

kinds of algae lived long before seed-bearing plants. So, here is another place where the use of poorly established methods of interpretation is bringing embarrassment to Christians.

Thus a prominent segment of evangelical Christianity has now developed a series of awkward and misleading methods of reasoning and techniques of interpretation. These already have become a real hindrance to the Christian work which is being attempted by this type of fundamentalist, and frequently casts a harmful shadow across the work of all evangelicals.

Among the fundamentalist groups which emphasize the young-earth view, we find high ideals, but their position is too restricted to be of use in understanding the scientific evidence or in properly relating it to the Bible. The view is similar to the narrow field of a telescope. Even though there may be a clear object or idea out beyond the end of the telescope, the viewer is missing out on the great mass of beauty and meaning in the landscape.

The growth of the young-earth movement during the past decade has been close to phenomenal. The position held with regard to the great Biblical truths of God, man, sin, and salvation is very similar to that held by the other evangelicals of the Christian community. But the position taken on the age of the earth, being magnified to such proportions as it has, usually draws a sharp line of separation between the young-earth groups and other evangelicals. Let us hope that this line can be softened in the future, so that all those who believe the fundamental truths of Scripture can work together more effectively for the cause of the Gospel.

Prospects for the Future

It appears that the present trends of divergence and conflict concerning the doctrine of creation will continue, for some time at least. Theologians of the less conservative persuasions undoubtedly will continue to insist that the Biblical account of creation has religious value, but practically no historical purpose. Evangelicals probably will remain divided into the groups we have already mentioned.

Since this book is written primarily for evangelicals, we will now list some goals and principles which can be of use in our efforts to properly represent our God as we live in this world.

1. We should emphasize the historical value of the Biblical account of creation (but at the same time not become hyperliteral). The tendency to see only spiritual lessons in the first chapters of Genesis can only weaken our testimony concerning God's revelation. The two complementary facts that human language is meaningful, and that the first chapters of Genesis are not poetry, make it necessary for us to assume that God, in giving us these chapters, was attempting to reveal some of the facts concerning origins. To allegorize the entire account, as some attempt to do, is to raise the enormous problem of how much of the remainder of the Bible should be considered