

**Antediluvian Social Landscapes: Challenges and Continuities in Human Social Life**

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### **Abstract**

Popular films, books, and museum exhibits draw audiences with vivid accounts of prehistoric life. As a cultural anthropologist I too am intrigued by ancient bones and evidence of past human life ways. Prehistory, however, can be a difficult topic for Seventh-day Adventists. Reconciling evolutionary and biblical models of human history seems impossible so we avoid the subject altogether. This approach leaves students encountering interesting or compelling narratives of prehistory grounded in macro-evolutionary theory without an analytic background to evaluate the merits or limitations of those arguments. Human biology and prehistory as studied by physical anthropologists is an expansive discipline with complex debates and many ongoing questions. However, the topic is not impossible when considered from a biblical perspective. I begin by defining the terms and organizing frameworks embedded in questions of human prehistory and antediluvian social landscapes. I then provide an overview of evolutionary and biblical frameworks for understanding prehistory and biological change in human populations. Finally, I draw from the first chapters of Genesis as primary sources for understanding the origins of human culture and for observing changes in human social life. I examine post-diluvian narratives including our own to trace areas of continuity between current human social worlds and those of the distant past. I conclude with practical strategies for approaching questions of human prehistory with students and lay members. My goals in this presentation are to suggest anthropological and biblical approaches to considering human social worlds of the past, to foster faith, and to encourage meaningful conversations.

*Key words:* social organization, prehistory, anthropology, biblical insights

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Popular films, books, and museum exhibits draw audiences with vivid accounts of prehistoric life. As a cultural anthropologist I too am intrigued by ancient bones and evidence of past human life ways. Prehistory, however, can be a difficult topic for Seventh-day Adventists. Reconciling evolutionary and biblical models of human history seems impossible so we avoid the subject altogether. This approach leaves students encountering interesting or compelling narratives of prehistory grounded in macro-evolutionary theory without an analytic background to evaluate the merits or limitations of those arguments. Human biology and prehistory as studied by physical anthropologists is an expansive discipline with complex debates and many ongoing questions. However, the topic is not impossible when considered from a biblical perspective. I begin by defining the terms and organizing frameworks embedded in questions of human prehistory and antediluvian or pre-flood social landscapes. I then provide an overview of evolutionary and biblical frameworks for understanding prehistory and biological change in human populations. Finally, I draw from the first chapters of Genesis as primary sources for understanding the origins of human culture and for observing changes in human social life. I examine post-diluvian narratives including our own to trace areas of continuity between current human social worlds and those of the distant past. I conclude with practical strategies for approaching questions of human prehistory with students and lay members. My goals in this presentation are to suggest anthropological and biblical approaches to considering human social worlds of the past, to foster faith, and to encourage meaningful conversations. Secular sources have much to say about prehistoric human life and the Bible offers key insights into antediluvian social landscapes though these approaches are different in important and conflicting way presenting challenges. They also share key understandings and overlap in important ways elucidating areas of continuity in human social life. While there is much to think about, commonly used frameworks for examining human prehistory can be discussed in ways

that deepen faith in the biblical text and provide insights for understanding human history and diversity. Let us begin.

My name is Stacie Hatfield. I am a cultural anthropologist. I study intersections of race and gender in the United States and gender, community, and archaeology in Jordan. In the United States, there are four major subfields in anthropology. They are cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and biological or physical anthropologists. Anthropology across its multiple subfields is the study of human culture. It is the study of all people, in all places, at all times. Because anthropology is encompassing in its study of human life, anthropologists also study human prehistory primarily through the subfields of archaeology and physical anthropology. Many of you are generally familiar with archaeology as a discipline. Archaeologists study human culture and past human life ways through material culture; the pottery, projectile points, buildings, irrigations systems, grave goods and other evidence of human life found around us and preserved primarily in the ground. Physical anthropologists study human culture through the human body. Many physical anthropologists are forensic scientists working in criminal justice to determine the circumstances of untimely or violent deaths. Physical anthropologists also work identifying human remains in post war contexts. Physical anthropologists working in United States Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) labs identify the remains of individuals killed in combat to repatriate their remains to families or loved ones and allow burial and for closure for those families. The DPAA lab in Hawaii handles the bulk of this work and is the largest physical anthropology and forensics lab in the world (Agency, 2023). Physical anthropologists have taught us much about human migration patterns. Through DNA analysis, know that people began in small numbers in Africa and migrated from there to other parts of the world in multiple waves and at different times, a view consistent with the biblical history of the flood. Physical anthropologists have also made vital contributions to studies of human variation generally understood as race and have looked deeply into what separates humankind from the rest of the animal kingdom. It is because of the

work of physical anthropologists and human population geneticists that we know that race is a social rather than a biological reality (Barbujani, 2005; Gannon, 2016; Mukhopadhyay & Henze, 2003). Race is the meaning we give to physical and cultural differences. We could spend a whole session examining human variation and race and we will discuss humankind as a distinct, yet integral part of created life in this paper. Archaeology and physical anthropology are only a few of the ways anthropologists and social scientists understand and produce knowledge about the past. We also utilize theory and methods from linguistics and cultural anthropology. Today we are looking at prehistoric and antediluvian social landscapes. As I mentioned, I am not a physical anthropologist. I am a cultural anthropologist. Both are subfields within the broader discipline of anthropology. While the differences between the subfields are significant, I can confidently walk us through the frameworks used by physical anthropologists to examine prehistoric human social landscapes in conversation with biblical understandings of the pre-flood world. I have training in physical anthropology. There is much evidence in prehistoric and current lifeways to inform understandings of what social worlds prior to a global flood might have looked like; continuities in human social life can elucidate our understandings of the past.

### **Terms and organizing frameworks**

Through this paper, I want to provide you with three central thoughts. The first is that the examination of human prehistory and antediluvian social landscapes is not only interesting but valuable and worthy of study. Second, that biblical histories and narrative details provide us with a rich account of early and prehistoric human culture. Third, students and adults need an understanding of human prehistory that recognizes the merits and limitations of secular approaches and invites a deep faith in God not only as the creator of life but as the architect and creator of human culture.

We need to begin by identifying and defining terms and organizing frameworks embedded in questions of human prehistory and antediluvian social worlds. The first term we need to talk about is the word Antediluvian. For Seventh-day Adventists and others who understand the story of Noah and

his flood as a literal telling of real events, the Antediluvian period is the time prior to the flood. The period between creation and the flood is told in the first seven chapters of Genesis. The Bible offers few details on this period of history but what it does tell us is significant and outlines much of what we take for granted in human social life. The term antediluvian is specific to the idea of a catastrophic global flood or deluge and assumes that most animals, animals of the land and air for sure, and nearly all people died in this event. For individuals who do not understand the Genesis account of the flood to be the literal account of a global deluge, the term antediluvian is a nonsensical term. It creates a chronological historical context that does not exist outside of the idea of the great flood. The idea of antediluvian social landscapes is predicated on the concept of a global flood and of an antediluvian period, a time before the flood. Therefore, this kind of examination is inherently linked to cosmologies and theologies that support the idea of a great flood. For systems of thought that either do not believe the flood story of Genesis was a literal event or that flood stories in general were significant but localized events, studies of early human social landscapes fall under the category of human prehistory. Archaeologists, physical anthropologists, visual anthropologists, art historians studying petroglyphs or pictographs, and others specialize in the study of human prehistory. The term antediluvian is meaningful within specific biblical and cosmological contexts.

The phrase social landscapes as commonly used in anthropology, sociology, and cultural geography refers to ideas and structures that shape and organize interactions between people. The idea of social landscapes includes ideas of family, politics, economics, religion, and cultural interactions like art or music, and is shaped by natural geospatial landscapes like mountains and oceans as well as built landscapes like urban centers or rural villages. It also involves ideas of place and belonging including understandings of how social groups are defined and maintained (Layton & Ucko, 1999). A study of human social landscapes could be conducted around theological and academic conference on the topic of creation science in Australia such as the one we are having today. Many interesting things are

happening here. Today we trying to look back and better understand human social landscapes during a particular period of the past: the antediluvian or prehistoric past.

We also need a basic definition of prehistory. Prehistory is generally understood to mean those events that occurred prior to written records (Muckle & Camp, 2021). Humans universally learn to speak but writing is an advanced technology. Though the earliest writing revolved around trade and political propaganda, writing allows us to record stories and to document history. It provides a first-hand account that can be accessed long after the original writer lived and wrote. In a secular sense, human prehistory extends from the time that Homo sapiens became distinct from other archaic hominins and the animal world to the time that writing first appeared. The earliest known form of writing is Akkadian cuneiform, a Sumerian script developed in Mesopotamia around 3200 BC. Biblically, we have written accounts that chronicle human life from the very beginning, from creation but most scholars agree that the biblical scrolls were assembled and codified during the Babylonian captivity. While we have biblical accounts of written laws such as the scroll found in the temple during the time of King Josiah and accounts of God writing in Exodus, during which time the Israelites would already have been familiar with hieroglyphic writing forms found in Egypt, accounts of human life prior to the emergence of writing would have been held in living and communal memory by which I mean that people remembered and retold historical, cosmological, economic and political accounts of their lives and the lives of their people groups including the individuals we learn about in the Bible. When Moses wrote the Torah, he was divinely inspired and drew from oral histories passed from generation to generation beginning at creation and carried on the ark through the flood in the minds and words of Noah and his family, written and compiled through the millenia that followed, and finally passed down to us in written form and in oral form. Many of us first heard the stories of the bible from the lips of our parents or Sabbath school teachers. In the biblical history, the antediluvian world is a prehistoric world. It is a world before writing. So, from a secular sense, human prehistory is made up of those periods of human life and experience occurring before

written records. The same is true biblically. While we have a biblical record that recounts the story of how human life began on earth, prior to Noah and until the times of the kings and the Babylonian captivity, that record was not generally a written record. Jewish, Muslim, and Christian cosmology was first preserved through oral traditions as stories, songs, and poems preserved and retold across generations. A secular perspective understands prehistoric humans as people without the intellectual ability to develop advanced technologies like writing. A biblical approach understands early humanity as closer to Eden, people in many ways stronger, smarter, and more able than we are. I might argue that the beauty and strength of human thought and memory nearer to the perfection of creation would not have needed the crude technology of writing. They simply remembered. First-hand accounts and oral histories would have been more than adequate to accurately preserve social, historical, and spiritual knowledge. Human prehistory is defined as periods of human social life prior to writing from both secular and biblical perspectives, the antediluvian world was a prehistoric world.

So, when we talk about Antediluvian social landscapes, we are talking about the ways human social life was organized prior to the deluge described in the first chapters of Genesis. The story of Noah and the great flood is part of the traditional cosmology of Jewish tradition and continued into the Christian texts. The story of Noah and the flood is also included in the Islamic Quran. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Abrahamic religions, are major world religions. More than half of the world's population currently belong to these religious groups (Deshmukh, 2022). More than half of the world's population already knows the story of Noah and the flood. Flood stories with features that are significantly like the Genesis narrative are also found in non-Abrahamic traditions, in oral histories, mythologies, and cosmologies of First, aboriginal, and native people around the world including here in Australia. Secular perspectives understand human origins and prehistory from an evolutionary perspective and have naturalistic understandings of earth history that exclude interventions by God or by supernatural beings. I bring this up to emphasize that the title of this talk assumes a particular



theology, a particular understanding of earth and human history. This view is not universally shared. In our conversation today, I will discuss the complex and dynamic antediluvian social landscape drawing from information provided in the biblical text. Understandings of human origins from a secular perspective are different from those presented in the Bible and we will discuss these challenges. Human prehistoric social landscapes from biblical and secular perspectives also reveal some remarkable continuities similar threads that run through both perspectives. I want to share these with you as well and as a whole, provide you with a basic understanding of secular and biblical views of human prehistory and how we can understand and teach human prehistory in a faith context.

Most secular researchers examining human prehistory assume and conduct research from a macro- evolutionary perspective. Macro-evolution is the overarching or grand theory that life on earth began with simple organisms and evolved to become the incredibly diverse and complex speciated forms of life we see in the current world including immense diversity in animal life. This evolutionary world view includes but is distinct from the idea of micro-evolution. Micro-evolution indicates smaller changes within populations. Micro-evolution can be seen even over short periods of time (Brand, 2009). Both macro and micro evolution involve the basic definition of evolution I was taught in physical anthropology class, which defines evolution as changes in allele frequency in a population. In simpler terms, evolution is changes in genetic variation that occur for a number of natural and social reasons in any given population. Both macro and micro evolution are heavily shaped by what Charles Darwin called natural selection and natural selection is a nice term. What natural selection means is that nature selected some individuals to live and that those who lived, lived to reproduce, to pass on their genetic material. Natural selection applies to plant and animal life. The critical and key aspect of natural selection is that those who did not live, died. They were unable to reproduce or pass on their genetic material. Death is the primary driver of natural selection. Death is the primary driver of both macro and micro evolution. Any biological system where death occurs will experience changes in allele frequency in

its populations. We live on a planet plagued by death, so we see changes in allele frequencies. We see genetic variation. Human beings and the plant and animal world are impacted by death and by micro-evolution. This understanding is consistent with Genesis 1, where at creation, God designs that plant and animal life reproduce after their kinds. The genetic material of the offspring comes from the genetic material of the parents. Sexual reproduction is how plant and animal life on earth works. It is consistent with the story of the fall and the coming of death to our world found in Genesis 3. When death is present in a biological sexually reproductive population, that population will experience changes in allele frequency, in the types of genetic material present in the population. When death is present in a biologically based system, micro-evolution will occur. This is not a theological problem, and it helps to understand variation in human and other kinds of populations.

Seventh-day Adventist belief does not subscribe to macro-evolutionary explanations of life. We believe that God created life on Earth that life did not arise by chance and evolve in dramatic stages over vast periods of time. Adventist belief, however, does support the idea of micro-evolution, of genetic changes within populations. We do not believe that all kinds of dogs were carried along in the arc. We know the breeding histories of various kinds of dogs. This is an artificial kind of micro-evolution, but micro-evolution none the less. We know that plants and animals reproduce after their kinds, which produces genetic reorganization and diversity within populations because the genetic material available to the next generation comes from our parents, parent plants and animals and is impacted by natural and social factors (Larsen, 2019). The difference between macro-evolution and micro-evolution is the largest difference in secular and biblical approaches to ancient human history. Individuals working from a macro-evolutionary model study the emergence of humankind as a step in the long progression of evolutionary history that links *Homo sapiens* not only to early humans like Neanderthals and *Homo habilis* “the tool maker”, but also to archaic hominins like *Australopithecus afarensis* or Lucy, the famous skeletal remains found by Donald Johanson and his research team in Hadar, Ethiopia and to other

ancient hominid (Larsen, 2019). Some of these groups consist of few individuals with a very limited number of bones but others consist of multiple individuals and full skeletons found in diverse environments. I have met Christians who believe that these kinds of skeletal remains, these bones, and those of the dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures, are fake. That they were planted by Satan or by secular scientists to deceive or trick us. This argument is perhaps an opposite to the argument that God created a brand new earth to look very ancient. Both arguments propose that through either the workings of God or devices of Satan, the natural world can not give us an accurate account of its history. Being the children of Protestant Enlightenment thought and beneficiaries of the vast knowledge that a scientific study of the natural world has brought us, most Christians including Seventh-day Adventists reject the idea that the natural world provides a deceptive view of its history. We believe that the thoughtful and rigorous study of nature is important, valid, and reliable way to produce knowledge about the world and about God. The study of these skeletal remains and of early humans is no different. These bones provide important and valuable information about human and animal history. But this does create a problem. If Seventh-day Adventists reject a macro-evolutionary view and believe that humankind did not evolve from animal life forms that came before us, what do we make of archaic hominins? How do we read or understand these bones? To address this, we need to know a bit more about micro-evolution.

Micro-evolution is the understanding that through natural and social processes, changes occur in the genetic make-up of populations. Mutation, in which changes in genetic makeup occur cellular reproduction, gene drift in response to environmental pressures such as sunlight exposure, and gene flow through migration or different groups encountering each other, can all change the genetic makeup of a population. We can now see those changes in the genes or the genotype. But those changes have been most visible as they express themselves in our appearance, our phenotype such as our eye color or hair texture. Physical anthropologists tell us that the greatest genetic diversity among human beings is in

African. There is more genetic diversity between traditional groups living in African than there is between Asian and Caucasian groups in other places. This is one of the ways we know that race is social rather than biological. There is more genetic diversity within groups than there is between groups.

The Bible does not talk about race and race as an idea was not fully developed until very recently (Barbujani, 2005). People in the ancient world were defined by family heritage, by the region they were from, or by culture, what we now think of as ethnicity. But the Bible provides a great deal of evidence regarding human diversity. Genesis 6 says that during the time before the flood, the Nephilim were in the land. They were great men, men of renown. We know of giants living in the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. Esau's body hair was so dense that it could be confused with the fur of a goat. Humans who are exceptionally small, pygmy populations are present in our current world. Humans come in many sizes, shapes, skin tones, and types of hair. When we look in the Bible, we see the category of human as diverse, as encompassing different kinds of humans: humans that are very tall and strong, humans that are very hairy. Humans that separate themselves into distinct groups. Because of the ways population genetics works, as we migrate, travel, and intermarry, humankind begins to look more alike. When we think about human prehistory, it is helpful to consider that humankind was more diverse in the past than it is now. A greater degree of variation was included in the category of regular human.

The animal world was also more diverse in the past than it is now. We are currently in a mass extinction period. We are losing plant and animal diversity at an alarming rate (Steffen et al., 2015). We used to think that Neanderthal was a distinct prehistoric kind of human. Now we know that 1-4% of non-African individuals in European and some Asian populations have Neanderthal DNA. Homo sapiens and Neanderthal sometimes had children together (Neves & Serva, 2012). We are sexually compatible. However, Neanderthals are a kind of human that no longer exists. As a distinct group, they are extinct perhaps through natural causes, perhaps through social causes like intergroup conflict or violence.

When physical anthropologists talk about archaic hominins or primate human ancestors, they use an evolutionary framework to create a progression from animal to human. The biblical narrative contains a distinction between humans and other kinds of animals at creation. So how do we understand the bones and skeletal remains that seem to cross between the categories of animal and human?

The bones we see in the earth are real. These creatures lived, breathed, ate, and found mates. They were alive with the breath of God in them. The question is “Were they humans? Were they primates?” Do they represent an evolutionary bridge, a progression, between human and animal species? The answer, I think, has more to do with the categories we have constructed for what it means to be human, than in the biological world. We know there were types of animals in the past that are no longer alive. Some archaic hominins may be kinds of primates that no longer live on Earth and are unfamiliar to us. Some of these skeletal remains may be kinds of people that no longer live on Earth and are unfamiliar or unrecognizable to us. The natural world and the Bible tell us that there were types of people in the past that are no longer alive. When we consider archaic hominins and human prehistory, when we enter a museum exhibit on Neanderthals or archaic hominins, we do not need to be afraid that these skeletal records will upset a biblical understanding of human history. We just need a framework for understanding them. Some archaic hominins would undoubtedly be understood as animals if we saw them and could study them today. Some may have been diverse kinds of humans. Even now, in this very moment, humans excel at dehumanizing each other. Genocide and violence on the basis of racial or ethnic difference are tragically common. We kill even those we know to be human. I doubt we would be more accepting of ancient and diverse forms of human life. Animals can have complex social lives and humans can behave in terrible and inhumane ways. These bones, these skeletal artifacts are present and help us to understand the past. I am giving you this information so that you would have a way of talking about secular perspectives on human origins and prehistory. When someone asks about a Seventh-day

Adventist perspective on early humans, archaic hominins or Neanderthals a reasonable response is “We know these creatures lived. We know there were humans and animals alive in the past who are no longer alive. Both the Bible and secular science tell us that there were types of people who lived in the past but who are now extinct: they have all died or been absorbed into current populations. These individuals and populations were diverse kinds of humans or animals who lived in the past.” We used to think some kinds of people were less human than others. Now we know that that is not true. Being human is more than biology. Our understandings of what it means to be human are always changing. Consider for a moment in the context of artificial intelligence for instance.

For anthropologists the dividing line between animals and humans, between apes and homo sapiens, is the emergence of culture usually identified in the archaeological record as evidence of speech, complex thought, agriculture, and the domestication of animals. These together with a constellation of physical characteristics found in early bones mark the beginning of Homo sapiens. Music, art, writing, cooking, and increasingly complex modes of hunting, growing crops, and governing tell us how human social life was organized in the ancient past (Larsen, 2019). These come together to help form theories of prehistoric social landscapes.

#### **Antediluvian social landscapes: Continuities in human social life**

When we discuss antediluvian social landscapes, we are talking about the ways that human social life was structured prior to the great flood described in texts central to the Abrahamic faiths and found in oral histories and ancient mythologies around the world. From the Abrahamic faith traditions, the antediluvian period begins with the creation story in which perfect intelligent and beautiful human beings were created by God and ends with the story of Noah and the great flood. Secular examinations of human pre-history begin with evolutionary primate precursors to archaic hominins and homo sapiens with human social life evolving from animal social instincts and becoming increasingly complex. These two approaches have opposite trajectories in terms of intellectual and moral complexity. The Genesis

account begins with highly intelligent human beings engaged in complex social lives that falls away from God and perfection. The secular account begins with simple life forms that grow in cultural, intellectual, and moral complexity.

Remembering that conversations about the antediluvian social landscape rest within a particular religious and cosmological framework and now that we have a way to approach secular understandings of human origins and prehistory, we can now go to the Bible and talk about human social life prior to the flood. We can talk about antediluvian social landscapes. Because a global flood as described in Genesis would have been a catastrophic event, archaeological evidence of human social life would have been washed away. Believers in an antediluvian period should not expect to find archaeological or physical anthropological evidence of human culture before the flood. We do not have physical evidence of antediluvian buildings or technologies. There are no antediluvian airplanes or computers. Scholars of Ellen G. White and the White estate tell us that when Mrs. White refers to amalgamation prior to the flood, she is not referring to offspring produced by mating between humans and animals but to diversity within animal species and marriages between the followers of God and those who have abandoned faith and followed the world of fallen men (Nichol, 2023). For individuals who believe that the Genesis narrative provides a real description of literal events, our best evidence comes from the oral histories, from biblical and other texts, and from continuities in human social life we see around us. The biblical texts describing creation and life on earth prior to the flood are found in Genesis chapters one through nine.

Genesis one and two are the story of creation. These chapters establish the very foundations of what it means to be human even in the ways that secular theories understand what it means to be human. We are created in relationship with this planet. We are made of the chemical and biological stuff of Earth. We breathe its air. We drink its water. We eat its plants. We are able to make observations about the world around us. We describe ourselves and our world using symbols,

specifically, the symbols of words and speech. We measure time using days, weeks, and the monthly and yearly movements of stars and planets. We long for companionship and we, like the plants and animals of this planet, reproduce after our kind. We, like every human culture, have concepts of the supernatural and interact with the supernatural in meaningful ways. Adam and Eve have each other. Marriage now has many forms but an social agreements regarding the roles and boundaries of marriage exist in every human culture (Brown et al., 2020). There are taboos. Things that should and should not be done. In every essential aspect, we are complex and beautifully human from the very beginning.

The lived experiences of what it means to be human change abruptly in Genesis chapter 3. Eve talks with the snake and eats forbidden fruit. She shares the fruit with Adam, and he eats it. Chapter three brings into our story the other essential elements of what we understand of being human. The consequences of the fall mean that we feel naked. All humans across time and place in one way or another, cover our bodies. It is a defining aspect of being human (Brown et al., 2020). Conflict exists between people. We blame each other. We are separated from the supernatural and we are afraid of it. We work. We encounter obstacles to our work. We live in a world of gendered hierarchies and male dominance. We are ever in conflict with evil, yet we have enduring hope for the future.

Genesis four brings us absolute human conflict and competition. Cain becomes jealous and kills Abel. It also brings us horticulture and pastoralism. Abel tended groups of animals. Cain worked the soil. They worked with domesticated plants and animals. Secular accounts of the origins of human culture begin approximately 10,000 years ago with the emergence of horticulture and pastoralism (Brown et al., 2020; Muckle & Camp, 2021). The story of humankind in Genesis is also a story of horticulture and pastoralism not only in the story of Cain and Able but of many of the stories after the flood. Genesis five gives us family groups and the tracing of family lineages as a way of understanding social and family groups.



In Genesis six, we begin to see the broader societal impacts of post fall life. Cities spring up. Violence becomes a concern more generally. Cain is afraid for his life. God is the first tattoo artist. He marks Cain with a meaningful symbol to protect his life. We see distinct groups of people emerging. The Nephilim are in the land, a people distinct from everyday folk. And people are separated by belief systems. The people of men are not the same as the sons of God. These are groups differentiated by culture and perhaps by physical features as well (Nichol, 2023). There was conflict between these groups, but there was also intermarriage. The complex relationship between the political and the personal is visible in the antediluvian world. These marriages and the arrival of each infant life shape the genetic diversity of the antediluvian world.

We have already talked about micro-evolution and that there appear to have been more diversity among human beings in the past both pre and post flood. The flood would have created what population geneticists call a bottle neck effect. While the only genetic material available for human reproduction after the flood was that carried by Noah, his wife, his sons, and his son's wife, Noah and his family did create an unbroken social and genetic line between the antediluvian and post-diluvian worlds. Human culture is carried in our social understandings of the world. Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives, the eight people of the ark not only human and animal life, but they also carried human culture with them on the arc. The story of Noah's sons as evidence of social norms and incest taboos. After the flood, Noah planted a vineyard. He knew how to do that. He drank the wine and became drunk. He is scandalized by his son and both curses and blesses his children. These are cultural artifacts he brought with him across the waters.

The antediluvian world is a social landscape much like ours. People before the flood were intelligent thinking beings caught up like the anthropologist Clifford Geertz says in the webs of social significance they themselves had spun (Geertz, 1973) and having all of the features of complex human culture. They ate and slept. They fell in love and arranged marriages. Genesis four tells us they built

cities, played instruments, and developed technologies for metallurgy. They went about their lives living between good and evil and were so often caught up in their everyday lives that they had no room for God. Their Creator became a despised story and a forgotten myth. Genesis 6:6 tells us that every thought of their heart was evil all of the time and God's heart was filled with pain (*New International Version*, 2021). They were not different than we are though they may have had different features. They were eerily similar. We can see general continuity between current human social lives and antediluvian social landscapes.

### **Conclusion**

The Bible has much to say about the origins of human life and culture. Biological approaches can aid in understanding human biological and social change. Information about the past is incomplete. It is not necessary or even possible to have all the answers about what human and animal life in the past consisted of or looked like. But it is important to engage in meaningful conversations and to prayerfully draw from and point to well researched and thoughtful sources for further learning. Secular frameworks for examining human prehistory including those of archaic hominins can be discussed in ways that deepen faith in the biblical text and provide insights for understanding human history and diversity. Understandings of human culture used by physical anthropologists provide meaningful insights into what it means to be human now and in the past though they are distinctly different from biblical frameworks for understanding human prehistory. Because of these differences, and because human prehistory is a fascinating field of study, Seventh-day Adventists needs at least an introductory understanding of these topics so that interested students are prepared to engage with secular understandings of human prehistory in meaningful ways. Examinations of human prehistory and antediluvian social landscapes are not only interesting but are valuable and worthy of study. Biblical histories and narrative details provide us with a rich account of early human culture. Students and adults need an understanding of human prehistory that recognizes the merits and limitations of secular

approaches and invites a deep faith in God not only as the creator of life but as the architect and creator of human culture. The Bible has much to say about the origins of human culture and biological approaches can aid in understanding human history and diversity.

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