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The Author Replies . . .

Plate tectonics is the reigning (almost universal) model of earth history because it powerfully explains a vast body of observational data, and not because of a large measure of speculation by the uniformitarian mindset of the evolutionary establishment. In any case, catastrophism is making a welcome comeback amongst a significant number of influential mainstream geologists.

There should likewise be no reticence towards catastrophic plate tectonics, since it is based on sound experimental studies and the same vast body of observational evidence, and it has even greater explanatory power, all within a consistently biblical framework of earth history. To be sure, the model needs further development to cope with perceived difficulties and to dovetail its explanations more closely with the actual rock record, all of which my co-

workers and I are fully aware of and are currently working on. However, this need for model refinement should never be interpreted as a sign of weakness while ever the model is so eloquently consistent with so much observational data.

Such model refinement will also include an explanation of why there are so many similarities between the geology of the north-eastern United States, Britain and Scandinavia, for example, all within the context of catastrophic plate tectonics and drifting continental crustal fragments **during** the Flood. On the other hand, those that postulate post-Flood continental drift have yet to demonstrate a viable mechanism for it, and to explain how the animals and man would have survived the devastation at the earth's surface resulting from such a sustained violent upheaval.

My colleagues and I look forward to further refining the catastrophic plate tectonics model for the Flood and earth history to make it even more comprehensive and powerful in explaining the geological record from a biblical perspective.

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A NOTE ON NEW AUSTRALOPITHECINES

Dear Editor,

Since my last note¹ on *Australopithecus ramidus*, some interesting articles have appeared in the journal *Nature* which have modified the australopithecine picture just a bit. First of all, the recently described Ethiopian species *A. ramidus* was assigned as type species in the new genus *Ardipithecus*.² In the same article notification was given of another *A. ramidus* specimen (with mandibular and some post-cranial material) which will be the subject of further study. As I

indicated in my earlier paper³ fossil series are often characterised by a rather high number of confusing species, each showing mosaic and homoplasous characters. Yet another australopithecine species has been found which deepens the truth of that claim for the australopithecine fossil series. *Australopithecus anamensis* has been described from similar-aged (3.9–4.2 radiometric years) sediments in Kenya, based upon a similar number of fragments (3 post-cranials, 1 temporal fragment, 1 maxillary fragment, 5 or so mandibular fragments and 15 or so scattered teeth) between sites scores of miles apart and in sediments separated by at least 20 m of section.⁴ This paper by Leakey and others, as well as another by Peter Andrews,⁵ point out a number of the mosaic and homoplasous characters of this new species. Examples include, but are not limited to: dental similarities with Miocene African apes, bipedalism as in other australopithecines, sexual dimorphism reminiscent of apes, serrate root pattern as in australopithecines, and a body size greater than other australopithecines and like that of humans. Such high levels of species diversity, homoplasy, and mosaic characters continue to deepen the challenge to evolutionary models and strengthen the idea of high rates of intrabaraminic, post-Flood diversification along the lines of pre-programmed, latent morphotypes.

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