

# Letters

In fact, Burgeson eventually contradicts his own conclusion that the majority of the book is simply "useless," and is therefore "not to be recommended." How can he coherently make this claim, when he also openly states that my classical Christian approach to solving the theodicy problem is "fairly adequate"? Given the profound complexity of the theodicy problem, it follows that a "fairly adequate" solution is a highly significant one indeed. Indeed, the theodicy problem is widely recognized by virtually all philosophers and theologians as the single most difficult conceptual problem in academia today. Nevertheless, in the very same paragraph in which Burgeson judges my theodicy to be "fairly adequate," he goes in the very opposite direction by judging the book itself to be "simply useless." Is it even possible for a "fairly adequate" solution to the problem of evil to be "simply useless" at the same time? I don't see how.

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## The Reviewer Responds to Author

Michael Corey's *Evolution and the Problem of Natural Evil* addresses what is, perhaps, the major philosophical question confronting the Christian faith. I commend him for his attempt to address that problem, which has engaged our species for well over 2000 years. It may well be that his book will bring a measure of stability to some Christians who look for more certainty in their theologies than some of us have been able to find.

The librarian at the Iliff School of Theology, a Methodist seminary in Denver, clearly thought the book was of sufficient importance to place a copy in the Iliff library, and it may well be that my assessment is incomplete. I suggest that those with an interest in the problem of theodicy might do well to look at Corey's book, along with David Ray Griffin's recent book, *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts* (State University of New York Press, 2000). Griffin solves the theodicy problem quite well, but as I see it, at an expense of an inadequate theology. Corey has, likewise, solved the theodicy problem, but at the expense of an inadequate view of the scientific enterprise.

In rereading my review, I agree with Corey that I may have been overly harsh. Perhaps the title led me to expect more than the author was prepared to offer. But serious readers of it will have to decide this for themselves. When you find a copy on the library shelf, take time to look it over.

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## Beyond the Hills of Seely

I thank Paul Seely for his comments (*PSCF* Letters, June 2003) on the interchange between Art Hill and myself on the Noachian Flood (*PSCF* Letters, March 2003). It was my hope to encourage a dialogue between *PSCF* readers on this topic.

I both agree and disagree with Seely about "accommodating the cultural understanding of the time." The cultural perspective of a biblical people must always be figured into the equation of how to interpret Scripture, but the question still remains: Can the historical accuracy of the Bible be trusted? (By "historical" I not only mean history and pre-history in the traditional sense, but also the historical, time-related disciplines of archaeology, geology, astronomy, etc.). It is my belief that the Bible in its original (autograph) text accurately records historical events, *viewed within the culture (worldview) of those times*.

I'll give an example. In an upcoming article in *PSCF* entitled "Making Sense of the Numbers of Genesis," I try to explain that the Mesopotamians incorporated two numbering systems into their world view: (1) a numerological (sacred) system, and (2) a numerical (real) system. Two primary sacred numbers were sixty (the base of the Mesopotamian sexagesimal system) and seven, and the patriarchal ages from Adam to Noah are based on either or both of these numbers in some combination or permutation. In order to understand the very difficult topic of the long ages of the patriarchs and the chronologies of Genesis, one *must* understand the world view of the Mesopotamians—that their concept of the meaning of numbers differed drastically from our own. The biblical statement that Noah was 600 years old at the time of the Flood ( $600 = 60 \times 10$ , a "perfect" number to the Mesopotamians) can be understood numerologically from a Mesopotamian world view, but this "cultural accommodation" does not negate the biblical truth that there was a historical Flood, that God purposely produced this Flood for His own purposes, and that God worked through a specific historical man (Noah) to accomplish those purposes. It seems to me that "cultural accommodation" can be carried only so far if the integrity of the Bible is to be preserved.

Now, to address some of the more specific comments in Seely's letter.

1. Seely's comment: "the 'whole earth' of Gen. 8:9 that was flooded is the same 'whole earth' that the three sons of Noah later populated" (i.e., the extent delineated in Genesis 10). Actually, the geographical extent of the Table of Nations (Genesis 10) may be even wider than specified by Seely. The commentaries I've read extend the Table of Nations to Spain in the northern Mediterranean region, to the whole North Africa region, and to all of the Arabic nations. (Or as the Hebrew scholar Cassuto has remarked: "the Table of Nations included only those nations in contact with Israel—not all of the nations of the world"). The key here is that the extent of the "whole earth" expanded geographically over time commensurate with the expanded world view of the biblical writers. In Noah's time, the "whole earth" meant just the Mesopotamian alluvial plain; later in time when the Table of Nations was written down it referred to the then geographical extent of the Semito-Hamitic language nations in contact with Israel. In Acts 1:8 time (first century AD), the "uttermost parts of the earth"