed.

### Promoting Controversy Not Likely Resolvable in This Generation is a Bad Idea

Perhaps help for living with the controversy can be found in lessons from the history of science which,

like the history of theology, is replete with controversies surrounding the interpretation of its data. Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*<sup>18</sup> is the best known and most influential work written on the subject. He describes “normal science” as those times when the scientific community enjoys broad agreement on particular models of understanding regarding matters of research. These models or paradigms are firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that the community acknowledges as the foundation for its further research.<sup>19</sup>



The paradigm is open-ended, allowing room for the resolution of related research puzzles, but the paradigm itself reigns without essential challenge due to its conceptual success in solving problems in its field.

Yet according to Kuhn genuine scientific “discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly,”<sup>20</sup> the troublesome datum that a paradigm does not seem able to accommodate. Although during “normal science” anomalies are regularly encountered, the working assumption is that they are resolvable; perhaps adjustments to ancillary theories may resolve the anomaly and leave the paradigm intact. If, however, the paradigm cannot account for a growing number of anomalies, a crisis state may arise in which newer competing paradigms begin to receive serious consideration.<sup>21</sup> A scientific revolution<sup>22</sup> or paradigm shift occurs if one of the newer models gains acceptance due to the superior way it handles the anomalies.

In viewing the age of the earth controversy through Kuhnian lenses, the long-held young earth view would be equivalent to “normal science.” Without question young earth biblical exegesis reigned until the nineteenth century. This paradigm served the church well because it provided the simplest way to understand scripture. Moreover, the current science knew of no contrary empirical data to doubt it. But anomalies for the young earth model did arise, and they arose in science. Modern geology and paleontology provided the difficulties, and developments such as twentieth century astronomy and radiometric dating added to the doubts. As the scientific disciplines developed a growing unanimity in their shift toward an increasingly older earth, exegetical theories such as the Gap or Day-Age sought to harmonize the Bible with science.

Matters became far more complicated with the arrival of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*. Old earth theories of Genesis came under growing suspicion that they were accommodations to naturalism. The scientific data believed to indicate an old earth had arisen prior to and independently of Darwinism, and was eventually embraced by many of the leading Christian scientists who rejected evolution.<sup>23</sup> But Darwinism’s need for large amounts of time tainted all old earth theories in many minds, especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Two hundred years or so after old earth science began its rise, evangelicals find themselves in a crisis state perhaps worse than that experienced by previous generations. Old earth creationists generally are convinced that science clearly reveals an old earth, and many young earth evangelicals believe that old earth exegesis is not only flawed but also dangerously compromised. Contemporary attempts to find solutions have not spawned widespread paradigm shifts. Recent work in old earth exegesis such as the framework hypothesis has not convinced most young earth creationists of either its plausibility or immunity from accommodationism. And old earth evangelicals typically

deem young earth scientific models as shoddy science. Often each side views the other's theoretical justifications as *ad hoc* attempts to shield a position from legitimate criticism.<sup>24</sup>

Only with difficulty can one imagine a scenario in which old earth exegesis or young earth science might win the day. At present young earth proponents have strong emotional momentum among the evangelical laity, but with virtually no scientists outside of creationist circles holding to a young earth, the old earth view holds the high ground in evangelical colleges and seminaries. In Kuhnian terms, it appears the young earth paradigm, the theological equivalent of "normal science," has been unpersuasive outside its own community that it can resolve its scientific anomalies. But since the decline in popularity for the Gap Theory, neither does there appear to be an impending paradigm shift in which old earth exegesis will reign among evangelicals. Indeed, the potential exists for the controversy to persist for generations to come with the proliferation of still newer paradigms for the scriptural and scientific data.<sup>25</sup>

But in addition to "normal science" and "scientific revolutions," Kuhn discusses another model for handling scientific crises that may suggest a way for evangelicals to handle this case. When a problem resists resolution under both old and newer paradigms, scientists may be forced to conclude that no solution is presently available. In that case, the "problem is labeled and set aside for a future generation with more developed tools."<sup>26</sup> This is likely the attitude evangelicals should take at present regarding the age of the earth debate.

### Promoting Patience and Discernment in the Controversy is a Good Idea

Perhaps by means of a thought experiment it can be made easier to see why exporting the controversy into mission settings is such a bad idea. One can easily imagine the difficulty of teaching the essence of the debate to a third world pastor. One would first have to demonstrate masterful exegetical skill to show how the age of the earth is clearly taught in the Bible as one of its central doctrines. Then would follow an explanation how certain old earth evangelical brethren, though they

reject macroevolution, are nevertheless dangerous accomplices to its heresy. To make this case rationally, the pastor would then necessarily digest science, history and critical thinking lessons carefully linking old earth exegesis with macroevolution.

At the very least, these are the things that must be done to avoid the problems in the way the controversy is typically promoted in the United States. But surely this is no easy feat if it is even possible. Note that all this is quite different from exploring and holding views about the age of the earth; it is even different from attempting to persuade others of a particular view about the earth's age.

Instead the controversy would more profitably be viewed as an opportunity to teach Christian leaders how large doses of humility are essential to quelling controversy. Young earth proponent Leonard Brand models this in writing,

We must be honest with the uncertainties in the data and be careful to distinguish between data and interpretation. We must approach the task with humility and open-mindedness, even if the data point to dimensions of reality beyond our current understanding.<sup>27</sup>

If both sides would face the anomalies of their models and encourage all creationist scientific and exegetical work, real progress on a number of related creationist matters could be made more quickly. The Presbyterian Church of America, having experienced tremendous dissension in its ranks due to the controversy, conducted an important study of the matter comprised of a team of both young and old earth creationists. The team concludes the document by noting that God

has given us rational minds that are capable of thinking His thoughts after Him, particularly as concerns His creation. Just as the Holy Spirit illuminates our minds as we read His special revelation, so His providence directs the church of Jesus Christ to know the truth of His general revelation. In the knowing, that truth will indeed set us free. Until we know, Christ's Church must not be divided over what we do not yet know.<sup>28</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on papers presented to the Evangelical Theological Society, November 2001, Colorado Springs, CO, and November 2002, Toronto, Canada.

<sup>2</sup> The PCA controversy led to a study recommendation to its constituency, "Report of the Creation Study Committee," accessible at <http://pcanet.org/history/creation/report.html>.

<sup>3</sup> John Morris, *The Young Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1994), 41. Emphasis his.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., "The Tenets of Biblical Creationism" of The Institute for Creation Research at <http://www.icr.org/abouticr/tenets.htm> and the "Statement of Faith" of Answers in Genesis at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/about/faith.asp>.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 46.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> See Henry Morris and John Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 89-115.

<sup>8</sup> See the ICR document "What is the Difference Between Macroevolution and Microevolution?" by John Morris at <http://www.icr.org/pubs/btg-b/btg-094b.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, *Battle for the Beginning* (Nashville: Word, 2001), 61.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Gen 15.12,17; 19.23; 28.11; 32.31; Ex 17.12; 22.3,26; Lev 22.7 and in dozens more passages. See "A Response to Dr. Thiessen" by Thomas Eddy, Nov. 7, 2001, accessed at [http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article\\_Display\\_Page/0,,PTID23682|CHID125043|C](http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID23682|CHID125043|C).

<sup>11</sup> R.C. Sproul, "Galileo Redux," 61-61, in *Tabletalk*, "A Day in the Life of the Universe: Understanding Creation," 25:7, July 2001, 61.

<sup>12</sup> R.C. Sproul, Jr., "The Peaceable Kingdom," 4-7, in *Tabletalk* "A Day in the Life of the Universe: Understanding Creation," 25:7, July 2001, 7.

<sup>13</sup> John Morris, *The Young Earth*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Though suggesting young earth exegesis is simple, his intemperate remarks may obscure for some that certain young earth exegetical theories require a training of sorts, too. The present generation of evangelicals would almost certainly never have deduced from the Bible ideas such as the vapor canopy theory or that the book of Job supports young earth creationism by referring to the co-existence of dinosaurs and humans.

<sup>15</sup> The point is that though anyone holding one of these views would likely believe in a young earth, there is no necessary

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connection between these views and young earth creationism. Certainly not all young earth evangelicals hold these positions.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1:1-2:4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Genies House, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications), 142.

<sup>17</sup> MacArthur, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. See esp. 35-42.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., Galileo's study of motion followed the discovery of problems in Aristotle's theory, and quantum mechanics arose from the obvious difficulties for traditional mechanics in matters such as black-body radiation. Kuhn, 67.

<sup>22</sup> Important paradigm shifts in science are, at times, referred to as revolutions. E.g., the father of modern chemistry, Antoine Laurent Lavoisier, became convinced that anomalies related to the phlogiston theory of combustion suggested it was wrong. This awareness opened the door for him to expect and then discover something radically different. His oxygen theory of combustion provided the key-stone of a reformulation in chemistry typically referred to as the chemical revolution.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., the anatomist Baron Georges Cuvier (1773-1883) rejected pre-Darwinian evolutionary theory, but did challenge the commonly held theological theory that God would not allow His creatures to become extinct. He demonstrated that just such a thing had happened in his study of fossils collected from around the world. Indeed, Cuvier proved that some of these creatures were unlike any living in his day because the fossils were enormous. In [www.icr.org/pubs/imp/imp-103.htm](http://www.icr.org/pubs/imp/imp-103.htm); originally published as an ICR Impact Article, "Bible-Believing Scientists of the Past," Jan. 1982) Henry Morris refers to Cuvier as a "creationist scientist." Also mentioned on the ICR website are other past scientific luminaries listed as "creationist scientists" who would certainly not have held to flood geology or even a young earth (e.g., Carolus Linnaeus, Lord Kelvin or Louis Agassiz). The Answers in Genesis website also mentions these same notables as "creationist scientists," but mentions that some of them did not hold to a "literal Genesis" (i.e., a young earth). E.g., Cuvier is on the list, but is qualified as an "old earth compromiser." They were classified as "creationist," however, because they held to a "general belief in the creator God of the Bible" and generally opposed evolution. This same charity (classification

as "creationist") does not extend on the AIG website, however, to current day scientists believing in an old-earth because their view "has been disastrous in the long run." Thus, no contemporary "long-agers are included intentionally [as "creationist"], because they should know better." No further documentation or explanation is given as to how their view "has been disastrous." See <http://answersingenesis.org/Home/Area/bios/default.asp#presentsci>.

<sup>24</sup> The same thing occurs in scientific crises. See Kuhn, 78.

<sup>25</sup> Kuhn notes that a variety of theoretical constructions can be imposed upon any set of data: "particularly in the early developmental stages of a new paradigm, it is not even very difficult to invent such alternates." *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>27</sup> Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason & Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 74.

<sup>28</sup> "Report of the Creation Study Committee," accessible at <http://pcanet.org/history/creation/report.html>.

### Unlocking the Mystery of Life

Illustra Media, 2002

65 minutes, VHS & DVD.

—Reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

In the Evangelical movement today a huge blindspot is the funny attitude we have toward the whole world of "science." We love our cell phones and computers and all that, but basically we suspect that science is really the worst of all threats to the advance of the Kingdom of God. In some ways science does in fact set itself up as the ungodly, proud human knowledge that prompts John Templeton, in response, to champion "humility" among both scientists and theologians. But, rightly understood, the Bible does seem clearly to suggest that the most powerful demonstration of the glory of God is His creative handiwork.

And that is what scientists are dealing with day and night. Art is the study of what man has made; science is the study of what God has made. Why should we let the scientists be the main ones to glory in every new

glimpse into the fantastic intricacy of the human cell? Sure, scientists may seem often to be striving to beat each other out, to win grants and prizes and so on. But there is a powerful group among them whose quiet fascination with the truly marvelous and mysterious in both animate and inanimate nature partakes of almost a holy awe. Proof positive of the holy awe which God's creation can bring is the incontrovertible record of the Moody Institute of Science and featuring the redoubtable Irwin Moon, Ph.D. (UCLA). Missionaries made such powerful use of those ground-breaking science films that at their peak they were wowing millions in 3,000 showings per day (with an average of 500 persons per showing) throughout the world. In addition, these science films made their way into over 100,000 public schools in this country alone.

Now here is the exciting point. Irwin Moon's daughter Janet married the man (Jim Adams) who for 15 years led the team producing these spectacular science films at the Moody Institute of Science (one of the most strategic Christian ventures in

the twentieth century). She and he are still working zealously behind the scenes carrying on that incredible tradition.

This, then, goes far to explain what is undoubtedly the most impressive video ever made on the glory of God and the false moves of certain kinds of science. "Unlocking the Mystery of Life" probes a whole world of awe essentially unknown in the early days of the Moody Institute of Science. Its photography employs the very latest computer graphics to portray an astounding world at the microbiological level which both dazzles and confuses the best brains on earth. It also interviews outstanding scientists, whether believers or not. One scientist interviewed wrote a whole book on molecular evolution, only to yield finally to the simple fact that there has to be some guiding hand in nature rather than the idea (that has swept science, public schools, and even legislatures) of a Darwinian "unguided" evolution.

In a way, this is a dramatic introduction to Hunter's two books (see their reviews, page 116), although those books cover far more ground.