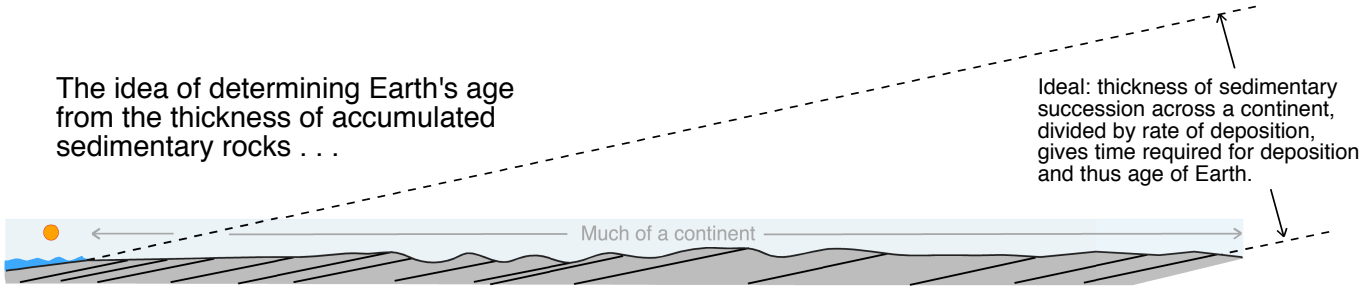
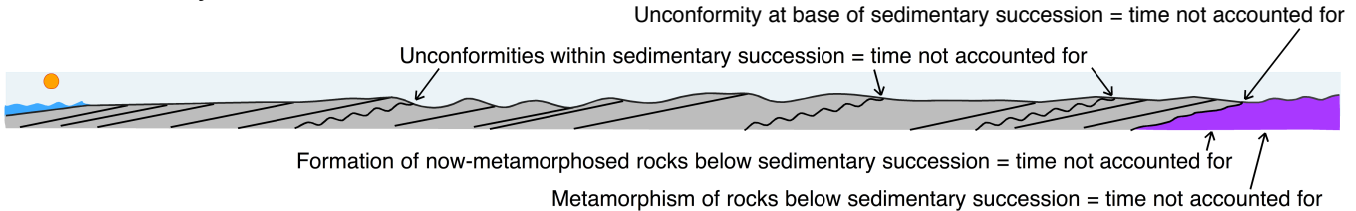


The idea of determining Earth's age from the thickness of accumulated sedimentary rocks . . .



. . . and why it fails



Nineteenth-century geologists aspired to determine Earth's age by measuring the thickness of the sedimentary strata that had accumulated on the continents and dividing by a reasonable rate of deposition. They came up with elapsed times of

hundreds of millions of years, far longer than the 6,000 years that theologians had arrived at from the Hebrew Old Testament. However, the nineteenth-century geologists' calculation could yield only a minimum age for Earth, because it failed

to account for unconformities within the sedimentary succession and failed to account for the Precambrian rocks, largely metamorphic rocks, that underlay and were thus older than the sedimentary strata that were measured.