

"Great are the works of the Lord; They are studied by all who delight in them."
—Psalm 111:2

Reasons To Believe Rochester, N.Y. Network



Taughannock Falls, Tompkins Co. N.Y.

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REASONS TO BELIEVE

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God's Facebook—Would You Trust It?

An Excerpt from a seminar by Jim Reeverts

Here are some provocative angles on the above question:

1. If God were trying to communicate with you, how would he do it?
2. If you DIDN'T know there even WAS a God, much less that communication was happening, what would convince you it was truly HIM who was speaking?
3. If you wanted to BE SURE it was GOD that was speaking – what type of evidence would convince you?
4. If you didn't WANT to know God and didn't want OTHERS to think there was a God – what would you do to try and divert others from the pursuit?

My story: I trusted others. I didn't need convincing when I gave my heart to Christ – I was 8. When I was a teen, I saw the difference God made in the life of the grown-ups in Church, and in the life of those teens committed to Him. I studied the Bible as part of the Bible-Quiz team at church – got very familiar with Matthew & Galatians-Colossians before I went to college.

In college – I heard new information, but I wasn't a science major – I was a humanities major – a philosophy/religion major. It wasn't until my first year of Seminary that I had to truly "struggle" with the critique of the New Testament. I had to defend my position of the resurrection using what I had learned – against 5 major theories against the resurrection. It was during that preparation that I encountered for myself the risen Savior. I was thoroughly convinced

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Empowering Evangelism: Finding The Lost Art of Apologetics

by Tom Wanchick



J. Gresham Machen, the great Princeton theologian, once explained that to hold a false idea, one incompatible with Christian truth, is to hold the most formidable obstacle to receiving the gospel.

British philosopher, Dr. Antony Flew is no stranger to such ideas. Indeed, Flew, a former Oxford professor, was arguably the 20th century's greatest defender of atheism, an author of dozens of books defending the atheistic stance.

One must be careful, however, to speak in the past tense here. For Flew's atheism is, thankfully, no longer with us – or with him. In 2004 came a remarkable, unforeseen turnabout: the once obstinate critic shockingly announced his departure from that darkened perspective. Though falling short of full-blown Christian faith, Flew had at last come to the light -- or at least to theism.

Just as profound as Flew's transformation, however, were his reasons for it. Indeed, to the modern mind, the story seems a glaring contradiction. For Flew had incredibly managed to reconcile the irreconcilable: God and science. New scientific discoveries, he concludes, show the universe's vast and intricately woven form; a Divine designer becomes unavoidable. Recent findings in biology he also inferred as indicators of God.

Flew's incident is hardly an isolated one. The beloved C.S. Lewis, for instance, reports his own travels from god-

lessness. Lewis built his foundation of unbelief, like Flew, with his intellect. His was a historical skepticism: why believe the Gospel accounts, he demanded? Are they not mere myth? It was finally in the answering of this objection that Lewis's barrier to God faded. What he once counted legend became life-changing truth. Similar cases from throughout church history could be cited.

These testimonies, while having their own nuances and details, are also importantly alike. They in fact make clear what Jesus himself ably demonstrated: the importance of evidence and carefully reasoned answers in evangelism. Jesus thus employed ingenious argumentation and logic in responding to his doubters and critics. He often cited his own miracles and insightful teachings as reasonable proof of his deity (Luke 7:19-23). "Therefore, be shrewd as serpents," he commanded (Mt. 10:16).

His earliest disciples were emphatically that. Paul's engaging address at Mars Hill (Acts 17:18-34) and his refutations of "hollow and deceptive philosophy" (Col. 2:8) were not atypical of his ministry. Peter, in addition, cited the need for a mature Christian mind enabling one to "make a defense to everyone who asks..." (1 Peter 3:15). Indeed, through these words, Peter inspired the modern-day title for that

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Evangelism *(Continued from page 3)*

very discipline. “Apologetics,” (from the Greek, *apologia*: defense) ultimately became known as the presenting of rational, intellectual reasons for believing Christianity.

Continuing chronologically, one finds the historic church undertaking the apologetic task with great seriousness – and great success. The early church father Origen, for example, refuted the voluminous criticisms of Celsus, the 2nd century Roman cynic. Even the acclaimed skeptic, David Hume – heralded by atheists even today – proved no match for Christian philosophers like Paley and Less in the 18th century.

The apologetic efforts of our Lord and our spiritual ancestors are thus rather inspiring. It’s peculiar, then, that many contemporary churches stand quite uninspired. Sadly, in a western culture highly influenced by a secularist academia and media, many Christians become overwhelmed and intimidated intellectually. They are, in effect, widely ignored in today’s marketplace of ideas. Eminent Christian philosopher, William Lane Craig notes that much of the general public, including “millions of students, our future generation of leaders” have accordingly absorbed a secular stance that finds Christianity irrelevant. Craig notes the grave hindrances this presents to God’s Kingdom:

[The gospel] is always heard against the background of the culture milieu in which one lives. A person raised in a cultural milieu in which Christianity is still seen as an intellec-

tually viable option will display an openness to the gospel which a person who is secularized will not. You may as well tell the secular person to believe in fairies or leprechauns as in Jesus Christ!

Despite these discouraging developments, however, there exists a hopeful irony. For, though the church finds itself apologetically weak presently, we in fact live in a time where the evidence in its favor is strongest. Indeed, recent scholarship boasts a virtual cornucopia of powerful Christian evidences from various fields.

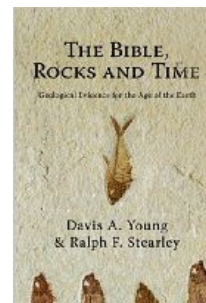
Craig, for example, convincingly argues that today’s scientific and philosophic data demonstrate the creation of the universe out of nothing, a clear confirmation of Genesis 1. Historical research also powerfully vindicates the Faith. Renowned Christian historian Gary Habermas observes that, in fact, virtually all historians today accept the details of Christ’s resurrection account as true.

These, of course, are the mere tip of the iceberg. Excitingly, entire volumes are dedicated to these and other myriad proofs and arguments for Christianity. We do well to partake of them and, in so doing, renew our confidence in confronting a culture steeped in secularism. Let us, then, follow in Christ’s footsteps. Let us do apologetics.

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Tom Wanchick is a founding member of Western New York Apologetics, a ministry devoted to promoting Christian apologetics in the Buffalo region. For more on their activities and events, see their website at <www.wnyapologetics.com>.

Book Review

by Virginia Peterson



The Bible, Rocks and Time,
by Davis A. Young and Ralph F. Stearley,
InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Very few books have been written from an old-earth Christian perspective on the subject of geology, so this one fills a great need. In the preface of the book, the authors state their aim:

The Bible, Rocks and Time is virtually a total rewrite of *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* [by Davis Young, 1982]. Although the theme and format of both books are very similar, they are very different books. The goal of our book is to convince readers, on both biblical and geological grounds, of the vast antiquity of this amazing planet that is our God-given home. Along the way we point out the flaws of so-called young-Earth creationism. Although the issue of Earth's antiquity may seem to be little more than an interesting intellectual exercise that has little immediate bearing on one's life, we point out that this issue can have profound spiritual consequences for the church of Jesus Christ, the individual Christian and the nonbeliever as well.

Dr. Young is Professor Emeritus of Geology at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, while Dr. Stearley is currently professor of geology and chairman of the department of geology, geography and environmental studies at Calvin College.

This 500-page book is divided into four parts: historical, biblical, geological, and philosophical perspectives. The authors seem to be familiar with just about everything written on the subject of geology and the Bible, so they present a wealth of information and go into a lot of detail to state their case. The footnotes are included at the bottom of the pages rather than in the back.

In the historical perspective chapters, the authors tell the story of the history of geology, showing how various scientists and theologians, (not infrequently in the 19th century the same people trained in both fields), have sought to harmonize the works of God in nature with the words of the Bible. Long before the presentation of Darwin's biological evolutionary ideas, the basics of stratigraphy (the study of rock layering) were worked out, and the evidence for an old earth was starting to accumulate.

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Review *(Continued from page 5)*

Turning to the biblical perspective, the authors deal with common young-earth arguments regarding the primacy of Scripture over science. They point out that: “Although we believe that natural science does not and cannot provide a positive interpretation of what a biblical text says, science certainly can raise questions about the validity of traditional interpretations, thus encouraging us to rethink more thoroughly what the text is really saying.” (p. 173). Also, “...the exegetes of the scientific era are not the only ones who have been influenced by their cultural milieu. It is impossible to exegete Scripture in a cultural vacuum. Every biblical interpreter throughout the history of the church, including the church fathers, has been unavoidably shaped and influenced by the cultural context in which he or she lived.” (p. 174). “So the perspicuity [clarity] of Scripture focuses on the central thrust of the Bible, the gospel of salvation. But even the message of salvation is not obviously and immediately clear to everyone upon the first reading of the text...From another angle, however, Genesis 1 is remarkable for the fact that even a child *can* grasp the substance of the chapter no matter how the details play out” (p. 180). These statements all illustrate the idea that the “plain reading of Scripture” does not always give us the correct meaning right away.

The geological section of the book is where the average reader will probably have the hardest time plowing through. The authors go into significant detail about geological ideas and locations to show where the young-earth theory doesn't fit reality. The topics include:

- the nature of the stratigraphic record
- fossil graveyards (such as the Green River formation fossils shown on the front cover)
- the clues to ancient environments and time intervals visible in the strata
- the origin, formation, and characteristics of plutons (molten rock masses that slowly rise toward the surface, eventually cool, and form mountains in some places – a research interest of Davis Young)
- two chapters on radiometric dating – a favorite attack point by young-earth creationists.

There are also two case studies included on the Michigan Basin stratigraphy and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Photos and diagrams are especially prevalent in this section of the book.

Closing out the book are two chapters on philosophical perspectives:

“Uniformitarianism, Catastrophism and Empiricism”, and “Creationism, Evangelism and Apologetics”. In the first, the authors examine and reject the uniformitarian vs. catastrophist straw man argument commonly put forth by young-earth creationists and conclude: “But if this debate over the age of the Earth is not really about physical evidence, then what is it about? We believe that those who

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Review (Continued from page 6)

are most firmly committed to young-Earth creationism do so because they are convinced that a divinely inspired, infallible, inerrant Bible demands it.” (p. 473). In the second chapter, under the section entitled “The Dangers of Continuing to Promote a Young Earth”, they say, “We submit that persistent advocacy of young-Earth creationism and Flood geology by churches, Christian organizations and individual believers results in two extremely serious consequences that damage the cause of Christ.” (p. 476)

What are these consequences? First, that children who are taught young-earth creationism in school and church will most likely be confronted with mainstream science in college, and may undergo a devastating crisis of faith when exposed to the evidence for an old earth. Secondly, evangelistic and apologetic efforts towards scientists are highly unlikely to succeed when young-earth creationism beliefs are presented as an integral part of the Gospel message.

Although, in my opinion, the authors go a little too far in rejecting a progressive creationist and concordist view of Scripture, it is a minor point in the book. They masterfully and exhaustively explore the subject of geology and the Bible, showing that it is only the young-earth creationists who reject the major findings of geology. In the end, the conclusion that the real sticking point is a particular Bible interpretation shows us where the most useful future study can be done. “It is healthier to maintain a belief in an old Earth in tension with the raw data of Genesis 1 than to persist in distorting the biblical text simply to achieve harmony. We should be content to let both bodies of revelation speak for themselves and listen as carefully as we can.” (p. 489)

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Some other works by Davis A. Young are listed below. He has abandoned his earlier progressive creation views since some of them were written.

Books:

- *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Theistic Evolution and Flood Geology*, Baker, 1977.
- *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, Zondervan, 1982.
- *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church’s Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*, Eerdmans, 1995.

Articles:

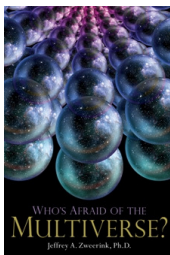
- *How Old is It? How Do We Know? A Review of Dating Methods*, parts 1-3, 2006-07.
www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2006/PSCF12-06Young.pdf
www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2007/PSCF3-07Young.pdf
www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2007/PSCF6-07Young.pdf

RTB News and Resource Spotlight

New!

[Who's Afraid of the Multiverse?](#)

by Dr. Jeff Zweerink, 2008.



Do other worlds exist beyond the observable universe? If we do live in what scientists call a multiverse, doesn't this rule out the necessity of a Creator? In this booklet, astrophysicist Jeff Zweerink tackles these questions and many more as he explains this increasingly popular view of the universe. He provides readable explanations of:

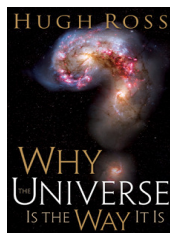
- * the four basic multiverse models
- * observational and theoretical evidence for the multiverse
- * the models' impact on the cosmological and theological arguments for God's existence
- * scientific and philosophical criticisms of the multiverse
- * a biblical response to the multiverse and more.

This booklet seeks to demystify the multiverse so that Christians can address skeptics' concerns with gentleness and respect—and without fear.

[Why the Universe is the Way it is](#)

by Dr. Hugh Ross, Baker Books, 2008.

"Why?" may be the most common and emotionally charged question in human experience.



With the Bible in one hand and the latest scientific findings in the other, astronomer Hugh Ross tackles many of our most pressing cosmic "whys".

Questions such as, If God made the universe, why:

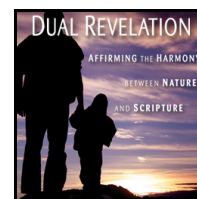
- * is it so vast?
- * wait to bring humans onto the scene?
- * allow decay and death to be part of it?
- * let one man and one woman ruin it for every one?
- * should I believe my life has any real meaning?
- * should I get excited about anything beyond what I can see?

The search for answers to these questions takes us on a thrilling adventure of discovery. The same God who created the universe gave humans the intellect and curiosity to explore it. Dr. Ross leads the exploration by showing how cutting-edge research and key biblical principles agree. This faith-building page-turner is equally useful for personal and group study, deep reflection and serious debate. It opens our minds—and our eyes—to a stunning new view of the Creator. This book is not highly technical and is suitable for almost anyone.

[Dual Revelation: God's Word, God's World](#)

<www.dualrevelation.com>

This 60 minute docudrama discusses the harmony between God's works in nature and His words in the Bible, using both provocative drama and input from knowledgeable scholars. Flyers, posters, trailers, and ordering information are available at the website.



[The Bigger Picture on Creation](#)

by Krista Bontrager, Reasons To Believe, 2008.

<www.readthebiggerpicture.com>

This is a seven lesson study guide on Genesis One for individuals or groups. Available for download are flyers, posters, notes for the DVD videos, and a new podcast. The eight episodes of the podcast feature interviews with the person appearing on the DVD segment for each lesson, and deal with questions that are likely to come up during the study. Two future studies are planned.

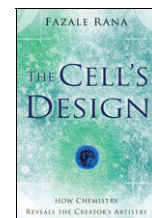


[The Cell's Design: How Chemistry Reveals the Creator's Artistry](#)

by Dr. Fazale Rana, Baker Books, 2008.

<www.cellsdesign.com>

Download a sample chapter from the book, book flyers and posters, and the new Cell's Design podcast, of which 14 episodes are available. Also check out the rap theme song!



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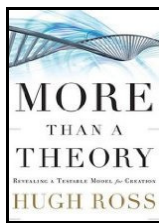
RTB (Continued from page 8)

Starting in February 2009, the internet radio broadcast **Creation Update** will be replaced by three podcasts available for download from iTunes.



Science News Flash will continue to cover headline-making science news, as well as significant discoveries that didn't make the news. Ken Samples will have a new podcast entitled **Straight Thinking**, dealing with philosophical and theological issues. Listener contributions are invited for a question-and-answer podcast called "**I didn't know that**". Questions may be submitted at the email address: <ask@reasons.org>. Also in February, the redesigned RTB website will be unveiled, after many months of work.

Coming in March 2009 is Dr. Hugh Ross' new book, **More than a Theory: Revealing a Testable Model for Creation**, published by Baker Books. With this year marking the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin, and



the 150th anniversary of the publication of **On the Origin of Species**, there will be many Darwin celebrations throughout the year, as well as continuing attacks on Christians from the "New Atheists". In this book, Dr. Ross offers a testable creation model, discusses what is good science, responds to the atheists' challenges, and offers Christians the knowledge they need to defend the God of the Bible as Creator.

If you use **Facebook**, look for and join the **RTB Global Community** (nearing 180 members), and become friends with **Western NY Apologetics**. @

Facebook (Continued from page 2)

the scriptures led beyond themselves to a PERSON: Jesus, the Christ.

Since then I have had the wonderful opportunity to study and teach about the creation through the science

courses at a middle school where I live. Through this study of the natural world and its properties, I have discovered the truth of Romans 1:20 – the creation reveals God's majesty, power and character. The nature of nature and the order of the chaotic truly is magnificent. It IS elegant – and rightly so – it reflects our Lord.

So how does one go about finding whether the Bible can be trusted – after all – its BIG! It's ANCIENT! It's HARD TO UNDERSTAND! There looks like there might be contradictions in it! It has been misused! It doesn't have modern pictures!

Take a look at this popular picture:



What do you see?

I'm guessing that *what you see has a lot to do with what you expect to see – and* some of you can actually flip back & forth between seeing the old lady and the beautiful young woman.

Here's a guiding question I've been chewing on: What DO I expect – when I think of God revealing Himself?

What do YOU expect?

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God's Facebook: Can You Trust It? is part of the **DOES GOD EXIST AT COLLEGE? Conference** sponsored each spring by the Western NY Apologetics group. This conference is dedicated to encouraging Christian young people in strengthening their faith as they prepare to enter college in the fall. Information about the next **DOES GOD EXIST AT COLLEGE? Conference** can be obtained at <wnyapologetics.com>. @

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REASONS TO BELIEVE

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The mission of Reasons To Believe is to show that science and faith are, and always will be, allies, not enemies. Our goal is to bring that life-changing truth to everybody who needs to know, both believers and nonbelievers.