

Appendix: Was there Death Before the Fall?

A Good Creation

The basic question is this: Is nonhuman death a result of man's Fall, or was it a normal feature of the Pre-Fall order consistent with the goodness of creation? Several exegetical and theological considerations suggest the latter view.

First, in the context of a poetic meditation on the creation period, Psalm 104 speaks of the predatory relationship between carnivorous animals and their prey: **The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God** (verse 21). The immediate context in which this statement is imbedded relates the appointment of the moon and sun for seasons (verses 19-23). When the sun goes down and it becomes dark, the predatory beasts creep about searching for food (verses 20-21). In the morning when the sun rises, they lie down in their dens (verse 22), and man goes forth to his labor until evening (verse 23). This description of the nighttime hunting habits of beasts of prey is contextually embedded in a paragraph that refers to the creation week, clearly *before* the Fall. Verse 24 of Psalm 104 praises the Lord for His works of creation:

**O Lord, how many are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all:
The earth is full of your riches [or, creatures].**

Psalm 104:21 states that the lions **seek their food from God**. Such provision is a testimony to the goodness of the Creator in caring for His creation. This theme is elaborated several verses later when the Psalmist praises God for His concern for His creatures: **These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things** (verses 27-28). There is no suggestion in this text that we are to view the provision of prey for carnivorous beasts as anything but a blessing from the hand of a good Creator. It certainly is not pictured as an abnormality resulting from the entrance of sin into the world. (*The Genesis Debate*, pp.286-287)

We humans can maintain a normal level of activity eating only fruit and vegetable products, but only for this simple reason:

we possess the intellect and technology to process vegetable matter into high-calorie, highly nutritive, low-fiber form. The only option for large, active mammals in the wild is to eat herbivores, the one significant natural source of processed vegetable matter. They could not survive or thrive otherwise.

What about the “hunted” herbivores? They actually benefit, too. Carnivorous activity maximizes the quality of life for the herbivores as a whole. As game wardens will verify, a lack of carnivorous activity leads to the spread of disease, to starvation, and to genetic decline. (*The Genesis Question*, p.98)

While death and extinction from a human perspective seem horrible, they also bring certain benefits.... For humanity to be provided with an abundance of limestone, marble, ozone, oxygen, water, top soil, coal, oil, gas, salt, phosphate, gypsum, etc., millions of generations of life would need to predate us. Because the physical realm changes with time, God apparently created different species at different times to suit the changing environment. For instance, only the most primitive and tiny forms of life could survive the eight-hour-per-day rotation period of early earth. Because highly advanced life requires a more delicately balanced set of characteristics for survival than primitive life, such life forms are much more vulnerable to extinction. But when such species became extinct, God created new ones, sometimes the same, and more often different (according to environmental and ecological conditions and divine timing) to replace them....

What we can deduce from all this is that God created humanity at the end of the window of time for life on earth so that we can be blessed and equipped with the maximum possible resources, (*The Genesis Debate*, pp.133,137-138)

The Presence of Death and Pain in the Original Creation

...death sustains the life of every animal. Eating, which makes animal life possible, requires the death of some other living thing. For example, when herbivores eat, plants or plant parts die. And, by the way, botanists did not originate the claim that plants experience life and death. The Bible said so first. (We are referred to such a passage as Job 14:7-9),

... there is hope for a tree: if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not cease. ⁸Its root may grow old in the ground, and its stump die in the soil; ⁹yet at the scent of water it will bud, and put forth shoots like a plant. (Job 14:7-9)

We may also refer to the words of our Lord Jesus recorded in John 12:24,

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed; but if it dies, it will produce much fruit. (John 12:24)

...to reject the reality of physical death among plants and animals before the creation of Adam and Eve defies both the scientific and the biblical data. Life can be reliably dated back to 3.86 billion years ago. And, unless God is a capricious trickster, which the Bible certainly denies, we can accept the testimony of billions of fossils throughout the last 3.5 billion years of geologic history. The existence of limestone, marble, coal, oil, gas, kerogen, peat, coral reefs, and quano deposits in great abundance on Earth tells of millions of generations of past life and death. Even the young-earth interpretation of Genesis 1 places the plants before the animals, and the animals before the humans, by a matter of days and hours. If any animal moved or ate, something else had to die. (*The Genesis Question*, p.100)

Furthermore, we should take note of the Lord God's pronouncement to Eve in Genesis 3:16,

To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing; with pain you shall give birth to children; ...

Part of the penalty and consequence of sin is that the woman's pain in childbearing would be greatly multiplied. This implies the presence and experience of pain, at least to some degree, in the lives of Adam and Eve even before the Fall.

The Extent of Death in Romans 5:12

Romans 5:12 says, Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death *entered the world* through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. If by world Paul intends

to include the non-human sphere, one must be prepared to argue that sin entered the non-human sphere as well, for Paul argues that sin entered the world, and death entered the world through sin. Notice that Paul's thought is restricted to human death on account of Adam's sin. He rounds out the argument by saying, and thus death spread to all men, not to the entire cosmos inclusive of the non-human sphere. Paul narrows the referent of $\kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ (world) by using the synonymous expression all men later in the same verse and again in verse 18. In Paul's writings, as throughout the New Testament, $\kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ most often refers to the world of humanity (e.g. Matthew 18:7; John 3:16; Romans 3:6,19; Romans 11:12; 2 Corinthians 5:19). The rare cases where the term refers specifically to the non-human realm of creation are identified by additional contextual factors, which are lacking in Romans 5:12. If anything, the context of Romans 5:12 exhibits an exclusive interest in the world of mankind. (*The Genesis Debate*, p.288)

The Meaning of Romans 8:20-22

... the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of decay *and be brought* into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (Romans 8:20-22)

The statements, the creation was subjected to futility and the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of decay, are referring to the operation of what we know as the Second Law of Thermodynamics—the law of entropy. The law of entropy is not a consequence of the Fall; it is, rather, a natural and necessary part of this present creation and has been in operation since the beginning.

...Adam would have had no managing or tending to do at all before the Fall if the thermodynamic laws were not already in effect. Physical work of any kind—even eating and digesting food—involves the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law describes the process whereby food is converted to work energy or to movement of any kind. Adam and Eve surely ate

and moved, talked and walked, before the Fall (see Genesis 2:16; 3:2-6).

Before man or any of the plants and animals were created, God made the stars and the sun (see Genesis 1:1-16). These heavenly bodies represent a near-perfect expression of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which can also be defined as the flow of heat from hot bodies to cold bodies. Stars radiate heat very efficiently. They rank among the most entropic (heat radiating) entities in the universe. Thus, Genesis implicitly affirms the operation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics before man's fall...

Cosmological research goes so far as to demonstrate that unless the universe were extremely entropic and extremely homogenous (meaning that entropy must be roughly the same everywhere in the cosmos) throughout the whole of its existence, physical life would not be possible. The cosmic entropy level stands as but one of the thirty-four features of the universe discovered so far that must be exquisitely fine-tuned for life's chemical components even to exist. If the Second Law of Thermodynamics had not been in effect from the first moment of creation until now, the cosmos would be devoid of stars, planets, and moons. A cosmos without stars, planets, and moons is a cosmos without physical life.

When we consider that the Second Thermodynamic Law is essential for life's existence, essential for eating and mobility and countless other activities..., we see no reason to suggest that the law should be judged as bad. Thermodynamic laws were included when God declared His creation "very good" (Genesis 1:31). (*The Genesis Question*, pp.96-97)

We should also take note of the fact that the Romans 8 passage describes the creation as groaning with **the pains of childbirth**. Thus, the groaning of the creation is not attributed to the curse pronounced against Adam because of his sin. On the contrary, it is the groaning that proceeds and anticipates the coming into being of new life—the fullness of life for which this present creation, together with the children of God, have been predestined.

The New Creation, Not Merely a Restoration of the Original

Such passages as Isaiah 11:6-9 and Isaiah 65:25 describe the life and nature of the new creation:

And the wolf shall live with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the goat; and the calf and the young lion and the yearling *shall dwell* together; and a little child shall lead them.
⁷And the cow and the bear shall feed *together*; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸And the infant shall play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child shall put his hand in the viper's nest.
⁹They shall neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6-9)

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, declares Jehovah. (Isaiah 65:25)

These passages do not state, nor do they imply, that the new creation is merely a restoration of the original creation. On the contrary, especially in light of Romans 8:20-22, the new creation shall usher in new life—it shall be of an altogether higher order than the original.

...we must assume that the unfallen Adam (and with him the entire creation) enjoyed the prospect of eschatological advancement to greater glory, on condition that he passed the probationary test of not eating the forbidden fruit. Such an understanding of the eschatological potential of *the* creation is a forceful argument against assuming that we must picture the pre-fall condition of creation as the equivalent of the consummated, eschatological state. (*The Genesis Debate*, p.289)

If Adam had resisted the temptation of the devil and had proved himself faithful to the Lord his God, he would have ushered the entire creation into its final state of glorious consummation. Although Adam failed, the purposes of God for the creation are not thwarted: they shall be fully realized

because of the faithful obedience of the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bibliography

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