

**CURRENT TRENDS IN CREATIONIST RESEARCH**  
**A REPORT ON THE 1998 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CREATIONISM<sup>1</sup>**

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**PREFACE:**

This is a personal account and summary of current trends in creationist research. It is based on my observations and impressions after attending the Fourth International Conference on Creationism (ICC). The purpose of this report is twofold: 1) To allow me to gather and synthesize my thoughts, impressions, and memories of the conference. 2) To provide a summary of the conference for those who could not attend, so they can have the benefit of knowing what is going on in creationist research. Obviously, the papers, information, and topics covered in this report will primarily be the ones that made the biggest impression on me. While I will attempt to be as thorough as possible, something of importance to someone else reading this report may be omitted. Finally, as there were two simultaneous tracks, I was not able to attend all of the lectures. Hence, the reporting on those lectures that I did not attend is based on the papers as printed in the proceedings and audio tapes of selected lectures that were of interest to me.

There was also a third track, which was an educational track. Ginger attended most of those sessions. Her thoughts, impressions, and conclusions are included in the educational section of this report.

**ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:**

The ICC is sponsored by Creation Science Fellowship (CSF) of Pittsburgh. The conference is held every four years and this was the fourth conference with the previous conferences held in 1986, 1990, and 1994. This conference was held at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA near Pittsburgh. Approximately 350 scientists, teachers, and general public attended the conference.

CSF did a marvelous job of hosting this year's conference. I was impressed with how well organized it was and how smoothly it was run. As a host site, Geneva College was superb. The food service in the cafeteria was

excellent. I was also impressed with the meeting rooms and auditorium. Sound, lighting, and seating were all very good.

**TECHNICAL SESSIONS (GENERAL):**

There were 47 technical papers presented at this conference and provided in the book of proceedings. One paper in the proceedings was not presented and one paper was presented over 2 sessions. For the purposes of a general overview, I have divided the papers into general categories. The general categories are Astronomy, Biblical Studies, Biology (which includes papers dealing with studies of biological fossils), Geology, Physics (including astro-geo physics), and Social Sciences (including papers dealing with worldviews and law). The number of papers representing the various categories is shown in table 1. It is noted that this categorization is my own and others may have categorized some papers differently as some papers may involve more than one category. Table 1 reflects only the papers in the proceedings and does not include the evening sessions and the education track.

Observation of table 1 shows that the preponderance of papers focused on Biology, Geology, and Physics. Note that the Social Sciences, Biblical Studies, and especially Astronomy are not well represented. In his presentation on the final night of the conference, Dr. Kurt Wise indicated that the fields of Geology and Biology are the furthest along in developing creationist models. The number of papers in those fields indicates that the focus of research is in those fields. Hence, it would not be surprising that they would be the furthest along. It should be noted that some of the Astro-Geo Physics papers that I included in the Physics category could be included with Geology, which would make that the highest category. Dr. Wise considered Geology to be further along than Biology.

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DISCIPLINE	NUMBER OF PAPERS
Astronomy	2
Biblical Studies	7
Biology	11
Geology	11
Physics	10
Social Sciences	6

Table 1- Distribution of Papers in the Proceedings

### IMPORTANT ADVANCES:

In this section I will highlight a few of the papers that stood out to me as making critically important advances to Creation Science.

**Age of the Earth:** First is a paper by Andrew Snelling of Australia, which was voted to be the best technical paper. It is entitled, “The Cause of Anomalous Potassium-Argon ‘Ages’ for Recent Andesite Flows at Mt. Ngauruhoe, New Zealand, and the Implications for Potassium-Argon ‘Dating’”. Please do not get intimidated by the title (I would be). The impact of the paper on the creation/ evolution debate is simple and profound.

Dr. Snelling collected samples of solidified lava flows at Mt. Ngauruhoe. The lava flows are known to have solidified in 1949, 1954, and 1975. He had these samples Potassium-Argon dated with indicated ages ranging from less than 270,000 years to 3,500,000 years. Standard dating methods maintain that Argon ( $^{40}\text{Ar}$ )<sup>2</sup> does not begin to accumulate in a lava rock until it solidifies. In other words, while the lava is still liquid, the argon is able to escape. The problem is that these samples showed ages of hundreds of thousands of years when we know that they solidified less than 50 years ago. If they solidified less than 50 years ago and the standard dating methods are correct, there should not be enough Argon in the rocks to obtain dates of hundreds of thousands to millions of years. Since we know when they solidified, then the only alternative left is that the standard dating methods are flawed. Finding extra Argon in lava rocks is not new, but Dr. Snelling went much further and concluded that the extra Argon appears to have come from “leftover primordial argon” in the upper mantle. In other words, the kind of Argon that is measured in Potassium-Argon dating schemes has existed from creation. He concludes that this has two very important implications. “First, this is clearly consistent with a young Earth, where the very short time-scale since the creation of the Earth has been insufficient for all of the primordial argon to be released yet from the Earth’s deep interior.” The second implication is that “when samples of crustal rocks are analyzed for [Potassium-Argon] ‘dating’, the investigators can never really be sure that whatever  $^{40}\text{Ar}$  is in the sample is from *in situ* radioactive decay... or whether some or all of it is from the excess  $^{40}\text{Ar}$ ” in the mantle. In short, Dr. Snelling has scientifically shown that the zero

<sup>2</sup> It is noted that  $^{39}\text{Ar}$  and  $^{40}\text{Ar}$  exist in lava rocks. For the purposes of this summary, Argon refers to  $^{40}\text{Ar}$ .

initial condition assumption of radiometric dating is probably a very bad assumption. This means that when a scientist measures Argon in a rock sample he or she has no way of knowing how much of the Argon is due to radioactive decay and how much was there to begin with. Hence, he or she has no way of knowing how “old” the rock is. We hope and expect to be able to show these same results with other radiometric dating techniques and destroy radiometric dating as the savior of an old earth.

**Categorizing Species:** Another paper that piqued my interest and, I believe, may have very significant implications on the creation/ evolution debate was a paper entitled “Is Life Singularly Nested or Not?” by Dr. Kurt Wise. Dr. Wise addresses the area of animal classifications, such as, mammals, reptiles, vertebrates, primates, etc. One of the dilemmas that creationists have had is that evolution seems to explain the current way of organizing organisms better than creation. This should not be surprising since evolutionists invented it. Even though they invented it, they still have to play games with animal characteristics in order to make their systems work. Dr. Wise shows that trying to fit the animals into a single pattern, which is called singularly nested, is an exercise in futility. Many “best” groupings can be identified for the animals. In other words, depending on which characteristics you are looking at, a single animal could be included in multiple groups. Computer modeling has shown that there are many ways to organize the animal kingdom and any one of the ways could be considered the “best” way. This is called multi-nesting. Dr. Wise proposes a multi-nested approach to classifying animals and ends with the following conclusion.

The unique nested pattern of life memorized by our children in secondary school is pointed to as evidence of macroevolution in tertiary schools. This contributes to the faith-challenges encountered by our children in evolutionary education. If life is networked or multiple-nested, and our children were taught a proper perspective on that, the appeal to bio-classification as evidence of macroevolution would be nullified.

**Vapor Canopy:** The next paper I will address is on a topic I have been following for a few years and, in my opinion, represents one of the best examples of creationist research. For years creationists have proposed that God placed a vapor canopy around the earth on the second day

of creation. It is believed by many that the collapse of this canopy was the cause of the 40 days and nights of rain during the time of the flood. David Rush and Dr. Larry Vardiman tested this theory with computer modeling and gave their initial report at the third ICC in 1994. The report was not encouraging. They found that if there was enough water in the canopy to provide substantial amounts of rain for 40 days and nights, the temperature on earth would be too hot for people to live. In order to get the earth surface temperatures down to a tolerable level, there could only be enough water in the canopy for a few feet of rain on the earth. This came as a major surprise to the creationist community and has caused us to open new lines of scientific inquiry into the meaning of “the windows of heaven were opened” as the Bible describes one source of water for the flood. Dr. Vardiman provided an update to this research at this ICC. He has refined the computer modeling but has not been able to account for substantially more water in the canopy. This line of research, to date, does not show that the canopy did not exist. It only shows that the canopy could not have been a substantial source of water for the flood. The research continues but needs to be more widely disseminated. Many popularizers of creation are still touting the canopy as the source of water for the 40 days and nights of rain. Research to date indicates this may not have been the case.

#### **Neanderthal Man:**

The final paper that I will discuss is a fascinating paper by Dr. John Cuzzo entitled “What Happened to the Cranifacial Structure of Humans who Live Past 100 Years? Neanderthal Similarities.” Dr Cuzzo has been researching Neanderthal fossils for a number of years. He has also been researching changes to the human head and face with aging. He states that “The picture that we get here is of an aging skull which, in general terms, grows much longer, a little wider with practically no increase and sometimes decrease in height.” He also notes that other researchers have found that “the cranium throughout life continues to thicken in certain places”. By compiling data from extensive studies, Dr. Cuzzo and Brian Garner were able to develop a computer model of modern human head and facial changes with age. With the computer model, they were able to predict what a human face and head would look like at age 500. Comparing their computer predictions with Neanderthal skulls he concludes that, “Evidence has been presented for the Neanderthal peoples to actually be the old humans described in the Bible”.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF THE ICC**

The papers summarized above highlight the importance of conferences like the ICC. One of the conference participants commented that “most of the prominent popularizers of creation science are not here. He was right and his comment was saddening. God has given me a ministry of teaching the truths of creation wherever he sends me. One reason I attended the ICC was so I could

keep current on creation research. As a non-prominent popularizer of creation science, I would not want to be teaching untruths while teaching the truths of God’s creation. I believe everyone who speaks on creation science has an obligation to keep current on creationist research. (I shall gracefully descend from my soapbox at this time.)

#### **MY PAPER**

Of the 150, or so, papers that started the peer review process, I had the privilege of presenting one of the 47 that were selected. My paper was entitled “Comparing Origins Belief and Moral Views” and was a report on my Masters Thesis at the Institute for Creation Research. As I became more involved in creation science, I kept hearing a common refrain similar to “what you believe about creation and evolution affects your moral views”. While this seemed reasonable, I began to ask myself “how do we know this”? I wondered if there was any scientific data to support this view. People who made this claim would often offer philosophical or anecdotal support for the claim but I could not find any empirical studies to support this idea. So, I did one. I conducted a survey of K-12 science teachers in America. The survey was designed to measure their beliefs about creation and evolution as well as measure their moral views. When I compared their origins beliefs to their moral views I found that there is, indeed, a relationship. Those that tended to believe in creation tended to have “positive” moral views (moral views that are consistent with the character of God as revealed in scripture). Those that believed in evolution tended to have negative moral views. The survey was not designed to determine whether one caused the other. It was only designed to see if there was a relationship. More research needs to be done to see if there is cause and effect. I hope that this will be the first of many studies and will serve to open a new line of scientific inquiry in creation science. If we can conclusively show that a person’s belief about creation and evolution affects his or her moral views, maybe God’s church will take this issue more seriously and understand the danger of compromising with evolutionary religious beliefs. (Since this is my paper, I guess I’m allowed another soapbox)

#### **EDUCATIONAL TRACK (by GINGER OVERMAN)**

None of the papers in the ICC proceedings were from the educational track. I was left with impressions of how the truths of creation should be taught in the public education arena. Many of the speakers relayed personal experiences of what they went through—some positive, but mostly negative. I will attempt to summarize the advice I gleaned from the papers.

**Do not bring up the subject of God, just stick with the science.** Dave Nutting, from Alpha & Omega Institute in Colorado, says that when a student asks him whom he thinks the Creator or Designer is, he answers them by saying he believes that He is the God of the Bible. If they

are interested in knowing more about that, they can attend the church meeting he is speaking at on such and such a day.

**Videotape the session.** Dave Nutting always videotapes his sessions so that if anyone sues him, he has protection and proof of exactly what he did. W. Kooi wishes he did that for protection for himself. He said they planned to do that, but it never materialized.

**Get permission from those in authority over you.** Let the principal or others who are in authority over you know what you plan to do. Several said they did that and attribute keeping their jobs to doing that.

**Get personal counsel (be proactive) before you start.** The actions taken against the teachers happened in only a few days period. If you waited to get a personal lawyer when it started, you would be probably still be waiting for an appointment with him when everything is over and a decision is made. Mark Wisniewski wished he had procured personal counsel before the whole mess started with him. He was teaching critical thinking skills and used the issue of creation/evolution for his students to decide for themselves through critical thinking which one they believed. A student wrote in the school paper a praise of Wisniewski's technique. The press picked it up and the ACLU came in and threatened lawsuit of the school system. As a result, he nor any other teacher can address any controversial topic. He is a member of the teachers' union and attributed that to keeping his job. He spoke with a union lawyer that he assumed would be representing him. That lawyer told Wisniewski that he did not do anything wrong. He went to the scheduled meeting with the administration a few days later and a few minutes before the meeting a different lawyer came up to represent him and told him what he was doing was illegal. He had never talked with her to explain what he was doing.

**Don't be cooperative with the press.** Mark Wisniewski was interviewed by the press for the paper and they turned everything around and misrepresented what he was trying to do in class. In hindsight, he would not have tried to answer to them.

**Make sure you have tenure before you start to teach anything about creation.** Dr. Kenyon, a university professor, was introducing creation and the problems with evolution, but he waited until after he had tenure. Then, even though some action was taken, he could not be fired. The resulting action was that he could only address the topic in 5% of his classes. He figured out that he could teach the topic in one or two of his classes.

According to Robert Melnick, a lawyer with the Rutherford Institute, the ACLU is waiting with their guns loaded and millions of dollars to take on a teacher's case in teaching creation and the problems of evolution. This

is not to scare you away. It is reality. One thing I would suggest is joining one of the alternative teachers' groups (alternative to the NEA) who told me they would back up a teacher financially if they were taken to court. Check with them to be sure that they will back you up and be sure it is in writing. One organization I have spoken to is: Christian Educators Association International (818) 798-1124.

### **CONCLUSION (Rich again)**

I am very excited about the current trends in creationist research. I have come to believe that the age of the earth issue is one of the most crucial issues in the creation/evolution debate. If we can conclusively show that the earth and universe are not millions of years old, we will have won the battle that will break the back of evolutionary philosophy. Scientists working on this issue are making great strides. It is also exciting to see where the research trends in Biology are going. I'm heartened to see that creationist biologists are casting off evolutionary based baggage like the current species classification system. They are opening their hearts and minds to other possibilities. In so doing, they are more open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as they attempt to "think God's thoughts after him". The one area that I believe is severely lacking is Astronomy. One of the questions we must find a satisfactory answer to if we are going to win the age of the universe battle is the question of millions of light years. There are also many other lines of scientific inquiry in astronomy that need to be addressed. I pray that God will raise up more creationist astronomers who are willing to shed evolutionary based baggage and be willing to open their hearts and minds to the leading of the Holy Spirit so God can reveal His truth. May God grant us the wisdom, courage, and love for one another to carry on and solve the mysteries of His creation. I pray that we will be united in one common goal of glorifying God and exposing the myth of evolution.