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The Church: Mother of Hope for the Poor

George Grant

In recent months a new interest has sprung up among conservative, evangelical, and reformed Christians in the care of the poor. The consensus recognition that Washington's much ballyhooed "war on poverty" is a dismal failure has driven Christians to consider new models of compassion. Unfortunately, more often than not the models we have thus far examined and endorsed ignore the most important, the most fundamental considerations.

Any kind of group or organization can operate a soup kitchen, open a shelter, give away cheese and butter, redistribute wealth, and provide a job service. But, only the Church can provide the things that the poor need most. Only the Church—as she holds steadfastly to the Word revealed, the Word incarnate, and the Word made manifest—can transform poverty into productivity.

This is due to several general truths.

First, the Church renews the minds of the poor through the teaching of the Word. Right doctrine shatters old habits, explodes bad thoughts, and establishes real hope. The gospel changes people. Thus, our charity agenda must be forthrightly evangelistic. The poor need good news. They need the Good News.

Second, the Church readjusts the poor both to God's society and the world in worship, through the Lord's Supper. To take the Lord's Supper is not to indulge in an abstract theological ritual. It is a tangible offering to God, a consecration before God, a communion with God, and a transformation in God. It is thus a conscious drive at the heart of reality. In this simple yet profound act of worship, the meaning and value of all life is revealed and fulfilled. The poor, like all men, need a double dose of reality. And only the Church can serve up that reality as she gathers around the sacramental altar.

Third, the Church reforms the lifestyle of the poor. The discipline and disciplining process of life in the local church repatterns a man's ways according to the ways of the Lord. As we bring up

our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (**Ephesians 6:4**), there are several measures that we must diligently undertake to ensure that "when they are old, they will not depart" from "the way they should go" (**Proverbs 22:6**). So for instance, we redirect their childish foolishness (**Proverbs 22:15**) by instilling in them godly habits. Through ritual and repetition we train them to walk in the "paths of justice" (**Proverbs 2:8**) and to avoid the "ways of darkness" (**Proverbs 2:13**). Through routines of righteousness we establish them in "every good course" (**Proverbs 2:9**) so that they may ever afterward "trust in the Lord with all their heart, not leaning on their own understanding, but in all their ways acknowledging Him," so that then "**He will make their paths straight**" (**Proverbs 3:5f.**).

But not only do we seek to build in the lives of our children Godly habits, we are concerned to immerse them into the life of the community of faith. Knowing that "bad company corrupts good character" (**1 Corinthians 15:33**), we strive to surround our children with good influences, with righteous role models, with positive reinforcement, and with joyous fellowship.

And finally, as we raise our children we provide constructive chastisement. When they

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Good Night (Studies in Genesis One)

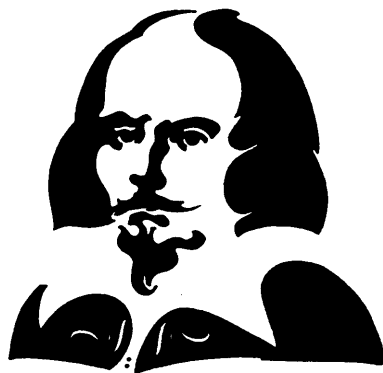
James B. Jordan

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (Genesis 1:4-5).

One of the problems we have reading the Bible is that we have all been infected to some degree with the legalism and moralism of pagan thinking.

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A good place to take note of this is here in the early verses of Genesis. As far as moralism is concerned, if something is not good it is bad, and if it is bad it is not good. Moralism takes no account of history, and thus is unable to see that something may be good at one time, but not good later on. To put it theologically, moralism lacks any eschatological perspective, and thus is incapable of any redemptive perspective.

Well, that's a real mouthful. What does it mean? Let's look at the passage before us to get a clear understanding of this matter.

Is God totally good? Yes, obviously so. When God made the world, was the world good? Yes, that has to be so. Yet, this good world that God made was "without form and empty, and dark" (Gen. 1:2). All right, then formlessness, emptiness, and darkness are good. Or are they?

Moralism says, "Well, either they are good or they aren't." What do Christians say?

Let's go on. God clearly was not satisfied with this state of affairs. The work of the Six Days was to give form to the formless, and to fill the emptiness. Moreover, first of all, we see God give light to the darkness.

Now, God actually says that the light is "good." Since the light replaces the darkness, that means that darkness is bad, doesn't it? At any rate, such is the tendency of mere moralistic thinking.

But if darkness is also good, why does God only call light good? Why not call both of them good? Why does the text emphasize that only one was called good?

To understand this we have to stop thinking in moralistic categories, and use eschatological ones. We get the clue right in verse five: "And there was evening, and there was morning." Which came first? Evening; night. Then, later on, light dawns. History moves forward (that's eschatology). There is progress from good to better to best.

Nighttime is good (remember, it is not a pitch-black night, because of the moon and stars, "lesser lights"). But, compared with night, daytime is good (or as we might say, better). What this means is that we can appreciate the night, but we are to prefer the day.

Let's take a relevant analogy. Was the salvation offered to men in the Old Covenant a good thing? Certainly. Was it glorious and life-giving? Of course. Yet, compared with the New Covenant, it is said to be "weak and beggarly." Symbolically, the whole Old Covenant takes place at night (Mal. 4:2; John 3:2; etc.). Night is fine, but when day

arrives, men are to **prefer** the day, and not turn back to the night. Animal sacrifices were commanded during the "night," but are forbidden now that it is "day."

Similarly, to take another illustration, it is fine to be a child. There is nothing wrong with childish behavior in a child. Yet, an adult is to put away childish things. It is perverse for an adult to behave like a child. What is good and proper at an earlier stage may not continue to be good and proper at a later stage.

Moralism seems right to Christians because many fundamental moral issues are unchanging, such as murder, adultery, and the like. If we are not careful, however, **moralism** will blind us to the **eschatological** side of ethics.

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good to better to best.*

Let me take a practical ethical problem to illustrate. Is there anything wrong with **lullabyes**? Is there anything wrong with the soft, ding-dong music played in nurseries, on "Romper Room," and so forth? Clearly not. On the other hand, are we supposed to outgrow such babyish music? I think so.

Now, walk into a Christian bookstore, or turn on the local Christian radio station. What do you **hear**? In most cases, hour after hour of syrupy, gooey, nursery- **schoolish lullabyes**. Ask yourself, Is it possible to set Psalm 2, or Psalm 109, to such tunes? The answer is obvious, and if we are to mature and become adults in Christ, we need strong, **adult** music to sing such strong, adult words to.

So, is music "morally **neutral**"? It would seem not. Lullabyes are not immoral or bad, but there is something very wrong and **perverse** when adult Christians insist on listening to nothing but lullabyes, and then (worse yet) insist on replacing the vigorous music of the historic Christian Church with such nursery-school songs.

Genesis 1:31 says that everything God made was, at the end of Day 6, "very good." This means that the system was good, the system in which night has its place, but separated from day, and giving way to cloy. Night is good, but day is better. We appreciate the night, but there is something wrong when men **prefer** darkness over light.

"To the Lord and his kingdom belongs the whole world, with all that lives and moves in it. *All* is yours, says the apostle. Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined, and made complete. It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being; to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into his heart; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and of the glorious liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God's Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. The creature, in the widest extent of the word, is earnestly waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, and sighing after the same glorious deliverance. The whole creation aims toward redemption; and Christ is the second Adam, the new universal man, not simply in a religious but also in an absolute sense. The view entertained by Romish monasticism and Protestant pietism, by which Christianity is made to consist in an abstract opposition to the natural life, or in *flight from the world*, is quite contrary to the spirit and power of the gospel, as well as false to its design. Christianity is the redemption and renovation of the *world*. It makes *all things* new."

from Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism*. Available from Trinity Book Service, P.O. Box 131300, Tyler, TX 75713. \$625.

The Genesis Flood Revisited A Reassessment of the Whitcomb/Morris Model

Jeffrey Meyers

The International Conference on Creationism held in Pittsburgh, August 4-9, 1986, proved to be one of the largest and most significant in the history of the creation science movement. The ICC brought together dozens of the world's prominent creation scientists to present technical papers and exchange ideas related to the theme "The Age of the Earth." In addition to these technical papers, lectures on basic creationism were given throughout the week, including a key-note address by Dr. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. This article will discuss the first of a number of positive trends in creation science that surfaced at the conference.

Whitcomb/Morris Model

Since the publication of *The Genesis Flood* in the early 1960's the creation science movement has largely been dominated by what has been called the **Whitcomb/Morris** model, with such familiar concepts as the vapor canopy theory, hydraulic sorting, flood geology, and **catastrophism**. Currently, many creationists are rethinking some of the central tenets of this model, particularly flood geology. Because of the book's wide circulation

and the influence of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR), the entire geological column and the corresponding fossil record have typically been attributed to the **depositional** activity of the Noahic flood. According to the **Whitcomb/Morris** interpretation, all of the earth's sedimentary rocks (Paleozoic through Cenozoic rocks), the highly contorted metamorphic rocks, and the fossil record are products of the **Noahic** world-wide flood, which lasted one year.

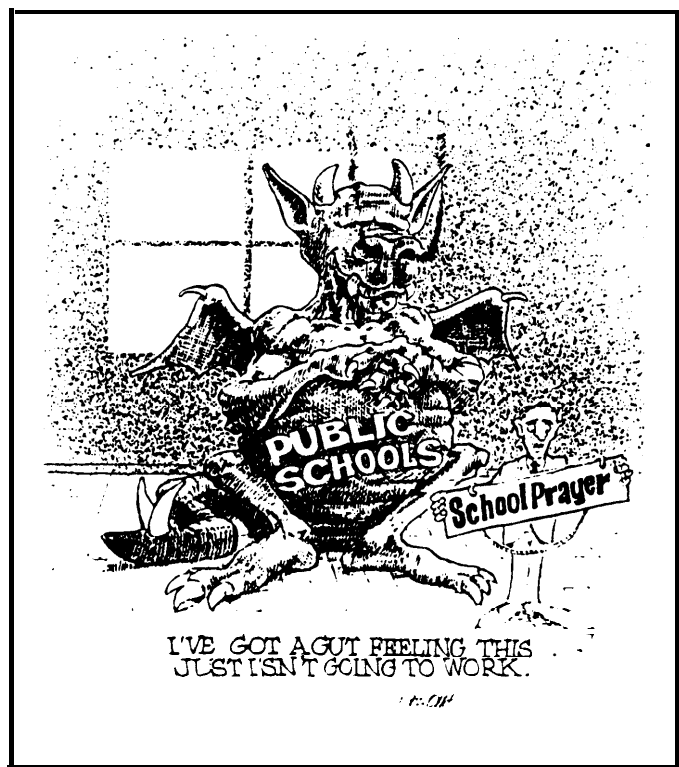
We discover distinct kinds of fossil animals and plants at various levels of the rock record for two reasons. First, the flood often buried creatures in their ecological habitat. Thus we find, for instance, oysters and clams at the bottom of the geologic column, fish above this, amphibians in their shallow water habitat, and so on. Second, hydraulic sorting, which is a function of the relative mobility and size of each animal, contributed to each animal's place in the rock record. Smaller, more mobile animals sunk rapidly and are located as a rule near the bottom of the column. Dinosaurs are farther up the geological column not because they lived 20 million years later than trilobites, but because they were buried in a different habitat, and because of their unique size and shape they were sorted out by the flood waters at a higher level. This hydraulic/ecological model has been accepted by most creationists for the last two decades.

Reproductive/Repopulation Model

Among those reevaluating this interpretation is Glen R. Morton. He suggested another theory, which might be called the **reproductive/repopulation** model, that appears to fit the facts just as well. According to this model, the flood was a tremendous catastrophe that obliterated all evidence of life and all human artifacts, and the erosive power of the flood was so great that it scraped the earth clean of all previous sedimentary rocks, leaving the crystalline bedrock exposed on the continental surfaces. No life survived-marine or terrestrial-the flood's enormous power.

Noah and the animals left the ark while the first layers of an enormous amount of suspended sediment were being deposited. They would have had to live on a **stable highland area** for many years while the geological effects of the flood continued below them. This accounts for the fact that Precambrian sedimentary rocks (the lowest in the geological column) are largely free of animal fossils of any size.

The animals would have begun to migrate and reproduce immediately, but the repopulation of the



earth would have been dependent on each animal's reproductive rate. **Based** on their rates of reproduction we would expect to find that small marine invertebrates, which reproduce at a very fast rate, would be the first to repopulate the earth, and therefore, be the first to appear in the geological record in what are called Cambrian and Ordovician rocks. These small sea creatures would also be the first to fall victim to the still unpredictable and unstable earth, being buried by many local catastrophes. They would repopulate areas that remained secure for a while only to be buried by some regional catastrophe and turned into fossils.

Neither school considers the possibility that the flood was a "year of miracles." God was shaking and baking the earth.... The flood was unique.

Thus, we would expect to find different groups of animals in the fossil record based *not* on hydrodynamic sorting but upon their various reproductive rates. This model maintains that the geological column was not all formed in one year, but was the product of many decades, possibly centuries, of **postflood** animal migration combined with regional geological catastrophes. The distribution of fossils is therefore a function of reproductive rates and migration over a few centuries, rather than hydraulic sorting. This is necessarily a very sketchy outline of a Morton's creative alternative to Morns's hydraulic/ecological model. (A full account of Morton's model can be obtained from two sources: First, "Fossil Succession," *The Creation Research Society Quarterly* Vol. 19, (September, 1982): 103. Second, his paper, "Geological Challenges to a Young Earth," and the rest of the technical papers delivered at the conference can be obtained from the International Conference on Creationism, P.O. Box 17578, Pittsburgh, PA 15235.)

There are a few problems with this theory, not the least of which is the time period required. Morton went looking for a new theory because he did not believe that the entire geological column could be compressed into one year. There are certain geological phenomena such as immense layers of varved or banded deposits, chalk and salt deposits, and various fossil anomalies that have defied all attempts to account for their formation in one year's time. Morton could not accept the fact that all these geological phenomena were produced in one year. He argued that only an earth at least

14 million years old could account for some perplexing geological phenomena—anomalies that creation scientists so far have not been fully able to explain.

The Bible's chronology does not allow for 14 million years. One wonders how millions of years could be fit into the Bible's postflood chronology. At the same time, however perplexing certain geological facts **are** to creationists, it does not appear that Morton's reproductive/repopulation model *demand*s 14 million years. Certain aspects of his reproductive/repopulation model are attractive, and possibly might be salvaged while remaining within the 6,000 year limit demanded by Scripture's chronology. Most likely some of Morton's model could be included within the hydraulic model to explain certain enigmatic geological facts.

A Year of Miracles

A fundamental problem shared by both models is that they assume the uniformity of natural processes during the flood. When it comes right down to **it**, creation scientists are often every bit as **uniformitarian** as their enemies, the evolutionists. Both Morns and Morton seek to account for the geological column using *only processes that are at work today*, such as hydraulic sorting, uniform rock formation and erosion rates, etc. Neither consider the possibility that the flood was a "year of miracles." God was shaking and baking the earth. God's normal providential interaction with the earth was superseded by special judgmental processes. In other words, the flood year was unique. During that year God was rearranging and restructuring the earth. If this is true, it would be a mistake to assume that present rates and processes can be extended back into the flood year.

It is also hard to believe that the flood entirely obliterated all life, marine and terrestrial, leaving no fossil remains as Morton suggests. Did Noah have aquariums in the ark to house the marine life of the world? Hardly. Genesis 7:21-23 explicitly states that only those creatures that lived on the dry land were totally wiped out. Presumably, some marine life—but not all—was buried and fossilized during the flood. That the action of the flood could have obliterated all traces of life, leaving no fossils behind, is difficult to concede. Morton's model claims that all fossiliferous rocks are the result of postdiluvial deposition. If this were true, ought there not to be evidence of enormous layers of fossil free sedimentary strata below fossil rich post-

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Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine*. Mercer University Press. 175 oversized pages, with illustrations. Hardcover. \$19.95.

The purpose of this book is to survey all the archaeological remains of the Christian Church from the period before the peace of Constantine, A.D. 313. As a survey, it certainly appears comprehensive, and has been heralded as such. Snyder discusses symbols, pictorial representations, church buildings, tombs, inscriptions and graffiti, and papyrus documentation. It is interesting to find that the most common symbol in this period was that of a woman with her arms upraised. Indeed, this female figure, called an *Orante*, was used for Jonah, Daniel, and other *men* of the Bible in various pictures! Similarly, it is interesting to learn that Jonah was by far the most popular story drawn by artists of the early church.

The problem for me comes with Snyder's interpretations. He is quite convinced that the most important factor in the interpretation of these remains is the **Greco-Roman** pagan heritage, and not the Bible. The *Orante*, for instance, was a traditional symbol of piety and peace. Snyder assumes that this is all it meant in early Christian art, while it seems to me that the *Orante* must also have been a symbol for the church, eternally feminine before her Lord. This would explain why Jonah and Daniel are pictured as *Orantes*, for they picture the church at prayer.

It is true, of course, that popular Christianity frequently cannot be distinguished from its pagan surroundings when it comes to certain customs. Modern evangelical readily adopt **secular** funereal practices, for instance, which include beautifying the *corpse*, viewing the corpse, burial in an expensive casket, burial in a public cemetery far removed from church property, and the placement of imposing monuments over the grave. None of this comes out of the Christian tradition, and a few moments of reflection will reveal preferable ways to do it, but few Christians today think much about it. Thus, we should not be surprised if early Christians were not much different from their pagan neighbors when it came to burial practices. And the same is true elsewhere as well, of course.

So, Snyder has a valid concern.

All the same, my assessment is that he does **way too** little with the Biblical background of the art and symbolism he discusses. A treatment of this same material by a scholar more committed to conservative evangelical presuppositions is needed.

Recent Old Testament Commentaries

The Daily Study Bible Series from Westminster Press continues to issue volumes, averaging \$15-\$16 in hardcover and \$8-\$9 in paperback. These are designed as popular, quasi-devotional commentaries, written by scholars for laymen. Recent volumes include *Deuteronomy* by David F. Payne. Payne does not take a firm stand for **Mosaic** authorship, but does restrict his comments to the text as it is. The lack of detail (unavoidable in a book this size) and the lack of a more conservative perspective limit this book's value, especially with Craigie's and Thompson's commentaries available from Eerdmans and Intervarsity respectively.

J. B. McConville's guide to *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther* is certainly readable and likeable, and by and large conservative and trustworthy. There is little material on these books (though that is changing), and the busy pastor will find help here. Sadly, McConville misses the basic movement from wrath to grace in Esther, failing to see that when Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman he is committing the sin of rebellion, bringing the wrath of God against all Israel. The same sin committed by Jewish leaders had resulted in the present exile (2 Kings 24:1, 20; 25:25). It is only when Mordecai repents that God changes the situation, reversing all fortunes.

Eerdmans continues its *International Theological Commentary* with two volumes: *Amos and Lamentations* by R. Martin-Achard and S. Paul Re'em (\$8.95), and *Nahum, Obadiah, Esther* by Richard J. Coggins and S. Paul Re'em (\$7.95). This is an uneven set, some authors quite liberal and compromised, others more conservative.

While there are particular points of interest, these volumes cannot replace the orthodox pastor's library of Keil and Delitzsch, and other conservative works. Like McConville, Re'em misses the transition from wrath to grace in Esther; and Coggins is unable to see Nahum in proper light because he does not realize that Assyria had been converted under Jonah, and then apostatized.

Eerdmans also continues the *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* with *Isaiah 1-*

39 by John N. Oswalt (\$29.95). Oswalt takes a strongly conservative line, arguing for the unity of the book written by Isaiah himself. Oswalt's study is a fine complement to E. J. Young's three-volume commentary on Isaiah.

Word Books has added several volumes to their *Word Biblical Commentary*. I was particularly interested in Simon DeVries's *1 Kings* and T. R. Hobbs's *2 Kings*. DeVries is disappointing. While his commentary has plenty of technical detail, and is useful from that standpoint, it lacks a good orthodox theological perspective. David's deathbed judgments become mere vindictive spite instead of Godly, proper judgments designed to clear the way for Solomon's reign (as Joshua had cleared the land of Canaanites earlier). DeVries misses the point at which Solomon falls into sin, immediately after the visit of the Queen of Sheba. After a great and Godly ministry to the gentiles, Solomon breaks in succession the three laws of kingship given in Deuteronomy 17, by multiplying gold (666 talents per year!), horses, and women.

On the other hand, Hobbs's study of *2 Kings*, though marred here and there by occasional higher critical comments, contains much good theological observation. Hobbs is alert to symbolic notices in the stories, such as breaches of boundary and illnesses that afflict leaders as signs that God's protection of the nation is being withdrawn. Used with

"The Reformation is the greatest act of the Catholic Church itself, the full ripe fruit of all its better tendencies, particularly of the deep spiritual law conflicts of the Middle Period, which were as a schoolmaster toward the Protestant doctrine of justification.

"The separation was produced, not by the will of the Reformers, but by the stiff-necked papacy, which like Judaism at the time of Christ, identifying itself in a fleshly way with the idea of the absolute church, refused to admit the onward movement.

"Thus apprehended, Protestantism has as large an interest in the vast historical treasures of the previous period, as can be claimed rightfully by the Church of Rome. Hence the arguments drawn by Romanists from this quarter, and particularly from the Middle ages—the proper cradle of the Reformation—have no application against our standpoint."

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discretion, this book would be helpful to the Reformed pastor.

A final notice: Zondervan has completed publication of *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament*, with volumes 3 and 4. This interlinear has the clearest Hebrew typeface I have seen, and will doubtless be of great use to those of us who have not totally mastered Hebrew!

—James B. Jordan

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violate God's standards, we discipline them (Proverbs 13:24). This "boundary of fear" restrains them from ill, and protects them from evil (Proverbs 1:8-9; 23: 13-14).

What does this have to do with a church's ministry to the poor? Quite a bit as it **turns** out. You see, like our children, all men, and certainly the poor, desperately need lifestyle adjustments that only life in the Body can effect. The ritual of worship and consistent discipleship trains them in humility, joy, perseverance, diligence, responsibility, and gives them a "new song". It instills in them godly habits. It **repatterns** them according to the ways to God.

Through constant fellowship within the community of faith, the poor have these new habits reinforced. Their expectations and desires are slowly brought into conformity with the expectations and desires of the righteous. They are reformed.

And finally, the "boundary of fear" restrains the poor **from** old patterns of sloth and self destruction. Through work requirements, moral, expectations, and community obligations, all enforced by church discipline, they are encouraged to grow in grace and humility. They learn that their attitudes, actions, and inactions have very real consequences (Galatians 6:7). They who are weary and heavy laden are liberated from the slave market shackles of the world and are yoked with the gentle and easy discipline of Christ instead (Matthew 11:28-30).

As Christians consider all the various options in the poverty issue, we must not limit our focus to the contributions of family, private enterprise, and **parachurch** outreaches. We must instead comprehend what should have been obvious all along: The Church is the Mother of Hope; the Church is the Wellspring of Reconstruction; the Church is the Nursery of the Kingdom.

Meyers, continued from p. 5

flood rocks? After all, according to Morton all fossilization occurred in the **postflood** era. We do not, however, **find** any such evidence. **Unfossiliferous** Precambrian sedimentary rocks are few and far between, representing a mere 2% of all sedimentary rocks on earth, hardly the kind of depositional remains we would expect from a world-wide flood.

Morton's paper elicited healthy but heated debate from the audience at the conference. Creative alternatives like Morton's can only lead to better models in the future. The **Whitcomb/Morris** model is not likely to crumble as a result of critiques like this. The Institute for Creation Research plans, however, to update and completely revise the old Genesis *Flood* in the next few years. The new work will correct many outdated sections of the book and take into account the criticisms and suggestions offered over the last 25 years. It's encouraging to see that the creation science movement is not stagnating.

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