

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Readers are invited to submit reviews of current literature relating to origins. Mailing address: ORIGINS, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, California 92350 USA. The Institute does not distribute the publications reviewed; please contact the publisher directly.

ARK FEVER

NOAH'S ARK: FACT OR FABLE? Violet M. Cummings. 1972. San Diego, CA: Creation-Science Research Center. 352 p. THE ARK FILE. Rene Noorbergen. 1974. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association. 207 p.

Reviewed by Katherine Ching, Geoscience Research Institute

Numerous attempts have been made to produce tangible evidence supporting the Scripture text which says: "And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat" (Gen 8:4). The "ark-aeological" literature usually contains first-hand accounts of various expeditions with varying degrees of success and failure.

Cummings and Noorbergen, however, give more than personal accounts of expeditions and research; they both endeavor to give a history of sightings and attempts to verify the sightings.

Cummings' book describes her husband's almost-thirty years of research through interviews and expeditions to Mount Ararat (located on the eastern border of Turkey). After preliminary chapters which give the Genesis flood account and speculations about "what it would have been like to be there as the ark was being built and boarded," Cummings proceeds to describe the thirteen reports of sightings of the ark on Mount Ararat since 1840 (the year that a giant earthquake opened a chasm in Mount Ararat). As further investigations into these rumors were made, frustrations abounded, for concrete evidences (i.e., photographs, newspaper clippings, and personal diaries) had been either destroyed or lost, and somehow the seekers after the ark story continually found themselves facing dead-ends. Ventures undertaken by the Sacred History Research Expedition, the Oriental Archaeological Research Expedition, the Archaeological Research Foundation, and the Scientific Exploration and Archaeological Research ended in conflicts with government permits and red tape, or, once getting clearance, inability to reach the area where the ark was thought to be.

Throughout her book, Cummings appears to be striving to prove that the ark is in fact on Mount Ararat, and, using all of the accounts of its sightings, she concludes that the Biblical custom of establishing truth “at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses” (Deut 19:15) might be applied to sightings of the ark. In the published sighting of the ark by two Russian aviators, in which 95% of the story was proved to be built largely on imagination, Cummings proposes that the possibly 5% factual evidence does seem to indicate the existence of the ark on the mount.

Her book gives the overall impression that, despite some evidence to the contrary, those who believe in God’s word still believe the ark is hidden on the mount, protected from destruction by God.

In contrast, Noorbergen covers the same story of research and expeditions, but with a different viewpoint. After receiving the “Ark files” from Dr. A. J. Smith, President of the Oriental Archaeological Research Foundation, his interest in the search was revived. This led him to accompany expeditions to Mount Ararat. He begins his book by citing a mixture of flood legends, myths, and Scripture as evidence that the ark is probably on the mountain. While stating that the Genesis flood account should be the basis for all ark research because it is the oldest sacred account, he then appears to place the other accounts on the same footing with the Biblical account.

His following chapters duplicate Cummings’ reports of the modern-day sightings, but instead of leaving these as possible evidences for the existence of the ark, he seems determined to see how many flaws he can find in each story. In each case, he triumphantly points out possible discrepancies and calls them hoaxes. Although he insists the ark is hidden on Ararat, Noorbergen sounds generally more cynical and negative than Cummings and leaves one with the feeling that the ark might never be located.

Both books are interesting reading, especially if one does not rely on “happy endings.” One wonders what impact the discovery of Noah’s ark would have on a world that suffers from doubt, credibility gaps, and an increasing immunity to sensationalism. Both authors expect too much from the Ark discovery: Cummings believes it could end the controversy between evolutionists and creationists, and Noorbergen appears to see the discovery as proof for a *worldwide* flood.