

history in turn explains several of the puzzles in Scripture arising from the traditional assumption that Adam was the first man. Cain found a wife from among these Mesopotamians and Cain's fear of other men becomes understandable. Scripture also says that Cain was building a city east of Eden. Again, Scripture interacts with secular history which knows that the first cities in the world were built in Mesopotamia and in the Susiana plain 250 km to the east about 4000 BC.<sup>4</sup> Assuming the scriptural and the archeological cities to be the same, this information dates Cain after about 4000 BC. And finally, the puzzling passage in Gen 6:1 can be explained:

When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.

The commentators explain the sons of God as angels<sup>5</sup> or as pagan myths.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, with an historical scriptural Adam the sons of God are from Adam's family (Adam is called the son of God in Luke 3:37) and the daughters of men are children of the Mesopotamians living at the same time. Just as for the scriptural account of Abraham, the scriptural account of Adam "fits precisely in the age of which it purports to tell."

We are witnessing, then, the same uncovering of Scripture as that for other ancient historical records. When I was in school, we were taught that the Trojan Wars were a myth. Now Troy has been found and dated. As ancient history continues to come up over the horizon of time, we are finally seeing the early chapters of Genesis come into view.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 62-3.

<sup>2</sup>John A. McIntyre, "The Historical Adam," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 54 (2002): 150-7.

<sup>3</sup>See e.g., R. J. Wenke, *Patterns in Prehistory* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 289.

<sup>4</sup>Wenke, *Patterns in Prehistory*, 404-8.

<sup>5</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 113.

<sup>6</sup>Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 43; and Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 110.

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## On the Hills of Concordism and Creation Science

In his contribution to the discussion of the extent of Noah's flood,<sup>1</sup> Paul Seely explains why he doubts that "concordism's long-standing attempt to read Scripture as describing a merely local flood covering no more than Mesopotamia or the Black Sea is any closer to the biblical data than creation science is to the scientific data." He evidently believes that the Genesis flood account is an inspired version of an ancient myth, a "theological revelation ... accommodated to the already ingrained prehistori-

cal traditions present in Israel at the time that God revealed himself to them."

We may seem to have only three major alternatives: Moses gave either (1) a true account of a local flood, (2) a true account of a flood that left no land above the waves anywhere on the planet, or (3) a fictional account of a flood too extensive to be considered merely local. Probably very few *PSCF* readers know that a fourth alternative has recently been advanced: (4) a true account of a flood that was neither merely local nor quite universal.

According to Seely, the flood account in Genesis implies "that God has spoken in Scripture ... as a Father to his little children, as a tutor (Gal. 3:24), accommodating his theological lessons to the mentality and preconceptions of his young children, aware that in time they will learn better of both history and science." We can agree that God speaks to us as Father, tutoring even through such things as the law of Moses, yet knowing that his people would not always remain under its supervision (Gal. 3:25). One must also concede that the Bible includes only a small part of all history and science (John 21:25).

The interesting question here is whether God uses fictional stories, cleverly disguised as factual history, to reveal some kind of truth, as Seely evidently believes. References to a "literally moving sun" do not prove his hypothesis. Even modern astronomy texts mention sunset as though it were the sun, not the earth, that moves, and since the Bible is for ordinary people, it is no surprise to find terms like *earth*, *sky*, and *star* that are understood more superficially by some folks than by others. There may even be popular misconceptions related to such things, of course, but pedantic technicalities alone cannot compromise the gist or integrity of a history.

If God actually does teach through fiction in the guise of history, then how can one separate fact from myth when reading the Bible? Did Jesus really rise from the dead, or was the resurrection story only an accommodation for people too ignorant to know that such a thing is impossible? To the men who wrote John 21:24, Gal. 1:11-12, and 2 Peter 1:16, confidence in the trustworthiness of God's words, warnings, and promises was more precious than life. We can conclude that the Christian faith is supposed to be rooted in factual history stretching seamlessly all the way back to creation (Acts 7; 2 Peter 2:4-9; and 3:3-7).

Seely wrote: "Nowhere in Scripture does God say or imply with logical necessity that divine inspiration guarantees the scientific and historical accuracy of biblical historical accounts." How then should we understand Hebrews 11? Here several heroes of faith are mentioned, including Abel, Noah, Moses, Samuel, and the prophets. At the very end of the chapter, the writer even works himself and his readers into the mix. If Noah is fictional, what about the others? Would the tutorial value of the chapter be enhanced in our day by including Spiderman or Santa Claus to impress children who might believe these are all real people?

To what extent can history as recorded in the Old Testament be confirmed through secular data? Sixty or seventy years ago, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel could not be related with confidence to the secular history of the region, and the recorded lengths of the various reigns appeared to

be hopelessly inconsistent. Then Edwin Thiele solved the puzzle, and the accuracy of this part of the Bible has been firmly established ever since.<sup>2</sup> The period in question began in 931 BC, but unfortunately, clear synchronizations with Old Testament stories about earlier periods have been difficult to find and defend, suggesting that something may be seriously wrong with one or more of the chronologies being compared. Many scholars, evidently including Seely, have concluded instead that we should not regard the older stories as real history after all.

Gerald Aardsma has recently published theories that arguably solve the Old Testament chronology problem all the way back to creation. His key claim is that 1 Kings 6:1 ought to be emended to restore one digit dropped through an early scribal error.<sup>3</sup> It should read the 1480<sup>th</sup> year, not the 480<sup>th</sup> year. This one simple correction shifts the chronology of all events before the time of the judges back a full millennium.

Better evidence for synchronizations with secular data in the earlier periods of interest suggests that Aardsma really is onto something exciting, at least for those of us who rejoice to find the Bible vindicated. This evidence points to a flood in 3520–21 BC that was by no means merely local.<sup>4</sup> The challenge for Seely is to prove his own claim “that no global flood has occurred in the last 10,000 years and more.” We should be skeptical, because negatives are notoriously difficult to prove. Even if Aardsma’s unconventional flood theory later proves to be false, his idea about a chronological correction may well remain valid regardless.

According to Aardsma, the flood was the result of water from the southern oceans moving north to cover most of the northern hemisphere,<sup>5</sup> leaving some areas dry: Antarctica, Australia, the southern parts of Africa and America, as well as northern lands at low latitudes or high altitudes. Aardsma believes the event was too tranquil to have deposited all the global sedimentary rock that most creationists attribute to the flood, but the flooded populations were destroyed. Aardsma has also proposed a physical cause for this flood. Some may prematurely dismiss his suggestion, but people who give it a fair hearing should find it reasonable and promising on closer examination.

If Aardsma’s theories prevail, we should agree with the claim by Art Hill, Paul Seely, and the creationists that the flood was not merely local, and with the claim by Carol Hill and Seely that geological data may cast doubt on some aspects of the flood model popular among creationists. We should also agree with both Hills that God gave us factual narratives, even in Genesis 1–11. The prospects for corroborating this point are too good to recommend joining Seely’s desperate expedition beyond the “Hills” of concordism and creation science.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>“Beyond the Hills of Concordism and Creation Science” in *PSCF* (June 2003): 138–9. The title alludes to earlier *PSCF* letters by Art Hill and Carol Hill.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, new revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1983).

<sup>3</sup>Gerald E. Aardsma, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*, 2d ed. (Loda, IL: Aardsma Research & Publishing, 1995); Gerald E. Aardsma, “New Radiocarbon Dates for the Reed Mat from the Cave of the Treasure, Israel,” *Radiocarbon*

43:3 (2001): 1247–54; and H. J. Bruins, I. Carmi, and E. Boaretto, eds., *Proceedings of the 17th International <sup>14</sup>C Conference*.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald E. Aardsma, “Noah’s Flood: The Irish Evidence,” *The Biblical Chronologist* 5.3 (1999): 1–7.

<sup>5</sup>Gerald E. Aardsma, “The Origin and Antiquity of the Biblical Text,” *The Biblical Chronologist* 8.6 (2002): 2–3.

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## Reflections on Newman’s “Problems for Theistic Evolution”

I am writing in response to the article by Robert Newman, “Some Problems for Theistic Evolution,” that appeared in the June 2003 issue of *PSCF*. I will address the theological issues that he raises, since the scientific ones are covered elsewhere.

I favor the view that Adam and Eve are historical individuals who underwent the Fall as described in Genesis 3. However, the fundamental Christian doctrine here is that all humankind is sinful and in need of God’s forgiveness, not exactly how we came to be in that unhappy state. The Bible contains plenty of evidence for our fallen state, even if the book of Genesis were to disappear tomorrow without a trace (see Rom. 3:23).

The text of Genesis 2–3 does indeed contain indications that it is in part a symbolic account. We have:

1. A snake that can talk. Most readers assume that the serpent is Satan.
2. Trees of Life and the Knowledge of Good and Evil. These are not ordinary trees.
3. Adam and Eve, who stand in spiritually for the entire human race.
4. Curses given and received. These fall upon all descendants of the primary character.
5. A messianic prophecy given in Gen. 3:15. Note that an event can be both historical and symbolic, as when Pontius Pilate washed his hands before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Glenn Morton and I both affirm an interventionist view of human origins, where God stepped into a biological line of succession and made something spiritually special happen. God did something similar with Moses in selecting him to receive his covenant, and later became incarnate in the second Adam, Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:45). If Jesus was willing to come into this world through an ordinary family in Bethlehem, why should we object to our origins from a bipedal primate in a corner of Africa? God is in the business of exalting the lowly and raising up the humble.

God somehow “sustains” the world by natural means that science can explore; and by outright miracles, which science cannot. God works both ways. When we get to heaven he will answer all our questions in person. Until then, science in general, and biological evolution in particular, will continue to be the witness of God’s creation.