



LSD - Life Before and After



Life Before

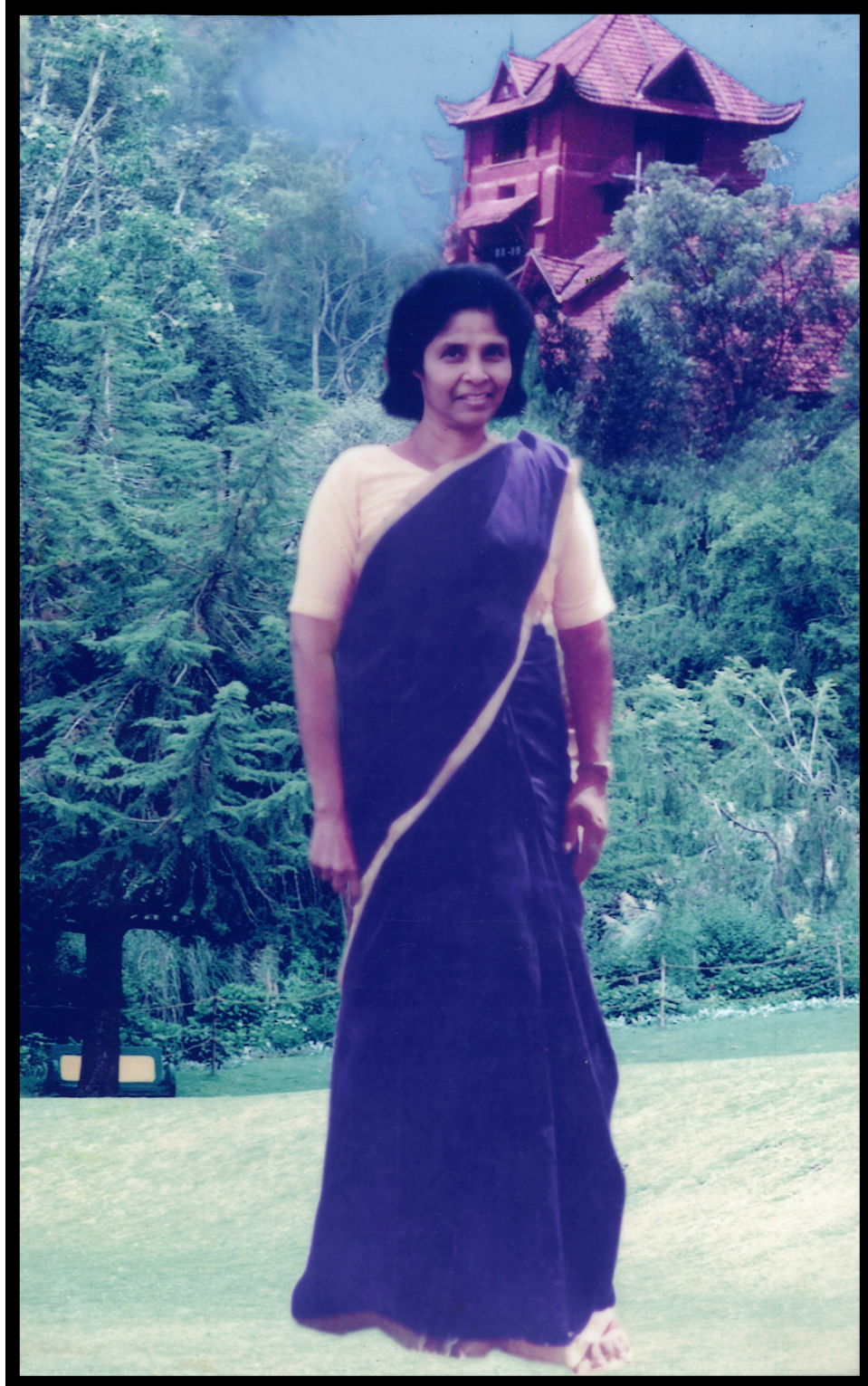


Life After

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Book cover compiled and edited by Salma Carunia Carter



In the Summer of 2017, Salma traveled to Italy and stayed in Rome, near the Vatican. She presented her scholarly husband's books and writings to the Vatican Library. In September of 2017 she received a thank you letter from Pope Francis expressing appreciation, acknowledging the gift of inscribed copies of Dr. Ben Michael Carter's writings with his personal photo with the Papal seal.



Introduction

LSD was the instrument through which I became aware of the cognitive problem. Any drug, or no drug at all, might have served a similar purpose, but for me the medium was LSD. I do not use it any more for two reasons. First, as a born again believer in Christ, I have serious reservations about it. Second, I do not think there is any more I can learn from the drug. But I used the drug with some frequency between the spring of 1970 and the summer of 1977, and it awakened me to the epistemological dilemma.

Simply put: how is it that a chemical, and in the case of LSD such a tiny amount of the chemical, can so profoundly transform our perception of reality? And what does this tell me about the reality I perceive apart from LSD? Does not the ability of chemicals introduced into our brains to reshape our world suggest that the world we perceive apart from those chemicals is itself a chemical construct? And if it is a chemical construct, how valid are the truths mediated to us via those chemicals? Notice that in asking this question I distinguish between myself, the mediating chemical matrix, and reality generally. And notice too that I and the mediating chemical matrix are part of general reality. Thus the question reveals that I do in fact perceive myself simultaneously both as a fact of general reality and an observer of general reality. This is significant so we will return to it later.

I recognized that the issue confronting me was a philosophical one, so I began to read in the western philosophical tradition. This study convinced me that Plato in addressing the problem of certain knowledge was asking the right question. How do I know a thing is what it is? It also convinced me that Immanuel Kant in positing mental categories as the instruments by which our brains construct reality hit upon an important part of the right answer. I have since become convinced that current research in neurobiology has basically verified the truth of Kant's insight. Our brains and the perceptual systems streaming data to them are chemical structures that create a virtual world with which we interact. Thus I really do experience reality as it is constructed by my brain. I can do nothing else. But it does not follow that I experience reality exclusively as it is constructed by my brain. In fact the brain is the second step of what is a three step process. The first step involves mind, the third culture. Awareness as a phenomena transcending human life suggests that mind and brain may be distinct.

My life has been an intellectual pilgrimage, and most of that pilgrimage has revolved around this epistemological perspective. After all, as Christian philosopher Arthur Holmes remarked to me back in 1985, before you can address other issues in philosophy, you must resolve the epistemological one. He was right, so I set off in that direction. In my dissertation at the University of Aberdeen, I wrote:

Ideas are generalizations by which we attempt to order perceptions. The effectiveness of ideas is proportional to their efficiency as agents of order. It is my contention that ideas, although they may within individual traditions be denotatively distinct, may have connotations which are functionally similar. Thus as related problems emerge within individual traditions and as the implications of ideas are explored, solutions which are quite similar may be formulated in traditions which are quite different. (Introduction, p. 1)

I sought to demonstrate this by examining the concept of salvation by faith as it was developed by the Japanese monk Shinran Shonin and the German monk Martin Luther. The point was of course that the contingencies of history, what we can think of as the cultural end of this model, have a profound impact on the way we construe ultimate (i.e. metaphysical) questions. I explored this same perspective in a different way in my first book *The Depersonalization of God: a Consideration of the Soteriological Difficulties in High Calvinism*. In this book I sought to show how ambiguities in the soteriology drew Christian theologians away from a doctrine of salvation that emphasized the cross and toward one that emphasized God's creative power. In the process God's will became paramount.

My second book *Unity in Diversity* was an investigation into the issues of pluralism that the problem I was investigating raised. In it I observed that as the implications of ideas were explored through the contingencies of history various traditions emerged in quite reasonable ways yet often contradicted one another. Then I argued that each tradition might be correct in its own way and that the problem might lie,

not in truth itself, but in our concept of truth, a concept we inherited from the Greeks. To help make my point, I appealed to chaos theory which illuminates the ways initial conditions give rise to multiple patterns that, if seen outside their context, would appear to have nothing to do with one another.

My Ph.D. thesis at the University of Edinburgh described how a missionary organization named Bethany Fellowship grew up around an idea originally propounded by its founder Ted Hegre and how it became a vector for the spread of that idea not only through the mission work itself but also through the publishing company it founded to help finance its mission work.

Then in my third book *A New Christian Paradigm* I developed that thesis further, arguing that Protestant missions had in effect created a new way of understanding Christian truth, a way that, though rooted in Protestant theology, was distinct from it because it shared a very different history from the history in which Protestant theology was rooted. Again my point was to show how historical contingencies can impact our metaphysical understanding.

In my fourth book *The Defective Image: How Darwinism Fails to Provide an Adequate Account of the World*, I argued from a Kantian perspective that our brains as Darwinian survival machines create species specific virtual realities whose function has everything to do with securing survival and successful reproduction and little to do with conceiving the world as it actually is. And from that position I argued that, from a Darwinian standpoint there was no reason to suppose that our biological brains can be trusted to build a picture of the world as it really is.

I believe that in the preceding studies I have made my point that truth is a cultural and biological construct and that as such it has primarily practical applications, that world maps we construct are simply expressions of the implications contained within these biological and cultural structures. Therefore in the current study, though I will revisit that thesis, I will not spend as much time going over this material. Rather I will assume the positions argued earlier and develop them in the light of quantum mechanics which, I contend, reveals the role mind plays in bringing reality into focus. I will also argue that cultural anthropology has revealed the very profound ways culture shapes our perception and interpretation of the world.

The thesis I will be defending in this book is as follows: the universe exists apart from us, but the universe in which we live is a fundamentally human composition created first by mind, second by brain, and third by culture. In defending this thesis I will also examine some of its implications.

Mind

In *Critique of Pure Reason* Immanuel Kant, defining an intuition as a representation that can be produced by a single object, argues that time and space are both independent but necessary a priori psychological representations upon which mental categories or concepts build a functional model of the world. Neither space or time are empirical, Kant says, rather both are pure forms of sensuous intuitions that make it possible for us to apprehend all phenomena whether external or internal. Of the two, Kant believes time is the most fundamental for without time there could be no phenomena at all. Kant goes on to say that phenomena external to us can not be known directly but only as mediated through our senses. So in the Kantian scheme, the senses mediate phenomena which are represented in the brain via the intuitions of space and time and then interpreted and constructed by mental categories to become the world we experience. Neurobiology has done much to validate Kant's schema, but so has quantum physics. Recently a series of experiments based on quantum physics have cast a new light onto Kant's insight concerning the nature of space and time. These experiments involved locality and sequential temporality.

We think of events in the universe as having locality and as being sequentially determined. What happens in one place cannot immediately impact what happens elsewhere, and between the events there is a cause and effect sequence that reflects the movement of time from past to future. However both of these conceits have been contradicted by quantum mechanics. Locality was challenged in the early 1980s by Alain Aspect, sequential temporality in the early 1990s by Marlan Scully.

Mind (space)

Let us look first at Alain Aspect. Jeffery M. Schwartz in his book *The Mind and the Brain* describes how in 1982 Alain Aspect and a team of researchers at the University of Paris published the results of a series of experiments they conducted to measure the relationship between pairs of particles. For example, a pi meson when it decays will produce an electron and a positron. Once created, these particles will speed away from one another in opposite directions. It is impossible to know what the spin direction of either of these particles is before one measures it, but it is certain that the combined spins of the two particles will equal the spin of the pi meson for, though they are now separated, their properties remain forever reciprocal. This is called *entanglement*. Entanglement does not mean that when the electron and positron are formed, they are formed with a fixed spin direction that is discovered. It means instead that the particles have an indeterminate spin direction, that the spin is determined only at the moment of observation, and that it might be different when observed at a different point in time. It also means that when one measures the spin direction of either the electron or the positron, one knows immediately what the spin direction the other part of the pair is even though the property of either particle is undetermined until it is measured. Thus measuring one particle immediately establishes the property of the other no matter how far apart the two particles are! By merely knowing the conditions in one part of the universe, one creates conditions in another part. This of course violates the principle of locality. Schwartz argues from such experiments that quantum mechanics shows us how mind exercises a profound impact on the physical world. Indeed, he agrees with philosopher David Chalmers that consciousness could be "an irreducible entity, like space, or time, or mass." (p. 256).

Mind (time)

In the March 2000 issue of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, mathematician Peter Zoeller-Greer describes an experiment based on what is known as the Wave-Particle Dualism of a photon and conducted in the early 1990s by a team of researchers under the direction of Marlan Scully. In the experiment a beam of photons was projected through a crystal. The crystal divided every photon in the beam into twin photons, each with a lower intensity that, when combined, equaled the intensity of the original photon. These two beams of photons were then directed toward an appropriately placed semi-transparent mirror. Beyond the mirror was a photon detector. These detectors showed that fifty percent of the photons were reflected by the semi-transparent mirror and fifty percent passed through, striking the respective detectors fifty percent of the time. But the photons that struck each detector were no longer lower intensity twin photons, but full intensity photons. When one pair of the lower intensity twin was eliminated by the semi-transparent mirror, the remaining member of the pair regained full intensity. This effect is called interference and conforms to the wave behavior of photons.

Then the researchers marked one of the members of the lower intensity pair by placing a polarization filter in its path thus destroying the photon's wave behavior. As a result the two detectors registered not only full intensity photons but also lower intensity photons. And both pairs of the lower intensity twins were registered simultaneously by the two photon detectors.

Finally the researchers, leaving the original polarization mirror in place, put an additional polarization mirror in front of each photon detector. As a result the detectors no longer registered both full intensity and lower intensity twins. Instead they registered only full intensity photons, fifty percent striking one detector and fifty percent striking the other. In some way placing a polarization filter in front of each of the detectors was able to cancel out the effect of the single polarization filter in the path of the lower intensity photon on the other side of the transparent mirror. Thus the lower intensity photons now united at the semi-transparent mirror as though no polarization filters were being used. It was as though the two depolarization filters were effecting an event that had already taken place!

Based on this experiment Zoeller-Greer argues that past reality like present reality is created through the process of observation. There is no unique or real past apart from an observer (pp. 13, 16). The past, until it is observed from a particular moment, is only unconfigured potential (p. 14).

Both the Aspect and the Scully experiments have been confirmed over extended distances. The Aspect experiment initially involved particles which were separated by only thirteen meters. In 1997 a team of researchers headed by Nicolas Gisin at the University of Geneva confirmed nonlocality over a distance of thirteen kilometers. The Scully experiment has been replicated on a cosmic scale of billions of light years using the gravitational lens created galaxies.

Given the results of experiments like these, I agree that mind is not just an irreducible entity on a par with time or space, as Dr. Schwartz puts it. I would agree with Prof. Zoeller-Greer that mind is in some sense more fundamental than either of those entities, that in some way mind is instrumental in bringing space and time into being as particular expressions.

Of course mind in this context has no particular identity. It is not human, animal, demonic, angelic, or divine. It is instead a property, a generalization for the capacity to be aware, a capacity which would necessarily involve some sense of sequence and location. A toad would have that. So would a carp, a canary, a cat, and a man. So also, one supposes, would angels. And, as the being who created it all, so would God. It would follow that mind is a capacity or property distinct from the matrix that carries it. Carbon based life might provide a matrix for mind, but so could spirit. And if things as distinctive as carbon based life and spirit might provide such a matrix, so might other things as well.

If mind affords a sense of location and sequence to that which has it, mind also furnishes that which has it with a sense of identity. Mind, as the principle which distinguishes self from not self, provides the a priori psychological representation by which each soul can be aware. Thus to function mind must be individualized. However, the brains of each species are species specific. It follows then that the categories which create the virtual worlds with which the various species interact are also species specific. And because they are species specific we may suppose that the virtual worlds they create are themselves distinct. As the structures of our brains create the world we perceive and interact with, so the structures of a cat's brain create the world the cat perceives and interacts with. And while there may be some mind and structure overlap making it possible for us to intuit at some level what a cat sees, the particulars of a cat's perception will be forever closed to us. We may suppose then that there are cat worlds, guppy worlds, toad worlds, human worlds, and angel worlds, each sharing various properties at some level but also quite dissimilar.

But if the species specific nature of various creature's brains imply the virtual worlds they create are dissimilar, how can we surmise that the various worlds share some properties? Two lines of evidence suggest this is so. First, as guppies, toads, cats, and humans are carbon-based life forms and live on the same planet, it is reasonable to suppose that the virtual worlds created by the brains of these various creatures are analogous and probably allow the creatures to experience their shared planet in some similar ways. Evolution theory insofar as it presupposes that all life forms derived from a common ancestor also suggests some level of overlap among the virtual worlds. Second, communication is based on intuition and intuition implies some degree of shared experience. By communicating, we make our intentions known to entities other than ourselves. Insofar as I can make my intentions known to a cat or the cat can make its intentions known to me, we have achieved some level of communication. Thus it follows that the cat and I have some level of shared experience which enables the two of us to grasp intuitively what the other is thinking. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that similar chemical matrixes in the same basic environment and with some ability to communicate operate within virtual worlds that are in some ways similar.

KARL BARTH CONTEMPLATING JACOB'S LADDER: A FANTASY

And Zacharias said, Whereby shall I know this? (Lk. 1:18)

Then Mary said, "How shall this thing be?" (Lk. 1:34)

Nicodemus answered and said, "How can these things be?" (Jn. 3:9)

This moment is the only truth I know.
The here and now will never let me go.
The triumph of the will just isn't so.
That pyramid was plundered long ago.

Death is the consequence of all we do.
Death is the valley all must journey through.
The vulture and the worm will tear in two
This precious substance that is me and you.

I am the core and stuff of other men.
Who wrapped my secret skeleton in skin?
I am the dust of stars and all that's been.
And if the grave claims all I am, what then?

A fragil moonbeam paints that narrow stair
Which I must climb alone. What waits up there?
May I decend again or will I care?
I climb because I must. I do not dare.

The sunlight shuts my eyes and makes me sneeze.
The giant darkness pounds me to my knees.
Canaan is ash between eternities.
Reach down and touch me, Jesus, if you please.



Mike & Salma at Williams Square in Las Colinas, Texas.

“I am running with Strange Horses” - Mike Carter



Mike & Salma Carter with Pat & Terry Carter at Williams Square in Las Colinas, Texas.

Strange Horses

What I was
I have forgotten
What I am
I cannot know
I am facing
My tomorrow
And tomorrow
Lies in shadow

I am running
With strange horses
Out where hills
And rivers mingle
And the distance
Stretches cloudless
Into angles

Wind and war
Tumble around me
While behind me
There is nothing
And before me
There is dying
But I gleam
Like seven razors

I am flying
With strange horses
Over ruins
Wrapped in roses
I have passed
Beyond those judgments
Whittled in
The cliffs of Moses



Ben Carter & Pat Carter

Desert camps
No longer matter
I have walked
Upon the lake
I have slept
Beneath Golgotha
And now
I am awake

I am running
With strange horses
Red and speckled
Black and pale
All around me
There are angles
And I ride
Upon their gale

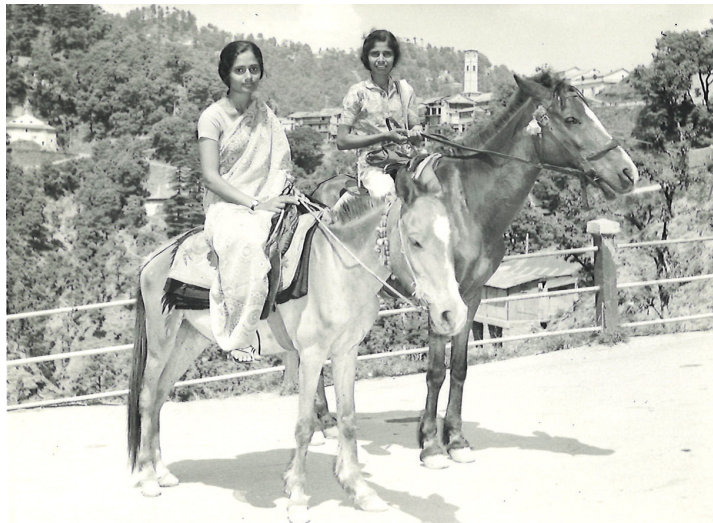
I am soaring
With strange horses
While beneath me
Cities crumble
My tomorrow
Lies in shadow
Wind an war
Around me tumble

I am running
With strange horses
And I hear
The heavens break
What has been
No longer matters
I'm awake

By

Mike Carter

Ini Carunia & Salma Carunia



How do you know God exists?

How do you know God doesn't? My point in responding in this way is to try to show that the nature of the question being asked is wrong-headed. In fact, the question involves two philosophical problems that have only indirect bearing on the supposed central focus of the question: God. The first problem is the problem of knowledge: how do you know? The second problem is the problem of existence itself.

Concerning the first: we know of things in a variety of ways but primarily we know them through experience, intuition, or some interface between the two. We are only on the edges of being able to understand how the brain filters and structures raw experience in order to construct some kind of coherent picture of the world, and how learned cultural patterns help the brain to do that. The process of intuition is even more mysterious. So to the question, "How do you know...?" one can add the word "anything." "How do you know anything?"

For example, it is evident that $1=1$, but how do

you know that? You know it through intuition, but how does intuition work? Suppose you were talking to a person who was intelligent and reasonable but who lacked the ability to see that $1=1$. How could you demonstrate the truth of the proposition? In fact, at this point in our knowledge we simply cannot. One either sees it or one doesn't. If one sees it, no proof is necessary. If one doesn't, no proof will suffice. My point is that at this stage the question "how do you know?" cannot be answered satisfactorily.

The second problem is existence, but existence cannot be proved or disproved. The philosophical way of saying this is: "Existence is not a predicate in a rational argument." Another way of making the same point is to say: "Any proof for existence or non-existence is system-dependent." Step outside the assumptions embraced by the system and the proof collapses.

As an example of the problem let us consider something basic like my own existence. It is clear to me that in some manner I exist. But how can I be sure the things I think I know about myself are true? How

do I know my memories embrace anything real? How can I be sure that the entire cosmos complete with memories did not come into existence a second ago? How can I be sure where reality begins and illusion ends? Outside of some vague apprehension of myself as somehow here, how can I be sure of any existence beyond myself? In fact as I think of it I become aware that before I can determine if something exists I must be able to know clearly what existence itself entails. But in attempting to define existence, I reintroduce the problem of system-dependency. Suppose you do not accept my definitions.

So to come back to the original question, "How do you know God exists?" One can only respond, "How do you know anything?" And "What is existence and how can you be sure anything exists?" Or as I responded initially: How do you know God doesn't?

How did God begin? Who created God?

The assumption that God had a beginning rests on a logical absurdity. It introduces what is called the absurdity of "regressus in infinitum" or infinite regression. Consider: if there is a God-creator, what created the God-creator? And if there is a creator of the God-creator, what created the creator of the God-creator? And if there is a creator of the creator of the God-creator? What created that creator, and so on. The question by its very nature has no answer and thus is absurd.

The question by its very nature is absurd because it rests on a confusion of categories. For example, why must we assume that everything had a beginning? The circumference of a flat two-dimensional circle is π multiplied by the radius of the circle squared or πr^2 . Could it ever be otherwise? Was there ever a time when such a principle wasn't true? Can such a truth be said to have had a beginning? In fact, the principles of reason and mathematics exist apart from the universe and remain true whatever form the universe takes. Indeed, the universe is as it is because such

principles are as they are. When God told Moses, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14), he was saying a whole lot.

Because we exist as creatures within a conditioned universe, it is quite natural for us to think in terms of ends and beginnings. But if God created the universe, then God exists outside of and apart from the universe. Hence, questions based on our experience of the conditionedness of the universe are inappropriate when applied to that which preceeded the universe. The question "who created God?" rests on just such a confusion of catagories and that is why it is absurd. Catagories which are appropriate when applied to events within the universe (how did Edinburgh begin?) are inappropriate when applied to realities which exist outside of, prior to, or beyond the universe (when did it become true that the circumference of a flat two-dimensional circle equals πr^2 ?). And so such questions are absurd when applied to God.

Why does the Lord allow evil men to walk the earth?

If God did not allow evil men to walk the earth, who among us would still be here?

Because God created us in his own image, God created us with some capacity to chose our own way. Because God is good and God created us, God knows what is best for us. In ignoring God and going our own way, we chose a lesser good. In choösing a lesser good, we embark on a path toward evil.

Many thousands of years have passed since our ancestors made those first choices, and we are far down the path to evil. Each one of us has done much evil in our lives. Sometimes circumstances and opportunities have magnified that evil. Sometimes they have reduced it. But all of us drag behind ourselves a great chain of wickedness we ourselves have forged.

Strangely enough God allows us to walk the earth bound by these great chains - adding day by day to these great chains - because God has judged us and is punishing us (the wickedness we do is part of God's judgment upon our wickedness) but also because God is merciful and gracious and is giving us time to repent.

He calls us to repentance by sending messengers among us, messengers who have themselves repented and been freed from those vast chains they themselves forged and dragged. Freed from their shackles, those messengers stand among the ones still chained, tell them of the situation, warn them of what they are doing, and warn them of the consequences.

Robert is such a messenger. Hear ye him.

I did some quick research into Alfred Russel Wallace this morning (Tuesday, 28 March 1995). This is what I found out.

According to Who Was Who 1897-1916 Wallace travelled in the Amazon from 1848 until 1852. The Encyclopedia Britannica (1978) describes it this way:

[Wallace and the British naturalist Henry Walter Bates] went on an expedition to the Amazon in 1848, and in 1853 Wallace published A Narrative of Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro. On the return voyage his ship sank, and his collections were lost, except for materials already sent to England. (1)

He also spent eight years in the Malay Archipelago.² Of those years Britannica says:

In 1854-62 he made a tour of the Malay Archipelago to assemble further evidence, in addition to that collected in the Amazon, to support evolution. (2)

Apparently his ideas about evolution had begun to develop early in his life. According to the Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921:

In 1855 he published his first contribution to the species problem, an Essay on the Law which has regulated the Introduction of New Species, in which he laid down the evolutionary conclusion that 'every species has come into existence coincident both in time and space with a pre-existing closely allied species.' (3)

Darwin first read Wallace in March 1858 and he and Wallace presented a joint paper before the Linnean Society on 1 July 1858. Darwin published in November 1859 but Wallace did not publish The Malay Archipelago until 1869. (4) According to Britannica:

Both [Darwin and Wallace] believed that man had evolved to his present bodily form by natural selection but Wallace insisted that man's higher mental capacities could not have arisen by natural selection, as Darwin argued, but that some nonbiological agency must have been responsible. Here may be seen the influence of Wallace's convictions on the subject of spiritism.⁵

Appendix B asserts that Wallace "wander[ed] in the tropics of the Amazon for 12 years". We see that this is wrong. Matrisciana and Oakland also attempt to tie Wallace together with theosophy, specifically with Blavatsky's Theosophical Society (pp. 205 and 207). The Theosophical Society was founded, as Conspiracy points out, in 1875 but they don't mention that it was founded in New York and that when Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and co-founder Henry Steel Olcott left for India in 1878, the Society almost died. It was revived by William Q. Judge in the 1880s and 1890s. (6) Wallace's Miracles and Modern Spiritualism, to which the authors refer, was published in 1874 with a new edition coming out in 1896. (7) This would suggest, at least to me, that Wallace was only marginally influenced by Blavatsky if he was influenced by her at all.

The issue of theosophy is worth a quick look here. Etymologically theosophy means "wisdom of God" and appears in the works of several church fathers as a synonym for theology. It was not until 1550-1560 with the publication of a book on white magic entitled Arbatel that the word was given its current meaning. By the beginning of the seventeenth century

that meaning had been fixed and by the eighteenth century its use in the current way had become widespread. This was due particularly to the emergence of Baroque literature in Germany. (8)

Theosophy goes back to the ancient world. Most scholars do not believe that it evidences Asiatic roots especially among ancient and medieval thinkers but that instead it emerged as a parallel independent movement. But there can be no doubting its Asian roots in Mme. Blavatsky's thinking. (9)

In other words, theosophical ideas are a part of European tradition. Wallace could have entertained such ideas (in fact probably did) without any influence from Mme. Blavatsky at all.

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1. Encyclopedia Britannica (1978), Vol. 19, "Wallace, Alfred Russel", p. 530
 2. Ibid., p.
 3. Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921, "Wallace, Alfred Russel", p. 547
 4. Britannica, p. 530
 5. Ibid., p. 531
 6. Britannica, Vol. 18, "Theosophy", p. 277
 7. Who Was Who 1897-1916, "Wallace, Alfred Russel"
 8. The Encyclopedia of Religion (Mircea Eliade, editor-in-chief)(1987) Vol. 14, "Theosophy", p. 466
 9. Britannica, Vol. 18, "Theosophy", p. 227

INTRODUCTION

One of the theological difficulties which has become more acute over the last several centuries is what we might call a conflict of incompatible cosmologies. This is not a problem exclusive to any specific religion. Our inductive approach to knowledge has worked best when we have described events in terms of development paradigms but such descriptions have not proven particularly amenable to any traditional faith. A world which emphasizes pluralism and secondary cause is not a world which reassures the Muslim. The population explosion constitutes a profound challenge to reincarnational doctrines. Localized faiths appear irrelevant in a world with a universal vision. And the Judao-Christian faith complex which in a more naive century encouraged the pursuit of "natural philosophy" as the discipline of "thinking God's thoughts after Him" is being forced to re-evaluate its traditional truth-claims as a consequence of that pursuit. Indeed, the world we are discovering and describing is so completely different from the world any of these religions might have expected that their truth-claims in all areas are being challenged. Such a challenge is understandable for it seems not unreasonable to suppose that if statements about the physical realm are so obviously fallacious, statements about metaphysical realities might be just as wide of the mark. Before curved space/time that is measured in billions of light years, before matter-waves, DNA, and hominoid fossils a million-and-a-half years old, religion, once the citadel of human dignity, has been forced into a

Pride has deceived us as we read:

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.

- Obadiah 3-4

So it is true that:

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso ever walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

- Prov. 28:26

To walk wisely means to wait upon God. We read:

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

- Isa. 40:31

It is God who will correct the situation by creating a new heart.

And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

- Jer. 24:7

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stoney heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.

- Eze. 36:26

Thus we see that not all men are children of God. There are children of the flesh (those who are by nature children of wrath - Eph. 2:3) and those who are sons of God by adoption (Gal. 4:5). Paul developes this idea further in Romans 9:

They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, at this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God that sheweth mercy.

- Rom. 9:8-16

The question we are asking is this: to what extent can a person by making the proper choices cooperate with God and provide for his own salvation? In the light of the ascription of salvation to God through the incarnation and pentacost and the expressed failure of the law to make us righteous:

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:19-20)....Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Rom. 3:28)....I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Gal. 2:21)

we can assume that it is not sin which damns us for many of us who are saved were very great sinners. Rather it is sins which make us worthy of damnation and reveal our need for a redeemer. We can also say that it is not works of the law which makes us worthy of salvation. Who saves us? Christ! Who damns us? Let us look for a scriptural perspective which will aid us in answering this question. Regarding man's freedom to choose his course and direct his life the Bible tells us:

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

- Jer. 10:23

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

- Prov. 16:9

Men as they pursue their course may not be aware of their need for redemption. They may believe that all is well with them.

All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

- Prov. 16:2

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts.

- Prov. 21:2

Now we are told that:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

- Jer. 17:9-10

CHAPTER ONE

The first eleven chapters of Genesis constitute a prologue, setting the stage for a more particular history. The chapters cover in a very cursory fashion a vast period of time. The first two chapters tell the story of creation, chapter one containing the seven day account, chapter two concentrating on the Garden of Eden and the formation of man and woman. The third chapter tells the story of the fall and the fourth relates the murder of Abel by Cain. Chapter five is a genealogy which traces the line of Seth up to the time of Noah. Chapters six through nine relate the history of the Flood. Chapter ten delineates the genealogies of the families of Noah. Chapter eleven tells the story of the tower of Babel and relates the generations from Shem to Abram. The constant references to genealogy stress the historical nature of these events and the events are developed within the three themes of sin, judgment, and covenant. These three themes are employed to make several theological points: that God is creator, that God has the ability to interact with his creation, that he is both merciful Lord and sever judge, that humanity in contradistinction to its potential for righteousness has corrupted itself, that the purpose of creation is to give glory to God, and that God will for the sake of his own glory enter into agreements with corrupt humanity, agreements which suggest both divine personality and human responsibility. The story of the Flood is the obvious centerpiece of these eleven chapters.

Though the chapters appear at first glance to tell the story of all humanity, it is evident upon reflection that they focus on the

very undignified retreat.

It is my purpose in this study to discuss that retreat as it relates to the traditional account of Noah's flood. I believe that no other story in the Old or New Testament so clearly reveals the cosmological crisis which confronts us. Jesus, the incarnation of God, because he comes from outside our universe, must remain a stranger in any cosmological paradigm we construct. The story of Jonah if literally true is by its nature unique and unfalsifiable. Our belief in its historicity depends upon our conception of God and not upon our conception of the world. The same is true of much found in scripture which the enemies of the faith would dismiss as "fantastical". Even the sun and moon standing still for Joshua or the backward motion of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz can be defended as local miracles of perception without putting too much strain on the credulity of the faithful. But Noah's flood because of its claims to universality constitutes a much more serious problem. Unlike the story of Jonah's whale it is falsifiable. Also our belief in the flood has little to do with our beliefs about God but does have a great deal to do with our beliefs about the world. Finally, it cannot be defended in the same way one would defend a local miracle without doing great violence to the story. This is true for two reasons. First, it was not local (at least as far as humanity is concerned since all but eight souls were destroyed as Peter tells us - I Peter 3:20). Second, it is not portrayed as a miracle in the same way that Joshua's sun and moon or Hezekiah's request for motion in a shadow are portrayed. The account of the flood is not an account of God exercising creative power. Here

such a system cannot account can be discovered, the system is revealed as faulty and its truth claims are compromised. This is a process that occurs continually and is one upon which we found our claims to progress. In the ancient world the failure of myths to answer the questions of origins which Thales asked marked the birth of Greek philosophy. The inability of the pre-Socratics to deal with epistemological questions opened the way for Plato's suggestion that the world is an expression of the interaction of substance and form. The recognition of the limitations of such a proposal created an environment friendly to empiricism. Empiricism's need for an integrative system inspired Newton. The eventual failure of the Newtonian system to account for the absolute speed of light or the progress of color in cooling metal pointed the way for Einstein. Analogically, if a locksmith claims to possess a key which opens all doors, that key must open all doors. Should the key fail, the locksmith must forge a new key.

As religious conservatives we confront such a secured and unyielding door. Before such a door, we have, I think, four options. First, we can affirm our traditional conclusions in defiance of all scientific theory and wait until the theories change, hoping that they will change toward conclusions more in keeping with our own affirmations. This is an historically valid option. Traditional theology affirmed for many centuries and for the best theological reasons the doctrine that matter was created from nothing while the best science affirmed that matter could not be created or destroyed. While it would not be accurate to claim that contemporary science

now affirms the position of traditional theology, it is certainly true that the creation and destruction of matter is today a scientifically verifiable event. A second option for religious conservatives would be to maintain the truth both of the conclusions of science and of traditional theology, that is to become involved in an apologetic which takes credible account of scientific theory (in this case, geological and archaeological evidence which presents a world in which there was no universal deluge). The third option would be for us to abandon our traditional positions, that is to cease to be religious conservatives while trying to maintain elements of the traditional faith. The fourth option would be for us to abandon our faith altogether. While discussing the course of our retreat in the face of the emerging contemporary cosmology, I will evaluate these options as they relate to Noah's flood and make some suggestions concerning possible alternatives.

Mesopotamian and Egyptian world. The time span covered by these chapters is admittedly uncertain but on the surface would not appear to take us much beyond three thousand years B.C. It is also evident that the tradition presupposes both the development of agriculture and metallurgy. God plants a garden which man tends. Part of God's judgment on Adam is that he must till the earth by the sweat of his brow. Also in the line of Cain we discover Lamech's son Tubalcain who is described as being "an instructor of every artificer of brass and iron" (Gen. 4:22), suggesting that what we have designated as the Iron Age must have dawned before the time of the Flood.

Having been described the Flood plays little role in the rest of the Old Testament beyond being employed as an illustration by both Isaiah and Ezekiel. In Isaiah it is referred to in terms of God's "little wrath" and is contrasted with his "everlasting kindness". God remembers that the waters of Noah will not go out again (Isa. 54:7-9). In Ezekiel Noah is referred to twice in chapter 14 verses 14 and 20 where he along with Daniel and Job is described as a righteous man. The emphasis here is to stress that Israel has become even more corrupt than the world which God had earlier destroyed.

In the New Testament the theme of Noah's righteousness is transformed into the theme of faith (Heb. 11:7) and the eschatological dimensions of the Flood suggested by Isaiah are much more fully developed by Jesus and Peter. Jesus in referring to his second coming employs the Flood as an illustration from history to underline the terrible nature of that judgment and its catching men unaware (Matt. 24:36-39;

Luke 17:26-27). Peter also uses the Flood in this way (II Pt. 2:4-10) and, referring to Christ as having preached to the spirits in prison who were destroyed during the Flood, sees in the Deluge a figure of baptism (I Pt. 3:18-22).

The most natural reading of the words of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, and Peter suggests that all four understood the Flood as an actual event in history. Indeed, it is as an event in history that the Flood assumes portentous escatological urgency. The Flood may not be repeated but God's judgment of the world with its concomitant destruction will be repeated. God's righteousness never changes and he is provoked by sin. As he has acted in the past so he will act in the future and the appeal to Noah underlines this claim. It is not sin as a symbol but sin as a universal temporal reality which provokes God to acts of universal judgment. The covenant with Noah has not freed us from God's wrath, it has merely changed the form that wrath will take. The next destruction as Peter tells us will be by fire (II Pt. 3:5-7). However, if we assume the Flood as an historical event, we would also expect certain geological consequences.

Because events referred to in the Bible generally have a historical basis, archaeological and geological evidence for such events can be found. Although identification of sites and dating often proves to be problematic, a large body of evidence has been accumulated which confirms in a multitude of ways the basic factuality of much of the Old Testament. However, evidence supporting the account of Noah's flood is conspicuously absent. There is of course some evidence of sever

flooding in the Mesopotamian region and suggestions have been made by those men who excavated the alluvial deposits left by those floods that such deposits are evidence for the biblical deluge. However, subsequent dating of these various deposits have demonstrated that they are not coeval and in the case of the eight foot deep alluvial despoit discovered by Sir Leonard Woolley in 1929 at Ur an ensuing excavation four miles away from Ur at the Tell el-Obeid, an excavation conducted by Woolley himself, revealed no traces of alluvial strata.¹

The word in the Genesis account used for Noah's flood is mabbul. It has no known etymology in Hebrew and may be of Assyrian origin from the word nabalu meaning "to destroy".² The Noachian flood is portrayed in the Bible as a unique event and its uniqueness is emphasized by the author's use of this unusual word. This is no periodic destruction. The Flood occured once for specific reasons and ended with a divine promise that it would never occur again.

The date of this unique flood has been fixed traditionally at sometime around 2500 B.C. However, archeologists have uncovered a continuous Egyptian record extending well into the fourth millennium B.C. Sumerian inscriptions in what is basicly the same language Abram would have heard when he lived among the Chaldees have been dated to three thousand years B.C. This suggests that the tower of Babel was built sometime prior to that date and the tower of Babel was of course erected after the Flood. In fact, although linguistic studies have suggested a common origin for all languages, that origin has been pushed considerably beyond thirty-five thousand years ago.³ Radiocarbon datings

indicate time spans equally as vast.

Revised radiocarbon datings suggest that the earliest stone rings in Britain were being constructed in the Lake region and on the Atlantic coast about 3300 B.C. and that at the time that God was flooding the world recumbent stone circles were being built around Aberdeen, Scotland.⁴ The first period of construction for Stonehenge has been dated to 2800 B.C. and an unbroken series of levels has been unearthed at the site covering a period of some thirteen hundred years.⁵ Malta was being settled by 5000 B.C. and stone temples were being erected there by 3000 B.C.⁶ The culture which gave rise to these temples came to an end approximately 2000 B.C.⁷ Jōmen or "rope-marked" pottery was being made in Japan ten thousand years before the birth of Christ and lasted as a sequence until almost two thousand B.C.⁸ Archeological evidence places hunters in North America between 35,000 and 40,000 years ago⁹ and sites of continuous occupation that covers several thousand years have been excavated on that continent. Some examples:

At Kotzebue Sound on Cape Krusenstern on the Arctic sea in Alaska excavations reveal continuous occupation of the area from the present to about 3000 B.C.¹⁰ At Danger Cave in western Utah there is evidence of continuous occupation from the Christian era back to 8300 B.C.¹¹ The Columbian River Plateau reveals evidence of cultural hegemony extending from two thousand years ago until eight thousand years ago¹² and in Idaho this same complex can be traced as far back as ten thousand years ago.¹³ The beginnings of animal husbandry in central Mexico are dated to before 5000 B.C.¹⁴ and agriculture to between 5500 and 7500 B.C.¹⁵

There can be no doubt that such time spans even if only very

approximately correct present us with a profound theological dilemma. God has chosen the vehicle of language to communicate to us truths about himself. Traditionally the church has understood pentecost to mean that there is no sacred language used in God's communication of that truth but that the multitude heard of the wonderful works of God in their native tongues (Acts 2:4-11). Language as a profoundly cultural phenomenon is structured by one's cultural worldview but worldviews are provisional while truths about God we assume to be absolute. We also assume that the Bible contains such absolute truths about God. Here then lies the crux of the dilemma; either something is very wrong with our constructions of pre-history suggesting that there is something very wrong with our view of the world or the apparently straightforward historical account of the Flood as found in scripture is not what it appears to be. If something is very wrong with our worldview then, since we conceptualize events in terms of that worldview, something is very likely wrong with our basic understanding of scripture. However, consequent to the apparent advantages we enjoy today because of our worldview, it is difficult to imagine that something is so flawed with that worldview that it can, while revealing so much to us about the present, present us with past which is fundamentally false. Therefore the tendency has been to assume that our worldview is basically sound, that our reconstructions of the past are basically accurate, and that in order to affirm our basic historical understanding of the account of the Flood the wisest course is to re-evaluate the historicity biblical account. So let us examine the current trends of this re-evaluation.

From the beginning the orthodox church has generally understood the account of the Flood to be literal history. Augustine's defense of the historicity of the Deluge is classic and he concludes that there is no untruth of any kind in scripture.¹⁶ What reads as history is history. In fact, he states that our confidence in biblical prophecy provides the ground for our confidence in biblical history. Because we know that the Bible has told us the truth about the future, we can know that the Bible tells us the truth about the past.¹⁷ Even as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century Matthew Henry could assume the historicity of the Flood and make no defense of it in his commentary.¹⁸ However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century all that had changed and Adam Clarke in his commentary has a detailed defense of the Flood as a phenomenon conceivable given the scientific conclusions and assumptions of the time.¹⁹

This defense of the Flood as scientifically feasible marks a shift in the intellectual climate. This shift reflects the growing antiscapernaturalism which characterized the era and the emergence of a new interpretive paradigm for understanding events in the world. Called uniformitarianism, this paradigm assumed that the normal occurrences in the world (occurrences like storms, standard temperature variations, volcanos, earthquakes, and local floods) were sufficient to account for the present appearance of the world so long as enough time had elapsed to allow the effects of these occurrences to become cumulative.

James Hutton (1726-1797) in an address to the Royal Society of

Edinburgh in 1785 first presented this theory. In 1795 he published an expanded defense of the concept but because his ideas were not clearly expressed the book did not have much of an impact until 1802 when John Playfair (1748-1819), a Scottish physician, minister, and instructor of mathematics at the University of Edinburgh where he accepted a chair of natural philosophy in 1805, published his Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth. The ideas of Hutton and Playfair produced strong reaction in the intellectual community and Adam Clarke's defense of the Flood reflects that reaction. However, in defending the Flood Clarke is fully aware that it is portrayed in scripture as an episode which happens from within the continuum of natural events and he therefore appeals to those same scientific assumptions which had informed Hutton's conclusions. Even as the reasonableness of Christianity (to borrow a phrase from John Locke) was the standard which the orthodox bore against the deists in the eighteenth century, so the naturalness of Christianity was to become the standard which Christian apologists were to bear against the scientific criticism of the nineteenth century.

In 1830-33 Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875), who was trained in the classics and who took his degree in law but who became interested in geology while attending lectures on that subject by William Buckland at Oxford, published his Principles of Geology and the doctrine of uniformitarianism was established permanently. It became the bedrock of geology and was soon adopted as a basic assumption by all forms of scientific endeavor which sought to understand and reconstruct antiquity. Theologians have responded to these reconstructions in two basic ways.

Either they have

reduced the Flood to a local inundation or they have denied the necessity for affirming that there was any Deluge at all. The first revision of traditional Christianity has been dubbed conservative, the second liberal. There is also a third group represented by men like Henry Morris who seek to affirm a universal Flood in the old sense but do so by positing an antediluvian world vastly different from the one in which we live. I refer to this third position now but because it represents a reconstruction of the traditional account rather than a revision of more customary views I will discuss it in more detail later.

The liberal position is assumed by publications like The Interpreter's Bible and Harper's Bible Commentary. Here the assumption is that the account of the Flood is a story based on an earlier Babylonian myth and is not to be considered as true history at all. Hebrew writers borrowed the Babylonian myth and reinterpreted it in line with their own monotheistic assumptions. They employed a story current in their own cultural milieu in order to teach truths about God. This reinterpretation of the Babylonian material is of course inspired and that inspiration guarantees validity of the religious truths drawn from the account, but has no bearing on the historical truths of the tale itself. Because traditionally Christianity is a religion which has stressed its historical roots, this distinction between historical and religious truths disturbs the more conservative scholars for to them it sounds like a resuscitation of the old heresies of docitism and gnosticism. Smith's Bible Dictionary or S.J. Schultz's The Old Testament Speaks represent this position. Here what is important is not the global extent of the Flood but its con-

sequent destruction of all humanity. So long as there was a Flood which destroyed all humanity except Noah and his family, they feel that traditional theological conclusions are assured. There is an interesting exception to which we should refer. Harold Lindsell in his Harper Study Bible seems quite willing to entertain the possibility that others besides Noah and his family survived. He notes that the extra-biblical evidence does not support the notion of a universal flood and also observes that the ancestry of the Negroid and Mongoloid races cannot be traced from the descendants of Ham, Shem, or Japheth.²⁰

This theological requirement that all humanity be destroyed has resulted in a tendency to substantially post-date the Deluge. Gleason Archer who sees no reason to doubt the literal ages recorded for the patriarchs in the first chapters of Genesis and who even suggests that we may account for their longevity by assuming the existence of an ice shield in the upper atmosphere which would have protected those men from harmful cosmic rays, admits the difficulty of harmonizing the account of the Flood with current archaeological data. To solve the problem he proposes that there are gaps in the genealogies of those first chapters and uses the gaps to argue that the Flood must have occurred well before 5000 B.C.²¹ Charles T. Fritsch whose Layman's Bible Commentary takes a more liberal position in the discussion also suggests that the Flood if it took place probably took place in the Stone Age.²² It matters little that Tubalcain instructed every artificer of brass and iron. Here conservative and liberal have come together in their

quest for solutions to the conundrum.

Viewed theologically there are strengths and weaknesses in both the liberal and conservative revisions. It will be our task in the next chapter to examine some of those strengths and weakness.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Gebelein, F.E., Editor, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. I, Harrison, R.K., "Historical and Literary Criticism of the Old Testament", sec. "Middle Bronze Age", p. 233
2. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 13
3. Jennings, J.D., and Norbeck, E., Editors, Prehistoric Man in the New World, Swadesh, M., "Linguistic Overview", p. 530
4. Burl, A., Rings of Stone, Introduction, p. 39
5. Ibid.
6. Renfrew, C., Before Civilization, Chap. 8, pp. 147 and 152
7. Ironically, the Lebanese city of Gebal, which was renamed Byblos during the Hellenistic period, and from which we get the word bible, has been inhabited since at least 5000 B.C.
8. Mason, R.H.P., and Caiger, J.G., A History of Japan, Part I, Chap.1, p. 4
9. Jennings and Norbeck, Prehistoric Man, Krieger, A.D., "Early Man in the New World", p. 68
10. Ibid., Collins, H.B., "The Arctic and Subarctic", p. 88
11. Ibid., Jennings, J.D., "The Desert West", p. 156
12. Ibid., p. 163
13. Ibid., p. 166
14. Ibid., Armillas, P., "Northern Mesoamerica", p. 295
15. Ibid., p. 294
16. Augustine, City of God, Book XVI, Chap. 9, p. 664
17. Ibid.
18. Henry, M., Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible
19. Clarke, A., Clarke's Commentary, Vol. I, pp. 73-76
20. Lindsell, H., Harper Study Bible, p. 14

FOOTNOTES ON CHAPTER ONE CONTINUED

21. Gebelein, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. I, Archer, G.L.,
"The Chronology and Metrology of the Old Testament", sec. B "Problems
in Regard to Precision", p. 362
22. Fritsch, C.T., The Layman's Bible Commentary, Vol. II, p. 42

CHAPTER TWO

Section 1 The Liberals

One of the most attractive aspects of the liberal position is the apparent ability to deal plausibly with the absence of archaeological and geological support for a universal flood. By stressing the distinct cosmologies of the ancient and modern worlds and emphasizing the unifying themes in scripture they are able to construct a theology which at first looks very traditional. God, though he knew there was no Flood, inspired the Hebrew writers to incorporate the story into their sacred canon in order to announce some particular truths about himself which could not be revealed as effectively in other ways. To argue that the story of the deluge was simply a device which the Hebrews employed in order to teach truths about God is superficially appealing. One could even view this as the genius of ancient apologetic. However, further reflection exposes the weaknesses of such an assertion.

First, we must ask what truths are revealed about God in the Flood story that are not abundantly supported by other passages. While the Flood story shows us God's righteousness, his judgment on sin, his selective mercy on those who themselves are deemed righteous, his willingness to enter into a covenant with such men, and humanity's essential unity as descendants of a single couple, all of these themes are affirmed by many other texts. What is unique about the Flood is its universal character and that is the aspect of the Flood story that is stressed in the New Testament. God judged the entire world

but saved some few. This event is seen to have profound soteriological and escatological implications. But if there was no Flood, then we have no evidence that God has ever exercised catastrophic universal judgment which means that any warning derived from presupposing such a judgment is void. This undercuts the veracity of Isaiah, Peter, and Jesus himself. Indeed, it has profound implications for one's Christology. What are we to make of Jesus if in order to emphasize his theological claims he based them on an event in which his contemporaries believed but which we know did not happen. Did Christ know that there was no Flood of the magnitude described in the scriptures but accommodate his statements to the ignorance of the people of his time? If so, what does such accommodation imply about Christ's claim to be the truth? Can the truth remain the truth if it knowingly allows ignorance and error to remain? And if Christ allowed for ignorance and error when proclaiming his doctrine, how can we determine where the error ends and the truth he wanted to impart begins? On the other hand, it may be that Christ voluntarily assumed some level of ignorance when he descended to dwell among men. We may find some help in such a kenotic Christology when it comes to understanding how Christ might have increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man (Luke 2:52) The surprise expressed by Jesus at the faith of the centurion or at his disciples failure to grasp the lesson he had tried to teach them when he fed the multitude. But does such a Christology really help us when it comes to understanding his theological claims? If he assumed ignorance in theological areas, how could he have spoken

with authority when it came to theological issues? Jesus not only refers to the Flood (something he does not have to do) but draws theological truth about himself from his reference. It is one thing for Jesus to say that he does not know the time of his coming. It is a very different kind of thing for him to claim that he is going to return when he is not. And to deny the historicity of the Flood is to undermine the historicity of that return.

This brings us to the problem of escatology. If the Flood to which Peter refers when telling us that next time the world will be destroyed by fire is only a symbol, then is it not possible that the destruction of the world by fire is itself a symbol? And if the world is only to be symbolically destroyed, is it not reasonable to assume that it will only be symbolically recreated? In short, to deny the historicity of the Flood is to rob its escatological symbolic import of any content. Symbols when they have no focus have no meaning and truths derived from such symbols have no significance. In the case of the Flood it comes to little more than saying that had there been a Flood, God would have acted in ways consistent with his character as it has been revealed in other passages. Religion is nothing if it is not vital. To deny the historicity of the Noachian deluge is to robe it of its vitality, that is it renders the story non-religious. This is the fatal error in a division of religious truth from historical truth and it is why docitism and gnosticism have always been condemned as heresy by the orthodox church.

But there are other principles as stake as well. If there

was no Flood, then we have no assurance that any cosmic event referred to in scripture is actual. No one died in a Flood which never happened. Yet part of Christ's salvation victory was to preach to the spirits in prison who were disobedient during the days of Noah. If Christ never really did that when Peter says that he did, is not Peter's testimony concerning other acts of the Lord compromised? After all in telling us what Christ did during the time he lay in the tomb Peter is by implication making a very important claim about the factuality of Christ's resurrection. How would Peter have known what Christ had done unless the risen Christ had told him?

We discover then that the problem of cosmology is not as irrelevant as the liberals might have us believe for in dealing with cosmological statements we are forever encountering passages which tell us that God did things he in fact never did in the light of our current cosmology. Take the case of the firmament, for example. The firmament was understood to be a solid shield or dome which separated the waters from the waters. To create the firmament was for God the act of an entire day. It was further believed that the firmament which God had created was filled with windows out of which proceeded weather.¹ The opening of these windows was part of the cause of the Flood. Yet today we know that there is no firmament. On each day of creation God called into being something which exists: light, earth, seas, plants, sun, moon, stars, living creatures and men. But on the second day God created something which we know to-

day does not exist: the firmament. To get around this difficulty it has been suggested that the firmament can be interpreted to mean the vastness of space. But there are two problems with this interpretation, two problems which are interrelated, and both of which involve the function of the firmament. The firmament divided the waters from the waters. The vastness of space does not. But what is more important, the firmament was intended to provide a basis for order which the vastness of space cannot do. Order in the ancient mind was founded upon the establishment of opposites and hence upon paired divisions.² The creation of the firmament was the primal division, the fundamental orientation of the universe, the alignment of the universe in terms of above and below. The vastness of space provides no such orientation. It is more nearly equatable with the deep than it is with the firmament. So the question remains: what is meant by the statement that on the second day God created the firmament?³

There is also a hermeneutical problem in this movement to de-historicize the scriptural account. If we want to say that the stories are only symbols, then we must begin to ponder the significance of the details in the stories. As part of an historical account the details can be seen as incidental. But if the stories are purely symbolic, then there is no reason for assuming that the details have no symbolic import. They become part of the inspired tapestry. Such a movement introduces a radical subjectivity into the process of interpretation, a tendency which is exacerbated by the tacit admission that the orthodox church has been mistaken right along about the

fundamental nature of the stories. We will further discuss this tendency toward subjectivity later.

Finally, we come to the problem of the covenant which God made with Noah. Covenant in the Hebrew mind was a legal act binding not only upon those who entered into it but also upon their off-spring. This reflects that basic human unity which is so fundamental to the moral orientation of the Judao-Christian belief complex. We do not exist in isolation. Hence our deeds effect others. We can harm or benefit them.⁴ We can inherit sin and have righteousness imputed to us. And we can be bound by systems of authority and moral agreement which devolve upon us from our progenitors. One of the most striking evidences of this persuasion is the argument developed for Christ's authority over the Levites in the seventh chapter of Hebrews. The covenant God made with Noah is understood to be a universal covenant because, like the covenant made with Adam, it was made with the father of us all. Covenant, understood as a legal document, has no binding power if it was never enacted. And it has no authority as a universal document if it was never enacted with someone who could claim to represent all humanity. Few arguments ring as falsely in the liberal position as their attempt to treat the Noachian covenant seriously after having denied its universal and legal nature. And on few occasions is the problematic character of their view of God's actions so clearly revealed. The God of covenant in the story of Noah, as they understand it, appears to act very much out of character.

Section 2 The Conservatives

At first glance the conservatives, because they affirm the historicity of the Flood at least insofar as they affirm an event upon which the story is based, avoid the sort of theological problems which confront the liberals. But a further consideration of their position reveals that this is not always the case. If like Harold Lindsell they allow for the possibility that others besides Noah and his family survived the catastrophe, then the problem with the universality of the covenant God made with Noah emerges and this opens questions about God's consistency. Also the Flood as a unique event is nullified and its escatological implications compromised. A flood which is only sever is not the flood of the Bible.

On the other hand, those conservatives who affirm that the Flood, regardless of its geological extent, really did drown everyone except Noah and his family, encounter another kind of problem. In order to account for the archaeological and linguistic data and to explain the origin of Asian, American, and African peoples, they must post-date the Flood considerably in which case Biblical statements run afoul of archaeological dates for agricultural and metalurgy, possibly by as much as ten thousand years. As a consequence the geneologies which originally were intended to affirm the historicity of events are stretched to the point of irrelevance.

Here then lies the crux of the problem: the Flood is a falsifiable event and apparently it did not happen. However, a universal Flood, witnessed to by scripture, testified to by Christ, and revealed as

having great escatological import, confronts us with profound and perhaps unsolvable theological problems. It is at this point that the third position to which I referred in the last chapter, the position which supposes an antediluvian world radically different from our own, needs to be considered. There are at least three difficulties with such reconstructions. First, they disrupt the continuity between the antediluvian and postdiluvian world. There is no reason to believe that God recreated the world after the Flood and it is certainly true that he did not restore its original harmony. Instead he used Noah to preserve the seeds of the old world. The same animals and men (and by implication the same plants; the olive leaf was recognized when the dove returned with it) populate the world before and after the deluge. This strongly suggests that the same basic principles were operative in both situations. If we assume a uniformity of principles, then the theological groundwork for justifying the assertion that the world was substantially different before and after the Flood is undercut. This leads to the second problem; there is no scriptural justification for the sorts of reconstruction hypothesized by those who hold this position. Proposals that ice shields were suspended in the upper atmosphere, that phenomenon like fermentation, rain or even rainbows were unknown in the antediluvian world stand without a shred of scriptural support. And this opens the door for the third problem. There is no archaeological or geological support for such suppositions either. In short, there is not one bit of evidence theological, scriptural, or scientific to substantiate such

proposals. Hence the reconstructions fail to do what they strive to do which is to make credible the scriptural account of the Flood in the light of the new cosmological model and to defend traditional theological positions derived from the assumption of the historicity of scripture.

Section 3: The Four Possibilities

We can now begin to see more clearly where the weight of the evidence leads us as concerns the four possibilities we mentioned in the Introduction: the possibility that we can affirm the traditional position that the scriptural account tells of an historical universal Flood and that we believe the account is true regardless of the scientific evidence and will wait until science changes its conclusions; the possibility of maintaining the truth of both the scientific and the traditional assertions concerning a worldwide deluge; the possibility of abandoning the traditional position about the Flood and treating the scriptural account in a purely symbolic way; the possibility of abandoning our faith altogether. It would appear from the argument as it has been developed thus far that possibility two and three are the least satisfactory.

The primary difficulty with the second possibility is that the assertions of contemporary science and the assertions of traditional Christianity are very much at odds. Traditional Christianity has assumed that the Flood took place. The overwhelming testimony of the evidence collected and evaluated by contemporary scientists indicates that it did not. Traditional Christianity says "A"; contemporary science says "not A".

This is a contradiction. To attempt to affirm both is to violate the law on non-contradiction. Consequently the second possibility can be eliminated.

The primary difficulty with the third possibility is theological. It comes very close to affirming that the heretics, those gnostics and docitists who from the beginning stressed the ahistorical nature of the scriptural witness, have been right all along which means that what passed as orthodox Christianity for fifteen hundred years was in fact heresy. We are driven to this position as I have attempted to show if we assert that what appears to be history is in fact irrelevant as history when it comes to developing doctrines about key aspects of our belief. The implications of admitting that all branches of the the church have been so fundamentally mistaken for so long a period of time are staggering. Not only must we assume that the church has consistently misconceived the nature of the truth committed to it, we must also assume either that those who knew or glimpsed the truth lacked commitment to and/or certainty about that truth so that they were not able to prevail or that no one knew the truth from the beginning. When we consider it from this perspective we can see that the third option also involves a contradiction: tradition says "A"; modernity says "not A". The third option attempts to resolve the contradiction by abandoning the traditional position and affirming the modern one. But such a move leaves most of us wondering whether even now the church has got it right. That is because to accept the third possibility is to accept the proposition that on a fundamental level falsehood was maintained as

truth and that the spirit of the Lord either connived at this or was absent during that time. Traditionally the church has asserted that it has authority in matters of truth because it has both the scriptural revelation and the spirit of the Lord or the mind of Christ which helps it to correctly interpret that revelation. To admit this level of error is to admit that its claim to authority is highly provisional. This means that it is impossible to maintain any level of orthodoxy and that we as believers are abandoned to the uncertainties of subjectivity.

As a consequence of these difficulties it would appear at this stage of the argument that possibility one and possibility four are the most viable of our alternatives. But neither presents us with a particularly attractive alternative. To be told merely to wait indefinitely until new evidence is made available, evidence which while it might contradict the present scientific version of events may not be particularly friendly to the traditional Christian version, is hardly an alternative conducive to faith. Although, as was pointed out in the Introduction, such an alternative is legitimate and does have historical precedent, it is not quite the same thing to be told that matter cannot be created or destroyed and to be told that there was no Flood. This is because both statements come with a qualifier attached and that qualifier is "as far as we know". Assuming a creator God who has the power to speak a universe into existence, the law of the conservation of matter loses its theological significance for it can always be assumed that we don't know very much and that limitations on our knowledge are not limitations on the power of God. But in the

case of the Flood, the situation is somewhat different for it is the God who acts in history and who reveals himself in those actions that is being challenged. Here we should not expect to have to know very much in order to verify the story. In the first place, a catastrophe on the magnitude of the Flood which must have occurred in comparatively recent history should have left all manner of evidence. In the second place we should expect that the God who used historical verifiability as a means of helping his people determine who among the prophets was telling the truth (Deu. 18:22) would desire that the account of his actions contained in scripture could be verified to the greatest extent possible so that the truths communicated by those events might be assured. Hence, the level of our knowledge really doesn't affect the feasibility of the one proposition since that proposition concerns God's actions before time and space came into being but the level of our knowledge does effect the second proposition since that proposition concerns God's actions in time and space.

On the other hand, to be told only that our faith has always been wrong and should be abandoned on that account is not in our view a very attractive alternative either. However, its attractiveness does not affect its power as an alternative if a more effective solution to the problem we are discussing cannot be proposed. Therefore, in the following chapters it will be our purpose to see if we cannot come up with a more effective understanding of this problem.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. For a description of this see the Etheopian Enoch. The windows of heaven could also be a source of blessing. See II Kings 7:2 and 19 or Mal. 3:10.
2. Levi-Strauss, C., The Savage Mind, Chap. 5 "Categories, Elements, Species, Numbers"
3. This problem leads us to ask a question which would not have occurred to the ancient Hebrews in quite the same way that it occurs to us: where did the water come from and where did it go? For the Hebrew the water was always there for the earth stood out of the water and in the water and could be overflowed with that water (II Peter 3:5-6). For the modern there is no water above or below to inundate the land and destroy it.
4. This is to be contrasted with the Hindu concept of the law of karma where whatever happens to a person is the consequence of what he himself has done either in this life or another. The concept of karma leaves the individual morally isolated. A person viewed from such a metaphoric can not be helped or harmed by another. He can only help or harm himself.

CHAPTER 3

Our argument thus far has revolved around the Flood as a falsifiable phenomenon. An event which is falsifiable has profound significance when it is part of a system of truth claims that are by and large non-falsifiable for it becomes a gage which helps us to assess the level of truth within the entire compass of these claims. If, for example, Peter tells us that he has spoken to the risen Lord and later when discussing the Lord's death and resurrection mentions that during the three days when the Lord's body lay in the tomb the Lord himself was preaching to spirits in prison who had been disobedient in the days of Noah and we have grounds for assuming that Peter accepted the Flood as an event in history, then we may, if we know that there was no Flood, have justifiable grounds for wondering about the truth of the rest of Peter's assertions concerning the resurrection. Peter's witness to the resurrection itself is non-falsifiable. I have no way of proving that a being from another realm and having powers far different from my own did or did not as part of his self-manifestation lay down his life and take it up again. But if Peter tells me things about what this being did and I know those assertions are very probably not true, then I have grounds for doubting the entire story. And in the absence of a Flood, Peter's statements concerning Christ's preaching to disobedient spirits are problematic to say the least.

In the case of a scientific hypothesis one is sometimes able to adjust the framework of one's theory in order to account for data which conflicts with that theory while still leaving the basic structure of the theory intact. However, it is much more difficult to make

similar sorts of adjustments in religious systems of knowledge which claim to be both wholistic and true in all their particulars. Theological knowledge of this sort is, as Paul Tillich observes, analogous to a circle and adjustments along any point in the circumference of that circle must inevitably effect all the other points.¹ This is precisely what has happened in the case of the Flood. The story, credible within the framework of one cosmological model, has been profoundly challenged as we have developed an alternative cosmological model to account for more of the information we have amassed about the universe and this challenge has effected the integrity of the entire system or our traditional religious assertions. Christology, soteriology, escatology, the character of God, the nature of truth and symbol and heresy, all fall under scrutiny as we confront this dilemma.

And I gave myself to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this is also a vexation of the spirit. Ecclesiastes 1:17

Dais of dawn, pale morning's window seat,
Ushas descends upon the trembling wheat.
She spreads her skirts above the chrome primrose,
Through petticoats of light their petals close.

Gay morning-glories crowd
through creeping vines.

A crystal in a cloud
Her brilliance shines.

Sleeve-dancing, a fluttering pantomime,
Space is an aggregated expressed in time.
From intuitions of effect and cause
Imagination structures change with laws,

Change through eternity
Subsumes decay.

We find our destiny
In yesterday.

Through light elusive gleams the measured tope
Where thrush and thrasher from each covert slope.
Tilt to ancient music and old acclaim.
The forests move. The song remains.

There is no messiah
for this season.

Only Athaliah
Crying, "Treason!"

A syrinx music weaves through this grove.
Who would pursue discernment under mauve,
Variegated, violescent skies
Woos a mirage, commanding stones, "Arise,
They shall teach!" How shallow

Is graven gold,
Scabious with shadow,
Hard, mute, and cold.

The years wrap us unevenly
In their variegated textures.
For time unfolds according to its order.
But we get old a piece at a time.
A string of gray surrounds us.
A persistent stiffness,
A crumb of decay, a sudden splinter of pain.
Old age comes unevenly.
Rapping at us like a woodpecker.

Dr. Ben Michael Carter



Mike's library is available for viewing at 2505 W. Northgate Drive in Irving Texas.



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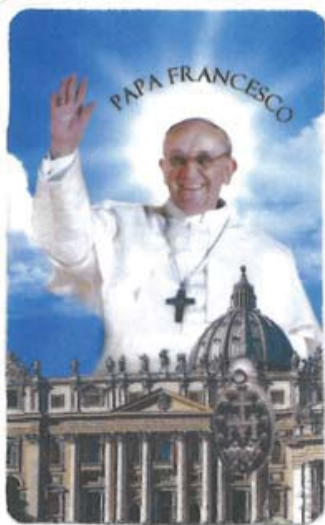
FIRST SECTION - GENERAL AFFAIRS

From the Vatican, 19 September 2017

Dear Ms Carter,

I am writing to acknowledge the gift of inscribed copies of Dr Ben Michael Carter's writings, which you presented to His Holiness Pope Francis.

In expressing appreciation for this kind gesture, I am pleased to assure you of His Holiness's prayers for your late husband and for you and your intentions.

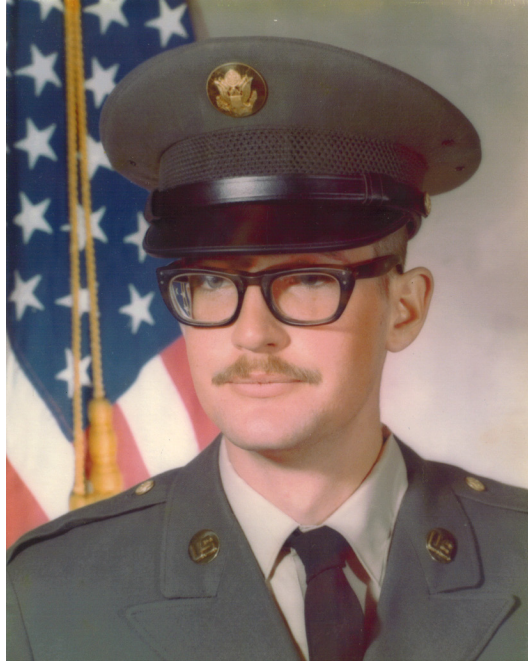


Yours sincerely,

Monsignor Paolo Borgia
Assessor

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Ben Michael “Mike” Carter was a Renaissance man who loved writing. He authored six theology books and a novel. He also wrote for magazines, journals and newspapers, as well as poetry reviews. He earned a B.A. in Economic History from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, an MA in theological studies from Wheaton College, Illinois, an M.Th. from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, U.K., and a Ph.D. in History of Christianity in the non-western world from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, United Kingdom. He was a member of the Irving chapter of the Texas Poetry Society, the American Scientific Affiliation, and the Evangelical Theological Society. He was married to Salma Carunia from Dohnavur Fellowship, Tirunelvel, South India.