

6. The Bible and Science

Biblical material: Gen. 1:1; 2:1, 2; 7:11-24; Deut. 4:32; Ps. 100:3; 139:14; Isa. 42:5; 45:18; Jer. 33:22; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2.

Quotes

- The Bible, and it alone, with nothing added to it nor taken away from it by man, is the sole and sufficient guide for each individual, at all times and in all circumstances. *Michael Faraday*, one of the greatest physicists of all time.
- The nearer I approach to the end of my pilgrimage, the clearer is the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible, the grandeur and sublimity of God's remedy for fallen man are more appreciated, and the future is illumined with hope and joy. *Samuel F.B. Morse*, inventor of the telegraph.
- In regard to the origin of life and science it all positively affirms a creative power at work. *Lord Kelvin, William Thompson*, who established concept of thermodynamics and the scale of absolute temperatures.

Questions

Is the Bible "scientific"? How do we resolve the tension between such different world-views? How do different ideas of origins affect us? Is the alternative to "science" to think illogically or irrationally? Is the Bible contradictory to proven scientific concepts, and if so what might this mean? How do we present the Bible to those of this scientific age?

Discussion/Comment

"Science is built up with facts, as a house is with stones. But a collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house." Jules Henri Poincaré.

As we understand more and more about the universe in which we exist the argument for a Creator becomes ever more compelling. Take, for example, what has come to be called the "Anthropic Principle." This principle proposes that the universe—the physical place in which we live—has characteristics that appear to indicate that it was deliberately designed for life and our existence. In fact, there are so many specific factors that need to be "just so" that it is now ridiculous to believe that our universe is a random occurrence. The number of "accidents" that would need to occur to form a life-friendly universe is just so immense that no reasonable person could believe this was the process. Even those scientists who want to deny a Creator God cannot deny the impossibility of random formation of our universe by accidental processes. The possibility is just too remote. The physical constants of the universe have to be exactly as they are, or the universe would not have formed, or would have been a place where life could not exist: "The laws of science, as we know them at present, contain many fundamental numbers, like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron.... The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.... One can take this either as evidence of a divine purpose in Creation and the choice of the laws of science or as support for the strong anthropic principle." Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*.

The extremely precise and critical properties that are needed for the universe to even form in the first place also point to very careful design and purpose. Writing about the supposed big bang, Hawking also explains that if the expansion velocity had been very slightly larger, then

the universe would have expanded too rapidly and no galaxies would have formed. Very slightly slower and the universe would have collapsed back upon itself. Hawking estimates that even a decrease of one part in a *trillion* would have resulted in the universe's re-collapse long ago, while a similar increase would have prevented galaxies forming.

One part in a trillion. Very small odds. Then add in some other aspects that if they occurred randomly would be extremely improbable. If the proton-neutron mass difference is not exactly as it is, then there would only be protons or neutrons. There would be no chemistry at all—and no life! If the nuclear weak force (one of the forces that holds matter together) had been very slightly weaker then all the hydrogen in the universe would now be helium. Not great for life either! If the nuclear strong force had been 2 percent greater, then protons (at the center of atoms) could not have formed. If the same force had been 5 percent less, no stars.

There's much, much more, involving the gravitational constant, the quantum of angular momentum, electromagnetic coupling, fine structure constants, and the ^8Be , ^{12}C , and ^{16}O nuclear energy levels—too much to go into here. But the point is made—the universe is fine-tuned to such an amazing extent that created design is the only reasonable conclusion. To have the right conditions for the universe to even exist, let alone for life, our universe must be balanced on the equivalent of a cosmic knife edge.

Even atheist astronomer Fred Hoyle admits that the way the elements carbon and hydrogen (on which our bodies are based) are required to be made suggests that the process has been deliberately “fixed” that way, and as a result: “A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”

The conclusion of Stephen Hawking, when looking at the way the universe is thought to have started, is that “It would be very difficult to explain why the Universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us.” A stunning admission that it is indeed scientific to accept the theory of a Creator God!

Text comments

Gen. 1:1; 2:1, 2; 7:11-24. Creation and the Flood—how do such accounts play in the scientific world? An ongoing dialogue...

Deut. 4:32. Creation affirmed—but how does this demonstrate the evidence?

Ps. 100:3; 139:14. God made us—how does such a belief affect our self-perception?

Isa. 42:5; 45:18. Jer. 33:22. God's work of making the heavens. How does this relate to $e=mc^2$? And how does this relate to science, which does not operate in terms of affirmations?

John 1:1-3. The Creator-Word expressed in sublime language—but does not give us physical or chemical mechanisms. Like Milton we want to think God's thoughts after him...

Heb. 1:2. Jesus is the one “through whom” the universe was made. What does this mean?

Ellen White Comments

I have been warned that henceforth we shall have a constant contest. Science, so-called, and religion will be placed in opposition to each other, because finite men do not comprehend the power and greatness of God. {Ev 593}

Too often the minds of students are occupied with men's theories and speculations, falsely called science and philosophy. They need to be brought into close contact with nature. Let them learn that creation and Christianity have one God. Let them be taught to see the harmony of the natural with the spiritual. {COL 25}

7. The Word in Our Lives

Biblical material: Ps. 19:7-10; 119:105; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:24.

Quotes:

- Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to the book of nature, it befits us to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather, above all else, of the glory of God. *Johann Kepler*.
- The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts. *A. W. Tozer*
- It is Christ Himself, not the Bible, who is the true word of God. The Bible, read in the right spirit, and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to Him. *C.S. Lewis*
- We are not to make the Torah into God Himself, nor the Bible into a “paper pope.” The Bible is only the result of the Word of God. We can experience the return of the Word of God in the here and now, the perpetual return of the actual, living, indisputable Word of God that makes possible the act of witnessing, but we should never think of the Bible as any sort of talisman or oracle constantly at our disposal that we need only open and read to be in relation to the Word of God and God Himself. *Jacques Ellul*

Questions

What difference does the Bible make in our daily lives? How is the Bible to be used? How can we turn the Bible into a “paper pope”? How is the Bible life-changing—and how do we share such an experience with others? We often speak of the Bible as a light and a lamp—yet in practice what does this mean? How do we make the Bible practical?

Discussion/ Comment

What is the Bible then?

- The record of God revealing himself to human beings all through history, and especially in the greatest revelation of all: God’s Son, Jesus Christ.
- The account of the great controversy between God and the Devil, good triumphing over evil, and how we all are involved in the battle over the nature and character of God.
- The demonstration of how God came to save us and to re-make us in his image. The evidence of God’s salvation.

So it can’t be just a good book, or sublime literature, or human imaginings. Take or leave it—the Bible says of itself: this is God speaking to you. Question is, can we trust this God?

For to answer the question “Can we trust the Bible?” really means answering a deeper question: “Can we trust the God the Bible describes?” So what of the God of the Bible? Doesn’t really matter whether the Bible can be trusted if we can’t trust the God it speaks of.

From Eden to Exodus, from Mount Sinai to the Mount of Olives, from Galilee to Gethsemane—the chorus of the Bible is: God can be trusted! He really does do what he promises. He really can fulfil his claims. He really is as he says.

The Bible is not full of pious sayings and religious instructions. Instead it shows how God acts and reacts to human beings. The Bible tells the story of how God so loved the world that he was willing to do absolutely everything—even to die on the Cross—to win us back.

Take time to check out this God. He doesn't say "Believe blindly in me." He says "Take a look. See the kind of person I am. Examine my record. Understand my nature. Then accept me for what I am. Look at what I can do for you. Salvation unlimited!"

That's what the Bible describes. In clear and simple terms it tells us how God is involved with us. The evidence is overwhelming. So why do so many ignore the Bible, then? Why do so few people trust the Bible?

People don't reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts themselves! Sadly most don't want to know what the Bible says because they don't want to know God. As Josh Billings suggested: "Almost any fool can prove the Bible ain't so—it takes a wise man to believe it." So let's leave aside all the pointless quibbling over this "inaccuracy" or that "mistake" in the Bible. It either is the word of God or not. That's the question. Either it is a pack of lies, or the deepest truth. No two ways about it.

How do you decide, then? How do you decide personally whether you can trust the Bible and its God? Only one way--read it, and find out! Start with the heart of the Bible, one of the gospels. Ask yourself questions: What is this telling me? Who is this person Jesus who claims to be God? Is he trustworthy? What did he do? How does this affect me now? Only by doing such an experiment will you find out the truth for yourself. "The Bible must be its own argument and defence." (H.J. Van Dyke).

Only then will you really know, instead of relying on other people's ideas and opinions. As Charles Hodge said: "The best evidence of the Bible's being the word of God is found between its covers." For personal experience is the only way the Bible can be analysed and judged trustworthy.

Text comments

The law is perfect, God's precepts right. Lamp and light. So how do we understand such concepts and apply them in our lives today? (Ps. 19:7-10; 119:105). How does faith come from hearing? (Rom. 10:17). How do we become a new creation? (2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 4:24). How is the word of God living and active, and like a sword? (Heb. 4:12).

Ellen White Comments

The ministers preach smooth things to suit carnal professors. They dare not preach Jesus and the cutting truths of the Bible; for if they should, these carnal professors would not remain in the church. But as many of them are wealthy, they must be retained, although they are no more fit to be there than Satan and his angels. This is just as Satan would have it. The religion of Jesus is made to appear popular and honorable in the eyes of the world... But there was no difference between the professed followers of Christ and the world. {EW 228

The religion of Christ never degrades the receiver. It refines and ennobles the character. We should study carefully lest we cultivate some trait of character that is unlike the divine Pattern, and not in harmony with the blessed will of God. Just as soon as there is the diligent study of the Bible that there should be, we shall not fail of noting a marked difference in the characters of the people of God. We shall say from the heart, "The things I once loved, I now hate; and the things I once hated, I now love." {RH, April 9, 1889}

8. Revelation of Hope

Biblical material: Ps. 34:7, 91:4, Rom. 3:26, 1 Cor. 15:51-58, Col. 1:14, 2:13, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 1 Pet.3:18, 1 John 1:9, 2:12.

Quotes

- Hope springs eternal in the human breast. *Alexander Pope*
- In the land of hope there is never any winter. *English Proverb*
- We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air. *Rudolf Bultmann*
- Hope is—a prolonged protest against death. *Albert Camus*
- Hope is a good breakfast but a bad supper. *Francis Bacon*
- To reject hope is to mutilate the New Testament message of salvation in which every element is essential to the whole. *Oscar Cullmann*
- At first we hope too much, later on, not enough. *Roux*

Questions

What's the point of hope? Is hope deceptive? How does the Bible bring hope—and what kind of hope is this? How can we be sure—what is the basis for having hope? How to explain this hope to a hopeless world without sounding peculiar and irrelevant? Biblical claims can appear outrageous—how do we make hope believable? How is hope part of the cosmic conflict?

Discussion/ Comment

Talk to people on the street about what they hope for, and what answers do you get?

“I hope I pass my exams.” “I’m hoping to buy a new car.” “I just hope I find someone special to marry.” “My hope is to get to the top of my profession.” “I hope to be able to retire to a beautiful house in the country.”

How many would say, “I’m hoping to live forever”? “Some hope!” you may say. Immortality is perhaps the greatest dream we have. To live on, forever and ever, not having to wait for death, that terrible enemy to come and destroy us and all our hopes.

But that’s just a dream, they say. No one can live forever. Such a hope can never be true. Can it?

For what hope can this world offer? Only a doubtful, negative kind of hope that really is no hope at all. When people say “I hope so...” they’re already expecting the worst! Aristotle commented that “Hope is a waking dream” which hardly makes hope something you rely on. The Latin writer Gracian went further: “Hope is a great falsifier of the truth”; while the German philosopher Nietzsche was sure hope was totally bad: “Hope in reality is the worst of all evils, because it prolongs the torment of man.”

It’s family day on the beach. Five-year-old Paul seemed to have turned into a civil engineer: the whole area of sand around us had become a major building site of dams and castles...

“Look Daddy,” came the proud voice, “Look at all I’ve made. I hope we can come back again tomorrow! Can we, Daddy? I really hope we can...”

Next day on the beach there was nothing of that great empire to be seen. The tide had wiped away every trace. Nothing.

You should have seen Paul’s face. Surprise, confusion, disappointment—all at once.

“Where has it all gone, Daddy? I was hoping so much to make it even bigger today. I was really looking forward to it.”

So much for our human hopes. Like sandcastles on the beach, swept away without trace by the incoming tide. Hopes for achieving this or that, for making something enduring, for being powerful, famous, even worshipped. Tomorrow comes, and all these vain ambitions have vanished as completely as a beach washed clean by the surging sea.

No human hopes are worth hoping in. Promises are not worth the paper they are written on. Desires cannot last. Hopes die like fading flowers, turning to dust and ashes. For without God there is absolutely no hope.

But with God? Ah, then! He is the only hope in a world of hopelessness. So what of the Christian hope? What kind of hope are we talking about here? On what is it based?

On God himself. Can God lie? Would he ever *want* to? The vital truth is the Bible’s affirmation that “The Lord Jesus Christ...is our hope.” “On him we have set our hope.” “We have put our hope in the living God, who is the saviour of all men.” (1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Timothy 4:10 NIV). How amazing and central this hope! Romans 8:24 even says that “We are saved by hope”! How definite and assured this hope is. If you do not have this hope, how can you face the future, how can you live in the present?

Only the hope that comes from God can give what we all need the most: confident security in the present, and the assurance of a wonderful future in God’s presence. For “we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19 NIV). What is the result? “Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.” “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” “Christ in you the hope of glory.” (2 Corinthians 3:12; Romans 5:2; Colossians 1:27).

There *is* hope for this world: the blessed hope. The God of hope. The only hope!

Text comments

God of deliverance and protection. (Ps. 34:7, 91:4). God the justifier. (Rom. 3:26). The wonderful promise of resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:51-58). The foundational message of hope that comforts each of us. If there was nothing else, this passage is supreme and complete—provided we want to know this Jesus who returns. (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Ellen White Comments

When the gospel is received in its purity and power, it is a cure for the maladies that originated in sin. The Sun of Righteousness arises, “with healing in His wings.” Malachi 4:2. Not all that this world bestows can heal a broken heart or impart peace of mind or remove care or banish disease. Fame, genius, talent—all are powerless to gladden the sorrowful heart or to restore the wasted life. The life of God in the soul is man’s only hope. {CH 29}

We are not to be driven to Christ. It is our part to come—to make our own choice, and come to the fountain of life. Why should we not come to Christ? for in Him our hope of eternal life is centered... The apostle Paul exhorts us to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel... Hope has been set before us, even the hope of eternal life. Nothing short of this blessing for us will satisfy our Redeemer; but it is our part to lay hold upon this hope by faith in Him who has promised. We may expect to suffer; for it is those who are partakers with Him in His sufferings who shall be partakers with Him in His glory. He has purchased forgiveness and immortality for the sinful, perishing souls of men; but it is our part to receive these gifts by faith. Believing in Him, we have this hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast... Let us contemplate the glorious hope that is set before us, and by faith lay hold upon it. . . . {LHU 331}

9. The Bible and Health

Biblical material: Matt. 4:23; Luke 4:16-21; Rom. 6:4, 9-11; Phil. 4:4-9; Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8-10.

Quotes

- I've never met a healthy person who worried much about his health or a good person who worried much about his soul. *Bernard Haldane*
- We know a great deal more about the causes of physical disease than we do about the causes of physical health. *M. Scott Peck*
- Life is not merely being alive, but being well. *Martial*
- Thinking is the most unhealthy thing in the world, and people die of it just as they die of any other disease. *Oscar Wilde*

Questions

Why is health important in relation to the Bible? How does health relate to spiritual issues? Why do we spend so much time dealing with issues of health? How does the concept of health fit into the great controversy? Are healing and salvation related? What does the health emphasis say about God and his intentions for us and the whole universe?

Discussion/Comment

“Healing and restoration are often talked about in the Bible. God’s promises to restore Israel spill forth in language filled with healing and curative terms (*Jer. 30:12-17, 33:6, Ezek. 47:12, Mal. 4:2*). So clear is the affinity in the New Testament that one of its principal words for healing (*soteria*) may be translated as either ‘healing’ or ‘salvation.’ Salvation, then, may include not only rescue from sin and its consequences but also restoration, healing of the whole person.” (Monday’s lesson).

God’s revelation of salvation through Jesus is expressed in terms of divine healing of the sin-damaged individual. It is no coincidence that after being announced as the God-revealer (John 1:18), Jesus spent much of his ministry in acts of physical healing. Jesus told those around him: “When he [a man] looks at me, he sees the one who sent me” (John 12:45 NIV) and “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:7, 9 NIV)

In the announcement of Jesus’ birth, the angel tells Joseph, “She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21 NIV). Note that they are saved from their sins. Not a prescription as to the judicial absolution of sins.

But there is something far more important here. As already noted, Christ’s main method of demonstrating God to the world was through acts of healing. “Wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.” (Mk. 6:56 NIV). All perfectly clear. A wonderful description of the healing emphasis in the life of Christ.

But that word “healed” in this text hides a greater truth. The verb is the Greek word *sozo*. Which is the exact same word as used to describe salvation! So Matthew’s description of Jesus noted above could be translated “Because he will heal his people from their sins.” Why? Because in this case the word used for “save” is *sozo* too.

The insight that salvation means healing is essential to a proper understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus. When blind Bartimaeus shouts out to Jesus, asking to receive his sight, Jesus replies: “Go, your faith has healed you.” (Mark 10:52). “Healed”? Well, it could as well be “saved”—for the word is *sozo* again. For through Jesus’ healing he was saved; receiving God’s salvation he was healed. As Jesus walks towards Jairus’ house, messengers come to inform him not to bother continuing his mission. The girl has died. But Jesus turns to Jairus and tells him: “Don’t be afraid; just believe and she will be healed.” (Luke 8:50 NIV). The girl was dead, and Jesus speaks of healing? Yes, says Jesus, she can be rescued from death by Jesus the Life-giver, she can be saved from death. And in order to be saved, she would have to be re-made, made well again, totally healed. Healing is salvation again, as demonstrated by the word *sozo* again.

This essential meaning of salvation as healing is demonstrated by those words of Jesus to the healed woman: “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” Just one chapter previously Jesus is recorded as saying to the woman who anointed his feet: “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” (Luke 7:50 NIV). In the Greek, Jesus’ announcement to the two women is identical, since it uses the word *sozo* which is translated as “saved” or “healed” as the context dictates.

Consequently, that famous verse in Ephesians 2:8 which describes God’s salvation could have the word “saved” replaced by “healed”: “For it is by grace you have been healed, through faith...” Or in other words, “by the graciousness of God you have been healed by trusting God.” That is what Jesus Christ came to do. To win our trust so that because of his gracious nature he could then heal (save) us. This nature and desire is illustrated by the many miracles of healing, restoration and cure that Jesus did during his ministry—revealing God as the one who wants to heal us, not just physically, but spiritually.

As God said to his people of old, “I am the Lord who heals you.” (Exodus 15:26). This is his salvation—healing all the wounds of sin, curing the sickness of evil, and restoring us once more into full spiritual health: remade into his glorious image. This is his salvation, so fully and freely demonstrated in Jesus and made available to all who will.

Text comments

Jesus is recorded as healing every illness—how does this relate to our choices? (Matt. 4:23). Jesus announced a healing ministry (Luke 4:16-21). Spiritual death and resurrection is likened to physical healing. (Rom. 6:4, 9-11). Joy is a healing factor. (Phil. 4:4-9;). Healing of our mental attitudes is very much a part of this God-directed process. (Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8-10).

Ellen White Comments

In the medical profession there are many skeptics and atheists who exalt the works of God above the God of science. Comparatively few of those who enter worldly medical colleges come out from them pure and unspotted. They have failed to become elevated, ennobled, sanctified. Material things eclipse the heavenly and eternal. With many, religious faith and principles are mingled with worldly customs and practices, and pure and undefiled religion is rare. {CT 478}

Eternity is not to be lost out of our reckoning. The highest education is that which will teach our children and youth the science of Christianity, which will give them an experimental knowledge of God’s ways, and will impart to them the lessons that Christ gave to His disciples of the paternal character of God. {CG 296-7}

