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## Wayne Spencer—young-Earth creationist

by John Blanton

*Wayne Spencer will address The North Texas Skeptics at our regular meeting on 12 June. He will talk about the work being done by Carl Baugh, proponent of the Paluxy River “man tracks” and operator of the Creation Evidences Museum near Glen Rose, Texas.*

*Wayne Spencer has a degree in physics and is a former high school science teacher. His manuscript How We Know The World Is Young “is written to show that the young earth position is a reasonable alternative to the standard evolutionary timetable. It is understandable that these concepts will sound strange to individuals trained in science for years, only from the evolutionary point of view. It is hoped that the reader will evaluate the arguments presented here honestly, based on their own merits and not on preconceived biases. Many people with graduate degrees in science, from around the world, have become convinced of the scientific validity of the creation position.” [1]*

He goes on to say:

Probably the hottest controversy related to creation and evolution is the question of the age of the Earth and the universe. Evolutionists believe the Earth and Solar System are about 4.5 billion years old and the universe about 16 to 20 billion years old. Young Earth Creationists usually say the Earth is probably in the range of 6-10,000 years old. Though many scientifically trained people have turned from evolution to creation, the idea of a 10,000 year old Earth and universe is the hardest part of creation for many to accept. Some Christians will say, “what matters to me is the Rock of Ages, not the ages of rocks,” thinking the issue to be unimportant. But the age of the Earth is a spiritual issue because, 1) evolution absolutely requires billions of years, 2) the Bible implies things are only thousands of years old, and 3) being honest with the scientific evidence points to everything being young. Although no one can really prove the Earth to be young or old, thousands of years is more reasonable or plausible than billions. And if things are only thousands of years old, there could not possibly be time for evolution. [2]

For many creationists, this is the crux of the matter. Evolution requires a very long time span, and if this deep history can be denied, then evolution is effectively falsified. There is a temptation to point out that a long history of the Earth also directly contradicts Genesis, but that does not seem to be the big bugbear for creationists. What really sticks in

their crow is the common ancestry of man and other animals and the lack of a divine purpose for our lives. Evolution through random mutation and natural selection is it for them.

Shortly after radioactive decay was discovered about 100 years ago, scientists began to use the decay process as a clock to measure very long time spans. They soon reached the amazing conclusion that some Earth clocks had been ticking for billions of years. At last the science of biology had the long time span required to Darwinian evolution to succeed. Ever since, the practice of radiometric dating has been under attack by the creationists.

Spencer notes the argument from radiometric dating and points out some popular counter arguments. However, refuting radiometric dating alone will not deny an ancient Earth. The young-Earth creationists (YECs) must establish positive arguments. Wayne's manuscript goes on to summarize the most popular arguments the YECs invoke to deny an ancient universe:

## **Helium Escape**

The argument is this: Helium is a light, inert gas. It is produced constantly through decay of radioactive elements within the Earth. An alpha particle is just a helium nucleus stripped of its electrons, and many radioactive isotopes undergo alpha decay. So—where is all the helium?

To be sure, the atmosphere contains a measurable amount of helium—less than 1%. There should be a lot more. No chemical process takes it out of the atmosphere, because it is inert. Also, it dissolves hardly at all in water. So, where's it going?

Spencer and other YECs contend that, absent a means for removing helium from the atmosphere, it would take the atmospheric helium only 2 million years after creation to reach its present concentration. Spencer cites research done Dr. Larry Vardiman, which “includes documentation from the standard scientific literature.” [3]

Science explains how helium leaves the atmosphere: It escapes out into space. Helium molecules (single atoms of atomic weight 4) can achieve very high velocities when heated by the Sun high in the atmosphere. There is a statistical probability that any given helium atom can even achieve escape velocity (about 7 miles per second) through this process, but the probability is very low. Creationists contend this probability is too low, and they either ignore or discount the factor of the solar wind, which constantly sweeps away the upper reaches of the Earth's atmosphere. It's a nice exercise to determine just what is the helium depletion rate, and it will not be solved here. In the mean time the creationists continue to get mileage out of it.

## **Changes in the Earth's Magnetic Field**

This may be the strongest argument for the Earth being young. It may also have implications for the planets. This is original work from a practicing physicist, Dr. D. Russell Humphreys; he says the Earth must be less than 9,000 years old based on how the Earth's magnetic field has lost energy since creation. [4] The Earth is an electromagnet; electrical currents in the Earth's liquid iron core produce a field with a North and South pole like the Earth has today. Evolutionists have believed for years that the Earth's magnet has reversed polarity many times throughout the supposed 4.6 billion years of Earth history. This means the North pole would become the South pole and vice versa. Evolutionists think of the Earth as a kind of generator, called a dynamo, continually generating magnetic energy as it maintains itself for billions of years through cycles of reversals. [5]

This may be one of the most scientifically worthless arguments the YECs have advanced recently. D. Russell Humphreys is a real Ph.D. in physics who works for the Sandia National Laboratory in New Mexico. Besides Humphreys, Thomas G. Barnes, who is with the Institute for Creation Research, has advocated geomagnetism as proof of a young Earth. Barnes' own hypothesis is that the Earth's magnetic field started out at the physical limit and has decayed exponentially since the day of creation, giving us both the currently-observed field strength and the observed rate of change. Barnes' hypothesis seems to ignore Humphreys' acknowledgement that the field reverses from time to time.

In the mean time, real geophysicists are studying geomagnetism and are learning more about it. They are not finding anything that vindicates either Barnes or Humphreys.

## Star Clusters and Galaxies

Stars exist in organized groupings. Small groups of stars are called clusters while large groups of millions or billions of stars are called galaxies. Our galaxy is the Milky Way and is estimated to contain about 100 billion stars. Some clusters do not have their stars close enough together for them to be held together by gravity, and so the stars in the cluster are drifting apart. There are other effects which tend to break up galaxies and clusters over time as well. If the universe were 16-20 billion years old as the Big Bangers say, some star clusters should have broken up a long time ago. [6]

Spencer goes on to mention spiral galaxies, which YECs contend should have wound themselves up into featureless disks a long time ago, because the interior part of the spiral should rotate faster than the outer part. Neither the star cluster argument nor the spiral galaxy argument seem to be based on any legitimate scientific research. Scientists studying star clusters and spiral galaxies are not reporting evidence for a young universe.

## Rapid Formation of Rock Strata

The May 18, 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helens had great significance for geology. It demonstrated how rapidly geological forces can work in catastrophic conditions. Creationist geologists have studied the area surrounding Mt. St. Helens for several years and have learned some very interesting lessons. These lessons include 1) rapidly formed stratification, 2) rapid erosion, 3) upright deposited logs, and 4) coal and coal-precursor formation. [7]

Spencer cites the work of ICR scientist Steven A. Austin, one of the few ICR scientists doing real science. Austin has also published a paper arguing the possibility of rapid formation of coal. To summarize the whole argument here, Austin and others seek to demonstrate that millions of years are not required to form the minerals and structures we see on Earth today. They would like us to believe the Earth's formation could have taken only a few days or years.

## Conclusion

There are many other arguments for a young Earth, solar system, and universe which imply that God created all things less than about 10,000 years ago and that God sent a world-wide Flood about 4,000-5,000 years ago. Interpreting the data in terms of things being young sometimes greatly simplifies the process of explaining how the various features of the earth and universe formed. As time goes on creationists keep discovering more and more processes which show that the world is young. In April of 1978 there was a conference of scientists addressing the age of the universe and the earth. The following quote is by John A. Eddy who at that time worked at the High Altitude Observatory in Boulder, Colorado. The quote mentions a date by Bishop Ussher. Ussher was the archbishop of Armaugh in Ireland in the 17th century. He published a date for God's creation of 4004 B.C., a date even few creationists completely accept today. [8]

Spencer makes a good point in his last sentence. Even Don Patton of the Metroplex Institute of Origin Science (MIOS) will not step up to Ussher's date. He and other YECs know full well that recorded history goes back prior to -4004. When really pressed for a date, Patton will hedge endlessly. Ten thousand years? Well, not exactly. More? Less? Can't really say. It's wise for the YECs to waffle on an exact date for the creation. Science is working relentless on the puzzles of the universe, and any speculations made by the YECs today can become the laughing stock of tomorrow.

## References

[1] Spencer, Wayne, How We Know The World Is Young. URLs for Wayne Spencer's Web site are no longer active at:

<http://www.cyberhighway.net/~wspencer/>

<http://www.eaze.net/~wspencer/>

[2] Ibid.

[3] Vardiman, Larry, The Age of the Earth's Atmosphere, El Cajon, CA: ICR, 1990. [cited by Spencer]

[4] Humphreys, D. R., Physical Mechanism for Reversals of Earth's Magnetic Field During the Flood. Proceedings Of The Second International Conference On Creationism, Vol. 2, Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1991, pp. 129-142. [cited by Spencer]

[5] Spencer.

[6] Spencer.

[7] Spencer.

[8] Spencer.

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## Nightingale Shamed

*The following article first appeared in The Daily Texan, Student Newspaper of the University of Texas at Austin and is reprinted here with permission.*

**By Roahn Wynar**

Florence Nightingale would be profoundly ashamed. On Saturday, April 17 the UT School of Nursing will host a lecture by Barbara Dossey titled, "Florence Nightingale: a 19th Century Mystic," for the 1999 Reunion Weekend. Dossey is a leader of the movement that is systematically destroying the credibility of nursing by reintroducing magical and medieval thinking. Ironically, Dossey will lecture about Florence Nightingale, the woman who made nursing a credible field in the first place.

Dossey has embraced and promoted trendy crackpot medical notions for the last decade. But what makes her far worse than the average intellectually flaky nurse is that she formalizes this tripe into real nursing textbooks.

In her first textbook, Cardiovascular Nursing: A Bodymind Tapestry, she inserts entire passages of woo-woo material between chapters and attempts to discredit scientific medicine. She identifies non-holistic nurses as "allopathic," which implies that they don't really care about their patients as people. Evidence-based practice is supposedly relying on a "Cartesian dualism" and the most evil of all attitudes, "reductionism." Her basic claim is that the mind is the primary factor in any illness. Dossey's attitude ultimately lays the blame for being sick on the victim of disease. Disease is "a valuable sign of internal conflict" implying that sick people are mentally disturbed.

Once Dossey got away with writing a major textbook based on this medieval attitude, there was no stopping her. She subsequently wrote Holistic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice. In it she ponders ideas like, "Imagery connects the complex phenomenon of mind modulation with the unlimited capabilities of the mind-body-spirit." We see here the classic pseudoscientific technique of inventing vocabulary, in this case "mind modulation" which has no reliable meaning. The basic notion of "imagery" is that the mind reacts to imagined situations as though they were real. Mix this with the already assumed notion that illness is a mental problem, and you are only one step away from the inane conclusion: one can literally imagine their way to health. Several studies, one even here in Texas regarding breast cancer survivors, have shown no evidence that this is true.

Dossey tacitly accepts the existence of psychic phenomenon, and indeed supports various nursing practices that depend on psychic powers. The UT School of Nursing cites Dossey's handbook as scientific justification for including psychic power-based techniques in their continuing education curriculum. There is no meaningful science in her writing, just wishful thinking.

But enough about Dossey, let's talk about her husband, who is a hundred times worse. He is a medical doctor, and

between the two of them the Dosseys are out to introduce their self-created world view into mainstream medicine. He is the author of the hyper-pop book *Space Time and Medicine* in which he literally reconstructs reality to match his dream-like vision of medicine. Again it is all based on the notion that our minds construct the physical world directly. How does this work? Quantum mechanics, holograms ... blah blah blah ...

Larry Dossey claims, for example, that praying can cause healing, or harm. One absurd claim he makes is that people pray “wrong.” For example, if someone prays for a strong immune system, they might get it. Trouble is, there are many autoimmune diseases that are caused by a strong immune system and Larry Dossey warns us that the “immune system prayer” may actually cause these diseases. Larry Dossey is evidently, in the lexicon of scientific skeptics, an idiot.

If you are a parent praying for “perfect health” for your child, stop right now! You see, children must challenge their immune systems with minor infections in order to become healthy adults. If a child receives the perfect health you are asking for then the child will die later as an adult because their immune system will have never developed properly, according to Larry Dossey. In Larry’s world, praying is like getting a wish granted by a capricious genie. “Hey, I didn’t ask for a 10-inch pianist! ...”

The Dosseys demonstrate how ego drives the alternative medicine crowd. Advocates like the Dosseys enjoy maintaining the illusion that they know certain truths and have achieved a certain wisdom that makes them “healers.” In 1998 Barbara Dossey co-wrote a book called *Profiles of Nurse Healers*. Imagine 200 pages of nurses patting themselves on the back because they can unruffle an imaginary human energy field. This book includes a picture of a nurse unruffling the energy field of a horse.

No less than three University of Texas nurses have profiled themselves in this tome of shamans: Lynn Rew, Donna Taliaferro (UT-San Antonio) and Helen Erickson.

For the last 20 years the nursing profession has re-written physics, chemistry, philosophy and ethics in order to give themselves superpowers. Indeed, being a nurse today must be like living in a comic book complete with mystic energy fields, magic medicine water and cancer curing herbs. On Saturday we might pray that Dossey will not manipulate history as well and shame the great legacy of Florence Nightingale with twisted notions of mysticism. But in the Dossey world such a prayer could be dangerous.

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*“The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has limits.”*

*— Einstein*

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## Web news

**By John Blanton**

*The Internet is one of the least reliable sources of accurate information, but it’s free. Read with caution.*

**Iowa, oops!**

The following is from the Web site of the Republican Party of Iowa . It’s a statement of the Party platform. Although it

appears anachronistic, they have not seen fit to update it:

(as Adopted on June 15, 1996)

[Bunch of good stuff deleted]

### 3. EDUCATION

3.1 We support providing students in public schools with a traditional academic, objective, cognitive-based education which emphasizes reading, writing, mathematics, history, science, the arts, and physical education.

3.2 We believe in local control of public schools. Parents must have oversight of the educational process including school curricula, discipline and grading systems.

So far, so good. Just Iowa politics.

[More good stuff deleted]

3.5 We believe the theory of Creation Science should be taught in the public schools along with other theories of origin.

[Oops! Where did that come from? Wait, there's more:]

3.6 We recognize evolution taught in schools as a state funded religion.

3.7 We oppose the promotion of secular humanism, "Political Correctness," New Age concepts, the PETA philosophy, one-world government, "situational ethics", and the teaching of homosexuality or other sexually deviant behavior as an acceptable lifestyle or behavior. We support repeal of Iowa's Global Education mandate and Human Growth and Development mandate.

3.8 We oppose allowing homosexuals as teachers in public schools, as well as teaching of lesbianism or homosexuality as alternate lifestyles.

[And finally]

3.34 We believe that the Bible and all other religious texts may be on school library shelves and should be available to be read by anyone at any time.

[And]

3.38 We support the stocking of CREATIONIST produced resources in ALL TAX funded public and school libraries. We OPPOSE the current censorship of CREATIONIST resources.

And this is not even the Bible Belt. As Bob Dylan would say, "Better get away from Oxford Town." \*

### **Antigravity**

Terry Colvin <Fortean@primenet.com> has provided us a link to aintigravity on the Web:  
<[Http://www.amasci.com/freenrg/antigrav.html](http://www.amasci.com/freenrg/antigrav.html)>

"This page is an unabashed collection both of mainstream and far-fringe Antigravity files and links. Where professionals fear to tread, the lead is taken by amateurs, [maverick] researchers, and crackpot inventors..."

Terry's home page is at <<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Shadowlands/8832>>

\* The culturally-challenged can get an explanation of this by sending e-mail to the NTS.

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