

## Beyond the Hills of Concordism and Creation Science

The interchange between Art Hill and Carol Hill (*PSCF* Letters, March 2003) over the extent of Noah's flood illustrates the continuing inability of either concordism or creation science to resolve the conflict between Scripture and modern science. Carol rightly recognizes that words change meanings over time, so their meanings must be understood in terms of the times in which they were written. Accordingly, she is correct that the word "earth" in the Old Testament does not refer to our modern understanding of the earth as a spherical planet.

In addition, it is abundantly clear from the existence of the ancient ice sheet on Greenland, the lack of Holocene rocks in northern Mesopotamia (except along the rivers), the overlapping unbroken occupation of numerous cities in the ancient Near East, as well from the ancient existence of various peoples around the globe that no global flood has occurred in the last 10,000 years and more. This is not a conclusion from "uniformitarianism," as Art suggests, for glaciology, geology, and archaeology all accept the fact that catastrophic events have occurred. Nor is there any place in biblical Christianity for suppressing scientific light in favor of a commitment to a private interpretation of the scientific data. Modern science is the fruit of God's delegated rule of the earth to *all* mankind (Gen. 1:26-28). Both unbelievers by common grace and believers are capable of finding scientific truth (cf. Matt. 16:3). We cannot suppress *any* light and claim to be followers of Him who is the Light.

As Carol Hill and a number of archaeologists have so well shown, there is only one flood which has any close-fitting archaeological and historical correlation with the flood of Noah: the Mesopotamian flood of c. 2900 BC which left its evidence simultaneously in the tells of Shuruppak, Kish, and Uruk.

At the same time, some of Art Hill's arguments remain unrefuted. It is incredible that a Mesopotamian flood would have killed off all of the birds that lived in Mesopotamia (Gen. 7:21, 23). It is likewise contrary to the tenor of Genesis 9 that a flood covering only Mesopotamia is in view, much less the flood of 2900 BC which was a riverine flood and apparently only seriously affected southern Mesopotamia.

What neither author mentions is that contextually the "whole earth" of Gen. 8:9 that was flooded is the same "whole earth" which the three sons of Noah later populated (Gen. 9:19); and that "whole earth" is delineated in Genesis 10. In modern terms, it extends from around Sardinia to Afghanistan and from the Black Sea to the Gulf of Aden. The "whole earth" of Gen. 8:9 is thus the entire earth as it was then conceived, namely, the greater Near East.

Further, a good number of Old Testament scholars agree that when the "whole earth" was flooded in the time of Noah, it went back to being as completely flooded as it was in Gen. 1:2 (e.g., Hamilton, Mathews, Waltke, Wenham). And the anthropological universality of the Flood has been seen by virtually all Old Testament commentators from the beginnings of the Church to the present day.

For the above reasons and others, I do not believe 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. The Bible describes a Flood that completely covered the greater Near East, which would necessitate a global flood. This is true even though there was no global flood.

I think it is time, therefore, to lay aside the assumption that God's revelations in Scripture could only be given in terms of his omniscient knowledge of history and science and not be accommodated to the cultural understanding of the times. It is time to recognize that this assumption is rooted more in human reason than in biblical revelation. Nowhere in Scripture does God say or imply with logical necessity that divine inspiration guarantees the scientific and historical accuracy of biblical historical accounts. Indeed, nearly every historical book in the Bible implies by a reference to outside sources (e.g., Josh. 10-13, 1 Kings 14:19; Luke 1:1-4) and an absence of any claim to direct divine revelation such as is found in the prophets, that its history *qua* history was derived from purely human sources.

As to science, a close study of Scripture reveals that the science in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation has been accommodated to the science of the times. The Church in the time of Galileo was correct when it saw in Scripture a geocentric universe with a literally moving sun (Eccl. 1:5). The Church's mistake did not lie in its exegesis, but in its assumption that the cosmology employed in Scripture is a part of the divine revelation rather than an accommodation to the science of the times. It was the dawning awareness of the fact that Scripture is scientifically accommodated which led Calvin to say, "The Holy Spirit had no intention to teach astronomy" and that if one wanted to learn astronomy, one should go not to the Bible but to the astronomers (John Calvin, *Commentaries VI, Psalms 93-150* (reprinted, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 184 (on Ps. 136); Calvin, *First Book of Moses called Genesis*, 1:79).

In the case of the biblical Flood, the return of the earth to the conditions of Gen. 1:2 is integrally related to the cosmology of the times, and the underlying Mesopotamian tradition of a flood that destroyed all humankind shines through as the historical source of the biblical account. (No other flood story is even remotely as close.) Genesis 1-11 is a unit which follows Mesopotamian traditions, literary models, and motifs from beginning to end.

It may have been through the patriarchs, who came from Mesopotamia, that the Mesopotamian flood tradition first came to be accepted in Israel as an integral part of *their* prehistory of mankind. Its theological purification may well have begun in patriarchal times. In any case, it is the superior theology of Genesis 1-11 which contrasts with the beliefs of the times, not the history and science. The theological revelation in these chapters is accommodated to the already ingrained prehistorical traditions present in Israel at the time that God revealed himself to them. And this very accommodation is an implicit revelation that God has spoken in Scripture not first of all as a rationalistic philosopher-theologian, but 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.

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## Why We Exist

Freeman Dyson, the famous astrophysicist, writes: "Life resides in organization rather than in substance, and it makes sense to imagine life detached from flesh and blood and embodied in networks of super conducting circuitry."<sup>1</sup> From this we can postulate that a life form of superior intelligence evolved slowly in the cosmos, over eons and eons, from the gradual accumulation and self-organization of energy; and that this energy arose in the cosmos through the same random quantum mechanism as used by cosmologists to provide the energy need for the Big Bang, to create an "accidental universe." We can also postulate that the cosmos has always existed and still exists as that space or space time into which our universe is now expanding.

We can further postulate that the energy of the life form was slowly decaying, as all energy does, so that at some point this loss of energy exceeded the gain of energy being acquired from the cosmos so that the life form was either slowly dying, or becoming static in some way, so that the situation had become desperate for the life form.

We can postulate too that the planning for, and the creation of a universe as a survival plan is such a monstrous task that it could only be undertaken as an act of desperation, for survival itself. We can postulate such a survival plan must permit the life form to acquire new and fresh energy, an energy that was not being recycled from somewhere else.

We can postulate then that the life form evolved a Plan to create a universe the fundamental constants of nature and the laws of physics fixed in advance so that a universe had to evolve whereby intelligent life would emerge on countless planets throughout the universe and whereby the dominant intelligent life form on such planets had the mission and opportunity to develop a source of fresh energy which became accessible at some point to the life form; and that the life form then creates such universe through some inflationary big bang scenario.

We can also postulate that this fresh energy can be generated in the mind and brain of a dominant intelligent planetary life form through the exercise of free will, an act which is absolutely vital to the Plan; and that free will is so important to humanity that it has been handed down in allegorical form through the story of Adam and Eve, where Eve exercised her free will through the taking of the apple; and that this fresh energy increases with free will thoughts and actions which are good and decreases with those that are evil, which may be why the teachings of Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed are dedicated to encouraging that moral system which would promote the development of fresh energy; and that this fresh energy passes directly on death to the energy field of the creative life

form; and this may be why Jesus could tell his disciples with confidence as he was taken away to be crucified, as reported by John, "On that day you will understand that I am IN my Father and you IN me and I IN you." It may be that here Jesus was trying to tell them, before anyone had ever heard of anything called "energy," that the Father was a pool of living, sentient energy, and that He, Jesus, was in this pool, and that they would be in this pool too!

And finally, we can postulate that we know this fresh energy as the soul, and the creative life form as God, and that this then is the Destiny of Humanity, our reason for existence, to develop a soul which can merge with God and flow throughout the cosmos as a living sentient field, supporting this and other universes unto eternity.

## Note

<sup>1</sup>Freeman Dyson, *Infinite in All Directions* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 107.

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## Altruism as Evidence for Intelligent Design

Some biochemical processes are believed to be irreducibly complex, and the molecular components cannot be broken down into simpler molecules without the system falling apart. This complexity has been presented as evidence for intelligent design in living systems.<sup>1</sup>

The intelligent design hypothesis has been challenged on the grounds that the structures of living things are not in fact irreducibly complex, but have a built in redundancy.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it has been shown that irreducibly complex and functionally indivisible structures can be accessible by some Darwinian pathways, and there is fossil and biochemical evidence that some of these pathways have been traveled in the past.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, once complex biochemical systems have been selected for, natural selection would act to maintain these structures, since any slight deviation from a complex and inter-related process would have severe selective disadvantages.

Some altruistic interactions on the other hand not only can not be accessed through any known Darwinian selection pathway, but natural selection would be unable to maintain such systems. In a previous paper,<sup>4</sup> I reviewed three examples of altruism which would not be maintainable under any known mechanism of natural selection. My examples have been challenged by David Lahti<sup>5</sup> who concludes that these are all cases where Darwinian mechanisms would act to preserve altruism.

My first example concerned the reciprocal altruism of cleaner fish and the predators they clean. In this case, the predator is acting altruistically by not eating the cleaner when it has finished cleaning, and in some cases the predator may risk its life by ensuring the safety of the cleaners before itself escaping from larger predators.<sup>6</sup> Lahti states that this is an example of simultaneous mutualism, which is demonstrably false. The altruism here is not merely between the cleaner and the predator. Experimental evi-