

EVANGELICALS AND CRACKPOT SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT: Because of the tension which has developed between the scientific and the evangelical communities in the past century and a half, Bible believers are often (rightly or wrongly) suspicious of the discoveries and theorizing of modern science. This has led to a rather widespread attraction to theories viewed as crackpot by scientists and other educated people. Some examples are discussed and strategies proposed to protect Christians from looking unnecessarily foolish before the watching world.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, there has been a strong attitude of distrust and tension between the scientific and evangelical communities. Such tension, indeed, existed before this (and was growing slowly), but the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and its rapid acceptance by science was the straw that broke the camel's back. Numerous aggravating incidents since then have only added fuel to the fire.

One result has been that many Bible-believers are suspicious of any new discovery or theory coming from science, especially if it would require rethinking any traditional Christian teaching, whether biblical or not. A few have even gone back and rejected long-established science that doesn't fit the simplest reading of Scripture, though there is abundant, repeatable evidence for the science. Christian young people are often discouraged from entering a career in science, since it is seen as unspiritual or even dangerous. Scientific literacy among evangelical Christians has been rather badly damaged, too.

In fact, some Christians have become so iconoclastic about the findings and methods of science that they easily fall prey to the many crackpot ideas that always seem to be present in society. Meeting such Christians, unbelievers trained in the sciences come away with the impression that Bible-believers are crackpots, too, and that the Gospel message is not worthy of serious consideration. This is certainly a great tragedy in view of the task our Lord has set before us.

What can we do about this? I am not going to suggest swallowing every idea put forth in the name of science, even by prestigious mainstream scientists and scientific organizations. There are substantial anti-supernatural biases in science as currently practiced.¹ Christians should be aware of these.

I will suggest that we also need to be aware of the dangers lurking in the attitudes and thinking that characterize crackpot science. These attitudes will cut us off from what God is actually doing in nature. They may easily lead us to crackpot exegesis of the Bible and to the sort of arrogance that starts cults. We certainly want to avoid all these.

As usual, Satan has prepared pitfalls on both sides of the good road. We need to realize how weak some of these crackpot ideas are. We need to know some simple, easily-understood arguments that show this to be so, in order that we and those we influence will not be sucked in.

In this paper, I give a quick tour of some examples of crackpot science. Bibliographic references to proponents are provided at the head of each section. Most are taken from McIver's massive bibliography² and are marked by his catalog numbers.

Flat Earth

- 240 Ethelbert W. Bullinger. *Witness of the Stars*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1967 (orig. 1893).
Bullinger does not actually present his flat earth ideas here, but according to McIver, he later served on the committee of a flat earth society.
- 711 John Hampden. *The Earth in Its Creation....* London: W. H. Guest, 1880. Charles K. Johnson, president of the International Flat Earth Research Society, interviewed in *The Washington Star*, April 14, 1978, pp A-1 and A-7.

It will probably come as a shock to most Christians that there were evangelicals who believed the earth was flat as recently as the end of the last century. Much more recent is Charles Johnson in 1978. I don't know where Johnson fits on the theological spectrum; he does speak favorably of Moses in the interview, so would probably be viewed by outsiders as a Bible-believer. And, sad to say, he might actually be one.

What's wrong with the flat earth view? It ignores some very basic information accessible to all of us. We know from flying in airplanes and talking over the telephone that the time of day or night is different at different places east or west on the earth; for example, it is noon on the east coast of the US when it is only 9 AM on the west coast. The detailed distribution of these time differences only fits a more or less round planet. We also have photographs from space, though Johnson (of course) sees the whole space program as an elaborate hoax.

Our ancestors had more excuse for being wrong about this than we do, though any seaman two centuries ago knew about different times east and west. The standard way of measuring longitude then was by comparing local noon with a precision clock set to Greenwich time. Whether Bullinger and Hampden thought all these seamen were in on a clever plot against the rest of us, I do not know. Already by the 1700s surveying techniques were well-developed enough to make quite competent globes of the earth's features.

Geocentrism

- 194 Gerardus D. Bouw. *With Every Wind of Doctrine: Biblical, Historical and Scientific Perspectives on Geocentricity*. Cleveland: Tychonian Society, 1984.
- Merrill A. Cohen. "Heliocentrism vs. Geocentrism: Defiance or Defense of the Gospel?" Paper delivered at the Eastern regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, April 2, 1993.
- 525 R. G. Elmendorf. *How to Scientifically Trap, Test and Falsify Evolution*. Bradford, PA: Bible-Science Association of Western Pennsylvania, 1976.
- 562 John Finleyson. *God's Creation of the Universe As It Is....* London: 1837 (orig. 1832).

- 702 Marshall and Sandra Hall. *The Connection Between Evolution Theory and the Coming Together of the True Church*. Lakeland Park, FL: P/R, c1977.
- 716 James Hanson. *A New Interest in Geocentricity*. Minneapolis: Bible-Science Association, c1979.
- 757 Edward F. Hills. *Space Age Science*. Des Moines, IA: Christian Research Press, c1979 (orig. c1964).
- 1047 Stefan Marinov. *Eppur Si Muove*. Brussels: CBDS - Pierre Liebert, 1977.
- Walter R. van der Kamp. *The Heart of the Matter*. 8611 Armstrong Ave., Burnaby, B.C., Canada, 1967.

There are certainly some geocentrists still around, as you can see from recent publication dates in the above list. And one of them, Edward F. Hills, has had considerable influence in the King James only controversy. Geocentrists agree in believing that the earth is the center of things and that the sun goes around the earth rather than the earth around the sun. They differ among themselves on whether or not the earth is completely stationary, or rotates once a day on its own axis.

Exegetically, geocentrists that have the earth absolutely still would seem to be on more solid ground than the rotating-earth variety. There are several biblical references to the sun rising, the world not moving, plus Joshua's command for the sun to stop, but no passages that tell us whether during the course of a year it is the earth that goes around the sun or vice versa. I don't have space here to deal with the hermeneutical assumptions of geocentrists,³ except to note that they reject the very reasonable suggestion that all these passages are looking at matters from the perspective of one standing on the surface of the earth rather than of one looking down from space. God does condescend to speak to us in human language.

What's wrong with an absolutely still earth? Well, for one thing, every star must travel much faster than the speed of light to make it around the earth in one twenty-four hour day. Also, we can actually bounce radar signals off the moon and the three closest planets, Mercury, Venus and Mars. We can measure how far away each of them is by noting the time it takes the signal to return; and how fast each is moving relative to us by using the technique police radar uses to catch speeders. As a result we know that the moon and these planets are moving too slowly to make it around the earth in one day.

What about those geocentrists who admit the earth turns on its axis once a day but deny that the earth moves around the sun? Have you ever noticed how, in the summer, you get lots of bugs splattered on your car's windshield but very few on the rear window? In the same way, the earth gets lots of meteors splattered on its front side as it travels around the sun (the side you're on after midnight and before noon) but very few on the back side (after noon but before midnight). Every amateur stargazer knows you'll usually see more meteors after midnight than before. Besides this, Newton's laws of motion and gravity make complete hash out of any geocentric view, and it is such laws C not geocentric ones C that are used to send vehicles into orbit around the earth, the moon and even the sun.⁴ Geocentrists, too, have trouble explaining the success of the space program.

Small Universe

Harold Camping. *What is the Size of the Universe*. Oakland, CA: Family Radio, 1981.

1191 Richard Niessen. *Starlight and the Age of the Universe*. El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1983.

Many Christians believe the earth is only a few thousand years old. But if so, most astronomical objects we can see with a good telescope appear to be so far away that light from them would not have reached us yet. One solution to this problem has been proposed by Harold Camping of Family Radio. He claims that the whole universe is actually only a few light years across, so that light from distant objects reached earth shortly after creation.

We cannot yet travel out to the stars to see who is right, but we don't need to suspend judgment until we can. In Camping's view, the stars which appear farthest away are really just smaller and dimmer than the others. But this makes these stars so small that their gravity wouldn't be sufficient to hold the hot gases together nor provide high enough temperatures to run their nuclear furnaces. In addition, we can directly measure the speed at which individual stars are moving toward or away from us. On the average their sideways motions should be comparable, but this only works out if the stars are scattered through a very large universe as astronomers claim.⁵

Changing Speed of Light

1191 Richard Niessen. *Starlight and the Age of the Universe*. El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1983.

Trevor Norman and Barry Setterfield. *The Atomic Constants, Light and Time*. Australia: Flinders University, 1987.

1488 Barry Setterfield. *The Velocity of Light and the Age of the Universe*. Australia: Creation Science Association, 1983.

Barry Setterfield has proposed another way of responding to the problem that the travel time for light to reach us from the most distant parts of the universe seems too long for a recent creation. Rather than arguing that the universe is really very small (as Harold Camping does), he admits the universe is very large but claims that the speed of light right after creation was enormously higher than it is now, so that light from distant objects reached earth soon after creation. He and Norman argue that measurements made in the past few centuries for the speed of light show that it has been decreasing, though it has not changed much recently.

But to be able to see objects 10 billion light-years away if the universe is only 10 thousand years old means that the speed of light since creation must **average** a million times larger than it is now! If the speed of light were only a **thousand** times faster early in human history (as Setterfield claims), we should observe some drastic consequences. Einstein's famous equation $E = mc^2$ relates the conversion of matter to energy, where c is the speed of light. If we

keep the masses of objects constant but let c be larger by a thousand back in patriarchal times, then the heat output of the sun and of radioactive elements would be a million times what it is now, frying everything in sight! If instead we require that E be constant to avoid this problem, then the masses of objects will be a million times smaller, and neither humans nor air would have been heavy enough to keep from floating away from earth and life would have been impossible.⁶ Thus we have clear historical evidence that the speed of light has never changed by anything close to what Setterfield needs.

Ice Canopy

595 Walter T. Galusha. *Fossils and the Word of God*. New York: Exposition Press, 1964.

1465 Carl Theodore Schwarze. *The Harmony of Science and the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, c1942.

1467 Carl Theodore Schwarze. *The Marvel of Earth's Canopies*. Westchester, IL: Good News Publishers, c1957.

1647 Isaac Newton Vail. *The Earth's Annular System; or, the Waters Above the Firmament*. Pasadena, CA: Annular World, 1912 (orig. 1874).

1726 Samuel Webb. *The Creation and the Deluge...* Philadelphia: privately published, 1854.

1732 V. Luther Westberg. *Mystery of the Buried Redwood*. Napa, CA: privately published, [1963].

Many Christians believe that much of Noah's flood came from a vast water-canopy above the earth. Most hold that the canopy consisted of water **vapor**, in order to explain how it remained suspended.⁷ But a number have proposed it was an ice canopy. Schwarze (in #1465) even claimed the ice was a solid layer miles thick! Just how sunlight made it though such a canopy when it won't even penetrate a mile of ocean is not easy to imagine. Vail even had a rock canopy, which collapsed to form the geologic strata!

None of these are able to explain what would keep such a solid canopy in orbit, where it would be subjected to enormous tidal forces and unstable to the slightest fluctuations in gravitational attraction by the earth, moon and sun. Studies of glaciers show that even a few hundred feet of ice produces pressures sufficient for the ice to flow like syrup, so that a thick ice canopy could not retain its shape.

Even vapor canopies face serious physical difficulties. Every 30 feet of liquid water suspended in the atmosphere as vapor will increase the gas pressure at the earth's surface by one atmosphere. So just 270 feet of water in the canopy means the surface pressure would be ten times what it is now.

And 270 feet would not amount to much in the context of a global flood.⁸ One would guess that even this much vapor canopy would produce a severe case of global warming (runaway greenhouse effect). And all of this is unnecessary if we see the Gen 1:7 "waters above the firmament" as clouds in the atmosphere, which squares better with the reference later in Israel's history to "waters above the heavens" in Ps 148:4.

Astronomical Confirmation of Joshua's Long Day

547 Eugene W. Faulstich. *Moses the Astronomer and Historian Par Excellence*. Rossie, IA: Chronology-History Research Institute, n.d.

755 Harold Hill. *How to Live Like a King's Kid*. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, c1974.

1403 Harry Rimmer. *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936.

1623 Charles A. L. Totten. *Joshua's Long Day and the Dial of Ahaz*. Merrimac, MA: Destiny, c1968 (orig. 1890).

Something very striking happened in the conquest of Canaan, when God answered Joshua's prayer and defeated Israel's enemies at Gibeon (Joshua 10). The traditional understanding, reflected in most translations and commentaries, is that God caused the sun and moon to stand still or (equivalently) the earth to stop rotating. Some evangelicals, recognizing an uncertainty in the meaning of the Hebrew verb employed and feeling God may have used a more economical miracle than this, have made other suggestions.⁹ I personally see no reason why God could not have chosen to stop the earth, but it is certainly not unorthodox to investigate whether this is what the text really says.

Claims that the lengthened day has been confirmed by astronomical observations, however, appear to be hoaxes.¹⁰ Hill's story C reprinted in newspapers throughout the US in the 1970s C is that computers at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, MD detected a missing day in past time, and that 23 hours and 20 minutes of it were found at Joshua's time, and the other 40 minutes when the sun went backward 10 degrees in Isaiah's day. NASA denies any such discovery. Who is right?

To detect such a "missing day" one would have to have two sets of information to compare, one of which would be missing a day found in the other. These sets would presumably be historical information on the one hand and astronomical extrapolation on the other. If, for instance, we knew the exact date, time and place by historical records of some eclipse of the sun before the time of Joshua, and then by calculating back from the present, we found that the eclipse "should" have taken place exactly one day earlier than the historical report says, we would have such a day missing. However, the earliest report of a reasonably datable eclipse known (as of 1970) comes in 1217 BC, after Joshua's time. In any case, we can rarely date such events to the exact day in ancient times, much less to a few minutes. There appears to be no way for us to detect the sort of discrepancy Hill alleges.

A very similar story is told by Rimmer, who says an astronomer friend of Prof. C. A. Totten found the same two missing times by (hand) calculations late in the last century. The Totten book Rimmer mentions, however, has no such story, but merely Totten's own calculations. Totten, though, finds his missing day by accepting the date of creation proposed by Jabez B. Dimpleby of the British Chronological Association (September 22, 4000 BC), and finding that this was a Monday instead of the Sunday expected from his reading of Scripture, so one day must be missing from past time. He then assigns 40 minutes of this (= 10 degrees of sun

movement) to Isaiah's time and the rest to Joshua's. No independent confirmation here!

Anti-Quantum

71 Thomas G. Barnes. *Physics of the Future: A Classical Unification of Physics*. El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, c1983.

73 Josemaria Gonzalez Barredo. *The Subquantum Ultramathematical Definition of Distance, Space and Time*. Washington, DC: MIAS Press, b1985.

1003 Charles William Lucas, Jr. *Soli Deo Gloria: A Renewed Call for Reformation*. Temple Hills, MD: Church Computer Services, c1985.

Quantum theory, developed early in the twentieth century to explain the behavior of atoms and smaller objects, is admittedly very strange. An electron at one time seems to be a particle; at another, a wave. Sometimes the energy of an atom can only change by steps rather than smoothly. Light is only radiated or absorbed in little packets, called quanta. Some physicists have even claimed that an electron has neither position nor velocity until one of these is measured!¹¹

Understandably many Christians have found this too much to swallow, and have rejected the whole theory. Some of them, with training in physics, have sought to construct alternative theories, but none of these have attracted favorable attention in the scientific community. Admittedly, reconciliation between quantum theory and relativity (below) has not yet been achieved, and one or both of these theories will probably have to be modified before this happens.

But there is a real strangeness in the phenomena quantum theory seeks to explain, and there is no reason to believe the phenomena will go away. It is certainly possible that we will need to adjust some of our traditional views of reality to fit what God is actually telling us in these observations. We should not be surprised if our commonsense notions do not work well in circumstances far different from those in which we were created to function. Our God is an awesome God, and the universe He made has many surprises.

Anti-Relativity

71 Thomas G. Barnes. *Physics of the Future: A Classical Unification of Physics*. El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, c1983.

73 Josemaria Gonzalez Barredo. *The Subquantum Ultramathematical Definition of Distance, Space and Time*. Washington, DC: MIAS Press, b1985.

1003 Charles William Lucas, Jr. *Soli Deo Gloria: A Renewed Call for Reformation*. Temple Hills, MD: Church Computer Services, c1985.

1517 Harold S. Slusher and Francisco Ramirez. *The Motion of Mercury's Perihelion: A Reevaluation of the Problem and Its Implications for Cosmology and Cosmogony*. El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, c1984.

1729 James Paul Wesley, ed. *Progress in Space-Time Physics*. Blumberg, Germany: Benjamin

Wesley, 1987.

Relativity, too, has a great deal of strangeness. As an object moves faster and faster, it appears to shrink, gain weight, and experience time passing more and more slowly. In addition, it cannot be made to go faster than the speed of light, no matter how much energy it is given. Einstein's general theory of relativity adds space curvature and black holes to this strange brew. No wonder, again, that many Christians are skeptical of all this.

Part of the problem, though, has been a tendency among secularists to talk as though **moral** relativism is somehow supported by Einstein's physics. This is nonsense. There is no reason to believe that physics tells us anything about morality. In any case, relativity in physics has an absolute, the speed of light, whereas traditional Newtonian physics saw time and space as absolutes. We as Christians realize that God is absolute, but we don't know from this whether He has conferred any such character on light or time or neither.

It is foolish to expend the energy we should reserve for fighting moral relativism by attacking relativity in modern physics. The evidence for both the special and general theories is excellent.¹² Every device built for accelerating subatomic particles to high speeds must take these phenomena into account in order even to function. The bending of light by a massive object and the reddening of light when escaping from a gravitational field have both been observed as predicted.

Gospel in the Stars

- 240 Ethelbert W. Bullinger. *Witness of the Stars*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1967 (orig 1893).
 572 Kenneth C. Fleming. *God's Voice in the Stars: Zodiac Signs and Bible Truth*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1981
 960 Walter Lang, ed. *Genesis and Science*. Richfield, MN: privately published, 1982.
 1348 Howard B. Rand. *The Stars Declare God's Handiwork*. Merrimac, MA: Destiny, c1944.
 1485 Joseph A. Seiss. *The Gospel in the Stars*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, c1972 (orig. c1882).

This is not strictly a scientific question, but more a historical one, like the NASA computer story, above. Bullinger and Seiss popularized the work of Frances Rolleston, *Mazzaroth: or, the Constellations* (Keswick, England, 1863), who claimed that the constellations go back to patriarchal times, and that the Gospel is presented pictorially in them. The suggestion is quite an interesting one.

Unfortunately, Rolleston made considerable use of the Arabic names of individual stars in the constellations, engaging in considerable "misleading and unfounded" etymologizing to get her hints of what each meant, according to the evangelical astronomer E. W. Maunder.¹³ With no significant Arabic literature before the rise of Islam, we cannot be sure these names are really ancient, and most of them are merely names of parts of the constellations (head, foot, eye, etc.). And as C. S. Lewis has pointed out in another context, "no story can be devised by the wit of man which cannot be interpreted allegorically by the wit of some other man."¹⁴ The same

applies to star patterns.

Maunder himself believes that the 48 "primitive" constellations give evidence of being designed about 2700 BC.¹⁵ He feels they might possibly contain some such material, if the designers were familiar with some of the incidents preserved to us in the early part of Genesis.¹⁶ Consequently, this whole proposal must be labelled unproved, and ought not to be spread about so confidently as a number are currently doing.

Gospel in Chinese Characters

- 870 C. H. Kang and Ethel R. Nelson. *The Discovery of Genesis: How the Truths of Genesis Were Found Hidden in the Chinese Language*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1979.
- 894 Kiat Tien Khang. *Genesis and the Chinese*. Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn, 1985 (orig. 1950).
- 1180 Ethel R. Nelson and Richard E. Broadberry. *Mysteries Confucius Couldn't Solve*. S. Lancaster, MA: Read Books, 1986.

I have no intention of investigating this suggestion, having background in neither the Chinese language nor its history. I do think this is probably another illustration of Lewis' remark on the ease of allegorizing.

Numerology

- 210 Keith L. Brooks, ed. *Overwhelming Mathematical Evidence of the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures*. N. Syracuse, NY: Book Fellowship, n.d. (tract # 1219).
- Harold Camping. *1994?* New York: Vantage, 1992.
- 872 Reuben Luther Katter. *The History of Creation and Origin of the Species*. Minneapolis: Theotes Logos Research, 1984 (orig. 1967).
- 1004 Jerry Lucas and Del Washburn. *Theomatics: God's Best Kept Secret Revealed*. New York: Stein and Day, 1977.
- 1122 Henry M. Morris. *Many Infallible Proofs*. Sand Diego, CA: Creation-Life, 1974. Presented with some qualifications.
- 1250 C. G. Ozanne. *The First 7000 Years: A Study in Biblical Chronology*. New York: Exposition Press, c1970. Millennium will begin in 1996.
- 1253 Ivan Panin. *Bible Chronology*. Ft. Langley, BC: Assoc. of the Covenant People, c1950 (orig. 1923).
- 1550 James A. Stiverson. *The Harmony of God's Laws in Creation*. privately published, c1986.

The belief that the Bible has an elaborate system of numerical symbolism has been around at least since the beginning of the Christian era.¹⁷ It resembles pagan number mysticism going back still further to Pythagoras. Biblical numerology is not explicitly endorsed by Scripture, though many have found warrant for it in the mysterious 666 of Revelation and the unusually frequent use of the numbers seven, twelve and forty.

Given a desire to find spiritual significance for the otherwise mundane numbers in Scripture, and given the enormous variety of manipulations possible with mathematics, it is easy to "find" all sorts of coincidences. This has frequently been used to prove the inspiration of Scripture, but also of the Qur'an and the Talmud. This ability to "prove" inconsistent revelations, plus the many conflicting views of the significance of each number, is self-defeating.¹⁸ It would be impossible to disprove all the speculations which have been based on numerology, but we will soon know whether Harold Camping's calculations for the second coming are worth anything.

Velikovsky

- 588 Orval Friedrich. *Early Vikings and the Ice Age*. Elma, IA: privately published, c1984.
- 1263 Donald Wesley Patten. *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch*. Seattle: Pacific Meridian, 1966.
- 1264 Donald W. Patten, Ronald R. Hatch and Loren C. Steinhauer. *The Long Day of Joshua and Six Other Catastrophes*. Seattle: Pacific Meridian, 1973.
- 1434 Uuras Saarnivaara. *Can The Bible Be Trusted?* Minneapolis: Osterhus, 1983.
- 1555 James E. Strickling, Jr. *Origins C Today's Science, Tomorrow's Myth*. New York: Vantage, c1986.
- 1561 Luther Sunderland. *Darwin's Enigma: Fossils and Other Problems*. San Diego, CA: Master Books, 1984.
- 1703 Ralph Franklin Walworth. *Subdue the Earth*. New York: Delta, 1977.
- 1715 Fred Warshofski. *Doomsday: The Science of Catastrophe*. New York: Pocket Books, 1977.

The speculations of the Russian medical doctor Immanuel Velikovsky C that miracles such as the exodus and Joshua's long day resulted from the planet Venus passing very close to the earth C attracted considerable attention on college campuses in the 1960s. Some evangelicals later Christianized Velikovsky's views as part of a catastrophic interpretation of earth's history. Both scientifically and historically such theories could be called crackpot. The physical forces Velikovsky and his followers invoke won't do what he wants them to do, and the historical sources he quotes don't mean what he says they do.¹⁹

How Should We Respond?

These examples by no means exhaust the crackpot theories and scientific frauds that have been influential in evangelical circles. I still remember being told on several occasions in the 1960s that astronomers had discovered a cube 1500 miles on a side rapidly approaching the earth.²⁰ And we haven't even mentioned the considerable variety of quackery flourishing in health and medicine.²¹

Ideas such as these are appealing to many. Some people, perhaps, are the sort that easily jump to conclusions, impressed by the big picture and too impatient to be bothered with details or to check what someone with more knowledge might have to say. Others may find these ideas to be very congenial to their own views and useful as an apologetic against some conflicting

view which troubles them. And some may just want to be in on something special, to belong to some inner circle which really understands what life is all about. In any case, these are temptations we must be wary of, for our God is truth and he wants his people to care for truth the way he does.

There are principles which can help protect us against falling for crackpot science just as good hermeneutical principles protect us from crackpot exegesis. These are rooted in Scriptural principles for making decisions about matters of fact.²²

- (1) We should be fair. We should judge ideas we like by the same standard we judge ideas we don't like (Matt 7:1-5).
- (2) We should know what can be said against our pet ideas as well as what can be said for them (Prov 18:17).
- (3) We should seek out people (especially Christians) with special training in areas particularly relevant to the idea we are examining (Prov 12:15).
- (4) We should see what sort of cause is being proposed for the phenomenon being advocated and what evidence we have that the cause is adequate to produce the effect (Amos 3:3-6).
- (5) We should ask what sorts of evidence support this claim. Do we have the testimony of multiple, independent, reliable witnesses? (Deut 17:6; 19:15).
- (6) Does it seem that any data is being ignored or explained away? (Rom 1:18-20).
- (7) We should use caution in adopting a new idea that is not widely accepted (Prov 29:20).
- (8) We should be careful that our attitude is one of humility and a sincere desire for truth, rather than seeking recognition, vengeance or such (Prov 21:2-3; Mic 6:8; John 5:44).

Conclusions

Evangelical Christians are by no means the only people afflicted by crackpot science. A visit to any well-stocked secular bookstore will turn up hundreds of titles promoting such ideas. In fact, Christians who follow the biblical admonition to shun the occult will be spared many errors which trouble the New Age movement. So, of course, will the secularists who reject the supernatural, but they in turn fall for another kind of crackpot science, the belief that reality can be adequately explained without God.²³ We need to avoid both dangers.

References:

1. Some examples of this are the National Academy of Sciences' *Science and Creationism* (National

Academy Press, 1984) and the 1989 California Science Framework approved by the state Board of Education. On the latter, see K. Padian, "The California Science Framework: A Victory for Scientific Integrity," *National Center for Science Education Reports* 9(6), 1989; and Mark Hartwig and P. A. Nelson, *Invitation to Conflict* (Access Research Network, 1992).

2. Tom McIver, *Anti-Evolution: An Annotated Bibliography* (McFarland, 1988; reprint Johns Hopkins, 1992). McIver lists over 1850 books and pamphlets that oppose evolution in one way or another, some quite old, some very recent, some very sound, some very crackpot.

3. See John A. Bloom, "Geocentricity: What saith the Scriptures?" Address at the Biblical Cosmology and Geocentricity Conference, June 5-7, 1978 sponsored by the Tychonian Society at Cleveland State University.

4. More detail is given in Robert C. Newman, "Geocentrism: Was Galileo Wrong?" Tract, IBRI, 1994.

5. Robert C. Newman, "A Critical Examination of Modern Cosmological Theories," *IBRI Research Report* 15 (1982); see also Robert C. Newman, "Light-Travel Time: Evidence for an Old Universe." Tract, IBRI, 1993.

6. Robert C. Newman, "An Ancient Historical Test of the Setterfield-Norman Hypothesis," *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 28 (1991): 77-78; for a more general response to the problem of light travel time, see Robert C. Newman, "Light-Travel Time: Evidence for an Old Universe." Tract, IBRI, 1993.

7. See Joseph C. Dillow, *The Waters Above: Earth's Pre-Flood Vapor Canopy* (Chicago: Moody, 1981).

8. See Dillow, above; and Robert C. Newman, *The Biblical Teaching on the Firmament*. STM thesis, Biblical School of Theology, 1972. Microfiche, Portland, OR: Theological Research Exchange Network, 1986.

9. See Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 156-161.

10. See Robert C. Newman, "The Longest Day," *United Evangelical* 52, no. 15 (23 Aug 1974): 8-11; reprinted in a revised form as "Joshua's Long Day and the NASA Computers." Tract, IBRI, 1994.

11. See the popular discussion of these phenomena in George Gamow, *Mr. Tompkins in Paperback* (Cambridge, 1993 reprint); somewhat more technically in Nick Herbert, *Quantum Reality* (Doubleday, 1985); a Christian response is given briefly in Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos* (NavPress, 1993), pp 89-95.

12. See Clifford M. Will, *Was Einstein Right? Putting General Relativity to the Test* (Basic Books, 1986); for a sober Christian treatment of the matter, see Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God: Recent Scientific Discoveries Reveal the Unmistakable Identity of the Creator*, 2nd ed. (Promise, 1991), chap 5.
13. See the comments of E. W. Maunder, "Astronomy" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1939) 1:310.
14. C. S. Lewis, "On Criticism," in *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. 140.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 309; E. W. Maunder, *The Astronomy of the Bible* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, c1908), pp. 149-161.
16. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:310.
17. e.g., Philo, *On the Creation*, 13, 89ff.
18. For more sober treatments of Biblical numerology, see John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) and Oswald Thompson Allis, *Biblical Numerics* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974).
19. Robert C. Newman, "The Astrophysics of *Worlds in Collision*," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 25 (1973): 146-151; Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Immanuel Velikovsky's Catastrophic History," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 25 (1973): 134-139. Nearly the whole December, 1973 issue of the *JASA* was devoted to Velikovsky's views, with two papers favorable to him also included.
20. I don't have any documentation on this; all I heard was oral. Presumably this was supposed to be the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.
21. Some organizations seeking to educate the public about quackery and expose health fraud: Christians Investigating New Age Medicine, POB 16855, Asheville, NC 28816, phone (704) 684-8822; National Council Against Health Fraud, POB 1276, Loma Linda, CA 92350, (909) 824-4690; and the Consumer Health Information Research Institute, 3521 Broadway, Kansas City, MO 64111, (800) 821-6671.
22. A list of questions provided by Janice Lyons (of Christians Investigating New Age Medicines) for evaluating health products and services has some similarities: (1) Does the practice actually work? How do you know? Stories and testimonies do not prove anything by themselves. (2) Is the practice or therapy based on accurate anatomy and physiology? (3) Are there reputable scientific studies which support or oppose the therapy or practice? (4) Is the practice accepted by the science and health community as valid? If not, why not? (5) Does the practice depend on your ability to

believe in it, or the belief of the practitioner? (6) Does the practice work only if you or the practitioner enter an altered state of consciousness? (7) Does the practice depend on psychic or paranormal ability? (8) Does the practice depend upon life energy, bio-energy, prana, "electromagnetic" energy, polarities or other invisible or immeasurable forces, or does it employ needles, massage, finger pulls, touch, electronic devices, crystals or such? (9) What are the origins of the practice, leader or organization? (10) What frame of reference or worldview does the practice function in? What is the worldview of its major proponents? (11) Is Scripture being used to promote the practice? Is it being used correctly in context? Adapted from her article in *Christian Sentinel* 2 (Sept 1993): 6.

23. A certain irrational leap to avoid the theistic implications of scientific data characterizes a number of recent works. See, e.g., P. C. W. Davies, *Accidental Universe* (Cambridge, 1982); John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford, 1986); Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam, 1988).