

The Unintended Disservice of Young Earth Science

Andrew S. Balian

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Andrew Balian's book is a devastating and thorough attack on the Young Earth Science movement, which is led by evangelical creationist Christians who claim that the Bible "proves" that the Earth is a mere 6,000 years old. What is unique about Balian's effort is that its stated purpose is not to convince Young Earthers to change their belief, but merely to be quiet about it.

Balian represents one of many sides in a creationist civil war. His goal here, however, is not victory: It is the literary equivalent of attempting to impose a no-fly zone. He wants the combatants to set aside their rhetoric in favor of moving forward with the common goal of spreading Christianity.

As the title states, the author believes that the Young Earth Science movement does a disservice to all Christian groups, because its central belief "garners ridicule of the Bible for supposedly containing a creation fable." By insisting on its particular interpretation of Genesis, Balian believes, this group raises "a nearly insurmountable barrier between the educated world and the church," one that is "sowing the seeds of a major crisis which will make the job of world evangelism even harder than it is already."

Balian goes so far as to blame the Young Earthers for "doubling" the percentage of atheists in the United States from four to nine percent over the course of a single generation. That fifteen percent of all Americans now believe that the Bible is little more than a book of "fables," charges Balian, is also a direct consequence of preaching by the Young Earthers.

The author's intended audience, however, is unlikely to accept such chastisement. Balian grudgingly accepts this reality, and hopes that a broader group of ministers and lay people will use this book to help remove what he says "has become an albatross to our good captain—Jesus Christ!"

Balian provides ample ammunition to his coreligionists to strike at the Young Earthers' contentious theory of creation. His book's 190 pages of text are supported by 269 pages of appendices. Some of these appendices debunk or discredit Young Earth Science. Others of these addenda present how theologians, philosophers, and other learned men from St. Augustine on have sought to reconcile matters of faith and science in relation to Genesis and its story of creation.

To surrender to Young Earth Science, warns Balian, citing a leading geneticist, "would lead to a complete and irreversible collapse of the sciences of physics, chemistry, cosmology, geology and biology." Or, as a biology professor quoted by Balian explains, the "Young Earth perspective" is "the equivalent of insisting that two plus two is not really equivalent to four."

Despite its many references to science and scientists, however, Balian's book is not about science, but about religion. To those who might accuse him of undermining the creationist position, Balian offers the comforting defense that "no compromise with evolution is involved."

To the contrary, he supports the charge of one theologian that Young Earth Science "has inadvertently been the materialist/naturalist's 'best friend,' in that they have provided them with the perfect straw man to shoot down...." As such, Balian adds, the Young Earthers are "contributing to the needless damnation of souls by giving them a reason to ridicule the Bible*...*."

What Balian hopes to accomplish is for creationists in all camps to table their internecine arguments. He also suggests that they focus on their greater mission.

“Scripture shows sometimes speaking up is unwise,” he instructs his coreligionists. There is virtue in silence and that virtue is discretion. After all, he concludes, “...why pick this fight with the non-Christian world to whom we must evangelize?”

MARK G. MCLAUGHLIN (April 27, 2011)

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