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Response

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have any difficulty whatsoever in entering into a special (covenantal) relationship with that human race so formed under divine direction? Neither God's sovereignty nor mankind's responsibility is threatened in any way by the continuity of the macroevolutionary picture of biological history. What may very well be threatened, however, is an inadequate theological system or a deficient concept of how the elements of a sound theological structure relate to the specifics of cosmic or biological or hominid history.

Therefore, let me challenge my colleagues in biblical and theological studies with a few questions: If the idea that God formed all of his living creatures, mankind included, in a manner that resulted in a continuous succession of forms (something like the succession that is indicated by the paleontological record) stands in tension with some elements of our theological or exegetical tradition, could it be that the problem lies not with the concept of continuity in God's creative work but the elements in our tradition? Is it possible that, while our formulation of the *doctrine* of creation (which speak principally to questions concerning the identities and interrelationships of God, mankind

and the physical world) is sound and adequate, our traditional ways of *picturing* God's creative activity in forming his Creation and his creatures is inadequate—rooted, perhaps, in the medieval concept of a statically structured universe? Is it perhaps time to allow the results of empirical investigation of the Creation to inform or modify our *pictures* of God's creative work without disturbing sound *doctrinal* positions? Is it time to put certain traditions to the test by searching both God's Word and God's Creation?

There was a time when to be Reformed was to challenge the authority of tradition, and we still say that to be Reformed is to be continually reforming, but do we dare put these slogans into practice? And if we don't, will the Reformed witness to a scientifically well-informed world be given a hearing in the next century?

Cordially,

Howard J. Van Till
Professor of Physics
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Response

Dear Howard:

Thank you for your letter. I want to make one point. You state that biblical miracles were performed "as special signs to human observers present on the scene." What of creation from nothing in the beginning? Perhaps intensive scientific investigation is revealing to us the difficulty of crossing the gap between non-life and life. Such results can suggest that there was also unexplainable creation after the beginning.

Russell Maatman