

REPRINT

It seems to be a relatively common attitude among science fiction fans that religion is nothing more than a crutch for the masses who are too stupid to properly comprehend modern scientific reality. Such fans contend that, since religion "clearly" contradicts known scientific "law", religion is therefore automatically wrong. Faith isn't scientific; therefore faith has no place in the scientific community and should thus be ignored and/or derided as the stupid superstition which it is.

This attitude would be amusing if it weren't so pathetically hypocritical. The fact is that all science is inherently based upon faith. There is no such thing as scientific law; there are only scientific theories. True, some theories are so well entrenched, supported, and documented by physical evidence that they have taken on all the characteristics of "law" for most practical purposes. But, taken in the context of rigorous logic, they are still just theories.

All systems of logic are built upon some set of axioms. Axioms are, by definition, inherently unprovable. They are accepted on faith for the purposes of developing the system of logic built upon them. For example, one of the primary axioms of Euclidian Geometry is "the shortest distance between two points is the straight line segment connecting them". This is not a "law". It cannot be proven by any rigorous logic or any other true method of rigorous proof. It is accepted on faith because, neglecting general relativity and Lagrangian and Reimann geometrical theories, no one has ever found evidence of a shorter distance. However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence and there is no proof that a shorter distance doesn't exist. Nevertheless, it is still highly reasonable to have faith that the axiom is true. Without such faith, Euclidian Geometry would be useless. But Euclidian Geometry is used every day and makes accurate predictions of reality so the axiom is therefore considered to be "valid".

All scientific theory is based upon axioms which are accepted on faith. Thus, to say that there is no place for faith in science is to condemn science to non-existence. It is my contention in this editorial that Christianity is equally amenable to the treatment of rigorous logic and that, given certain axioms accepted on faith, it forms just coherent, internally consistent a system of logic as any scientific theory. And, furthermore, it does not contradict established and well supported scientific theory. Basically, I propose to my readers the following two axioms:

Axiom I: God exists.

Axiom II: The Bible is the inspired word of God, infallible in its original documents.

As with "scientific" axioms, these two axioms are inherently unprovable and must be accepted on faith. However, also as with "scientific" axioms, there is a wealth of evidence in the world, in cosmology, and in archeology which strongly supports these axioms' validity.

Does God exist? Consider the evidence provided by modern cosmology. The current "Standard Model" of cosmology (an outgrowth and refinement of

the earlier "big bang" theory) is based upon two observed phenomena: the expansion of the universe and the cosmic microwave radiation background. The standard model supports the idea that the universe did have a beginning and has not existed for all eternity. It is generally accepted that the beginning occurred with the explosion of a primordial mass somewhere between 10 and 20 billion years ago.

Scientific observation has revealed that "the universe is in a state of violent explosion, in which the great islands of stars known as galaxies are rushing apart at speeds approaching the speed of light. Further, we can extrapolate this explosion backward in time and conclude that all the galaxies must have been much closer at the same time in the past - so close, in fact, that neither galaxies nor stars nor even atoms or atomic nuclei could have had a separate existence."¹

Thus, the expansion of the universe indicates that the primordial mass must have existed. Where did such an initial mass come from? Was it created by God? How did it suddenly appear and explode to create the universe as we know it today? Actually, there's a small fly in the ointment here.

"In 1922 the general homogeneous and isotropic solution of the original Einstein equations was found by the Russian mathematician Alexandre Friedman....The Friedman models are of two very different types. If the average density of the matter of the universe is less than or equal to a certain critical value, then the universe must be spatially infinite. In this case the present expansion of the universe will go on forever. On the other hand, if the density of the universe is greater than this critical value, then the gravitational field produced by the matter curves the universe back on itself; it is finite though unbounded, like the surface of a sphere."²

In other words, if the density is less than or equal to the critical value, the universe will go on expanding forever and thus must have had a unique beginning. If the density is greater than the critical value, then the universe will expand to a certain maximum and then begin to contract back on itself, eventually reforming the primordial mass. Presumably the mass would then again explode, forming a new universe. Some theorists say that this process would continue for all eternity and, in fact, has been occurring for all eternity already. Thus, according to their theory, the universe has no unique beginning and no unique end.

However, "At present, the best inference that can be drawn...is that the deceleration of distant galaxies seems fairly small. This would mean that they are moving at more than escape velocity, so that the universe is open and will go on expanding forever. This fits in well with estimates of the cosmic density; the visible matter in galaxies seems to add up to not more than a few percent of the critical density."³

¹Weinberg, S.; The First Three Minutes; Bantam Books; New York; 1979; p.9.

²Ibid; pp.29-30.

³Ibid; p.36.

Thus, while by no means certain, the best evidence we have today supports the postulate that the universe did have a unique beginning. The scientific "law" of causality would then require that something "caused" the unique initial appearance and explosion of the primordial mass. It is my contention that anything capable of performing such an act is God by definition. Thus the expansion of the universe supports (but remember, does not "prove") the existence of God. It indicates that "God exists" is a reasonable axiom, worthy of being accepted on faith.

One consequence of the concept of the explosion of the primordial mass is that, at the beginning, the mass must have been extremely hot (about 100,000 million degrees Kelvin at about one-hundredth of a second after the explosion began).⁴ If so, a small amount of residual heat would still exist in the universe. In 1964, such residual heat, in the form of cosmic microwave radiation, in an amount which fit the prediction of the standard model, was discovered at the Bell Telephone Laboratories at Holmdel, New Jersey.⁵ This evidence further confirms and supports the standard model and hence the existence of God.

For those interested in a more detailed development of modern cosmology than presented herein, Weinberg's book is about the best I've seen and includes a supplement (pp. 155-165) covering the mathematics of modern cosmology in significant depth. I would certainly recommend it to anyone who wishes a better understanding of the birth of our universe.

But, you say, doesn't all this clearly conflict with the biblical account of the seven-day creation of the universe. It sure does look that way, doesn't it? However, let me call your attention to Psalm 90:4;

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday
when it is past and as a watch in the night.

and also to II Peter 3:8;

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one
day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand
years as one day.

In the hebrew of Psalm 90:4, the word for years is shaneh (shaw-neh') and means "a year (as a revolution of time)". In other places in scripture, this word is translated in connection with a "whole age".

The basic concept being presented in these verses is that God controls time; time does not control God. Thus, the seven-day creation account is not tied to the concept of seven days as we count days. The idea that God's seven "days" may have been stretched over 20 billion years as we count time is not at all unreasonable. Thus, no conflict between science and the scriptures should be dogmatically maintained on this point.

⁴Weinberg; op. cit.; pp.94-95.

⁵Ibid;p.43.

On the basis of these evidences, I am convinced that "Axiom I: God exists" is a reasonable assumption to make. Since no-one has ever made a conclusive case for the non-existence of God and, since scientific evidence strongly tends to support his existence, the remainder of this editorial will take Axiom I as given.

Let us now consider the evidence supporting "Axiom II: The Bible is the inspired word of God, infallible in its original documents". Two passages will immediately spring to mind to many long-term christians. One is II Timothy 3:16;

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

and the other is II Peter 1:20,21;

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

but, from the viewpoint of logic, this constitutes a tautology (circular reasoning): "A" is true because "B" is true and "B" is true because "A" is true, saying, in effect, "What the Bible has to say is true because the Bible says that everything the Bible says is true". This is arguing in a circle. I agree that what the Bible says is true but this argument does not constitute evidence. However, II Peter 1:20,21 does point us in the right direction. These two verses show us the way to find the evidence that does support the axiom's validity.

Deuteronomy 18:21,22 gives us a clear method for finding this evidence;

And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Also note Jeremiah 28:9;

The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.

Now, of course, the scriptures contain many instances where something is predicted to occur and a later passage confirms that it actually did occur. However, to try to use these as evidence would again constitute a tautology (The Bible predicted an event and the event actually occurred because the Bible says it occurred). No, as true as I believe such records to be, they still do not constitute evidence. What is needed is hard, physical evidence that the biblical predictions actually

did come to pass. For this, we turn to the field of archeology.

It will not be possible within the scope of this editorial to cover any more than a miniscule portion of the archeological discoveries which are evidences of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. I will attempt to cover a few of the most significant of such discoveries and leave the rest to my readers' own confirming research (Halley's Bible Handbook covers 96 major discoveries and I would recommend it to any of my readers who desire a more complete treatment of this material).

The prophecy of the flood came to Noah in Genesis 6:17;

And, Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

"George Smith, of the British Museum, found, 1872, in tablets from the Library of Assur-banipal at Nineveh, accounts of the Flood curiously parallel to the Bible account....And now, within the last few years, an Actual Layer of Mud, evidently deposited by the Flood, has been found in three separate places....At Ur, city of Abraham, the Joint Expedition of the University Museum of Pennsylvania and the British Museum, under the leadership of Dr. C.L. Woolley, found, 1929, near the bottom of the Ur mounds, underneath several strata of human occupation, a great bed of solid water-laid clay 8 ft thick without admixture of human relic, with yet the ruins of another city buried beneath it. Dr. Woolley said that 8 ft of sediment implied a very great depth and a long period of water, that it could not have been put there by any ordinary overflow of the rivers, but only by some such vast inundation as the Biblical Flood. The civilization underneath the flood layer was so different from that above it that it indicated to Dr. Woolley 'a sudden and terrific break in the continuity of history.'....Kish, 5 ft thick....(and) Fara." ⁶

Moses prophesied the death of the firstborn of Pharaoh in Exodus 11:4,5;

And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.

"Inscriptions have been found indicating that Thothmes IV, successor of Amenhotep II, was not his first-born nor heir apparent. Also that Merneptah's first-born met death in peculiar circumstances, and his successor was not his first-born nor heir apparent. So, whichever the Pharaoh, the Biblical statement is confirmed."⁷

⁶Halley, H.; Halley's Bible Handbook; Grason Co.; Minneapolis; 1964;

⁷Ibid; p. 77

The prophecy of the Fall of Jericho came to Joshua in Joshua 6:5;

And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

"Dr. John Garstang, director of the British School of Archeology in Jerusalem and of the Department of Antiquities of the Palestine Government, excavated the ruins of Jericho, 1929-36. He found pottery and scarab evidence that the city had been destroyed about 1400 B C, coinciding with Joshua's date; and, in a number of details, dug up evidence confirming the Biblical account in a most remarkable way....Dr. Garstang found that the wall did actually 'fall down flat'."⁸

The destruction of Nineveh was prophesied by Jonah, Nahum, and Zephaniah. Zephaniah 2:13-15;

Nineveh, the joyous city that dwells carelessly, and says in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me, shall become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in, a wilderness; the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the capitals thereof; and every one that passes by shall hiss.

Nineveh was destroyed by the Babylonians and Medes in 607 b.c., about 20 years after the prophecy. If you journey to the site of Nineveh today, you will find that it is still a desolation. The ruins of Nineveh were definitely identified by Layard in 1845.⁹

John 19: 41,42;

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus...

Jesus' tomb was discovered by General Christian Gordon in 1881.¹⁰

Now, these are all merely a very few of the archeological evidences supporting the validity of the Bible. The reader is referred to the literature for a more comprehensive treatment of this subject. The point is that archeological finds do bear-out the validity of the Bible and no archeological find has ever been discovered which could be used to conclusively demonstrate the non-validity of the Bible.

Furthermore, a rather interesting point is that the Bible is the only document in the history of the world that guarantees us a place in

⁸Halley; op. cit.; pp. 108-109

⁹Ibid; p. 292

¹⁰Ibid; pp. 450-451

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heaven (or nirvana, or whatever) simply on the basis of faith and not dependent upon whether or not we have lead "acceptable" lives. This in itself should make the Bible worthy of serious examination whether we begin with an attitude of belief or not.

On the basis of the archeological evidences, I am convinced that Axiom II is a reasonable assumption to make. Again, it has not been "proved" and must be accepted on faith but the evidence does give strong reason to so accept it. Therefore, the final portion of this editorial will take both of the two axioms as given. Once again, these axioms are:

Axiom I: God Exists.

Axiom II: The Bible is the inspired word of God, infallible in its original documents.

But hold on a minute, you complain! What about all the inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible? Don't they make it logically fallible? Well, there certainly isn't space to go over all of them in this editorial but let me say this: In the first place no such inconsistencies or contradictions are found in the areas of major doctrine (God's omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, Christ's birth, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, etc.) and, in the second place, I have yet to find any such inconsistency or contradiction anywhere in the scriptures that could not be resolved by reference back to the original language. Remember, Axiom II says, "...in its original documents."

For example, one of the most glaring and famous of such "contradictions" occurs in the comparison of the two accounts of Paul's conversion in the book of Acts. In Acts 9:7, it is said of Paul:

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

But, in Acts 22:9, during his defense before the people, Paul himself said:

And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

According to 9:7, they heard the voice but, according to 22:9, they didn't. Definitely a clear contradiction if I ever saw one!

However, the greek word which is translated "hearing" in 9:7 and "heard" in 22:9 is akouo (ak-oo'-o) which, elsewhere in the scriptures, is also translated as "give audience", "come (to the ears)", "be noised", "be reported", and "understand".

And, the greek word which is translated "voice" in both verses is phone (fo-nay') which, generally indicating the idea of disclosure, is also translated elsewhere in the scriptures as "noise" and "sound".

Thus, considering the alternative translations of the words, it could be concluded that those who were with Paul heard a noise or sound

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but did not understand that it was actually a voice. Or, possibly, they may have recognized it as a voice but not understood what was actually said. In either case, the apparent "contradiction" evaporates and can be laid to rest as merely an insufficiency of the translation from the original greek into the english. And so, I still maintain that Axiom II is reasonable.

Alright; having provided sufficient evidense to indicate the reasonableness of the axioms, let's take the first step towards building the system of logic based upon them in the Bible. Let us consider the major doctrine of the entire Bible. It occurs in four parts:

First, man was created by God in God's image and God found man to be a pleasing friend and companion and gave man control of the entire earth:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:26,27).

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31).

This does not necessarily conflict either with modern cosmology or with the theory of evolution. Since the length of God's "day" doesn't necessarily conform to how we count days, the actual time involved is not clear. Furthermore, the fact that God "formed man of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7) does not necessarily preclude the involvement of a large number of intermediate steps up along the evolutionary path. The point at which "man became a living soul" could very possibly have occurred as the very last of such steps.

Second, man rebelled against God and decided to satisfy his own lusts and desires rather than giving heed to God's will:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Genesis 3:6).

It is this rebellion, this attitude of placing self above God, that is the definition of sin. Every human who has ever lived is guilty of this rebellion, this attitude, this sin:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (Romans 3:10,11).

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

(Romans 3:23).

Third, the penalty for sin is death and separation from God:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:17).

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Romans 5:12).

For the wages of sin is death...(Romans 6:23).

And finally, fourth, there are only two ways that the penalty can be paid. Either you pay it yourself:

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14,15).

or you repent of your sin, accept the fact that Christ paid the penalty for you on the cross, and place your faith and trust in him to save you:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36).

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9).

It is a fundamental concept of logic that if the premises are true and if the conclusions follow from the premises, then the conclusions must be true. If you have accepted the evidence supporting the two axioms (and thus the axioms themselves) then, this, the major doctrine of the Bible, is inescapable.

If you have made it this far and clearly understand the axioms and the major doctrine, it is now time for you to make a decision. Will you accept it and believe God? Will you put your faith and trust in Christ to save you and guarantee you eternal life and companionship with God? Or, will you deny it and condemn yourself to eternal death and separation from God in the lake of fire? It's entirely up to you!

In conclusion, I reiterate my contention that Christianity is a coherent, internally consistent system of logic, based on the axioms that God exists and that the Bible is his inspired and infallible word.

There is a great deal of evidense to support the validity of those axioms even though they are inherently unprovable and must thus be accepted on faith. If the evidense leads you to accept the axioms then the rest of Christianity (in its pure biblical form) is inescapable.

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. (Luke 19:20).

Today, the whole universe is crying out the glory of God!

M. D. J.