

Can we believe the Bible?

A Personal testimony of an informal nature given at a Youth Rally in London, by Charles H. Welch, the late Principal of The Chapel of the Opened Book.

Why do I believe that the Scriptures are the Inspired Word of God? I know that you are beset with many problems and difficulties, and that you find it increasingly difficult to reconcile modern teaching and modern claims with so antiquated a belief that the Scriptures are the Word of God. I would have you understand that I sympathize with you in this matter, and that I have neither come here to lecture you, nor to preach at you, but that I desire to help you if I may over one or two of the preliminary obstacles that lie across your path. Before I deal with evidences that can be assembled, it might help you if I gave my own personal testimony, which is so true to me that it makes all outside evidence of secondary value. I had no Christian upbringing, and not until I was nearly twenty-one did I come under the influence of the Gospel. At the preaching of the Word such a revolution took place in my whole life and outlook as to constitute in itself an all sufficient evidence that the Word which contains such creative power, could not be anything less than Divine. Like the man whose eyes had been opened, who had been born blind, I am compelled to say 'One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see'. If I were surrounded by a group of blind men who seriously challenged the existence of light and colour, I should pity them, but should not waver in my own conviction, so, if you should say to me 'I do not see', I should pity your blindness, but I should not admit that your inability to see, was any reason that I should doubt the evidence of my own sense of sight.

Coupled with this is the uncompromising testimony from cradle to cross, from grave to glory of the Christ of God, but these are evidences to those who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, and cannot be pressed here.

I therefore would step down from this high ground, to a plane upon which we may all meet, whether professing Christian or not.

And I appeal first to the testimony of Archaeology.

The Deluge, a fact? Dr. C. L. Woolley exhibited in the British Museum a diagram of his excavation in Ur of the Chaldees where he showed a deposit, varying from eight to eleven feet in thickness which intervened between one great civilization and another, and said 'The flood which deposited it must have been of a magnitude unparalleled in local history', and Dr. Stephen Langdon, Professor of Assyriology at Oxford said, 'We had obtained confirmation of the Deluge of Genesis, there is no doubt about it now'.

I HAVE SEEN the Black Obelisk which mentions by name 'Jehu the son of Omri', a king anointed by Elijah. I HAVE SEEN the Cylinder inscribed at the bidding of Sennacherib in which he speaks of Hezekiah, shut up in his royal city Jerusalem like a caged bird. I HAVE SEEN the Moabite Stone which confirms the record of 2 Kings 1 to 3. I HAVE SEEN the name 'Belshazzar' of Daniel 5 written on a Cylinder. I HAVE SEEN the stone pillar upon which Amraphel of Genesis 14 engraved his code of laws. Coming to the New Testament, I have read the inscriptions found in Thessalonica and in Ephesus, which prove the accuracy of Luke as an historian, and I have assembled enough archaeological testimony to the accuracy of the Scriptures to occupy four or five hours in a series of lantern lectures devoted to the subject. From my own investigation I know that the Bible is historically accurate.

But let me come closer to the problems which you and I have to meet and solve. Let the first one be the insuperable difficulty that any scientific person has today in believing that:

(1) *Heaven and Earth were created in six days.*

Let it be said at once, that no scientist nor any one who believes what is written in Genesis 1 is called upon to believe anything so absurd. The fact is, that many give scant attention to the actual teaching of the book they antagonize and dismiss as absurd what, in reality, they themselves have foisted upon the record.

In Genesis 1:9 we read 'and let the dry land appear', or 'be seen' as the Hebrew *Raah* is translated in Genesis 1:4,10,12 etc. The dry land *became visible* on the third day, not because it was then at that time created, but because the waters which covered it were 'gathered together unto one place' (Gen. 1:9). Let us

open the book, then, and be scientists indeed, taking nothing for granted or at second hand.

‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’ (Gen. 1:1).

There is no word for ‘the’ in the original, it reads ‘In beginning’, not so much as a mark on the calendar of time, but as indicating the first movement of a series implying an ‘end’, which is named in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 ‘Then cometh the end . . . that God may be all in all’. In the simple but sublime words, of Genesis 1:1, the creation of the Universe is recorded. What took place in the six days of Genesis 1:3-31 was *the preparation* of the earth for man. In between Genesis 1:1 and 3 comes an undefined interval (during which all the phenomena associated with geology, the strata, the fossils, the coal beds), the catastrophe, which has left its mark upon the rocks and the earth’s surface, took place.

‘And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep’ (Gen. 1:2).

Here the word ‘was’ translates the verb ‘to become’ as in Genesis 2:7 ‘Man became (not was already) a living soul’.

‘Without form and void’ are words of judgment as Jeremiah 4:23-27 makes plain. The same two words *tohu* and *bohu* which are translated ‘without form and void’ are found in another context of judgment, which speak of yet future repetition of Genesis 1:2, namely Isaiah 34:4. In verse 11 the words ‘confusion’ and ‘emptiness’ are in the original the same that are found in Genesis 1:2 *tohu* and *bohu*. If we judge the book of Genesis to be unscientific let it at least be judged upon what it does actually say, and not what slipshod quotations make it say.

Moreover the ‘firmament’ of Genesis 1:8, is explained in the margin as an ‘expansion’, and this is the meaning of the Hebrew *raqia*. Thus Moses anticipates Jean’s ‘Expanding Universe’ by several thousand years. The Bible however is not a Scientific text book. It finds one short chapter sufficient for the record of Creation but employs many chapters to describe the construction of the Tabernacle, a meeting place, not so large as many a church or chapel. The Bible finds eleven chapters sufficient for its purpose, when it speaks of the 2 000 years that intervene between the creation of Adam and the call of Abraham, but it devotes nearly 1 000 chapters, or the rest of the Old Testament

to cover the similar period that extends from Abraham to Christ. The Bible is essentially a book of Redemption and must be judged accordingly. If it says in the language of the common man 'The sun rises' or 'The sun sets' it is no more unscientific than a modern newspaper.

Another objection raised against the Bible is that it is:

(2) '*Geocentric*'.

Today the astronomer is obliged to speak of distance in the terms of 'light years', and our earth is so small in comparison with the Universe and its many 'suns', that, says the scientist, it is impossible that God could speak of the Universe as 'The Heaven and the earth'. Yet, if I pick up *The Times* or any other newspaper, I shall find that these too are 'Geocentric', and the very ones who object to the Bible in this matter, would feel outraged if a daily newspaper should fill its pages with astronomical details concerning Mars, or the Milky Way, while children die of starvation and men and women seek in vain a home for their family. Why condemn the Bible because it ministers, not to the Universe, but to man? If the Bible be a book of Redemption, and if a man be the object of this redemption, then the Bible to be of service must be 'Geocentric' or fail of its purpose.

(3) *Nobody with any scientific knowledge believes in Miracles today.*

Scientists have studied the movements and reactions of matter, and slowly evolved a system of laws, called commonly 'The Laws of nature'. Miracles, because they appear to contradict or suspend these laws of nature are pronounced 'impossible'. If, however, we admit the presence of a 'Person', we admit the one element necessary for miracle.

The force of gravitation acts without regard for consequences, and the same blind force that causes the stone to fall down the face of a cliff will precipitate a little child to its death. The mother of that little child, being a 'person' however, thinks otherwise. Laws of nature or no laws of nature, she interposes the right arm of personality, snatches the child as it descends, contravenes the inviolability of gravitation, in other words, performs a miracle. If there be a God, and if He has regard for the works of His hands shall we deny to Him, that which is being done every day by His creatures?

If the Bible contains no miracles, that indeed, might be an objection to its veracity. Can we believe that God would send such a messenger as Moses, without giving him his credentials? (Exodus 4:1-9). Can we believe that the Christ could come into the world without some sign? Instead of miracles being considered impossible, it seems impossible to think that God, being God would not interfere in the ordinary course of nature over and over again.

(4) We have aired one or two of the objections that have been made against the Bible but time is limited, let me conclude by bringing to your notice one or two positive features which are in favour of the full inspiration of the Scriptures.

- (a) The uncompromising testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ to the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures. This is a study in itself. His endorsement keeps pace with His whole life and witness. From the moment of His birth at Bethlehem, which fulfilled a prophecy written centuries before, to the death of the cross, with all its peculiar associations, His whole life was one continuous exposition and endorsement of what had been written.
- (b) The chances that ten prophetic utterances should all be fulfilled in one person are so remote as to be practically impossible. There are more than one hundred prophecies fulfilled in the person of Christ, and the testimony of fulfilled prophecy is overwhelming.
- (c) Just as all chemistry is governed by number, so the distribution of words is governed by number, in the Scriptures. This is a study which cannot be explained here, but is open to the fullest investigation. There are several books on the subject obtainable at Libraries and Booksellers.
- (d) Just as in 'Nature' we see structure, whether in crystal, leaf or vertebrate, so the whole Bible and its sub-divisions exhibit to the searcher a most marvellous structure, linking the opening chapters of Genesis with the closing chapters of Revelation, underline the distribution of key words throughout the book, and being indeed characteristic of every chapter. These features which cannot be set out here, can be seen in *The Berean Expositor* and the various publications of *The Berean Publishing Trust*, to which the earnest inquirer is directed.

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