

NEWS AND COMMENTS

THE CARLSBAD MEETING

Every year scientists and other professional people gather in various places for conventions where individuals working in the same field meet together to present newly discovered information and share ideas with their colleagues. Then armed with renewed inspiration and encouragement, and perhaps a few new ideas combined with constructive criticism on their old ideas, they return home ready for more productive research.

Each year one group meets for a convention that is in some respects different from the usual scientific gathering, both from the standpoint of the subjects considered and from the breadth of approach employed. This group with the title of Bible-Science Subcommittee of the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is unusual in that its membership involves both theologians and scientists, although the latter predominate. The subjects under study are those areas where science and Scripture have a common interest. This committee performs an important function in bringing together individuals with diverse training to work together towards an improved understanding of earth history using both science and sacred history as a basis for study.

The April 1974 meeting was held in Carlsbad, New Mexico. This locale was selected so as to give the participants a first-hand view of the famous Permian fossil "reef." World-famous Carlsbad Caverns is dissolved out of this so-called reef.

Fourteen formal presentations, numerous discussion sessions, and three afternoons of field study were packed into three intense days. Two papers were presented by theologians. Gerhard Hasel of Andrews University gave a detailed study on the Biblical view of the extent of the flood. His conclusion was that the phrases used in describing the flood and the context and syntax all strongly indicate a universal flood. The writer of the Genesis story could not have expressed himself more explicitly on this point than he did. Dalton Baldwin of Loma Linda University discussed the nature of faith, and the relation between faith and science. Commitment in action to the most probable available presuppositions is a good way of doing science. The same applies to religion.

One topic which has been very much under consideration by this committee is the relation of the geological record to the Biblical flood. Papers by Ariel Roth of the Geoscience Research Institute, Leonard Brand, Arthur Chadwick, Berney Neufeld, and James Riggs of Loma Linda University, and Ray Hefferlin of Southern Missionary College addressed themselves to various aspects of this intriguing subject. Among the topics considered were various models of geological processes which may explain the thin but very widespread nature of marine and land deposits

found in sediments. The relation of megabreccias and other unstable sedimentary patterns to a catastrophe such as a worldwide flood was also considered. Data was presented indicating that the earth could support enough vegetation at one time to account for the existing supplies of coal and oil; hence the quantities present do not pose a restriction on a model that proposes their formation in one event such as the worldwide flood described in Scripture. Various models synthesizing different interpretations were also considered. A report was given on experimental studies indicating that the fossil footprints in the Permian Coconino sandstone were more likely formed under water than above water. This, of course, has significant inferences for a flood model. The intriguing question of an expanding earth was also discussed. The implications of such a model are very complex and deserve further study.

David Rhys, graduate student, and Raymond Cottrell of the Review and Herald Publishing Association both presented series of NASA satellite pictures illustrating the usefulness of these in the interpretation of the past history of the earth. The broad geographical perspective thus available is an invaluable tool.

Several speakers addressed themselves to the matter of time as it relates to the past history of the earth and the universe. Some attempts have been made in the past to use the growth lines present in fossil molluscs as an age-dating method. Recent research indicates that this technique is to be viewed with a great deal of caution (see *Origins* 1:58-66). Conrad Clausen of Loma Linda University who has been studying this method also suggests that the study of these growth lines may contribute to creation theory in fields such as paleoecology. Robert Brown, Director of the Geoscience Research Institute, discussed a number of avenues of evidence related to the age of the universe and the earth.

The entire committee spent three afternoons viewing the major features of the famous Permian “reef,” part of which is exposed in the Guadalupe Mountains. The gross features of this reef are reminiscent of a true reef, but the paucity of frame builders in the reef core casts serious doubts on its ever having been a wave-resistant structure as would be expected for a true reef.

The participants left the meeting with a new supply of eagerness to return to their research so that new advances in their understanding of the past history of the earth can be achieved before the next meeting, which will be held in central Oregon, at the site of well-studied tertiary deposits.

Leonard Brand