

APPENDIX IV

THE PROBLEM OF DEATH BEFORE THE FALL OF MAN

It has been widely taught among theologically conservative Christians that all death originated at the time of the fall of man. This generalization apparently has occurred because the Bible, being primarily a book about God and man, does not specifically state what effects man's sin had upon the animal and plant kingdoms.

Some of the Scripture passages which are frequently cited in support of the claim that all death originated at the fall of man are: Genesis 3:17b, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life." Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." Romans 8:22, "...the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of child-birth together until now." If these passages really taught that no death of animals and plants had occurred up to the fall of man, then we would have to say that practically all fossils were formed after the fall of man. However, this is not at all the case. We of course agree that both spiritual and physical death in the human race originated with the tragic event of Adam's sin. But the beginning of death in the animal and plant kingdoms is simply not mentioned in any of the Scripture passages having to do with man's sin; nor is the time of the beginning of such death given in any other place in the Bible.

A consideration of the mutual relationships of the organisms, including man, which God placed in the Garden of Eden should be of great assistance in understanding this problem. According to the second chapter of Genesis, God "planted" the Garden of Eden with many kinds of growing plants and a great variety of animal life. Man was given the privilege of eating the fruits of the garden, and we certainly must assume that the "beasts of the field" and the "fowls" likewise supplied themselves with food from the garden. Thus we are led to the conclusion that the supply of the biological needs of animals and of man was basically the same in the Garden of Eden before the fall of man as it is today.

The fact of the eating of plant materials in the Garden of Eden is readily admitted by all. Since plants are living organisms, with living cells similar to those of animals, there is no question but that the terms "life" and "death" are appropriate in speaking of them. Thus when man, the beasts, and the birds ate and digested plant materials, they were bringing about the death of living organisms. This fact is intensified when we realize that seeds contain young, living embryos; so when Adam and Eve ate nuts and seeds they were killing the young embryos within those seeds. Also, the death of small animals must have been a regular occurrence in the Garden of Eden. It is difficult to conceive of the hooved mammals roaming the fields day after day without crushing beetles and worms with their