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I'm looking at Oscar Fraas's *Vor der Sündfluth! Eine Geschichte der Urwelt* (1866)—that's *Before the Deluge! A History of the Ancient World*—because, ultimately, I tend to be suspicious. Seeing a quotation in William A. Williams's *The Evolution of Man Scientifically Disproved* (1925) from “a famous paleontologist” identified only as “Dr. Traas,” I set about the task of searching for its source, expecting to find mischief, or at least carelessness, afoot. I wasn't disappointed: Dr. Traas turns out to be Dr. Fraas, with an *F* rather than a *T* (see [part 1](#) [71]), and in fact to be Oscar Fraas (1824–1897), the curator of the department of mineralogy and paleontology at the Royal Württemberg museum of natural history in Stuttgart (see [part 2](#) [8]). *Vor der Sündfluth!* was intended as a popularization of contemporary geology, which Fraas (a former pastor) understood to be consistent with the history of creation in scripture. “Fraas's vision of the deep past,” explains M. J. S. Rudwick in his *Scenes from Deep Time* (1995), “is explicitly framed in terms of the divine purpose embodied in the ascent of life toward Man.” Beyond that I don't intend to go, in part because my German is not good and in part because the book is set in a blackletter font, making it even harder to read.

It was, of course, highly misleading for creationist writers of the 1920s—such as William A. Williams, T. T. Martin, Theodore Graebner, and William Bell Riley—to quote the passage from Fraas as though he were on the leading edge of paleontological opinion. After all, Fraas was writing for a popular audience in 1866, just seven years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin* and just as Darwin's ideas were beginning to influence paleontology. It was perhaps a little misleading for Karl Ernst von Baer to quote the passage from Fraas in his “Über Darwins Lehre” (1876), although since he describes the remark as “etwas derb”—a little rough, a bit uncouth, a tad strong?—it's unclear how much weight it was supposed to carry. Certainly von Baer would have welcomed paleontological support for his anti-Darwinian view that species cannot evolve beyond the general limits of the types to which they belong, but appealing generally to Fraas's lifetime of study of prehistoric fauna not having convinced him of evolution, as von Baer did in “Über Darwins Lehre,” is not especially persuasive—especially considering that Fraas was only forty-one when *Vor der Sündfluth!* was published.

The link between the Germanophone Fraas and von Baer and the Anglophone creationists was, again,

Elie de Cyon (1843–1912)—born Ilya Fadeyevich Tsion, also known as Elias von Cyon—who quoted Fraas in his *Dieu et Science* (1910). De Cyon turns out to be a fascinating, if unappealing, character in his own right. In *The American Scholar* in 1986, George F. Kennan—yes, that [George F. Kennan](#) [9]—describes him as having two identities: as “a young physiologist of startling brilliance and promise” but also as “a different figure: a shadowy one...appearing in a whole series of guises: journalist, secret agent, publicist, propagandist for a Franco-Russian alliance and historian of the alliance finally dying in Paris in 1912 in poverty and neglect.” If that weren’t enough, it’s also alleged that de Cyon’s writings formed the basis for the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In addition to other evidence connecting de Cyon to the forgery, Frank Fox observes in his “*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and the Shadow World of Elie de Cyon*” (1997), “criticisms in the *Protocols* of Darwinism echo ideas long held by [de] Cyon, whose opposition to the evolution theory was well known.”

I’m not going to try to unravel the tangle of de Cyon’s life here, and my French is not much better than my German, so I’m disinclined even to make a study of *Dieu et Science* to understand de Cyon’s position on evolution. Instead, let me end on a happier—if ironic—note. Oscar Fraas may have been skeptical about human descent from a “simian” species; he may indeed have been skeptical about any macroevolutionary transition at all. Today, of course, there are excellent examples of macroevolution documented in the fossil record. Among them, as J. G. M. Thewissen and his colleagues explain in a marvelous [review](#) [10] published in *Evolution: Education and Outreach* in 2009, are the cetaceans, where the transition from terrestrial to aquatic forms of whale is exquisitely documented. One of the earliest discovered animals in the transition is *Protocetus atavus*, found in forty-five-million-year-old limestone deposits in modern-day Egypt in the first decade of the twentieth century. (Brian Switek [discussed](#) [11] *Protocetus* for *Wired* in 2011.) And the paleontologist who described it, was, as it happens, Oscar Fraas’s son, Eberhard Fraas (above, 1862–1915).

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