Book Review - The Answers Book
Chapter 11 – What About Continental Drift?
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This is a very interesting chapter. The authors put forth the theory of catastrophic plate tectonics. Superficially, this theory is actually believable…however, just because something is "believable" does not mean that it is right. I could come up with a theory of the extinction of the dinosaurs, with no apparent flaws, but that does not mean that it is right…it is only one theory among many.

When you have multiple theories which appear to be correct, then one must turn to other, circumstantial evidences, such as stratigraphy, in order to choose the right answer. Yes, catastrophic plate tectonics sounds plausible, but when you ask if all the sedimentary rock layers of the world could be produced by the flood, the obvious answer is no, therefore this theory is not correct. Even so, the theory itself is not without flaws.

Problems (Page 161)

The first thing mentioned is the fact that magnetic polarity changes as you go down a core sample. The authors claim this as evidence of rapid formation, but there is no support for this belief. The rock units are not one huge slab, but break apart into blocks from the pressure as they spread from the center. These blocks, pictured in the diagram, can and do rotate. There is no reason to assume that these patches of polarity anomalies represent "rapid formation."

The authors also mention the rapid reversals found by Coe and Prevot. I do not have access to their work, and thus cannot debate this point. It is not clear from the text or the source whether or not these individuals are young-earth creationists, so the trustworthiness of their work is not confirmed.

Catastrophic Plate Tectonics (Page 162)

A "convenient" theory that supposedly fits the young-earth model perfectly (if it were not for all the other contradictory evidence!). There are a few minor comments for this section. Page 163 the authors say that the new ocean floor is dramatically hotter, especially in the upper 60 miles. Interesting, considering the fact that oceanic plates are only 10 miles thick!

The authors appeal to the grandeur of the Grand Canyon (I wish I had a dollar for every time this Canyon was used to support a young earth!). However, the Grand Canyon has already been shown in other articles to have formed slowly. Look at the weakness of their Grand Canyon claims here and here.

On page 164-165, they mention the fact that slabs of crust as it was subducted would not have had time to be re-melted into the core material, and that such slabs had been found. This argument proves an old earth, not a young one. Given their unique catastrophic model, I would expect the slabs to melt quicker in the young-earth model, since this is a time during which many molten rock events would occur, i.e. the numerous volcanoes, and rapid sea floor spreading and subduction. In other words, the earth's core is hotter than normal. In fact, the rapid subduction would generate more heat through friction than a slow moving, old-earth subduction model, so you probably would not have these slabs there in the young earth model…but you would expect them in the old-earth model.

The bottom of Page 165 says the uniformitarian model of plate tectonics has limited explanatory power. Nothing could be further from the truth. The authors cast doubt upon the fact that the slow moving tectonic plates would not have sufficient forces to build mountains, especially the Himalayas. However, there is no such doubt in the scientific community…it only exists in the young-earth community (which is not scientific). It's a proven fact that the Indo-Australian plate is moving north at about 10 centimeters per year. We now have an accurate, GPS reading on the altitude of Mount Everest, at 29,035 feet.[1] It is only a matter of time before we have an actual measurement of the growth (height) of Everest. Only then will the young-earth community realize their error…but, of course, they won't admit it.

Think of it this way…any force which can move something as massive as the Indo-Australian plate 10 centimeters per year, has more than enough force to push the mountains upwards. Also, since this plate is moving north, pushing into the Asian plate, there is nowhere for the rocks to go but up!

However, perhaps the most damaging flaw in this theory is this. The young-earth proponents claim that Everest was formed from these great forces, in a short amount of time. However, look at their theory for the Grand Canyon rocks in the diagram on page 86. They claim that the strata of the canyon are "plastic," i.e. since they were still soft (wet), when the folds occurred, they didn't break, but were plastic, or, they folded. Now, look at the rocks of Everest. Hmmm, you have sedimentary, fossil bearing rocks. If these rocks were still wet when Everest was pushed up, it would be impossible for them to have formed jagged peaks…if they indeed were soft and pliable as the young-earth model states, then Everest would merely be a heap of dirt, instead of the jagged rocks that it is. Using the young-earth model, there is no possible way that Mt. Everest could have formed in a cataclysmic plate tectonic scenario. The only feasible answer is that the earth must be old, with the slow growth of creeping plates pushing into each other over millions of years.

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[1] http://geography.about.com/library/misc/bleverest.htm