

NEWS AND COMMENTS

FLOOD MODELS STUDIED

The Bible-Science Subcommittee of the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists met a year ago to begin the development of an adequate flood model. Such a model proposes to correlate the Biblical description of the flood with geological and paleontological evidence.

Topics presented included a reevaluation of the flood-related information found in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White. Harold G. Coffin of the Geoscience Research Institute presented the available evidence and brought it to bear upon the geological and biological problems. He quoted from Ellen G. White, "Relics found in the earth do give evidence of conditions differing in many respects from the present; but the time when these conditions existed can be learned only from the Inspired Record. In the history of the Flood, inspiration has explained that which geology alone could never fathom." (White EG. 1958. The story of patriarchs and prophets. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., p 112). Dr. Coffin related that in his own experience an understanding of the Genesis flood had enhanced his ability to understand the "secrets of the past."

Ariel A. Roth, chairman of the Subcommittee, presented several possible earth models as they could be related to a worldwide flood. Included were considerations of a static-continent model, an expanding earth model and continental drift. None of these models a priori mitigated against a universal flood, and because of the current uncertainty in earth modeling, no model was considered preferable over others. The interesting model of an expanding earth caught the imagination of several present and seemed to fit well with some of the current evidence. Whichever model one chooses, the distribution of continental sediments can suggest a flood model that includes most of the geological column.

In his presentation based on extensive data, Lester Harris, then chairman of the Department of Biology, Columbia Union College, associated a large part of orogenic activity, volcanism, and glaciation with the complex interdigitated events during and following the flood. Recognition of the temporal relationships of these events plays an important part in developing an accurate flood model.

Another Geoscience Research Institute member, Harold E. James, Jr., acquainted the group with some of the sedimentology of flysch deposits, which are thick deposits consisting of sequential thin layers of fine sediment. Parts of these deposits display clear evidences of very rapid sediment accumulation during high energy conditions. The widespread distribution of these deposits in the geological record makes it important that we better understand the forces and circumstances necessary for their formation so that they can be correctly related to a flood model.

Some interesting observations from paleobotany as they relate to a flood model were presented by Arthur V. Chadwick, Assistant Professor of Biology, Loma Linda University. Important considerations were the presence of algae in the Precambrian; the sudden appearance of almost all plant types in the Devonian, with the notable exception of angiosperms; the massive coal deposits of the Carboniferous consisting mostly of extinct plant types; the sudden appearance of the angiosperms as a mature flora in the Cretaceous. These events which generally favor a catastrophic model require some additional development and refinement regarding causes. Dr. Chadwick also presented a report on some recent research being done in palynology and paleobotany in the laboratories at Loma Linda University.

Preliminary data on the distribution of trilobites was presented by Conrad D. Clausen, Assistant Professor of Biology, Loma Linda University. This distribution matches an ecological interpretation of the fossil record as well as, or better than, an evolutionary explanation.

Dr. Roth presented some preliminary results of his survey of clastic dikes and the implications of these findings on classical geochronological interpretations of earth history. He pointed out that clastic dikes, which are cases of softer sediment being intruded from below into cracks in overlying hardened sediments, pose constraints on a long chronology model, and support a short chronology.

By postulating greater atmospheric pressure, a warmer and more uniform temperature distribution, stronger magnetic field, and a smaller radiocarbon production rate, Ray Hefferlin, of the Physics Department at Southern Missionary College, introduced a flood model that accounts for a pre-flood life environment differing considerably from that of the present.

At a subsequent meeting of this Subcommittee last May, further consideration was given to details of a flood model. Matters dealing with Biblical interpretation were presented by Gerhard F. Hasel, Associate Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology, Andrews University.

Leonard R. Brand, chairman of the Biology Department of Loma Linda University, discussed the philosophical rationale in an approach to a flood model, and Dr. Coffin presented data relating the ecological distribution of living foraminifera to their relative location in parts of the fossil record.

Much interest has been engendered by the work of this committee. It is apparent that much more work remains to be done.

Arthur V. Chadwick