

looking back and moving forward

by Todd Charles Wood
and Andrew A. Snelling

Sometimes we hear skeptics say that the “young earth” interpretation of Genesis started with twentieth-century fundamentalism or nineteenth-century Adventism. The truth is that interpreting Genesis as straightforward history is as old as written records.

During the rise of modern science, many scholars naturally turned to Scripture as a key source of truth about early earth history. For example, in 1554 Johannes Buteo developed a detailed design of Noah’s Ark, which included space for all the animals and provisions.¹ Jose de Acosta in 1590 tried to figure out how animals came to the Americas from Ararat.² In 1692, John Ray tried to account for rock layers based on the Flood.³ All of these early scientists were motivated by biblical concerns and interpreted their findings in a biblical context.⁴

At the same time, scholars were try-

ing to shake off ancient traditions, such as the belief that the sun orbited the earth. Most renowned in this effort is Galileo, who found himself on the losing end of an argument with Roman Catholic authorities about the nature of the cosmos. Galileo’s critics contended that the Bible taught that the earth was the center of the universe and the sun moved around it. In response to that charge, Galileo suggested that the Bible might use figurative language and so biblical interpretation should “accommodate” new scientific discoveries:

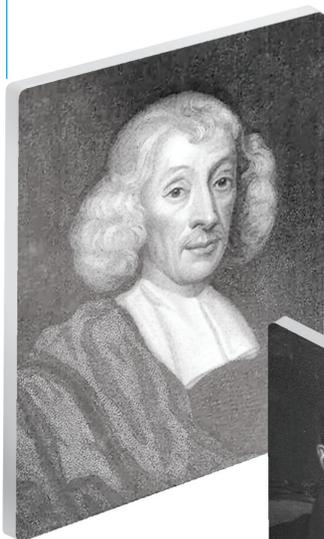
I think that in discussions of physical problems we ought to begin not from the authority of scriptural passages but from sense-experiences and necessary demonstrations. . . . It is necessary for the Bible, in order to be accommodated to the understanding of every man, to speak many things which appear to differ from the absolute

truth so far as the bare meaning of the words is concerned.⁵

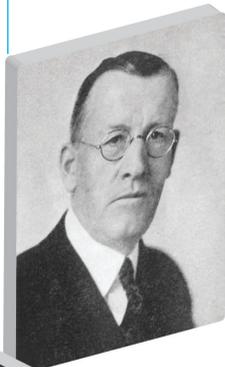
Galileo reasoned that because the Bible sometimes uses figurative language, we cannot rely on it to reveal true knowledge about the physical world. As a result, Galileo believed in a one-way relationship between science and the Bible, where science can change interpretation of the Bible, but the Bible cannot change scientific interpretations.

Galileo’s “accommodation” model of integrating faith and science became very popular in Europe, but it took several centuries for the destructive implications to work through Western culture. Debates over the interpretation of Scripture continued throughout the eighteenth century, and scientists began proposing theories that contradicted Genesis. In the nineteenth century, a group known as the scriptural geologists fought the first major battle over biblical authority in the emerging

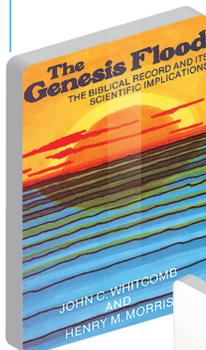
JOHN RAY
(1627–1705)
tried to account for
rock layers based
on the Flood



GEORGE McCREADY PRICE
(1870–1963)
wrote several critiques of geologic
assumptions that the earth is
ancient (*The New Geology*, 1923)



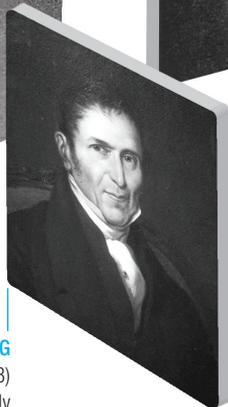
HENRY M. MORRIS
(1918–2006)
JOHN C. WHITCOMB
(1924–)
coauthors of *The Genesis
Flood* (1961), which helped
to launch the modern
creationist movement



**INSTITUTE FOR
CREATION RESEARCH**
(1971–)
first nondenominational
creationist institution
dedicated to promoting
scientific research



GEORGE YOUNG
(1777–1848)
pastor, theologian, and early
“scriptural geologist” who
argued that the Flood caused
most of the earth’s rock record



WALTER E. LAMMERTS
(1904–1996)
first of many creationists to
earn a PhD in a scientific
discipline (genetics, 1930)

**CREATION
RESEARCH SOCIETY**
(1963–)
the oldest scientific society
continuously publishing
creation research



science of geology.⁶

Darwin’s *Origin* (1859) sparked a similar battle over biblical authority in biology. At first, most Protestant Christians were skeptical of Darwin, but by 1875 the majority of scientists had accepted evolution, and Christians were forced to make a choice. Some followed Galileo’s lead and reinterpreted Genesis 1–11 as figurative or mythical. Others resisted the idea of evolution, insisting that the special creation of man was not open to reinterpretation.⁷ These vocal opponents of evolution (hereafter “anti-evolutionists”) began the modern creationist revival.

Though early anti-evolutionists had little scientific training, by the beginning of the twentieth century, several self-taught creationists began publishing books and speaking on the subject of creation. Men like George McCready Price (1870–1963) and Byron C. Nel-

son (1894–1972) had little formal training but were more acquainted with scientific issues than their nineteenth-century predecessors.⁸

The next generation saw the first formally trained and credentialed creation scientists. Walter Lammerts (1904–1996) earned his doctorate in genetics from Berkeley in 1930,⁹ and Frank Marsh (1899–1992) earned his doctorate in ecology from the University of Nebraska in 1940.¹⁰ Lammerts went on to help found the Creation Research Society, and Marsh was instrumental in promoting modern baraminology (see “Bara-What?” p. 33).

At this time, creationists tried to start their own professional societies. The Religion-Science Association in the 1930s accomplished little, but the Deluge Geology Society in the 1940s managed to publish several volumes of a journal.¹¹

After the 1961 publication of Whitcomb and Morris’s extremely popular *The Genesis Flood*, creationists again tried to organize a society, this time succeeding. In 1963, the Creation Research Society began with a “team of ten,” including Lammerts, Marsh, Henry Morris, and Duane Gish.¹²

The Genesis Flood also paved the way for something different: it was a landmark attempt to provide a comprehensive creationist model, integrating rigorous biblical exegesis with geology to account for the Flood. This was a different kind of task from the relentless critiques of evolution that dominated previous generations. The next generation of creationists have increasingly emphasized model-building, which has led to new creationist models in astronomy,¹³ geology,¹⁴ and biology.¹⁵

Recently, major collaborative research initiatives have been undertaken, such

**BSG: A CREATION
BIOLOGY STUDY GROUP**
(1996–)

first incorporated
society of professionals
who meet regularly to
develop models in a field
of creation research



**ANSWERS
IN GENESIS**

(1993–)
the apologetics ministry
that constructed the
Creation Museum

Training Tomorrow's Creationists

INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EAGER STUDENTS

As creationism continues to mature, new programs are being developed for young students looking to make science a career or just looking for an interesting course of study “outside the box.” Here are three groundbreaking new programs:

- **DEGREE IN GEOLOGY**—Plans are well underway at Cedarville University to offer the first geology major based in young-earth creationism. The school is currently seeking funding for equipment and additional faculty. The goal of this rigorous, hands-on research major is to produce geologists who are ready for immediate employment or for graduate work in secular schools. *Call 1-800-CEDARVILLE and ask for Dr. Whitmore.*
- **ACTIVE DINOSAUR DIG**—The Earth History Research Center and Southwest Adventist University cosponsor an annual dinosaur excavation at the Hanson Research Station in Wyoming. The excavation lasts four weeks in the month of June. Students get hands-on experience in professional excavation techniques, and enjoy regular lectures on topics related to dinosaurs and paleontology. *See <http://dinodig.swau.edu>.*
- **MINOR IN ORIGINS STUDIES**—The Center for Origins Research (CORE) at Bryan College now offers a minor in Origins Studies. This unique program allows students to major in their chosen field, while pursuing a special focus on critical thinking, research skills, and the latest findings from the world of creationism. *See www.bryancore.org.*

as the RATE (radioisotopes and the age of the earth) project.¹⁶ Now, a new major work on creationist geology is soon to be published as an attempt to provide a comprehensive, updated creationist model of earth history.¹⁷

The current generation stands at a pretty exciting point in history. We grew up with creationism, and now Christian academic institutions increasingly embrace the value of studying science from a biblical perspective (see “Training Tomorrow’s Creationists” above). As creationist research becomes more common in Christian academia, more creationists are choosing to pursue careers in science.

As the next generation of creationists rises, what can they expect? We hope they will realize that creationists are heirs to a tradition that stretches back thousands of years, when God gave dominion to Adam. It’s a thrilling and

humbling realization: as we each contribute in our own small ways to the creation model, we work to know God better and show His glory to the world. Who knows what thrilling discoveries are just around the corner? May God continue to bless His obedient people and use us to further His kingdom. ■

NOTES

¹ J. Buteo, *Opera Geometrica*, second printing (Lyons: Michael Iovium, 1559); J. Buteo, “Johannes Buteo’s Shape and Capacity of Noah’s Ark,” translated by T. Griffith and N. Monette, *CORE Issues in Creation* 2 (2008):1–87.

² J. de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, translated by F. López-Morillas (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002).

³ J. Ray, *Three Physico-Theological Discourses*, 3rd ed. (London: William Innes, 1713).

⁴ J. Browne, “Noah’s Flood, the Ark, and the Shaping of Early Modern Natural History,” in *When Science & Christianity Meet*, D. C. Lindberg and R. L. Numbers, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 111–138.

⁵ S. Drake, ed., *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* (New York: Anchor Books, 1957), p. 182.

⁶ T. Mortenson, *The Great Turning Point* (Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books, 2004).

⁷ J. H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

⁸ G. M. Price, *Illogical Geology* (Los Angeles: The Modern Heretic Company, 1906); B. C. Nelson, “After Its Kind” (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1927).

⁹ W. E. Lammerts, “Interspecific Hybridization in Nicotiana. The Amphidiploid *Rustica-Paniculata* Hybrid; Its Origin and Cytogenetic Behavior” (PhD diss., University of California–Berkeley,

1930).

¹⁰ F. L. Marsh, “Water Content and Osmotic Pressure of Certain Prairie Plants in Relation to Environment” (PhD diss., University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 1940).

¹¹ R. L. Numbers, *The Creationists*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), chapters 6–7.

¹² W. E. Lammerts, “Early Steps in Formation of Creation Research Society,” *CRSQ* 12 (1976):213.

¹³ E.g., D. R. Humphreys, *Starlight and Time* (Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books, 1994); J. Hartnett, *Starlight, Time, and the New Physics* (Eight Mile Plains, Australia: Creation Ministries International, 2007).

¹⁴ S. A. Austin et al., “Catastrophic Plate Tectonics: A Global Flood Model of Earth History,” in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Creationism*, ed. R.E. Walsh (Pittsburgh: Creation Science Fellowship, 1994), pp. 609–621.

¹⁵ T. C. Wood and M. J. Murray, *Understanding the Pattern of Life* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003).

¹⁶ L. Vardiman, A. A. Snelling, and E. F. Chaffin, eds., *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth: A Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative* (El Cajon, California: Institute for Creation Research, and St. Joseph, Missouri: Creation Research Society, 2000); L. Vardiman, A. A. Snelling, and E. F. Chaffin, eds., *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth: Results of a Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative* (El Cajon, California and Chino Valley, Arizona: Institute for Creation Research, 2005).

¹⁷ A. A. Snelling, *Earth’s Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation and the Flood* (tentative title) (Dallas, Texas: Institute for Creation Research, forthcoming).

Dr. Todd Charles Wood is a founding member of the BSG: A Creation Biology Study Group (BSG). For a more complete biography, see the end of “Horse Fossils and the Nature of Science” on page 77.

Dr. Andrew Snelling is author of numerous scientific articles and is the director of research at Answers in Genesis–USA. For a more complete biography, see the end of “Sand Transported Cross Country” on page 99.