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**The Bible and Science**  
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The Bible is under attack today by many who march under the banner of science. "The Bible is outdated," they say. "Its stories of creation, the fall, the flood and miracles are just myths invented by ancient men. Today we know better."

Do we really know better? True, our physical standard of living is much higher than in Bible times, but has modern science solved our personal and social problems? Can we believe that the twentieth century, with Communism, Hitler, Idi Amin and other evils, is an improvement? Has social science solved the problem of crime? Has psychiatry shown substantial progress in curing mental and emotional disorders? Real advances have certainly been made, but some have introduced us to menaces that threaten to destroy civilization and perhaps mankind. Science does not seem to be the cure-all that some have advertised it to be.

Is science opposed to the Bible? That depends on what sort of science you are talking about. Many believe in what we may call a "closed universe" science. This kind of science assumes that everything happens under the control of natural law. Therefore, everything can be explained by natural law. Even if God exists he could not interfere. Such an anti-supernatural view of science obviously opposes the Bible's teaching that God created and continually upholds the universe and that he may and often has intervened in it for man's benefit or judgment. But "open-universe" science, which allows for divine intervention, *does* fit the biblical revelation. This was the view of most of the founders of modern science, many of whom were professing Christians, and is the view of many contemporary scientists, whether Christian or not. In fact, biblical Christianity itself was an important factor in the origin of modern science, providing belief in an orderly universe created by a dependable God who has commanded us to help make life more pleasant for those around us.

What about details? Could the Bible be God's Word about spiritual things but still contain historical or scientific errors? At the very least that would be strange – a revelation which claims to be from the God who created the universe and controls history, but which makes mistakes in science and history! It certainly would be a stumbling block for prospective converts. Even though I am no mechanic, if I took my car to a garage where the mechanic pointed to the carburetor and said, "Your battery is dead," I would look for another garage! If we cannot believe the Bible when it speaks of earthly things, how can we believe it when it speaks of heavenly things? (cf. John 3:12).

But if the Bible is inerrant in scientific details, why do Christians who believe in its inerrancy disagree about Bible-science relationships? For the same reasons that Christians disagree on things like baptism, church government and prophecy. We are

finite in our understanding. Moreover, we have different backgrounds, temperaments, likes, dislikes and approaches. Some Christians adapt science to fit the Bible; others adapt the Bible to fit science; still others attempt to make each fit the other. Science continues to change as new data is discovered. Bible interpretations of minor matters also change with discoveries in archaeology or ancient languages. None of us knows either science or the Bible completely, and we see our own views change as we grow older. Our responsibility before God is to do the best we can with what we know and use it to seek to understand God's Word and God's world better.

### **Vindications of the Bible's Science**

Though faith will continue to be necessary until we see the Lord, God has already provided us with some direction and encouragement by allowing modern science to make discoveries which demonstrate the Bible's scientific accuracy, far beyond that of other ancient writings.

Although science had existed in earlier societies, it has always been destroyed by occultism and mysticism (as in ancient Greco-Roman culture) or by religious authoritarianism (as in medieval Islam). Moreover, science never became practical in these cultures because the manual labor need to build its discoveries into a technology was considered fit only for the lowest classes. In contrast, the biblical Christianity of the Reformation emphasized the universe as a creation of an orderly God who operates according to natural laws (Jer 31:35-36). It saw manual labor as honorable (Eph 4:28; 2 Thess 3:7-15), thus encouraging the marriage of science to technology.

The Bible pictures the universe as beginning at a finite moment in the past. Cosmologists have frequently resisted the idea of a beginning, but scientific evidence has continued to accumulate indicating that this is correct. The Bible also sees the universe as immeasurably large (Ps 8:3-4; Jer 31:37), with an uncountable number of stars (Gen 15:5; 22:17; Jer 33:22). This was a rare idea in antiquity but is fully vindicated today. It is striking that in Job 38:31 God speaks of the "chains" of the Pleiades and the "cords" of Orion. Today we know that both these constellations are among the few which are gravitationally-bound star groups, rather than merely unrelated stars that happen to be in the same direction from earth, as is the case with most constellations. Such examples can be multiplied.

S. I. McMillen, a Christian medical doctor, has noted how biblical quarantine (Leviticus 13) was used by the church during the Middle Ages to stop the Black Plague. Before that the physicians were stumped. Disease spread in hospitals as recently as 150 years ago because doctors did not cleanse themselves after touching dead bodies, as required by Numbers 19. McMillen also notes how circumcision helps prevent cervical cancer, though this effect has only been noticed in recent years by statistical differences in the occurrence of this cancer between Jews and Gentiles. Circumcision was to be performed on the child's eighth day of life (Gen 17:12), and it now appears that this is the best day in the child's whole life for the blood to clot.

This is not to say that there are no tensions between science and the Bible. But we would expect that, since we do not understand everything in the Bible or in the universe, we will probably not understand how the Bible and science are to be reconciled at every point. But if the Bible is God's Word, as abundant evidence indicates, then there must be agreement between the proper interpretation of the Bible and the actual nature of the universe.

## **Evolution and Creation**

Chief among these problem areas is the creation-evolution controversy. Evolution is quite generally accepted in science, education and government, where divine creation is often ignored. Bible-believers, however, must accept creation, whether or not they believe God used evolution as a part of his creative activity.

As a matter of fact, an important reason why evolution is so widely accepted is that secular education is based on naturalistic assumptions. If naturalism is accepted, then (given that life has not always existed on earth) life must have arisen by natural processes, in other words by some sort of evolution.

But there are immense problems with evolution. For example, the simplest living cell contains so much organized information necessary for its functioning that we would need 100,000 books the size of an encyclopedia volume to print it all! Atheistic evolution has only *random* processes to account for this complex order. Is this likely? It is highly unlikely, as mathematicians have pointed out. Imagine training monkeys to type on special electric typewriters which have only thirty-three keys (all capital letters plus punctuation) at a rate of three characters per second. If the monkeys choose letters at random (as monkeys usually do), to type merely the two words "ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA" would require 100 thousand billion billion monkey-years! How then could the organized information in even the simplest living cell come about by random choices even in extraordinarily long periods of time? At the very least, living things demonstrate a complexity that would have required a God to guide the process of evolution.

Orthodox Christians do not agree on whether God created by frequent or only occasional intervention, whether the Bible requires us to believe creation was relatively recent (a few thousand years ago) or ancient (some billions of years ago), and whether the fossil record and the details of Genesis 1 refer to the same events. Thus, we have young-earth creationists, restitution creationists, progressive creationists and theistic evolutionists, any of which may believe in an inerrant Bible. Some of us must be wrong, but this paper is not the place to settle these questions. In the meantime, we can agree that atheistic evolution faces serious problems which can only be solved by a Creator. We can agree in pointing to that Creator and that book, the Bible, in which his design for us is recorded in words each can understand.

## Other Problems

Liberal theologians have regularly pointed to the incident of Jacob's sheep in Genesis 30 as an example of a scientific error. They say the Bible teaches that Jacob caused striped, speckled and spotted sheep to be born by having the ewes look at striped, speckled or spotted sticks. In fact, however, the Bible only teaches that at first Jacob thought the sticks were producing the result but that later he learned that God produced this effect by using striped, speckled or spotted rams (Gen 31:10-12). The Bible here agrees with modern genetics and even corrects Jacob's false ideas!

Another problem passage is Job 37:18. Elihu appears to say the skies are "strong as a molten mirror." Some might suggest that Elihu is only saying they *look* that way. Others might think Elihu is wrong, but the Bible is merely recording his statement (though Elihu is *not* one of the three friends God corrects in Job 42:7). Personally, I think we have a bad translation here, even though it appears in all English versions I have seen. The word translated "mirror" is not the usual biblical word for mirror, and it nowhere so occurs in ancient Hebrew. How do we know it means "mirror"? Actually, an almost identical word means "appearance." Moreover, "strong" may be translated "mighty"; "molten" may be rendered "poured out." The word translated "skies" may be rendered "clouds." Thus, we have at least two possible translations:

1. *Can you, with Him, spread out the skies,  
Strong as a molten mirror?*
2. *Can you, with Him, spread out the clouds,  
Mighty, with an appearance of being poured out?*

The first of these translations pictures a scene at creation, the second an everyday weather phenomenon. If we look at the context, Job 37 says nothing about the time of creation, but speaks repeatedly about the weather.

Another problem area concerns the location of heaven. Since the bible regularly uses "up" with heaven, many Christians have thought of it as out in space somewhere. This is the point of the Russian cosmonaut's mockery when he returned to earth saying he had not seen God. However, a careful study of the biblical material on heaven suggests that it is all around us but is invisible, perhaps because it occupies another dimension. This is suggested by God's speaking from Mt. Sinai though he is in heaven (Exod 20:21-22; Deut 4:12, 15; Neh 9:13), of clouds being regularly associated with God's appearances, and of Jesus suddenly appearing inside a closed room (Luke 24:36; John 20:19). It appears that the biblical view of heaven is not primitive at all, but very sophisticated.

As Bible-believing Christians, we do not have to be ashamed to confess our belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. After all, that is what the Bible claims for itself. We do not need to limit inerrancy to spiritual matters, though these are the things most important and most emphasized in Scripture. Since our God is the Creator of the universe and the Controller of its history, we should expect his word to be right about science and history.

If gifted scientists like Isaac Asimov and Robert Jastrow can communicate complex ideas of modern science in language laymen can understand, we should not be surprised that God has used simple non-technical language to include some profound scientific truths in the Bible for our encouragement in a scientific but doubting age.

During my college days many doubts about the truth of the Bible were raised. One of the reasons I switched from science to theology was to find out for myself whether the Bible will stand searching investigation. I have not been disappointed!

**For Further Reading** (\*author not evangelical)

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