

This is the first time in months that an entire edition is dedicated to one topic, **CREATION/EVOLUTION**.

“God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week.” This is the first part of the statement voted by the 1980 General Conference Session as the position held by Seventh-day Adventists on creation. We believe that God created life on this earth in six literal days, just a few thousand years ago. This statement causes a Seventh-day Adventist, particularly one involved in theology or the natural sciences, to confront the fundamental assumptions dictated by the scientific community.

Secular (sometimes anti-religious and frequently anti-supernatural) scientists claim to approach the geologic column, fossil record, and other data with dispassionate, scientific objectivity. The evidence to the contrary is that secular scientists approach data with the presupposition that God is excluded from any explanation. In other words, their conclusions are restricted to that which is considered to be “scientifically correct.” (For evidence, read *Darwin on Trial* by Phillip E. Johnson and *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* by Michael Denton.)

This situation forces Seventh-day Adventist theologians to confront their Biblical hermeneutic, Seventh-day Adventist scientists to confront their own presuppositions in the area of origins, and both to confront their own integrity.

Some Seventh-day Adventist theologians debate the historicity of Scripture and its inspiration. To accept the Scriptures as authoritative means accepting the reality of creation and the flood as described in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

Seventh-day Adventist scientists, on the other hand, must struggle with the tension between “scientific integrity” (almost impossible to separate in today’s higher education environment from “scientifically correct” acceptance of evolution as a fact, not a theory) and “theological integrity.” Is it possible to be a Seventh-day Adventist (creationist) and a scientist? There seems to be two likely outcomes.

1) A Seventh-day Adventist scientist who, while recognizing his/her position includes unanswered questions, admits to creationistic presuppositions and tries to reconcile the scientific data with the Biblical record on the basis of the Biblical record. He/she searches for that which supports a) a short chronology (thousands versus millions of years), and b) Catastrophism versus the gradual or uniformitarian deposition of the geologic column, or which c) demonstrates weaknesses in the evolutionary arguments.

2) Accommodationists who try to reconcile the Bible to

contemporary scientific interpretations. This frequently involves reinterpreting the six days of creation to represent millions of years. Thus they can claim to be in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs, as long as they can define the meaning of the terms. Of these the question can legitimately be asked, are they really creationists, as Seventh-day Adventists understand that term to mean?

Evidence is growing that the second outcome is increasingly common in several divisions of our world church. This is not the time nor the place to describe the evidence for this conclusion. However, this is the background for the segment I inserted in the April 4 edition of “From the GC President,” in which I described an April 2 debate, moderated by R. F. Cottrell, in which three panelists, including Richard Hammill, appeared to question the literal interpretation of our fundamental beliefs, confronted three (present and former) scientists of the Geoscience Research Institute, who are attempting to reconcile scientific data to the Biblical record.

Drs. Cottrell and Hammill objected to my description of the meeting, insisting that they accept the wording of our fundamental beliefs. I agreed to publish a statement from them in which they were to reconcile this affirmation with the tone, content and format of the April 2 debate. I also indicated that I would invite Dr. Ariel Roth (GRI Director) to describe the meeting as well. The statement I received from Drs. Cottrell and Hammill is as follows:

“The April 4 edition of this weekly newsletter mistakenly reported Drs. Raymond Cottrell and Richard Hammill as attacking the historicity of Scripture and the Genesis account of creation. Like the other five panelists they believe there is full and complete harmony between the Bible and confirmed data of the natural world when both are rightly understood. The April 2 panel discussion was designed to clarify this relationship in a way faithful to the Bible record.”

Dr. Roth’s description of the meeting is as follows:

“The meeting was generally cordial. Various views were expressed on a number of topics. Some of the issues over which there were fundamental differences of opinion are: 1) Is the Bible a valid, historically accurate document? 2) Was “Noah’s flood” a planet-wide catastrophe? 3) Has life been on Earth for millions of years, or was it created recently by God during creation week? and 4) Has man evolved from lower forms of life? More time was given to those who question traditional Adventist beliefs than to those who support them.”

I hope that this enlarges the context of this important subject to the Church.