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God's Time-Records in Ancient Sediments (Book Review)

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God's Time-Records in Ancient Sediments, by Dan Wonderly. Flint, Michigan: Crystal Press, 1977. 258 pages. Reviewed by Richard G. Hodgson, Assistant Professor of Astronomy.

God's Time-Records in Ancient Sediments is an important book by an author who takes very seriously God's revelation in both the Bible and in His physical creation. He is convinced that when the testimony of both is rightly interpreted a consistent picture will emerge, since God is one and the author of both the Bible and the physical universe.

In this book Dan Wonderly concentrates his attention on the geological evidence which God has placed in His creation concerning the age of the Earth. Instead of dealing with this question in a vague, generalized way as is so often done in popular books designed for Christians unfamiliar with geology, Wonderly talks about specific sediments, coral reefs, etc., at specific locations, and the length of time involved in their particular formation. Coral reef formation, for example, is very slow—even in the most favorable latitudes in the Pacific Ocean it is only approximately one-third of an inch a year, and some reefs are thousands of feet thick! He discusses the more than 200,000 layers of material deposited in the Permian Basin in western Texas and eastern New Mexico, layers which represent *annual* deposits. Many specific examples could be cited which clearly indicate that the Earth is many millions of years of age. It is Wonderly's thesis that God is revealing this truth to those who are prepared humbly and honestly to look at the testimony found in His creation, and that the Church of Christ is not well served by religious practitioners who summarily dismiss or systematically distort the geological evidence regarding the age of the Earth (or parts thereof), and who would force upon us (and upon the text of the Bible) a line of interpretation which demands a young Earth only a few thousand years old.

Not all Christians presently agree with Wonderly's contention that the Earth is very old, but all educated Christians should give the evidence he presents a very careful reading. It is an argument based on many different lines of historical evidence — the history of the Earth as recorded in its rocks — leading very consistently to the same conclusion: the Earth is old.

Some may be tempted to say that we do not need to bother with any historical evidence. They want to believe what they want to believe quite apart from any historical evidence. That approach, the reviewer believes, is a serious mistake. True Christianity is an *historical* religion, a religion that

says that the Creator-God has been active in human history and in the Earth's history. Our God acts; He has done things. As the Apostle Paul has said, "If Christ be not raised [from the dead], your faith is vain. . ." (I Cor. 15:17). In other words, our salvation depends upon what God has done in Christ *in history*. That is what the Incarnation is about. Our faith, in the final analysis, rests on historical events. The great and ancient creeds of the Church are not an intonation of philosophical propositions, but a recitation of historical events which, if they were not true, would be the undoing of the Christian religion.

Thus the Christian is called to take history seriously, for it is God's theatre of operation. To do that one must also take seriously God's physical creation and its history, and consider its testimony carefully. This is why Dan Wonderly's book deserves a careful reading by all ministers, teachers, and other leaders in Christ's Kingdom.

Wonderly makes clear that even though the evidence clearly points to an old Earth, it does not support Darwin's theory of evolution, a doctrine which he and the reviewer feel is clearly contrary to the Bible's teaching. To acknowledge an old Earth does not mean that one subscribes to evolutionism. It is unfair and unjust to assume the two are necessarily linked. Here again, the Christian should be eager to look at the evidence, both in the Scriptures and in the rocks. We should never be afraid of examining evidence, for Truth cannot be overthrown. (Our false conceptions of Truth may be discovered and dismissed by this process.)

Wonderly's book deals only with evidence from sedimentology. One might wish that he had included some of the considerable body of evidence obtained by using radioactive decay methods, which also supports his conclusion. Wonderly limits his discussion — perhaps wisely — to the study of sediments because he believes that sediments are better understood by the general reader, and he does not wish to introduce any elements which might cloud the issue in his readers' minds.

God's Time-Records in Ancient Sediments deserves a careful reading by all who would be educated Christians. It will make the soil under foot take on a new meaning, and one's whole outlook on the physical creation may be transformed.