

Geographer Arnold Guyot

“That man was made last of all of the creatures was both an honor and a favor to him – an honor, for the method of the creation was to advance from that which was more so, and a favor, for it was not fit that he should be lodged in the palace designed for him, until it was completely fitted and furnished for his reception.”

“Although [North America] was inhabited by many indigenous tribes, it may be justly said, at the time of its discovery by Europeans, to have formed one great desert. The Indians occupied it without possessing it. The whole continent seemed prepared to be the abode of a great nation yet unborn.”

Statesman Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

“In observing [America], there is much to convince us that an almighty overruling Providence designed, from the first, to place here a united people.”

Educator Emma Willard, 1869



God *Fashioned* the Continents for His Story

Before one previews any particular scene in the drama of history, he should first observe the stage on which the play unfolds. Since God controls all things and has a grand scheme in mind, then He must have had a purpose for His design of the earth and its continents. Is that divine purpose evident? Are there physical signs of the intentional hand of Providence? If the Lord has foresight (which He does), and if He planned the story that would unfold on earth (which He did), then wouldn't it make sense that He would create the continents to oblige?

The answer is yes, which points us to the subject of geography. Geography is two words – “geo,” which refers to the earth, and “graph,” meaning “to write.” Though geography refers to the drawing of maps, in light of divine Providence, it could refer to the inscription of God's hand on the earth. Since God is the Creator, we should see His handiwork in creation, evidence of His purposes. His design should point to the work of Christ in human history – the story of liberty.

We must go back to the beginning, to see the full context of God's plan and, specifically, how America fits into that plan. We must go back to the Bible. Is America included there? Yes, in the first verse. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” This land mass, called America, has been here since creation, separated from the other continents by two vast oceans. Did God have a purpose for this continent? Of course. Did God have a purpose for the other continents? Absolutely. He shaped all of the continents for His greater plan.¹

It intrigues the mind to wonder why the continents are so different from each other? Did the Lord haphazardly hurl a pile of dirt to the earth and say, “There, that will work?” Did He carelessly sling paint on a canvas and remark, “That'll do”? Of course not. That's not the nature of God that the Bible describes. He is never careless or haphazard. Rather He acts with intentionality, giving great attention to detail. The continents are shaped exactly like He intended.

Each of earth's continents has a well-defined individuality, which fits it for a special function. The southern continents are the continents of nature, because of their unique natural resources. Nature's life is typified by Africa, with its superabundant wealth of creatures, South America with its exuberance of vegetation, and Australia with its antiquated forms of plants and animals. However, in the grand drama of man's development, Asia, Europe, and North America, the continents of history, have played distinct parts, for which each seems to have been admirably prepared.²

Asia is the largest of the continents, the most central, the only one with which all the others are closely connected, and the one whose different physical regions show the greatest contrasts and are separated by the greatest barriers. This great continent is the continent of origins. The human family, its civilizations, the languages and the major systems of religion (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity), all had their beginning here. By the great diversity of its physical features and climate, and the strong barriers

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CONTINENTS OF HISTORY

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Asia
Continent of Origin
Men, nations, languages, and religions have their origin here

Europe
Continent of Development
Government, languages, society, and Christianity progress greatly

North America
Continent of Completion
America becomes the fullest expression of a Christian civilization

Simply consider the discovery and settlement of North America, and you will catch a glimpse at the forethought of God's design. Had the Pilgrims been greeted with the Rocky Mountains, they certainly would've been discouraged. Had the deserts of the mid-west been on the East Coast, the first European settlers would've never flourished.

No, God did not discourage them with impassable barriers, but rather He blessed their curiosity with the most fertile soil on the continent, and He set the most daunting roadblocks to the far west. Even America's rivers, finding their way to the Atlantic, beckoned Europeans to explore. Had those same rivers emptied into the Pacific, the progress of exploration would likely have ceased.

ers isolating them one from another, Asia was fitted to promote the formation of a diversity of people groups, while its close connection with the other continents facilitated their dispersion.³

Europe shows a diversity of structure greater than that of Asia, but with smaller areas, less extreme contrasts of climate, a more fertile soil, and everywhere an abundance of the most useful minerals, while its coastline or sea zone is greater than that of any other continent (Europe led out in the Age of Exploration). Also, this continent is fitted, by its diversity, to foster the formation of distinct nations, each developing in a special direction. The proximity of these nations, the greater communication between them, and, above all, the common highway to the sea, nowhere very distant, facilitates interaction, the lack of which arrested the progress of Asia.⁴

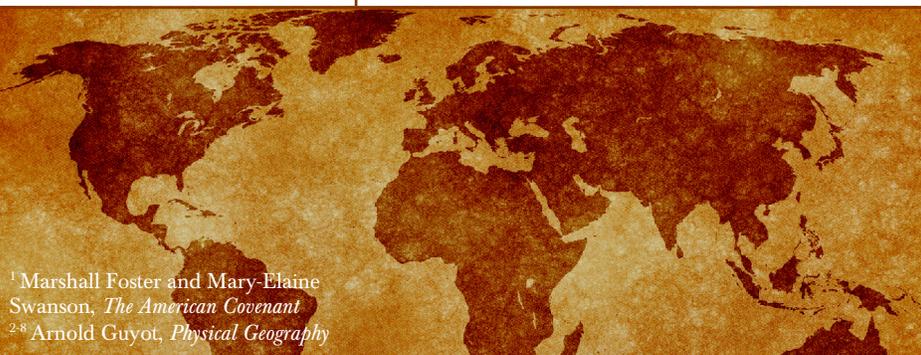
Though not the continent of origins, Europe is the continent of development. Progress finds its fullest expansion and activity, not in their original seat in Asia, but in Europe. The arts and learning attained their highest development in Greece and Rome. Christianity, also, only began in Asia. Transplanted to Europe, it gradually attained its full development and became the foundation on which is built the structure of modern civilization.⁵

America, different in position, structure, and climatic conditions, from both the other northern continents, seems destined

to play a part in the history of mankind unlike Europe and Asia, though not less noble than either. The structure of this continent is characterized by a unity and simplicity as striking as the diversity of Europe. In its climate, those contrasts which are so violent in Asia, and still prevail in Europe, are obliterated. Everywhere in America, provision is made for mutual interaction and the blending of the entire population into one.⁶

Evidently, this continent was not designed to give birth to a new civilization but to receive one ready-made. Its vast plains, overflowing with natural wealth, are turned towards Europe, and its largest rivers discharge into the Atlantic, while its lofty mountains and less fertile lands are removed far towards its western shores. Thus, it seems to invite the Europeans, the people of progress, to new fields of action, to encourage their expansion throughout its entire territory and their fusion into one nation. America, therefore, seems destined to furnish the most complete expression of the Christian civilization and to become the fountain of a new and higher life for all men.⁷

What, then, can one conclude from a biblical study of geography, a Providential view of the continents? Truly no blind force gave our earth the forms so well adapted to perform these functions. The conclusion is irresistible! The entire globe is a grand organism, every feature of which is an outgrowth of a definite plan of the all-wise Creator, for the advancement of the human family and the manifestation of His own glory.⁸ Simply put, God designed the perfect stage for His intricate story of liberty. He had a plan from the beginning for both the actors and their surroundings. The earth is telling of His wonders. Its admirable features compliment His grand drama.



¹ Marshall Foster and Mary-Elaine Swanson, *The American Covenant*
²⁻⁸ Arnold Guyot, *Physical Geography*