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SOME SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS OF APOLOGETICS

TRUTH never changes ; but from age to age a change may be expedient in the Christian's presentation of the truth which he believes. Methods of presentation which were eminently effective in the days of Erasmus might not prove adequate in these days of conditioned reflexes, chromosomes, and radioactivity. It will be the object of this paper to outline in a very brief way some phases of the modern aspects of science which need to be kept in mind in any consideration of the evidential aspects of the Christian religion.

A generation or two ago, the chief attack was upon the historicity of the Old Testament, the historicity of the New being also involved. Today that question has been largely settled. Since the discovery of the Tel el-Amarna tablets, it has been no longer possible for the "critics" to maintain their claim about the illiteracy of the day of Moses ; while since the discovery of the stele of Hammurabi it has not been possible for them to discredit the formulation of a code of laws before the days of the kings. Every year of excavation in the Orient adds to the profusion of discoveries with which the historic accuracy of the Old Testament is now being vindicated.

The scientific attack upon Christianity has chiefly assumed two aspects. One of these deals with God's method of caring for His universe ; the other is concerned with the origin of things, or with those problems clustering around the Bible's record of Creation. It will be in order for us to consider briefly both these problems, and to show that the modern discoveries of natural science help the Christian very materially in justifying the ways of God with man.

From the days of Sir Isaac Newton, when law and order were seen to prevail in the inorganic world, down until the closing years of the nineteenth century, every new discovery, in either physics or chemistry, seemed but to confirm the mechanistic view of the universe. The more modern discoveries connected with radioactivity and quantum mechanics are tending to discredit very seriously this long-popular mechanistic philosophy, confirming instead the Bible view that all the various phenomena

of nature are not due to powers or "properties" or "forces" which reside in matter and the objects which surround us in the material universe, but *are due to the directly exercised power and guidance of the God of the universe*. It is cheering to note that Professor Floyd E. Hamilton, in his recent work *The Basis of Evolutionary Faith* (page 71), has the courage to take this position. Scripturally, philosophically, and even scientifically, no other position is possible; though until very recent years few Christian apologists have had the courage to be consistent in this matter. But in the light of the new discoveries in physics, science is now confirming what the Christian Church has always declared in all her most rational periods, namely that, apart from the permitted activity given to free intelligences, everything in the universe is perpetually and directly under the control of that Master Mind to Whom we as Christians direct our prayers: "Our Father, Who art in Heaven."

During the two closing decades of the nineteenth century, T. H. Huxley and his followers were fond of emphasising the differences between what they termed the "supernatural" and the "natural." The former they assigned to theology and religion; the latter was their own special domain. They claimed that all things worth knowing belonged in the realm of the "natural"; though they were willing to assign the regions of myth and of all nebulous thinking to what they were pleased to term the "supernatural." Of course, all those events which the Christian Church usually termed "miracles" belonged in this cloud-region of the "supernatural"; but all measurable and verifiable facts belonged in the realm of the "natural," with which (by Huxley's implication) God had nothing to do. And the agnostics of that day considered it their chief business to push back the boundaries of the "natural," until eventually all worth-while knowledge would be included within the domain which they claimed by right of pre-emption.

With this whole scheme of Huxley's of dividing between the "natural" and the "supernatural" the Duke of Argyll took direct issue. In a letter to the *London Times*, published in its issue of February 8th, 1892, he said:

This antithesis is absolutely unknown to the literature both of the Old Testament and the New. It is equally unknown to science and also to philosophy. The Bible knows nothing of what men now call "the supernatural." It regards all "natural processes" as the work of a Divine Being. . . .

Regarding Huxley's alleged distinction between these two classes of events, Argyll further declared :

I venture to assert, on the contrary, that this is very bad science and still worse philosophy. Physical science has nothing to do with anything else than "processes" and physical causes. When it pretends to deny the derivation from or the direction of these by a Supreme Mind it goes outside its province.

The sacred writers have dealt with this aspect of nature [design, purpose, adaptation] almost exclusively. But they have never tried to eliminate the idea of physical processes. Both to them are equally "natural." The vicious and unphilosophical distinction between "natural" and "supernatural" is absolutely unknown to them.

With all this I most heartily agree. And with it all the most enlightened among Christian apologists have always been in agreement. But the point I am here making is that all the newer discoveries in physics, such as the quantum phenomena, together with the modern knowledge regarding the behaviour of the cells and vital phenomena in general, are rapidly convincing the modern world that a Master Mind is tirelessly and intelligently in control of all the phenomena of the universe. It is everlastingly and literally true: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

This view of things might be backed up by direct quotations from such men as Arthur H. Compton, Willis R. Whitney, and Michael Pupin in America, or from Sir Arthur Eddington and Sir James H. Jeans in England. But I must pass along to consider the second aspect of my subject, namely, the problem connected with the origin of things, or the problem of origins as given in the Bible and as revealed by such sciences as biology and geology.

Balked by the persistent mystery of the origin of life, and disappointed by the way in which Mendelism has refuted the Darwinian fable of unlimited variations in all directions, biologists have very reluctantly come to admit that they do not really know *how* any of the higher forms of life could possibly have developed from any of the lower. Austin H. Clark of the Smithsonian Institution, and Professor D'Arcy Thompson are not by any means the only biologists in whose eyes the radical differences between all the great groups of living things are becoming more and more impassable and unbridgable with every passing year. While still calling themselves "evolutionists," the leaders in biological science are splitting up into fantastic cliques with the

most wild and absurd theories. A. H. Clark says that all the great types of animal life have been completely distinct from one another from the very "beginning"; though he still sticks to the idea that all sprang from one original speck of protoplasm. Professor Leo S. Berg, of the University of Leningrad, Russia, denies the theory of Darwin and Haeckel that all forms of life have sprung from one or at least a very few original forms, and says, "Organisms have developed from tens of thousands of primary forms" (*Nomogenesis*, page 406). While Dr. Hans Przibram teaches that every one of the higher forms of life "has developed independently of all others from a distinct species of protozoan" (*Science*, September 19th, 1930, page 283).

The familiar arguments from comparative anatomy, from embryology, and from blood tests no longer appeal to such men as Henry Fairfield Osborn, who now declares that man is not descended from the apes, he never was an ape at all, and the "missing-link" theory is one which ought to be banished for ever from scientific discussions.

Amid all this chaos, while all but a few stand-pat Darwinians like Keith and the Bishop of Birmingham are admitting that they have been disappointed in trying to find out just *how* evolution has occurred, and are falling back on a vague *faith* in some general idea of development somehow, this conspicuous failure of biological theory is bringing into sharper relief the one supposedly real set of facts upon which every scheme of organic evolution has always had to rest, namely, the alleged historical order of the fossils, progressing (so it has been said) during immeasurably long ages from the small and simple forms to the larger and higher forms of life.

This fossil fort, the inner citadel of the evolution theory, is the one now under scientific attack. In various works¹ the present writer has discussed the want of scientific logic and the utter unreliability of the methods by which certain fossils have been assigned to one age and certain others to another subsequent age, contending that there is no possible method by which a genuine time-value can be attached to any particular kind of fossils. There is one long-vanished age which is revealed by the fossils, an age marked by a mild climate all over the globe, by a multitude of kinds of life which are usually larger and more

¹ *The New Geology, a Textbook for Colleges* (1923); *Evolutionary Geology and the New Catastrophism* (1926); *A History of Some Scientific Blunders* (1930); *The Geological-Ages Hoax* (1931), etc.

thrifty looking when similar to the modern forms, but many of which have vanished altogether. But all these forms of life now found as fossils were evidently destroyed and buried by flowing water under circumstances which are extremely difficult to account for on the basis of the quiet, regular behaviour of the oceans and rivers; and the tell-tale conditions under which they are found in the strata correspond wonderfully with what we might expect if they were but the various forms of antediluvian animals and plants which were all destroyed and buried by the Flood. The conspicuous failure of all attempts of geologists and palæontologists to show a real time-value among the fossils, assigning some to one age and some to another, helps very markedly to make probable the theory that all the fossils may represent only the ruins of one age of the world, that one described so painstakingly in the sixth, seventh and eighth chapters of Genesis.

This Flood theory of geology has had a long and honourable history, a chapter in the history of the progress of science which modern evolutionists would very much like to have the world forget. Byron C. Nelson has laid Christian apologists under a lasting debt of gratitude by giving us a sketch of this forgotten chapter of history in a recent volume, *The Deluge Story in Stone*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn., U.S.A., 1931). But it is beyond my purpose to repeat the arguments for this Flood theory here. I have space only for a brief discussion of the logical relations of this Flood theory to Christian apologetics.

When, after the long night of the Middle Ages, the study of science was resumed in the time of the Renaissance, the fossils were first declared to be only freaks or sports of nature. Gradually it became established that they represent real forms of life which were buried at some time or times in the long ago. In seeking to correlate these forms of animals and plants with the record of Creation given in the Bible, it became manifest that only *three* possible theories could be proposed. Either these animals and plants lived *before* the Creation described in the first chapter of Genesis; or they lived *during* the progress of this Creation (the days of this Creation being on this view prolonged into indefinite ages); or they lived *after* this Creation, having been buried by the Flood and its subsequent changes.

The history of apologetics shows that all of these three possible theories have been at times advocated by men interested

in adjusting or "harmonising" the facts of science and the record of Genesis. Without trying to give anything like a history of each of these three views, I shall only try to explain the relationship of each to the Bible and to modern scientific discoveries. Each is held by good Christian people, each is being defended by magazine articles and by books, and each has a history of more than a hundred years. It will be convenient to assign names for these three views, though the order I shall give them is the reverse of the historical order in which they arose and were advocated. *

(1) The *interval* or *restitution* theory seems to have been first proposed near the beginning of the nineteenth century by Thomas Chalmers. It says that the fossil world represents an age antecedent to the Creation of the main part of the first of Genesis, being implied by the language of the second verse, which (it is said) may be translated "And the earth *became* without form and void," words which it is said imply a lapsed or disorganised condition due to a vast destruction of a world previously existing. This empty and desolate world was then made over and restocked with a new set of animals and plants, as told in the remaining part of the first chapter of the Bible. This second creation is conceived to have been accomplished literally in a straightforward fashion, in six literal days. As this theory conceives the fossil world to have lived and been buried before the Adam named as the first man, it is sometimes called the *pre-Adamite* theory.

(2) The *day-age* theory says that the days of Creation may easily be understood as having been really long periods of time—corresponding to the familiar geological "ages." Without being formulated in any formal way, this theory may have existed during the eighteenth century or earlier; but it seems to have been first given shape by Hugh Miller about the middle of the nineteenth century, or soon after the rise of uniformitarian geology under Sir Charles Lyell. Under the advocacy of Dana, Dawson, Agassiz, and many other geologists, this theory had a very wide vogue during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. It never succeeded in making a very good detailed fit between the days of Genesis and the geological "ages," even when these "days" were conceived as having been long indefinite periods and when it was believed that the fossils could be classified off into a real chronological sequence, where certain fossils could

be scientifically proved to have lived and died long periods before others. During recent years, however, it must be confessed that this day-age theory has gradually given place to a more indefinite view, more in harmony with the evolution theory, under which no very definite attempt is made to justify the Creation record of the Bible, but the latter is looked upon as only a sort of poetical myth, agreeing in a vague way with the evolution of life, but with no real justification as to its details.

(3) The oldest of these three views is the Flood theory, which may be said to have originated in a work by Dr. John Woodward in 1695. For approximately a century it was widely held by educated men, though with the rise of Lyell's theories, which were supplemented and strengthened by those of Darwin and his followers, the Flood theory went into eclipse, only to be revived about thirty years ago by the present writer. Nelson's *The Deluge Story in Stone* (1931) gives the history of this view of geology. This theory says that if we are to take the Bible record of the Flood at its face value, it will never do to limit the action of this catastrophe to the dimensions of a big spring freshet in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Whereas, if we assume that it may have been an absolutely world-wide catastrophe, and if we admit that it may have done a considerable amount of geological work in the way of killing off animals and plants and burying them, there is absolutely *no possible method of discriminating among the fossils, assigning some of them to this event, but tabulating off the rest in the accustomed chronological order just as if this world-catastrophe had never happened.*

In other words, we seem obliged either to minimise the extent and work of the Flood, as has usually been done by the advocates of the other two theories, or to take it at its full face value; in which latter case we will find that we cannot in any practical way assign limits to the amount of geological deposits which may have been done by it, nor can we with any show of reason discriminate among the fossils, assigning the "extinct" kinds to some long previous age, and assigning only those fossil kinds which are identical with modern living plants and animals to the effects of this world Flood.

It would doubtless sound dogmatic for one to say that *all* the fossil types lived contemporaneously in the same world, and that all the stratified deposits were made by the Flood. The modern advocates of the Flood theory never dogmatise in this

fashion. What they do say is that the fossil evidence compels us to believe in a world-catastrophe of *some dimensions* since man and myriads of living animals and plants existed ; then if we make a reasonable allowance for what this Flood probably must have done in the way of killing off living things and burying them in stratified deposits, *we will not have enough deposits or kinds of animals and plants left over unaccounted for to make much of a showing for constructing any previous "age" of the world's history.*

Scientifically the latter method is eminently reasonable. It is invulnerable from a scientific point of view in its method of reasoning ; while it is all that any reasonable system of apologetics ought to expect in the way of a harmony between the Bible and the record in the rocks. On the other hand, both of the other theories are weak and unsatisfactory from the apologetic point of view. The pre-Adamite theory is built out of the *need* of such an age before the Creation of Genesis, which is felt by those who take the current geological theories (and alleged facts) at their face value. But there is not the slightest hint in the first and second verses of the Bible that a plant or an animal ever existed before the regular Creation described in the remainder of the chapter. This pre-Adamite theory fails to account for the long ages of suffering and death even among the animals long anterior to the entrance of sin, as described in the third chapter. While from the scientific side it fails to make it seem probable that God would have destroyed a completely stocked globe for no assigned reason, and then should have made another world somewhat similar in character, and stocked with thousands of kinds of animals and plants which *seem to be the exact duplicates* of the kinds found as fossils in the rocks.

Similarly, the day-age theory is unsatisfactory from the apologetic point of view. It is admitted that the word *day* (Hebrew *yom*) may under some circumstances be understood as meaning an indefinite period of time. But the setting in which it occurs in the first chapter of Genesis, especially the repeated phrase "the evening and the morning were the . . . day," and the institution of the seventh day of rest at the close—this setting seems absolutely to demand that we understand this word in its ordinary meaning. As a further objection to this view, it should be remembered that it is extremely difficult to make any reasonable fit between the order in which the plants and animals are alleged to have appeared in the geological "ages" when

compared with the order in which they are said to have been created in the record of Creation. Huxley made a strong point of this bad matching between the two records when he was debating this subject with Gladstone and others in various publications during the 'eighties and 'nineties of the nineteenth century. Besides, it seems almost self-evident from the history of these and subsequent controversies that this day-period theory has been all too readily used as a preparation for a full acceptance of the evolution theory.

It should further be noted that both the pre-Adamite theory and the day-age theory accept at par the current theories and alleged "facts" of geology, especially in *the very point of their greatest weakness*, namely, the supposed accuracy of the geological methods of discriminating among the fossils and assigning some to one age and some to another. In other words, both these theories seem to me to err greatly in taking at their self-asserted value the theories of the geologists regarding the geological "ages," while they seriously discount the Bible record of both Creation and the Flood, in order to make the geological scheme fit the Bible.

It is far too long a story for me to attempt to repeat here the many and very serious ways in which the records of the fossils have been twisted or "doctored" in order to build up the scheme of the geological "ages," as given in the current textbooks of the science. For the details of this scientific argument I beg to refer the reader to the various books on this subject by the present writer. I hope that no-one will so far trust the "doctored" evidence presented in the current geological and evolutionary literature that they will dismiss this modern presentation of the Flood theory without examination.

The actual facts of geology as now known have convinced several recent writers on apologetics that the Flood theory is by far the best one. Professor Floyd E. Hamilton adopts this view in his recent volume, *The Basis of Evolutionary Faith* (1931), as he had already done in his previous volume, *The Basis of Christian Faith* (1927), which is one of the strongest books on apologetics published anywhere. Dr. George B. O'Toole also adopts the Flood theory in his *The Case against Evolution* (1925), which is the leading Roman Catholic work on the subject. Byron C. Nelson's *After Its Kind* (third edition, 1930), as well as the same writer's *Deluge Story in Stone* (1931), represent the chief

Lutheran publications on these subjects. Several other recent books might be mentioned which have adopted this Flood theory as the most effective line of apologetics. Indeed, it is not too much to say that since its first modern presentation in the year 1902 by the present writer, this revived Flood theory, adjusted to all the modern discoveries in geology and biology, has been one of the chief reasons for the very strong revolt against the evolution theory which is usually called "Fundamentalism" both in America and elsewhere.

In conclusion, I would respectfully ask all Christian workers who may read this article not to dismiss this Flood theory lightly, with the word that it is quite preposterous and absurd. Remember that a very large proportion of what passes as "fact" in current geology is chiefly theory, sometimes with a small residuum of actual fact, but too often merely a traditional statement handed down from the early ages of the science when most of the modern discoveries, such as "deceptive conformities" and "thrust faults," were unknown. These modern discoveries have put the entire science in a new light, for all who are willing to give this Flood theory a full and candid hearing. While it goes without saying that, if the Flood theory of geology can possibly be defended in the light of modern science, Christians need never lose any sleep over the theory of organic evolution, but may with entire confidence accept the Genesis record of the Creation of man and of the animals and plants at their full face value. The latter possibility is one that ought not to be lightly passed over by anyone who genuinely desires to find a settled harmony between science and Christianity. For if we can accept the Flood theory of geology and the literal Creation of the first chapter of the Bible, the rest of the problems confronting apologetists will take care of themselves.

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