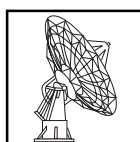


day” the nation did not know that Yahweh was their God; before that day they had not been saved by the Lord, although they were dwelling safely.

This having been said, events at present do not appear to suggest that Israel will ever achieve

peace and security by human efforts; but the prophets tell us that they will be in this state before Gog comes down, and we must wait in faith for the sure word to become a reality.

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## Science

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# Was the creation cursed?

Alan Fowler

**I**T IS COMMONLY believed that sin brought a curse on the whole of nature by introducing death into a previously deathless creation. It is argued that because the original creation was pronounced ‘very good’ then it must have been deathless. All death is regarded as intrinsically evil. In this article I hope to show that death was, and is, an essential element of God’s creation, and plays a key role in a perfectly balanced order of nature.

There is no hint in Genesis 3 that the sin of Adam and Eve brought animal death into the world. The tempter was cursed to crawl on its belly and eat dust. Eve was punished by being subjected to hard labour in bringing up children and being dominated by her husband. Adam was punished by being driven out of the garden and subjected to the hostile elements of “the field” (typified by “thorns . . . and thistles”), whereas before he had enjoyed the protected environment of a Divinely planted and enclosed garden. And both Adam and Eve were punished by being expelled from the garden and denied access to the tree of life (vv. 22,23).

Since access to the garden in Eden could be prevented by barring the east gate, it is evident that the garden was an area enclosed by a high wall or rock face. The garden, which had been planted by God, was completely separate from the outside world, which was called “the field” to distinguish it from the garden. The curse on the ground was imposed *for Adam’s sake*. So when Adam was expelled from the garden he now encountered the natural world, which contained hostile plants. There is therefore no imperative

to believe that the original plant kingdom was changed because of Adam’s sin. And there is certainly no evidence in Genesis that the fall in Eden involved radical changes in the animal kingdom.

### New Testament evidence

We need to look at the New Testament, particularly the writings of the Apostle Paul, to discover the source of the idea that there was no death in the world before the fall in Eden. The three key passages are as follows:

- 1 “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . .” (Rom. 5:12). The compelling logic of this passage is that Adam introduced human death into the world. Since animals have no free will, and are driven solely by Divinely implanted instincts, they cannot sin and therefore suffer no consequences. But, since we all sin, then, like Adam, we all die.
- 2 “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). This passage is elliptical; it means that, just as all those who follow Adam will die now, so all those who follow Christ will live in the future resurrection.
- 3 “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath

subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:18-23).

This passage is often thought to support the notion that the whole of creation was cursed because of Adam's sin. But there is another translation of the original Greek. The words 'creature' and 'creation' in this passage are both translations of the Greek word *ktisis*. *Ktisis* can refer either to created things or to human beings, depending on the context. Thus in Romans 1:20 *ktisis* refers to the creation of the world, whereas the words of Jesus in Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature", clearly refer to humans. So in Romans 8:18-23 we need to determine whether *ktisis* refers to creation in general or humans in particular.

Paul is dealing with the sufferings of the early Christians (v. 18), and is comforting them with the assurance that the trials of this life will be followed by a glorious future (v. 19). So we find that *ktisis* in verses 19-23 is associated with human hopes and aspiration, and it is therefore appropriate that *ktisis* refers to mankind rather than the whole of the animal kingdom.

Verse 20 in particular favours this interpretation, because Paul is echoing the sentiments of Ecclesiastes 1:2: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity". 'Vanity' in Ecclesiastes refers to the fact that without God human life is empty and void of purpose.

In verse 22 the AV translators have changed from 'creature' to 'creation', implying that *ktisis* in this verse means the natural world. However, if we compare verses 22 and 23 we see that there are two groups that are groaning, namely, mankind in general in verse 22 and believers in particular in verse 23.

Moreover, even if we believe that *ktisis* in verse 22 refers to the whole of creation, this does not imply that Paul is referring to death. Travail in childbirth is often used in Scripture as a metaphor for an impending time

of trouble (for example, Micah 4:9,10). There is therefore no evidence that fundamental changes in nature occurred as a result of the fall in Eden.

### The extent of predation

Genesis 1 informs us that plants and animals were created with reproductive powers; every plant has "seed . . . in itself" (v. 11), and fish and fowl were told: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth" (v. 22).

Plants and animals have many more offspring than can possibly survive. Death is inevitable, and survival depends on success in adapting to environmental conditions, in finding sufficient nourishment and in avoiding being ousted or eaten by other creatures. Plants compete with each other for access to space and light. Insectivorous plants prey on insects for food. In the animal kingdom there is an intricate web of predation that controls populations and maintains the balance of nature.

Among mammals there are numerous predators belonging to the order *Carnivora*, including 36 species of cat, 3 species of hyena, 80 species of civet and mongoose, 68 species of weasel and 370 species of shrew, hedgehog and mole, not to mention dogs, foxes, jackals, bears, otters, badgers, etc. But carnivorous animals are far more numerous than this group of flesh-eating mammals. For example, eighty per cent of the 950 living species of bats, all the 40,000 species of spiders and all the 4,900 species of snakes and lizards are carnivorous.

Looking at birds, we find that there are 190 different species of owls and nightjars, and over 260 raptors, which are all carnivorous, as are all the woodpeckers, kingfishers and swallows and swifts. All the seabirds and most coastal and estuarine birds are carnivorous; and many birds, such as blackbirds and song thrushes, are omnivorous, that is, partly vegetarian and partly carnivorous. Even the mainly vegetarian chicken needs to grub for small animals in order to keep healthy in a natural environment.

Aquatic life is likewise kept in balance by predation. There are about 1,500 different frogs and toads which are predatory (living on insects, caterpillars, worms, etc.), and each lays up to 28,000 eggs at a time. If all the 1,500 to 4,000 eggs laid by our common frog were to survive to adulthood our world would soon be overwhelmed by frogs.

The same pattern of predation is found in the marine environment, where the surplus progeny of one species provides food for another. The cod produces six million eggs in one spawning, and a giant clam produces a thousand million eggs annually for thirty to forty years. Such fecundity necessitates death of eggs or offspring.

A deathless world would be entirely different from our world, which is the product of a balance of life and death. Death is an integral part of the economy of nature. Our world is not a deathless world into which God introduced some carnivorous animals. A deathless world would have been an entirely different creation. Nowhere in Genesis are we told that God recreated the natural world after Adam sinned.

#### **A deathless garden?**

Adam was put into a mature garden. Soil in a fertile garden consists not merely of chemical compounds derived from weathered rock. It contains humus, which is a microcosm of life and death. Fertile soils teem with viruses, bacteria, protozoa (single-celled organisms), fungi, algae, worms, insects (including beetles, centipedes, millipedes, wireworms, ants and termites), and also mites and spiders. These organisms play vital and complementary roles in aerating soil and fixing nitrogen from the air, in recycling plant and animal material and in assisting the absorption of nutrients by plant roots. But all these multitudinous soil organisms are part of a complex cycle of life and death. All these organisms die, either through decay or predation. Their excreta during life and their bodies after death are recycled by other organisms and then provide nutrition for the next generation, and so the cycles are completed.

It is, of course, accepted that with God nothing is impossible, and that God could have brought about the radical changes required for the introduction of death as we see it today, in the twinkling of an eye. It is not a question of what God *could* do, but what He *chose* to do.

#### **A vegetarian world?**

It is commonly believed that a passage at the end of Genesis 1 teaches that all animals were vegetarian before the fall:

“And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of

the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so” (vv. 29,30).

These verses reveal the fundamental truth that practically all animal life depends on vegetation. Apart from the deepest abyss, the basis of all ocean life is phytoplankton, which consists of countless billions of free-floating minute photosynthesising plants. These are eaten by minute animals called zooplankton, and both kinds of plankton are at the base of a food chain that sustains all marine animals. On the land, vegetation provides food for all terrestrial animals except those that live by fishing. When a fox eats a rabbit it is consuming vegetation that has been processed in the stomach of the rabbit. So this passage is expressing a profound biological truth: *all terrestrial life depends on green plants*. It also has a spiritual lesson: God has provided an abundant source of food for both man and animals.

#### **Is predation cruel?**

As humans, most of us feel revulsion at the sight of a tiger killing an antelope, and we may be reluctant to accept that God's original 'very good' creation included predation. But this is an emotional judgement based on anthropomorphism, that is, the transfer of human feelings to animals. Our fear of death arises from the fear of losing our future. Animals live only in the present; they have no concept of the future and so do not fear death. Death is an abstract concept that cannot be understood without the faculty of language. So if apes and humans were sitting together in a hijacked plane the apes would not share the terror of their human neighbours.

But how do we understand the look of terror in the face of the fleeing antelope? This is part of an instinctive reaction to the immediate threat that causes a release of adrenaline to equip the antelope for flight. This reaction includes dilation of the pupils, release of glucose into the blood and increase in the heart rate. Although humans are endowed with the same instinctive *physical* reactions to danger, we should not assume that animals suffer our *mental* anguish at the prospect of a violent death.

This question also raises an important ethical issue. God cares for animals. The sabbath law was formulated to provide rest for working animals as well as slaves (Ex. 20:10,11). And we are reminded that “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast” (Prov. 12:10). So if animals

suffer as much as we do when faced with extinction it is difficult to believe that God would require sacrifice of animals just to teach us spiritual lessons.

### Theories of Creation

In conclusion, we will take a brief look at the impact of this theory (that there was no animal death before the fall) on the three models of Creation.

- 1 Most of those who believe that the whole universe was created in seven days about 6,000 years ago also believe that the extinct fossilised herbivorous animals were created before the fall and the carnivorous animals after the fall.

Extinct fossilised species are about twenty times more numerous than existing species. For example, there are only two species of elephant today, compared with 150 extinct elephant-like creatures in the fossil record; five surviving species of rhino compared with 200 extinct species; four living species of hyena compared with 70 extinct species; and there are no dinosaurs today, compared with

over 500 extinct herbivorous and carnivorous species. The fossil record reveals the same balance of herbivores and predators as exist today; so if all the living and extinct predators were created after the fall this would have necessitated a huge increase in the number of herbivores to feed the predators.

- 2 The re-creation theory postulates that there is a vast time gap between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1, and that Genesis 1 describes a recent creation on a very old and devastated earth. This theory regards the fossil record as a history of a previous creation that contained the same pattern of predation as is found in the living world today, so it accepts that animal death did not originate from the fall in Eden.
- 3 If we believe that the literal days of Genesis 1 are human time frames during which God revealed His creative work occurring over millions of years then we have harmony between the Genesis record and the fossil record viewed as a history of a very old earth. Death is seen as an integral part of God's creation from the beginning of the natural world.



## Prophecy, History and Archaeology

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# Ezekiel's visions of the Millennium

## 2. The holy oblation

Geoff Cave

**H**AVING LOOKED in the first article at the borders of the land of Israel in the age to come, attention is now focused on how the land will be divided up between the tribes, with special attention to the holy oblation in the midst of the land, and the city that is part of that oblation. The way in which the tribal strips are apportioned is relatively straightforward; the details are given in Ezekiel 48:1-8,23-28, with the verses in between describing the holy oblation. The details are shown in the map at Figure 1.

### The divisions of the holy oblation

The word 'oblation' simply means 'offering', being used for the sacrificial offerings in the Law.

The holy oblation is the portion of land that will be set apart for the Lord. It will contain the sanctuary, where the nation will worship and to which they will bring their offerings, and it will also contain the city, which will be called "The LORD is there".

The oblation is divided into three main sections, as Figure 2 overleaf shows:

- A portion for the priests, the sons of Zadok, with the sanctuary in the centre (48:10-12)
- A portion for the Levites (vv. 13,14)
- The remainder for the city (vv. 15-19).

The portion for the sons of Zadok is described as "most holy" (v. 12), the portion for the Levites as "holy" (v. 14). The portion for the city is de-