

and encouragement. He takes Bibles, packed into every possible space in his trusty Volkswagen, into such Communist countries as the USSR, Cuba, and China. He sees the joy this brings to deprived Christian church members and clergy. He is able to preach and to bring his own radiant, ringing testimony to churches east of the Iron Curtain.

This book provides an excellent three hours of pleasurable, suspenseful, inspirational, and unforgettable reading, ideal for a Sabbath evening.

LETTERS

The review of Coffin's *Creation — Accident or Design?* by Ian M. Fraser [autumn 1969] is of interest for what it portrays of Adventist attitudes toward the study of geology and related sciences — the wide range of opinions about creation, chronology, and earth sciences. The church has perhaps not been truly polarized into conservative and liberal camps on this subject, but it does seem that there is a danger of developing a hagiology composed of the writings of Price, Marsh, Coffin, Clark, Booth, and others, with partisans for a variety of factions and subfactions adhering dogmatically to the views of their particular patron saint.

Fraser has made a good suggestion in the last paragraph of the review — that a symposium be held to consider significant new findings and to discuss problems faced by students and others attempting to reconcile the Scriptures and [writings of Ellen White] with seemingly contrary evidence and assertions from extra-denominational and even denominational spokesmen. The outlook for such a program is good, in view of what seems to be a weakening of evolutionary foundations in some areas. Furthermore, what biblical or [White] statement has ever been disproved when taken simply, as it stands, without reading human interpretation into the revealed record? Any retreat or recantation by a creationist or diluvialist has always resulted from dogmatic and opinionated amplification and extrapolation beyond the tantalizingly meager details of the biblical record. If Christians understood that Holy Writ was not intended by God as a scientific textbook (even though many of its statements have been upheld by science) how many Canossas might its well-meaning advocates have avoided?

Some Christians have felt that the creationist faces a dilemma in trying to defend his faith and be objective at the same time. While it is perhaps impossible for anyone to be completely objective and forgo all personal opinion and background influences, need this deter the Christian from study of earth science in an attempt to corroborate biblical accounts? What is wrong with having a conviction that the Bible is true, and then approaching the study of nature in the spirit of Job 12:7, 8? Is not this passage in full accord with the highest principles of objective research and scholarship? I

feel that humility would be a more rewarding approach here than a so-called "open mind" — and a more exact term for a true scholarly attitude.

There are those in our ranks who are willing to jettison faith in Ellen White's statements in order to admit an age for the earth in excess of 6,000 years. Are not these young turks (and some not so young) perilously close to a priori reasoning when they try to establish this greater age in an attempt to fit certain events into the 6,000-year period? Here is another area where thorough scholarship is needed — to enlighten both the avant-garde and the reactionary.

Fraser makes a significant comment in regard to Coffin's attribution of most of the Tertiary and subsequent strata to postdiluvial action. This point disturbed me somewhat when I read Coffin's book, but Coffin does appear to have a case here, and of course he is entitled to an opinion. Fraser suggests that limitation of Flood activity to the later Cambrian strata up to and including early Tertiary beds represents the "major contribution of the Geoscience Institute to date." Is Fraser serious here, or is he making a wry comment on what some see as reticence of the Geoscience Institute staff to break into print prematurely?

77

At any rate, part of the work of the symposium suggested by Fraser should be to inform Adventists and others that developments in this field come slowly, and that caution ought to be one of a scientist's instruments. It has been suggested that Gentry's work has been ignored by some because of his willingness to express opinions and report research promptly. Both haste and caution have their proper place in science, to be sure, but whatever else may be said concerning Gentry, it is certain that his work *has* attracted much interest both in and out of Adventist ranks, and anyone of his attainments who champions the cause of creationism deserves serious consideration in any works intended for Adventist use in this field.

After surveying the publications and influence of Adventist writers in the field of geological apologetics during the past decades, I cannot escape the conclusion that the church ought to be cautious about rejecting the commonsense approach of Price in an effort to repudiate what appear now to be obvious errors in his writings. It seems to be proper today to express scorn for Price but reprehensible for Price to have scorned the teachings of men who were attacking the faith *he* had espoused. Perhaps Price should have been more temperate, but we should view him in the light of an earlier era, when a growing church welcomed aggressive champions. This is not to say that Price never made mistakes. We should be careful, however, that we do not become so sophisticated and genteel that our efforts lose their thrust in an attempt to be cool and detached when discussing points of our faith.

There are two accounts in the biblical record that are especially controverted by scientists today: the Creation story and the record of the Flood. A Christian who accepts these two events as fact and who searches for direct evidence for them is unable to find any for Creation. This is one area in which he must rely on faith and indirect evidence. The matter of the Flood is somewhat different: here we may handle and study materials which all scientists agree were laid down as aqueous deposits. Should not Adventists study the strata as thoroughly in an attempt to learn what happened at the time of the Flood as we have studied biology in an effort to establish the truth of the account of Creation?

After all the geologists' efforts, there is much yet to explore in the earth's crust. With increasing interest in deep wells for waste disposal and oil exploration, much more data on sedimentary strata — down to the basement complex in many locations — are being made available daily. If it is true that "there are any number of scientific tests for determining the mode of formation of [a] rock and evaluating the plausibility of its having been formed by a flood" [Edward N. Lugenbeal, "Might" Never Makes Right, spring 1969, p. 71], should not Adventists direct much more attention to geology in order to establish probabilities for diluvial origins of the strata? This would call for a positive approach to the study of diluvial phenomena, not a simple attack on others' positions. How are we ever going to influence geologists favorably if we do not attempt to find common areas of understanding?

After cursory examination of Mars and the moon has been made, a number of scientists have inferred that the presence of Earth's vast water covering and sedimentation are unique in the solar system. That this water played an essential part in deposition of the strata is undisputed. May we not emphasize this uniqueness and the biblical statement that an entire world was flooded and perished [2 Peter 3:6]? If dead men do tell tales, then buried continents may yet have many tales to tell as they "teach" us. The future may well hold many surprises for the creationist-diluvialist, and Lugenbeal's appeal for probabilities rather than simple possibilities in Flood geology [spring 1969, p. 70] is particularly pertinent in view of Fraser's call for extended research and analysis directed toward satisfying Adventist interest in this fascinating field.

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How Is Earth History Revealed? by Stidd [summer 1970] continues the analysis of inadequacies in Coffin's book, *Creation — Accident or Design?*, initiated by Fraser [Problems of Creation and Science, autumn 1969].

Coffin's initial attempt is commendable, despite shortcomings, because he was undoubtedly influenced by many pressures to conform to the traditional doctrine of the church. He has succeeded, among other things, in consolidating and documenting more sensitive areas and problems than have been heretofore seen in one volume. In so doing, he has provided the springboard for Fraser and Stidd to pursue controversial issues in open discussion.

Stidd states, "It is commonly assumed that Coffin's positions are required if one is to defend the integrity of the Sabbath and preserve respect for the Bible and the value of the writings of Ellen White. But this is not necessarily so." I concur with Stidd. Although my theology is centered within the basic doctrines of the church, I have had to suspend some of its detail dogma pending further clarification in these controversial areas in order to be intellectually honest with revealed fact.

It is believed the position "this is not necessarily so" is held by many others who for sound reasons dare not express or hint it openly. If this is a fact, the situation is deplorable, because it makes hypocrites of those who may be in the teaching, publishing, or preaching professions and must strictly follow the doctrinal line. It must have shocked many of the hyperfundamentalists when the *Review and Herald* [Sep-

tember 3, 1970] pointed out in one of its editorials, as I understand it, that the conventional Daniel 12:4 "many shall run to and fro" should possibly have been translated "many will be at their wits' end."

It seems to me that the foregoing indicates, among other things, that our theology as well as our view of science should be reviewed for harmonizing. Furthermore, I simply cannot believe that a technology that can put a man on the moon can be so far wrong in the many areas that our apologists are trying to convince us to believe. It is very strange to me that only where religion encounters science do the apologists object. They seem to be perfectly satisfied with the scientific method elsewhere.

Please publish more on this subject.

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