

A developing schism in Flood geology

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Young-earth creationism continues in its development with the ongoing refinement of a Bible-based geologic framework of earth history. Unfortunately, this work is not unified as two opposing perspectives have developed. The more popular approach seeks to adapt and modify existing concepts and ideas derived from Naturalism (e.g. the standard geologic timescale, Plate Tectonic theory, and radiometric age dating). We identify this framework as the 'Remodelled naturalistic approach'. The less popular framework, which we term the 'Reconstructed Bible-based approach', seeks to define earth history solely from the biblical narrative. These constructs are diametrically opposed to one another. We review the two geologic frameworks and their supporting concepts and conclude that the advancement of either approach should be conducted openly and defended by peer-reviewed literature. A failure to do so will only serve to weaken the advancement of diluvial geology

The development of a Bible-based geological framework of earth history is progressing. However, the work is not unified. Two competing perspectives have emerged, each with a different philosophical basis. A schism is developing in Flood geology that will divide it into two opposing positions. One approach advances a remodelling of geological ideas derived from Naturalism (figure 1). The other advances a reconstructed geologic history based solely on an outline derived from the Bible (figure 2). Presently, the 'Remodelled' naturalistic approach is the more popular of these two efforts in creationism. The least developed and less popular concept is the 'Reconstructed' Bible-based geological outline. Because these constructs are progressing in different directions, it is important to understand their differences, limitations, and ultimate endpoints. This work presents an overview of the two conflicting perspectives.

The need for a biblical geologic framework

In their groundbreaking work, Whitcomb and Morris¹ understood that earth's biblical geologic history should not be defined from the naturalistically based standard geologic timescale. Unfortunately, neither they nor any other young-earth creationist at the time proposed a formal geologic framework in which to define the rock record. This has resulted in a largely disorganized effort in reconstructing earth history based on the biblical account. As an organized scientific pursuit, the development of diluvial geology has advanced very little over the course of several decades.

A Remodelled naturalistic approach

Although not the first person to attempt a diluvial interpretation of earth history, a comprehensive book on the geology of the Grand Canyon by Dr Steven A. Austin,

a young-earth creation geologist, was the most highly developed effort in remodelling the naturalistic standard geologic timescale within the biblical narrative^{2,3} (figure 3). Two years later, a special issue of the *Journal of Creation*⁴ was dedicated to defining the Flood/post-Flood boundary at various stratigraphic contacts while also using a compressed standard geologic timescale. Shortly thereafter, several young-earth creation scientists proposed a hierarchical geologic framework based on following the time-compressed standard geologic timescale with an emphasis on lithology and biostratigraphy.⁵ A summary/overview of the 'Remodelled' naturalistic approach adapting a compressed standard geologic timescale to biblical history has recently been published by Dr Andrew A. Snelling.⁶

In 1994, several young-earth creationists proposed an adaptation of the popular naturalistic idea of Plate Tectonic theory to the Flood framework. They apply a compressed standard geologic timescale with the purported accelerated movement of earth's many crustal plates consistent with the concepts already promoted by naturalists (e.g. Wilson cycles, matching biostratigraphy, matching lithostratigraphy, and matching paleomagnetic data sets).⁷ Identified as Catastrophic Plate Tectonics, this Remodelled naturalistic concept has become widely accepted among creationists and promoted by many of the young-earth creation organizations because it is consistent, except by time differences, with the popular Plate Tectonic theory taught in most public and private schools.

Probably the most promoted and highly touted of the many Remodelled naturalistic concepts has been accelerated nuclear decay. Well-funded research produced two separate volumes^{8,9} containing many technical ideas supporting the adoption of radiometric age-dates and proposing their incorporation within the biblical framework. To reach the lay audience, additional non-technical materials¹⁰

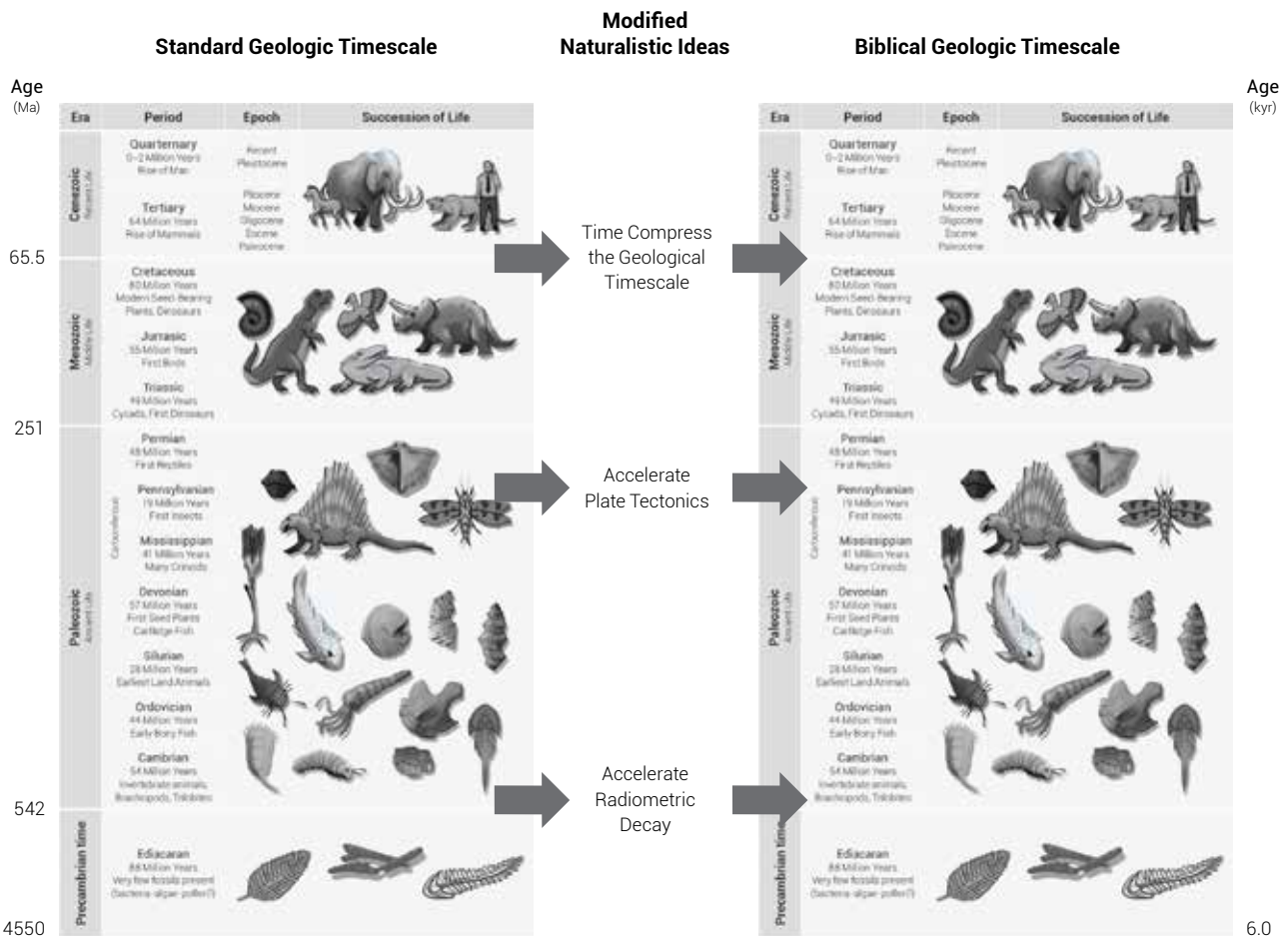


Figure 1. Some young-earth creationists suggest that we simply remodel naturalistic geologic history by compressing it to a biblical history. This is the 'Remodeled' framework behind acceptance of the compressed standard geological timescale, accelerated (i.e. Catastrophic) Plate Tectonics, and accelerated nuclear decay. However, there are many inconsistencies in the unification of natural and biblical geologic history.

were produced to promote the results of the study and its application in defining Bible history. The popularity of the RATE investigation is due to its acceptance of excessively old age dates that are believed to be the result of accelerated nuclear decay which occurred predominately during Creation Week and the Flood.¹¹

Issues with the Remodeled naturalistic framework

Perhaps the best advantage in following the Remodelled naturalistic framework is that it quickly and comprehensively provides a fully developed perspective in which to redefine a young earth. Theoretically, one need only compress the standard geologic timescale to accommodate it to the biblical narrative, and all of the geologic history taught in school has direct application to developing a young-earth geologic framework. However, applying this approach has many serious issues to be resolved. For

example, the linear progression of time follows the same Eons, Eras, Periods, and Epochs as the standard geologic timescale. This means that the Precambrian-to-Holocene evolutionary sequence also follows and its advocates must defend the Flood burial of all created life consistent with the standard geologic timescale. Other issues include the requirement to accept missing time when no rock layers are present and the application of conceptual ideas (e.g. facies, stratigraphic succession, and changing paleoenvironments) that are counter to what might be expected during the Flood cataclysm. These issues have not been addressed by the Remodellers.

Support for the Remodelled framework is derived from many different naturalistic datasets (e.g. biostratigraphy, Plate Tectonics, and radiometric age-dating). The necessary modifications to following this approach in defining biblical earth history often result in serious but separate issues from Naturalism. For example, both the acceleration of

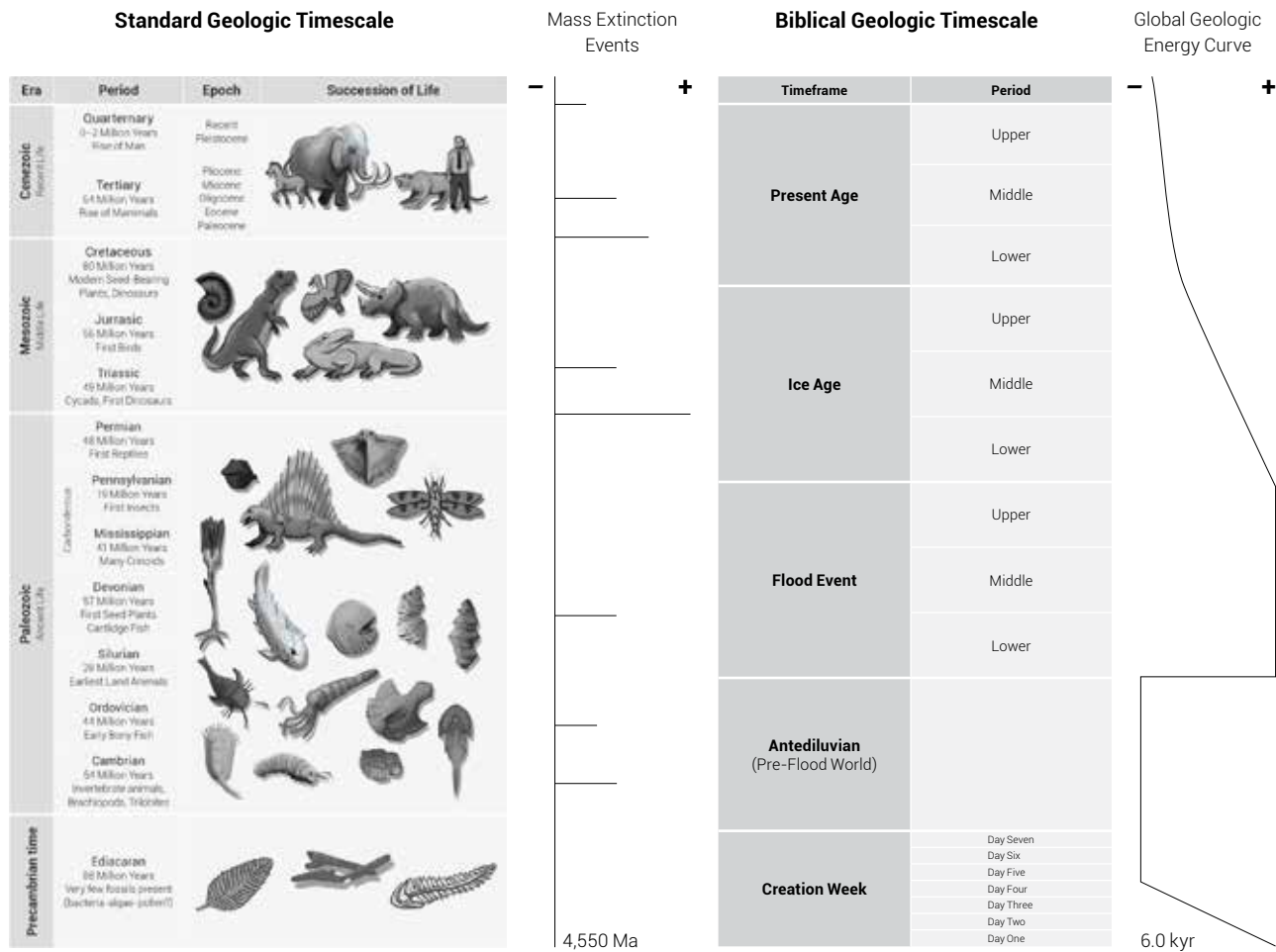


Figure 2. The two philosophical approaches to earth history are completely different. The naturalistic geologic timescale defines time both by evolution and radiometric dating. Biological evolution and mass extinction events have long served to divide time within this framework. Today, radiometric dating is supplanting biological evolution. A 'Reconstructed' biblical geologic history (Froede's version of a biblical geologic timescale shown) proposes that the two greatest periods of globally encompassing geologic energy expenditure occurred during the Creation Week and the Flood. We believe that these two competing philosophies cannot be unified in the development of a biblical geologic framework of earth history.

Plate Tectonic theory and the acceleration of nuclear decay create serious heat issues that individually and separately generate sufficient heat to melt the entire earth during the global Flood.^{12,13}

The biblical record restricts the greatest periods of globally encompassing geologic energy expenditure to two separate periods—Day 3 of the Creation Week and the global Flood. This places limits on the development of the compressed standard geologic timescale and its corresponding stratigraphic sequence and directly conflicts with the bifurcated biblical requirements. Assigning Precambrian, Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic sediments and strata to either Day 3 or the Flood creates inconsistency, conflict, and confusion when applied globally.

Finally, the Remodelled naturalistic approach seeks to set the pre-Flood/Flood and Flood/post-Flood boundary at

specific contacts along the compressed timescale (e.g. Precambrian/Cambrian, Paleozoic/Mesozoic, and Mesozoic/Cenozoic). However, the global nature of these stratigraphic contacts has made them seemingly indefensible and irrational.^{14,15} Published work further developing these important boundaries in diluvial geology has since ended.

Although articles and books have been written challenging many of the ideas in the Remodelled naturalistic approach,¹⁶⁻¹⁹ little information in its defense has been forthcoming from its advocates. This philosophic construct can only advance as it is developed in the peer-reviewed technical literature. However, it remains a very popular framework for many in creation science despite its limited defense and poorly defined naturalistically accommodating foundation.

A Reconstructed biblical outline approach

A different philosophical approach to establishing a framework for defining a biblical geologic history (figure 4) was first proposed by Dr Tasman Walker in 1994.²⁰ Independently, Carl Froede Jr²¹ published a similar conclusion—that young-earth creationists need to construct earth’s geologic history based solely on the biblical narrative (figure 2). This approach jettisons any need for incorporating the standard geologic timescale. It also liberates Bible history from the conflicting philosophical assumptions inherent in remodelling naturalistic geologic history (e.g. standard geologic timescale, lithostratigraphy, biostratigraphy, and radiometric age-dating).

Issues with a Reconstructed biblical geologic framework

The Reconstructed biblical geologic framework is not tied to any existing conceptualization or philosophy where ideas have already been developed that could readily be adapted. Rather, defining earth history will come from applying the historical outline from Scripture to the physical rock record. This approach is still in its infancy due to the scale of work necessary to develop a detailed earth history—largely dominated by the Flood.

Although two Reconstructed Bible-based geologic timescales have been developed, each has a different perspective on the divisions of time. The Walker timescale confines much of the stratigraphic record to specific numbered days

within the Flood year²² while the Froede approach is more open to defining the rock record based on the site-specific conditions and the local rock record.²³ However, both are useful in defining important pre-Flood/Flood and Flood/post-Flood boundaries and will allow the geologic division

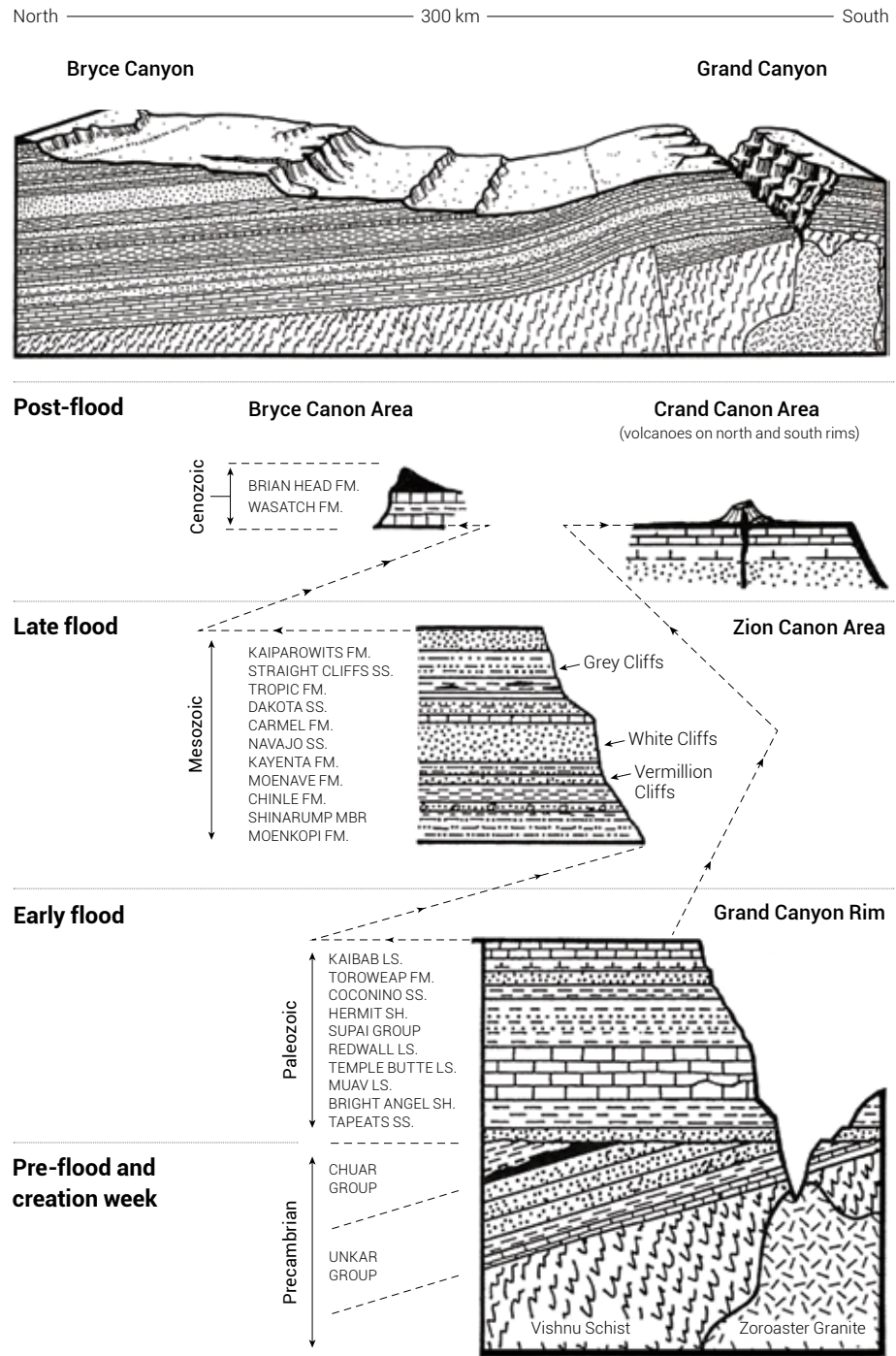


Figure 3. Austin ‘Remodelled’ the stratigraphic section from the base of the Grand Canyon to the top of the adjacent Colorado Plateau by simply time-compressing the naturalistic standard geologic timescale. This approach links these strata to a modified form of naturalistic philosophy.

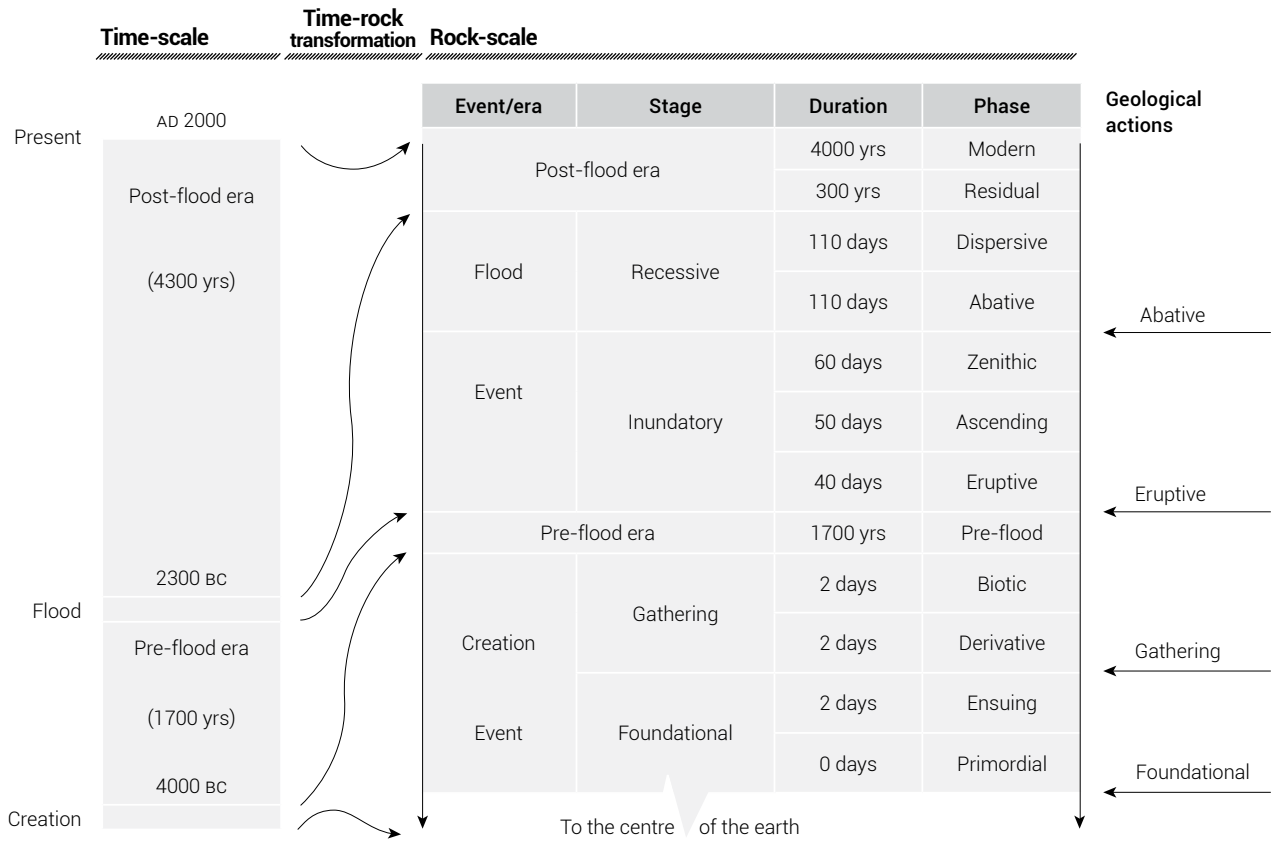


Figure 4. Tasman Walker proposed this 'Reconstructed' timescale based on the biblical narrative. This was the first formal biblical geologic timescale to break away from the naturalistic standard geologic timescale. It has been successfully applied at many locations.

of time to be developed in a consistent manner despite any differences.

Summary and conclusions

A biblical approach to understanding earth's geological history remains under development. Two competing philosophies, the Remodelled and Reconstructed frameworks are being advanced. The Remodelled perspective advocates modification of naturalistic concepts allowing for the adaptation of an existing and well-developed framework through such tenets as a time-compressed standard geologic timescale, accelerated plate tectonics, and limited periods of accelerated nuclear decay. Inconsistencies between the remodelled geologic and naturalistic timescales have been identified but remain unresolved. Additionally, the adaptation of the Remodelled approach creates new issues separate from its naturalistic source, many of which appear to require miracles for their resolution. Is this how creation science should advance?

The Reconstructed framework is a ground-up approach to defining earth's biblical geologic history based on the

divisions of time outlined in Scripture. The development of this conceptualization of biblical history will require fieldwork and the reanalysis of existing naturalistic datasets (i.e. reject naturalistic interpretations and work from the physical data). It does not suffer from underlying philosophical requirements or conflicts that might require miracles to resolve. However, there is much work to be done in developing the Reconstructed framework and the workers are few.

The mutually exclusive constructs of a Remodelled versus Reconstructed framework of biblical geologic history will ultimately result in disunity between the camps defending Flood geology. The advancement of either approach should be based on consistency in following the biblical narrative, its application to the physical rock record, and common sense. Presently, the Remodellers point to the Grand Canyon, as they have since 1994, while the Reconstructed supporters have numerous examples from across Australia and the United States where the biblical geologic timescale has been applied. The need to invoke miracles to accommodate ideas based on Naturalism should be avoided in the development of either geologic framework. Lastly,

the advancement of either geologic framework should be conducted openly and defended by peer-reviewed literature. The lack of defense of either framework will only serve to weaken the advancement of diluvial geology.

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