

Origins Insights

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CREATION SCIENCE FELLOWSHIP



February 2005

How I became a "Young Universe" Creationist

by Bob Harsh

I was raised by parents who had a "without any doubt" faith in God as Creator. The time period was the 1950's and 1960's. The environment was a farming community that had very traditional values. My church taught me to believe that the Bible was literally God's words to man. It was clear to me that the Bible's authors spoke many times about where matter, energy, and living organisms came from. I cannot remember a time when I believed that the Bible was vague about "origins".

Of course my science teachers at Morning Sun, Iowa schools all were college educated and taught a much different origins story. But like many modern-day science educators, they taught it as fact but did not make too much of a point about it. So I cannot remember being overly bothered by the "obvious" conflict. I always liked science and enjoyed the freedom to believe that I could think for myself. During my high school years the conflict didn't bother me. On the other hand, I had never ever read anything "scientific" that upheld creationist ideas.

I attended Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania during the mid 1960's. Geneva was a Christian college with a strong science department. While at Geneva I was never taught anything that would lead me to believe in creation or disbelieve evolution. Evolution was taught in a matter of fact manner that did not openly

CSF Meetings

CSF South

Springs in the Valley Church
264 Old Clairton Road, Pleasant Hills

Monday February 21, 2005, 7:30 PM

Questions for Creationists

By Dennis Wert

In this interesting presentation Dennis will explore several questions. Among these are: What real evidence is there for the "fable" of Noah's flood? Can you believe the "bible" and still be an evolutionist? Have scientists "proven" that Darwin's Theory is correct?

CSF North

Mars Alliance Church, Rt. 228

Tuesday February 15, 2005, 7:30 PM

Introduction to Fossil and Rock Dating Methods

By Bob Ivey

In this presentation Bob will discuss and define some of the basic concepts and terms used in the dating of rocks and fossils. Attend this talk and learn how you can challenge those who still believe that the earth is 4.5 billion years old.

confront my creationist “religious” beliefs. I cannot recall any ideological war within my mind during my college years. Perhaps I was too busy learning the facts and did not step back to view the larger picture. Perhaps I was just immature and naïve. By the time I graduated from Geneva I think I believed in evolution from a scientific viewpoint and creation from a religious standpoint.

I began my teaching career at Seneca Valley, a small rural school in the Southwestern Butler County School District. It remained small until Interstate 79 was completed and “Cridder’s Corners” became a major crossroad. As a beginning teacher I had still not faced the obvious dichotomy between evolution and creation. They had remained, seemingly in different compartment of my brain. I just sort of skipped over the basic topic of evolution with the fallacious belief that the students had enough information to decide for themselves if they wanted to believe in evolution or not. It was not a big deal to me. They could believe either way, as long as they were not too dogmatic.

Then I entered the graduate school at Slippery Rock State College. The Biology Department was excellent and rigorous. Many of my classmates went on to other graduate programs that were perceived to be less demanding. My professors all aggressively promoted evolution by means of natural selection. That is, except for one. One professor raised “some” doubts about the validity of evolution. [Dr. Kimbal Erdman had great credentials and was a popular professor, but he moved out West after only a few years at Slippery Rock.]

I can recall one of my favorite professors, making a point that he had nothing but disdain for “teleological” arguments about the origin of living things. He had no argument from me, because I did not know what “teleological” meant! The professors were pretty consistent with their use of their terminology about evolution. They rarely used the word, “evolution” but they fairly often used the “process of natural selection” to explain where any kind of anatomy, physiology, or behavior had its origin. I believe their overt teaching that natural selection explained just about everything was the beginning of my quest for the truth about that issue. I gradually became a skeptic of orthodox evolution doctrine.

The real turning point for me was when I took the required course, Evolution. It was taught by the only professor that I had for my graduate course-work at Slippery Rock that I would rate as a very poor teacher. The more I studied the book and interacted with the professor, the less I believed evolutionary theory was scientifically valid. A requirement of the course was to write a major research paper on a topic of our choice. I was doing research for my thesis on red-backed salamanders and had a keen interest in amphibians, so I did my paper on the evolution of amphibians. I read numerous articles in scientific journals and found the all presented their cases in a remarkably similar pattern. Each would have a bold title. The abstract and introduction summarized the study as a great evidence for how the organism they had studied had evolved. Their explanations were hardly ever presented as tentative ideas. The introductions and summaries were always presented as indisputable fact! Then came the experimental methods, results and discussion. You would have thought you were reading a different report. No evidence was ever presented that would convince a fair minded skeptical fellow scientist that the advertised breakthrough in explaining the origin of the organism by means of natural selection had been accomplished. The concluding remarks would always revert to the same rhetoric of the abstract and introduction. It was remarkable to me that the journal reports were so consistent with this pattern.

That paper was probably a turning point for me. The definition of “science” that I consistently taught my students during my thirty six years of teaching biology at Seneca Valley High School was: “Science is the process of searching for the truth about nature.” I was disturbed enough by what I had discovered that I became keenly interested in investigating the topic of evolution further. The more I read the more of a skeptic I became. I even started to report some of my problems with evolution to my classes. My students at Seneca Valley seemed to appreciate having a science teacher who was willing to think on his own and challenge scientific orthodoxy. I have always appreciated the caliber of student of was privileged to teach at Seneca.

One of my fellow teachers was the long time Physics teacher, Phil Hershey. Mr. Hershey was an outspoken “creationist”. He helped me along my journey as well. Although I never became as outspoken, he presented to me a role model to observe. The year after I earned my Masters Degree in Biology I did some summer course work at the University of Cincinnati and became friends with some people at a church we attended near the campus. They invited me to come back in the fall to hear a speaker who was to speak about creation and science. John Clayton was a physics teacher from South Bend, Indiana and came from the same mold as Phil Hershey. He was very self assured and presented his ideas in a convincing manner. He was an enthusiastic “Old Earth” creationist. For several years he was my main source of creationist information. I became an enthusiastic creationist who could point to “nature” as the evidence for my “creationist” beliefs. I did not however, gain the disdain for “young earth” creationist that John Clayton exhibited in his speaking and writing. I just felt a little sorry for the “religious fanatics” who believed that the Bible taught that the Universe was created in six “literal” days. They obviously were misinformed and I parroted the open-ended length of the Genesis “days” that old earth creationist promote. I was simple more tolerant than my more orthodox brothers.

Thanks to John Clayton I became an active promoter for creationist ideas. The turning point towards changing my firmly established beliefs came in an interesting way. I was invited to present a series of lessons on the topic of science and the Bible to the teen group from Grace Church in Harmony that met in homes on Wednesday nights. Peter Everett was the youth pastor and he had heard that I was a creationist scientist and he wanted his teens to be exposed to those ideas. I was glad to offer my services and presented the lessons from an “orthodox old Universe” perspective.

One reason I can “tolerate” people who hold to “wrong” ideas is; they may have never been exposed to any convincing evidence that would stimulate them to change their mind. I think it is a good policy to distrust anyone who dogmatically claims to have all of the right answers. All competent scientists are skeptics at heart! I was wrong in the past and I am probably wrong about some ideas now.

Pastor Pete invited me to attend a meeting of a group called who called themselves, Creation Science Fellowship. They met in a library in the North Hills area of Pittsburgh. We went and I was hooked. They were “obviously” wrong about their old Earth ideas, but perhaps they had not been “enlightened” yet. But they seemed to have scientific reasons for their beliefs. Their most important aid to me was that they offered books for sale. I purchased several and devoured them.

I soon found myself eager for the next monthly meeting to come. Several members were a good influence on me. Bob Walsh, Dennis Blackburn, and Hank Jackson had a big influence in my conversion to being convinced, from a scientific standpoint, that the Universe was recently created. But my most important influence was the books I read. A video by Dr. Steve Austin’s research comparing the stratigraphic layers in the Grand Canyon and the eruption of Mt. St. Helens was especially convincing.

I have enjoyed almost 20 years of fellowship and learning from some very interesting people in Creation Science Fellowship. I dearly miss their fellowship now that I have moved to Georgia. A real service that our local CSF group provides is the hosting of the International Conference On Creationism every four years. This is a world class peer reviewed professional scientific conference. Each of the papers provides high quality additions to the body of knowledge about nature from a young Universe Creationist perspective.

I enjoyed teaching Biology at Seneca Valley High School for the past 36 years and am now continuing my career as a first year biology teacher at Greater Atlanta Christian School in Norcross, Georgia. Many people have asked me about how I teach biology in a public school as a creationist. I have always been careful to teach the

truth about evolution in a manner that did not confront students in a controversial way. I was careful to teach only from a purely scientific base. I did not use the Bible as an authoritative source or say that God had created anything. I rarely even used the terms "Create" or "Creation".

The rest of Bob's story will be continued in the March issue of Origins Insights.

Politics, Education and Entertainment

The origins debate has become a major component in our daily discourse. We see it in the politics of court cases from Dover, PA to Cobb County Georgia. We saw a form of it in the last Presidential election embedded in the issues of morals and stem cell research. We see it on TV in programs like Dateline and in a recent episode of Boston Legal.

Attend your CSF meetings where you will learn the truth and acquire the tools needed to defend the position of a young earth creationist.

Checkout our web site, www.csfpittsburgh.org, for materials and links to other sites. Also be sure to watch Origins on CTV, Channel 40, Monday at 10 PM, Sunday at 5:30 PM and Saturday at 4 AM.

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