

The Virgin Birth

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Sin -An Acquired Characteristic Which Is Inherited

To show the necessity for the supernatural virgin birth of our Savior, Custance makes three points in his treatise:

- (1) Adam and Eve were created immortal. They were not made to die.
- (2) Acquired characteristics cannot be passed on to offspring. Certain mutations can be induced by radiation or mustard gas, and these can be transmitted, but they are nearly always harmful, and they do not produce changes in basic character.
- (3) However, in the case of Adam, the acquired characteristic of sin was passed on to his descendants. Nothing that we can do, or that can be done in the universe, can change this condition. Sin is now a part of our genes. The only way a change can be effected is that Christ Jesus be born of a virgin, free from the acquired characteristic of sin, and thus restore the original condition for us.

Adam and Eve Immortal

Custance makes the point that death is “in no sense an inevitable consequence of being alive.” He quotes from H. J. Muller writing in *Science* (1955) about “Life”: “Natural death is not the expression of an inherent principle of protoplasm.”

According to Custance, “There are untold billions of living plants, trees, and other things, which do not appear to have any limitations placed upon their continuance other than those which result from accident, and by accident I simply mean events fatal to the organism but not originating within itself.” He applies this to even more billions of microorganisms whose nature is simply to divide and divide and divide endlessly. He claims that cells may be destroyed by dehydration, shock, starvation, crushing, predacity, disease, poisoning, heat, cold, etc., but if protected from such accidents death really is not part of their experience. The aging process is really fastest when the man or animal is younger, Custance claims. The aging process slows down in time, but the individual has less ability to recover from shock or attack. It is his opinion that if the organism could be fully protected from shock or attack, it could live for an enormous length of time. Sir Julian Huxley is quoted with regard to trees in India receiving adequate protection that have survived for centuries where normally they would have survived only about forty years. (Huxley in “The Meaning of Death,” *Essays in Popular Science*, Penguin Books of London, 1938).

Reference is also made to the experiment of Alexis Carrel who kept chicken tissue alive for 27 years. Edward Deevey, writing in the *Scientific American* (April, 1950) on “The Probability of Death” states that death from old age is a legal fiction. Sir Peter Medawar is also quoted from his book *The Uniqueness of the Individual* (1957) as saying he has extreme difficulty in finding one single record of anyone dying a truly “natural” death, Stephen E. Slocum writing in the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 1961) quotes Dr. Hans Selye (1961) who claims that in his autopsies he has never found an individual who had died of old age, and he believes no one ever has. August Wiesmann is quoted as saying he did not



know why a cell must divide 10,000 or 100,000 times and then suddenly stop. Although he made this statement in 1889 it is still fundamentally true today.

The conclusion is drawn that Adam could have lived forever and was created for such a life, and our modern scientific studies seem to confirm this view. This ideal was changed when Adam disobeyed God.

Acquired Characteristics Not Heritable

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, something happened and their genes were changed. This acquired characteristic was passed off to their offspring and became heritable. To establish this point Cushman shows that it is biologically impossible now for acquired characteristics to be passed on or to be heritable.

Each new generation begins with the union of two seeds, one contributed by the male, the other by the female. When the male seed reaches that of the female, it penetrates and fuses with it to form the first complete cell of a new individual organism. This divides into two cells; each of these divide and there are four. This process continues until there are 32, still no larger than the original. At this point the cells become different, therefore these first 32 cells might be termed the original cells, the germ plasm. Cells developing after this are known as body cells. Body cells originate from the germ plasm, but germ plasm never arises from body cells. The germ plasm not only reproduces itself but also ensures its own continuance by building around itself a body. The body perishes with each generation, but the germ plasm does not. Thus the germ plasm is potentially immortal.

Darwin had a different idea. He believed that when a creature, through some accident of life, develops a body structure unlike his fellows which gives him an advantage in the struggle for life, this advantage can be passed on to his offspring. Although in our day, few biologists accept the position of Lamarck, they are still trying to find through mutations a mechanism for transmitting acquired characteristics.

August Weismann (1834-1914) proved Darwin's and Lamarck's theories wrong. Due to an eye difficulty, he was not able to use the microscope, so he turned to philosophy. He assumed that a special heredity substance must be present in all life forms that is transmitted from generation to generation without real change. He named this substance the germ plasm. Although he did not know about chromosomes and genes, his theory is still upheld. In 1959 Robert Briggs and Thomas King authored a book *The Cell: Biochemistry, Physiology, Morphology* in which they stated that Weismann's theory has been remarkably substantiated by genetic work carried on by his successors.

The important fact brought out is that the body does not produce the seed, but the seed produces the body. Therefore, nothing that affects the body during its lifetime, can influence the seed except under exceptional and well-recognized conditions. To Cushman this is proof that the seed itself is immortal although the body is mortal.

Sin Passed On

The one great exception to the well-established rule that acquired characteristics cannot be passed on to offspring is the inheritance of sin. The thrust of Cushman's argument is that death is not natural and that as the Bible states, death is the result of Adam's sin. This characteristic of sin became inherent in the germ plasm, and there is no way to rid the human race from it.

It is Cushman's theory that in eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve ate a protoplasmic poison, something which affected their germ plasm, their chromosomes and genes. This nature of sin with its subsequent death was passed on and is present in the germ plasm of each individual today. There is nothing that can change this, therefore mankind needs the virgin birth of Christ, born without the property of sin in His germ plasm, being conceived of the Holy Spirit, to alter the effects.

Death Through Man

Custance makes the biological point that death comes through man and not through woman. The female portion of the germ plasm can exist without its male counterpart. This is why parthenogenesis is possible. He believes the reason for the inability of the male portion of the germ plasm to reproduce itself is that it does not contain enough food cytoplasm. To substantiate this, he quotes from George W. Corner in *The Hormones in Human Reproduction* (1963): if an egg is divided into two portions, the portion having no nucleus will divide to become an embryo if a sperm cell is introduced. This embryo would be motherless for it contains no female egg nucleus.

Custance goes on to make the observation that this poison of which Adam and Eve ate and which entered their germ plasm, had more effect upon Adam than upon Eve, for Adam's seed seems to have surrendered its immortality whereas Eve's seed did not. According to Romans 5:13 "by one man sin entered the world." This is not stated concerning the woman. This line of reasoning is carried out in detail in the book to indicate why Jesus could be born of a virgin, retaining within Himself the power to remain sinless.

The Virgin Born Not Under Death

Only because Jesus was born biologically of a woman, was He not subject to death. If He were to serve as our sacrifice, He needed to be free to willingly surrender His life. This would not have been possible had He been the product of human male and female. We who are the offspring of the union of man and woman have no choice but to die and we cannot willingly surrender our life.

Eve Cultured From Adam's Side

Another interesting point brought out by Custance is that Eve was cultured from Adam's side rather than being a separate creation, with the result that she carried the same genes as Adam. This made it possible for Christ to carry these same genes and thus be truly a representative of the human race in His body as well as in spirit, as we are taught in Romans, chapter 5.

If Eve had been a separate creation, laws on genetics (as developed by Mendel) would apply. One-fourth of their descendants would carry Eve's genes, another fourth would carry Adam's, and one-half would carry genes from both. How then could Jesus completely represent the entire human race? If Adam and Eve had been separate creations, there would have been three separate lines.

According to Custance, this distinction is not unimportant. When Adam fell into sin, not only did his spirit come under judgment, but his body as well. We live in a space-time world, and all of it is affected by sin. Our bodies must be redeemed, but all material things in the world which are also affected by sin also need to be redeemed (see Romans 8:22). It is important that Christ, in His body, represent the entire human race.

The Christmas account is doubly important for us as we contemplate that Jesus Christ took on a human body in addition to His God Spirit.

By Pastor Walter Lang, based upon Doorway Paper No. 15 Arthur C. Custance, excerpted and edited from Bible-Science Newsletter Copyright December 1969

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