

The Age of the Earth, the Moon, and Catastrophism

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This is a fascinating article shared by S.D.D.H. (to whom a big thank you for sharing it) about recent fossil finds that have some scientists revisiting the question of the age of the Earth, and when life first began to appear here. Except, as one reads this article, some “problems” begin to appear for those “following the science”, or at least, following *some* of it, while ignoring a few inconveniences caused by some *other* science:

[Fossil Discoveries Challenge Ideas About Earth’s Start](#)

The thesis here is simple enough, and will be of some interest to those who have long thought that the Earth, and more importantly, the life on it, is far older than the standard narrative believes:

In the arid, sun-soaked northwest corner of Australia, along the Tropic of Capricorn, the oldest face of Earth is exposed to the sky. Drive through the northern outback for a while, south of Port Hedlund on the coast, and you will come upon hills softened by time. They are part of a region called the Pilbara Craton, which formed about 3.5 billion years ago, when Earth was in its youth.

Look closer. From a seam in one of these hills, a jumble of ancient, orange-Creamsicle rock spills forth: a deposit called the Apex Chert. Within this rock, viewable only

through a microscope, there are tiny tubes. Some look like petroglyphs depicting a tornado; others resemble flattened worms. They are among the most controversial rock samples ever collected on this planet, and they might represent some of the oldest forms of life ever found.

In late-2017, researchers lobbed another salvo in the decades-long debate about the nature of these forms. They are indeed fossil life, and they [date to 3.465 billion years ago](#), according to [John Valley](#), a geochemist at the University of Wisconsin. If Valley and his team are right, the fossils imply that life diversified remarkably early in the planet's tumultuous youth.

More importantly, the new discoveries suggest the possibility that the early "hellish" period of Earth's geophysical history itself may increasingly come under fire:

As that story goes, in the half-billion years after it formed, Earth was hellish and hot. The infant world would have been rent by volcanism and bombarded by other planetary crumbs, making for an environment so horrible, and so inhospitable to life, that the geologic era is named the Hadean, for the Greek underworld. Not until a particularly violent asteroid barrage ended some 3.8 billion years ago could life have evolved.

But this story is increasingly under fire. Many geologists now think Earth may have been tepid and watery from the outset. The oldest rocks in the record suggest parts of the planet's crust had [cooled and solidified by 4.4 billion years ago](#). Oxygen in those ancient rocks [suggest the planet had water](#) as far back as 4.3 billion years ago. And instead of an epochal, final bombardment, meteorite strikes might have slowly tapered off as the solar system settled into its current configuration.

What I find intriguing here is the rather loose confirmation of cosmologies indicating a very early beginning not only to life, but also to those views which hold that *intelligent* life may have existed on this planet far longer ago in the mists of pre-history than the standard academic and scientific model suggests. For example, Michael Cremo and Richard Thompson's *Forbidden Archeology*, a lengthy and copiously documented and illustrated book well-known in the alternative research community outlines a case for the existence of such life, not just hundreds of thousands of years ago, but even millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions, and in the case of one rather extra-ordinary archeological mystery, over a billion years ago. Whatever one may think of their thesis – and having read their book, I'm not inclined to entirely dismiss it – one thing that emerges from this article is that “following the science” can be a daunting proposition, especially since real science changes; new facts are discovered and their implications are pondered and discussed, and old models are tweaked, adjusted, significantly modified, or outright rejected. And as any historian of science knows, sometimes those old rejected models have astounding ways of coming back, in a new guise or new clothing, as more data is added to the picture, or data “from outside the considered context” is pondered.

That point brings us to another point in the article, one which to my non-scientific mind, poses yet another significant problem for “the narrative”. First comes the rehearsal of the narrative:

About 4.54 billion years ago, Earth was forming out of dust and rocks left over from the sun's birth. Smaller solar leftovers continually pelted baby Earth, heating it up and endowing it with radioactive materials, which further warmed it from within. Oceans of magma covered Earth's surface. Back then, Earth was not so much a rocky planet as an incandescent ball of lava.

But then we get this exposition of one of those theories that forms one version of the narrative, which we'll call the "Earth-Moon fission theory" for want of a better term:

Not long after Earth coalesced, a wayward planet whacked into it with incredible force, possibly vaporizing Earth anew and forming the moon. The meteorite strikes continued, some excavating craters 1,000 kilometers across. In the standard paradigm of the Hadean eon, these strikes culminated in an assault dubbed the Late Heavy Bombardment, also known as the lunar cataclysm, in which asteroids emigrated to the inner solar system and pounded the rocky planets. Throughout this early era, ending about 3.8 billion years ago, Earth was molten and couldn't support a crust of solid rock, let alone life. (Emphasis added)

I don't know about you, but at this juncture I feel a little like that *enfant terrible* in elementary school who asks that disturbing question "Why didn't the trees just grow taller?" when confronted with those pictures in older generation "science" textbooks trying to describe why giraffes had such long necks, and being told that they "evolved" them to reach the leaves on eucalyptus trees. (I know this from experience, because I was one such *enfant terrible*, and when my question was posed, I was told that "When you grow up you'll understand it. Are there any other questions?") But back to our story...

The Moon, you see, was split off from the Earth when "a wayward planet whacked into it with incredible force, possibly vaporizing Earth anew and forming the Moon." Well, that may satisfy geologists, but it presents a few problems for physicists, such as trying to explain just how the Moon then ended up in a nearly perfect circular orbit around the Earth in a double planetary system at the exact distance needed for the Moon to blot out the corona of the Sun exactly during an eclipse, and doing so in such a fashion that the Moon, rotating on its own axis, rotates in an orbit at just exactly

the right speed to leave one face constantly turned to the Earth – about 60% of its surface – and the other face invisible to Earth-born observation until Apollo and Chinese satellites evolved to show us the other side. The *other* model of the Earth-Moon narrative has the Moon wandering through the solar system, somehow evading gravitational capture by such behemoths as Jupiter and Saturn (perhaps they were nowhere near when the Moon wandered through and hence couldn't *be* captured which is certainly a possibility), and ending up in the same orbit doing exactly the same things, the problem here being that if it was captured, its orbit would possibly be a little more elliptical than it actually is, since it would *accelerate* during the capture. Possible? Sure, except it looks to my non-scientific mind as if the Moon had to have been slowed down during the capture, and “parked” there, leaving people scratching their heads and re-doing their equations. And if you think I'm the only one with a “Moon problem,” think again, because Isaac Newton and Isaac Asimov both had the same problem (and there's a few others, including some intrepid Soviet scientists who some years ago actually posited the idea that it was a big spaceship and that someone simply *parked* it there and arranged for it to be doing all the strange things it is doing), leaving some – including me – to respond to the question “Ever seen a UFO?” with the answer “Yes, every time I see the Moon.”

So, I don't know about you, but yes, I can buy some really old fossils and an even older date for the origins of life on this planet, but I'm still skeptical about some explanations for that Moon, or whatever it is...

See you on the flip side...