

Following Darwin? An Interview with Dr. Emil Silvestru
By Richard Fangrad, CEO, Creation Ministries International (Canada)

Do real scientists believe the Bible? Could a scientist still do good science if he believed that God created the universe in six real days, about six thousand years ago?

It has been my privilege to work alongside Dr. Emil Silvestru at the Canadian office of Creation Ministries International (CMI). He is one of many highly qualified scientists who reject evolution and believe that there is good scientific evidence to support the Bible's account of Creation. Dr. Silvestru answers a few questions and tells us about a new and exciting documentary film that he is involved with.

RF (Richard Fangrad): People are often shocked when we mention that Creation Ministries International (CMI) employs “real” Ph.D. scientists. Why does CMI do this?

ES (Emil Silvestru): We do it so that CMI can properly assess the many scientific claims in the media and in public school curricula that contradict the Bible, and so we can provide scientifically sound answers within a Biblical perspective. Many presume that science is all about collecting facts. But when it comes to the issue of origins—how the universe and the world came to be, etc.—all scientists bring their worldview (i.e., their religious beliefs) to the table. It is absolutely necessary that the claims of secular scientists are answered by Christian individuals with a matching level of expertise. As a result of these claims, many Christians have rejected the plain teaching of Genesis and accepted compromise views. But compromising on Genesis inevitably leads to compromising on Redemption! If Genesis is not what it says it is, then Christ is not who He says He is! CMI's scientists not only provide reliable answers to secular criticism, but they also reveal the massive set of presuppositions on which the entire evolutionary theory is built.

RF: Like many of our scientists, you were an atheist and evolutionist when you grew up in communist Romania. How did your education as a scientist help you to make sense of Creation and the events in Genesis?

ES: Being a scientist is usually a matter of following a desire you feel you were born with. It can free your mind from the feeling of being forced to learn (which most students face during schooling years), and as a result you become a natural seeker of knowledge. For some, it is just a matter of time until you discover order, beauty, and the unmistakable signature of a Supreme Intelligence. In my case, it was my heart that first understood that the Creator was the Christ (my wife-to-be Flory was already a believer). And as my heart surrendered to Christ, my mind followed, in the sense that Christ's teachings changed my paradigm. Shocking as it may sound, this doesn't mean I rejected science, only the secular materialistic interpretation of beginnings. Genesis is a book of beginnings; hence a scientist who is a follower of Christ has to deal with it head on. I understood that if all of the Bible is not God's inerrant Word, then Christianity loses meaning. Therefore I had to come to terms with Genesis as written, because it is foundational to the very gospel.

The geologist in me realized very quickly that the key event in Genesis was Noah's Flood—the ultimate geological event. If there really was a worldwide flood, then the vast majority of sediments and fossils that we see today could have been its outcome. This made the idea of deep geological time (millions of years) usually associated with such sediments irrelevant.

Note: For more fascinating details about Dr. Silvestru's testimony (including secret Christian meetings in communist Romania), read the interview from a June 1999 issue of Creation magazine on our website (www.CreationOnTheWeb.org/silvestruinterview).

RF: A number of years ago you told me about a fascinating idea for a Creationist documentary. It was to retrace Darwin's 1830s voyage of the *Beagle* with the aim of reexamining his observations. This exciting documentary—currently in production—is one of the biggest for any faith-funded ministry. How did you first come up with this idea?

ES: I knew that the secular world would make a huge fuss about the “Double Darwin Anniversary” in 2009. It will be 200 years from his birth and 150 years from the first printing of his world-changing *The Origin of Species*. I had read quite a lot about Darwin (after all, if I publicly disagree with the man, I should know at least what he believed and why!). I came to realize he really considered himself a geologist, not a biologist. And as a young (twenty-three-year old) geologist, a voyage like the *Beagle's* must have been instrumental in his intellectual shaping.

For instance, as he began the voyage, he read the first volume of Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, then fresh off the press. Before reaching the western coast of South America, he read the second volume and later on the third. There is no doubt in my mind that he was a man with a mission—convinced that Lyell was right (and the Bible wrong—Lyell had clearly stated his goal was to “liberate science from Moses”).

Although little is taught or written about Darwin's geological mistakes, I was sure there had to be some significant ones. It was then that I started toying with the idea of a documentary to revisit the places that impacted Darwin's ideas. A sort of “the stuff they didn't tell you about Darwin.” There is no doubt that 2009 will be a year of praise and indiscriminate worship of Darwin.

By following in Darwin's footsteps to the very locations he visited and by reviewing them through the eyes of the modern geologist, we could reveal a “different Darwin.” The aim was never to indulge in “Darwin bashing” but rather to provide a calm reassessment of the “facts.” This is because we want it to be acceptable to major TV channels. It could simply leave the viewer with the thought, “If Darwin was wrong about some of his geology, maybe his biology could also be wrong.” That could open their eyes to alternatives they never knew existed. Such a documentary could also become an excellent tool that Christians could use for “pre-evangelism,” by helping remove the blindfold of evolutionary “scales” that many non-believers have without knowing it.

RF: Darwin's idea is primarily a biological theory, yet as a geologist you are deeply involved in CMI's documentary about Darwin. How did his view of geology affect his thinking about biology?

ES: His geology provided the framework for Darwinian biological evolution. To give "goo-to-you" evolution a chance, he needed eons of time. Lyell's millions-of-years interpretation of the rocks and fossils provided the time he needed. When visiting places like the Galapagos Islands, Darwin interpreted the geological features he saw as evidence of deep time. Along with much needed major climate and geological changes, and isolation, he believed that there were sufficient mechanisms plus the time to allow creatures to change from one kind into another via natural selection. What Darwin did not understand is that while natural selection can give rise to change *within* a created kind, it does not provide the mechanism for the huge changes required by his evolutionary ideas to change one kind into another.

RF: While filming the documentary in the locations Darwin visited, what geologic feature most impressed you?

ES: The Santa Cruz River in South America. This river was pivotal in Darwin's speculations about slow erosion over millions of years. The river has no significant tributary along its 205 miles of length, yet it carries about 915 cubic yards of water every second from its source (a lake) to the ocean. And although its slope is insignificant (it drops only 623 feet over its length), it flows on the average at 17 mph. As we boated up the river against the flow for two and a half days, we burned 154 gallons of fuel!

It is a truly mighty river. Yet Darwin (who traveled upstream for about two-thirds of that distance) was convinced it could not have cut the very large valley (over 18 miles) it flows in, and its very hard basalt layers. He believed that the sea must have eroded it over many millions of years. But having seen the river and the geology of the area, I am certain it was cut by the sudden release of a huge volume of glacial meltwater that flooded towards the ocean. That would have been hundreds of years after Noah's Flood toward the end of the Ice Age. I was happy to find evidence on the ground for this. (It's interesting that ideas about the Ice Age were popularized only after Darwin had returned to England, so he would not have thought of the possibility of an Ice Age flood.)

RF: What was the film shoot like?

ES: Exhilarating, very rewarding, and to me deeply emotional. For someone born and raised in communist Romania, without the normal opportunities to visit such remote places as Patagonia, it was even more overwhelming. Reading was the chief occupation of my early years, and through the books my mind would travel to distant places. But I never dreamt I would see them! During filming I tried as earnestly as I could to put myself into the shoes of the young Charles Darwin, trying to imagine what he felt when he saw those same places. I suspect his mind, just like mine, was galloping to take it all in and to ensure that it was neatly recorded for further investigation and interpretation. In

planning the shoot I had to choose locations based on Darwin's writings, but we had only two weeks for reconnaissance prior to the filming, which started in March 2008.

RF: A growing number of Christian schools and homeschooling families already integrate teaching that God created recently, in six days. How important is it that they discuss Darwinism?

ES: I believe it will be very important to understand Darwinism and the arguments for and against evolution. We are going to hear a lot of grand claims in 2009. Also, too often Christians use weak arguments against evolution and, when challenged, many stumble. By understanding the supposed mechanisms for evolution, we can see how they break down under the scrutiny of real observational and experimental science.

The key is to teach our children "how to think" about the issues. Evolutionary science tends to teach them "what to think" without ever questioning the interpretations or mechanisms. Teaching at Christian schools and at home provides the opportunity to choose your sources of information. Unlike students trained in public schools, our students can hear, discuss, and learn about Creation science. CMI's scientists (a wonderful team to which I am honored to belong) work continuously to provide solid scientific data that can be effectively used in discussing Darwinism. There are over 5,500 fully searchable articles on our website (*CreationOnTheWeb.org*). We are here to help. Also, you can find out more about CMI's exciting documentary project, including pictures from some of the locations, by visiting www.DarwinFilm.com.

Biographical Information

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Richard Fangrad was driven to get involved with creation ministry primarily because of the influence that creation materials and resources had on his own faith and his walk with Christ. He has been speaking on the creation/evolution issue since 1994, and the Canadian office of Creation Ministries International (CMI) began as a room in his home in late 1998. Richard is now CEO of CMI-Canada and co-host of CMI's TV show: Creation Magazine Live! Richard and his family live in Kitchener, Ontario.