

### Sin, Fossils, and Pre-Adarnic Men

Many, rejecting the theory that Noah's flood can sufficiently account for the deposition of fossils, coal, and petroleum, have relegated them to the supposed gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. While we certainly recognize the *biological* problems encountered by saying that death came upon the animal world as a result of the sin of Adam, one has very serious *scriptural* problems if he does not. Says Custance in commenting on this difficulty:

If one wanted to be facetious one might ask, however, whether herbivorous animals ate anything during the days or hours of Adam's innocence: and if they did, whether they were careful not to eat any microbes (by accident of course) that happened to be on the leaves. Or did they not perhaps tread on some and kill them-ants for instance-albeit unwittingly? Is it possible indeed for vegetable matter to be sought and eaten at all without the death of some life? Does not the digested leaf die? Surely life is found everywhere and not just in the larger, more immediately visible creatures.

Personally, I do not see that death is in any sense a *punishment* in the animal (or plant) kingdom. It is for man, only when he sinned (Romans 5:12). The passage in Romans 8:22 is not as clearly a reference to the whole animal creation as is often assumed since, in the Greek "the whole creation" is a phrase which occurs elsewhere only of human society. It appears again in Mark 16: 15 in the great commission- "to every creature." It appears in Colossians 1: 15 where the reference is equally clearly to the *human* race, and in Colossians 1: 23 "to every creature" where the reference is clearly the same. It is not altogether just to take a phrase like this and use it to invalidate a thesis unless one tells the otherwise uninformed reader that an entirely different interpretation is not only possible but more likely.<sup>1</sup>

This type of thinking is not unlike that of many gap theorists. Before we discuss the passage, it is best to get the entire context of it before us. Romans 8: 18-23 says this:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

The other two verses bearing closely upon this discussion are Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ... ,"

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<sup>1</sup> Custance, "Reply to Book Review," pp, 135-6.

and verse 14: "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense .... "

### **The Entrance of Sin**

There are several observations we need to make about these verses in the process of making a conclusion about the entrance of sin and its effects upon the animal world.

1. We have already recognized the biological problems involved with saying that there was no death before the fall. The life cycle of the animal world is presently built upon the feeding of one animal or form of life feeding on another animal or form of life. But if we are to choose between an interpretation based upon the problems of biological science and one based upon the evident meaning of Scripture, we must choose Scripture, and wait for scientific knowledge to be augmented sufficiently to correlate the two. This historical problem, furthermore, is not the only one for the interpreter who sees all of creation in view in Romans 8. There is also the problem concerning the future restoration, when all of "creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption" (Rom. 8:21). Lenski speaks candidly to those who raise these scientific problems:

Many questions regarding details confront us in this connection. Will the animals, the plants, the insects be raised to life? What about the noxious creatures, the bacilli, for instance? We have no answers. Wait! It is vain to operate with our logic in a field that is infinitely above all logic. Do we know what it means to create? As little do we know what it means to make all things new. Do we know what our glory will be? As little do we know what this glorified earth will be. The great hope arises from the divine assurances and promises. Let no little vain reasonings dim that hope! He who made Paradise for Adam will make heaven and earth new, far beyond Paradise, in the consummation ....

The speculations and hypotheses of modern science, philosophy, and theology regarding the brute origin of man and regarding an evolution that is in progress, but does not have even a hypothetical goal, are mistaken in the light of Scripture. It is a pity that some men are inclined to take them seriously.<sup>2</sup>

Our knowledge is not sufficiently advanced to correct the Bible, nor will it ever be. We do not know, nor perhaps will we ever be able to conceive, of all the changes that occurred when the curse came. If the scientist argues that for life to survive, death in other life must occur, we could just as well argue that death and the wearing-out process is also just as much an integral part of man's body as we know it, yet there was no death in man before the fall! Many things were changed at the fall, and death in the animal kingdom seems to be one of them.<sup>3</sup>

2. The meaning of the word *ktisis* (creation) and the phrase *pasa he ktisis* (the whole creation) is not as certain as we could wish. It does not help, however, to cloud the issue by citing other places where the phrase or word is used. The question is, what is its meaning in *this context*, and what

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<sup>2</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), pp, 538-9.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed defense of this view, see Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, pp. 454-73.

contextual considerations govern its meaning? Arndt and Gingrich, under sub-listing β, "the sum total of everything created, *creation, world*" comment on Romans 8: 19-22 thusly: "The meaning of : [*ktisis*] is in dispute in Romans 8:19-22, though the passage is usually taken to mean the waiting of the whole creation below the human level (animate and inanimate ... )."<sup>4</sup>

Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* makes a similar judgment: "Romans 8: 19 f. sets the same limits for this creation. [*ktisis*] here refers to the whole creation."<sup>5</sup> Hodge is also of the same opinion:

That [*ktisis*] here, is to be taken, not as meaning the whole human family, nor the heathen world, nor all rational creatures, but the whole creation with which we are immediately connected-the earth, and all its tribes of beings, man excepted-is the opinion of the great majority of commentators of all ages. It is supported by the following considerations: 1. In the first place, the words [], *the whole creation*, are so comprehensive, that nothing should be excluded which the nature of the subject and the context do not show cannot be embraced within their scope .... 2. In the second place, as the apostle clearly distinguishes between []; and believers, the latter cannot be included in the former.<sup>6</sup>

Hodge's last point is a particularly strong argument, for a simple reading of the passage immediately gives the reader the impression that two distinct groups are in view, one a group of believers, which is contrasted with the other, the whole creation.

There are, moreover, other Scriptures that explicitly state that the earth and creation in general were cursed because of Adam's sin: "Cursed is the ground because of you .... Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you ... " (Gen. 3:17,18). How much the animal and plant world was actually changed after the curse we cannot know, but we cannot deny that they *were changed*, that this change was a result of *Adam's sin*, and that the change involved *death*. "It is sufficient that the irrational creation was made subject to a frail, dying, miserable state, by the act of God (not by its own) in punishment of the sins of men. This is the representation of the Scriptures and this is the declaration of Paul."<sup>7</sup>

3. As to Custance's statement that "it is not altogether just to take a phrase like this and use it to invalidate a thesis unless one tells the otherwise uninformed reader that an entirely different interpretation is not only possible but more likely,"<sup>8</sup> we heartily agree. In point of fact, we would have appreciated seeing Custance himself do that very thing in his discussions of *hayeta, asa and bara', tohu* and *bohu, katartizo, katabole* , and every other place where he took the decidedly *strange* and *unusual* interpretation, many times misquoting the lexicon, and often not even citing it fully. We could ask the same for all the early writers and translators who were misquoted and whose statements were taken

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<sup>4</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 457.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Foester, "KTItw," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. III, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 796.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), pp, 269-70.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>8</sup> Custance, "Reply to Book Review," pp. 135-136.

out of context. Yes, we agree, let us have all the evidence both for and against the view, and we are confident when that is done, the Gap Theory will finally collapse.

We concur with Whitcomb and Smith who conclude:

Could death have prevailed in the animal kingdom in a sinless world? Does not the Bible indicate that the "groaning and travailing in pain" of the animal kingdom is a result of the Edenic curse which came after Adam's fall (Romans 8:20-22)? It was not Nature, or Satan, but man who was created to be king of the earth (Psalm 8, Hebrews 2:5-8); and not until man deliberately rejected the known will of God did death make its first appearance on this planet (Romans 5: 12) or did animals fall under "the bondage of corruption" (Romans 8:21). It is at this point that the Gap Theory has seriously compromised the Biblical doctrine of man's original dominion and the doctrine of the Edenic Curse.<sup>9</sup>

Now if one accepts this thesis that it was the fall of Adam which brought sin into the world, and, consequently, death to the irrational living world, then insurmountable problems arise for the relegation of fossils to the gap period, for death is the necessary prerequisite for becoming a fossil. Therefore, if fossils are attributed to the gap period, one must postulate the prevalence of death in the animal world before sin. We must remember that one of the advantages of the Gap Theory is supposed to be its ability to account for the fossils, and it does this *before* the supposed recreation of Genesis 1: 3 and following.

However, the Bible makes Adam responsible for sin-no one else-and especially not a pre-Adamic race of men who inhabited the earth according to some gap theorists (though not Custance). In fact the Scriptures know nothing of any pre-Adamic race, despite the unfortunate statements of several commentators, including one very competent Old Testament scholar,<sup>10</sup> who suggests that Pithecanthropus, the Swanscombe man, and Neanderthal all be relegated to a period prior to Adam.<sup>11</sup> Such a statement once more demonstrates the folly of accepting the propositions of science uncritically, for when we find a place for Neanderthal before Adam, we also find that most scientists now insist that he was very intelligent, had a religion, gardening ability, and socializing tendency. His only difference from a normal contemporary human being was that he suffered from rickets.<sup>12</sup> Now that science has changed its mind, where are our harmonizations left?

Pember evades the problem of the fossils by assigning them to another world which, he says, had no relation to ours:

For, as the fossil remains clearly show, not only were disease and death-inseparable companions of sin-then prevalent among the living creatures of the earth, but even ferocity and slaughter. And the fact proves that these remains have nothing to do with our world, since the Bible

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<sup>9</sup> Whitcomb and Smith, "Book Review," p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Jr., A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), pp. 172-175.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> cr, Time, 97 (May 17, 1971), p. 75; and "Neanderthals Had Rickets," Science Digest, 69 (February, 1971), 35•6, citing F. Ivanhoe in an article in Nature (no bibliographical data). Cf. also Ralph S. Solecki, Shanidar: The First Flotoer People (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).

declares that all things made by God during the three days were very good, and that no evil was in them until Adam sinned ....

Since, then, the fossil remains are those of creatures anterior to Adam, and yet show evident tokens of disease, death, and mutual destruction, they must have belonged to another world, and have a sin-stained history of their own, a history which ended in the ruin of themselves and their habitation.<sup>13</sup>

Custance, on the other hand, in order to avoid this problem, positions himself with those who say that sin, and, therefore, the death that came as a result of sin, only applied to the race of men. This is probably not the best interpretation.

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<sup>13</sup> Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages*, pp. 34-35.