Why the Bible?

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Why the Bible?

By Sean Pitman

December 16, 2011 21 Comments

The Bible makes many extraordinary, even magical, claims about the nature of human history and about the nature of reality in general. Of course, so do many other fairytale books and well-loved moral fables. What, if anything, makes the miraculous claims of the Bible any different? Why should anyone believe in the historical existence of talking donkeys and snakes, a truly virgin birth of an incarnate God-man, people raised from the dead, someone walking on water, splitting the Red Sea to walk through on dry ground, the creation of all life on this planet in just six literal days, a worldwide flood that destroyed every land-dwelling animal except for those on Noah’s ark, and on and on and on?

Some people choose to accept as historical facts certain specific miraculous stories within the Bible, such as the virgin birth of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead, while they reject other stories as just too far fetched, such as a literal six-day creation week. But, upon what basis does one accept the magical claims of the Bible on the one hand, but reject those on the other? If one is going to give the Bible any kind of authority to present truly fantastic or miraculous events of any kind, how then is one going to pick and choose which miraculous stories are more or less likely true within the same book? – stories which are all equally presented as historical facts, intended to be taken as such by the biblical authors themselves, within the pages of the Bible?

It seems to me that there is very little reason to accept certain fantastic Biblical stories as historical facts while rejecting others that are presented in essentially the same manner as fable or allegorical. If one is to be rationally consistent, one must either accept or reject all of the historical (and futuristic) claims of the Bible as the biblical authors intended them to be understood, or reject all of the fantastic, miraculous or magical claims of the Bible all together. I really don’t see how one can rationally have it both ways?

This was essentially the point of James Barr, a well-known secular scholar of Hebrew at Oxford University. For example, Barr argued that it is quite clear that the author(s) of the Genesis narrative intended to convey to their readers, to us, a literal historical account of God’s creative act in the formation of life on this planet. I don’t think even liberal secular scholars of Hebrew would deny this, as Barr explains:

Probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that: (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience. (b) the
figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story (c) Noah’s flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark. Or, to put it negatively, the apologetic arguments which suppose the “days” of creation to be long eras of time, the figures of years not to be chronological, and the flood to be a merely local Mesopotamian flood, are not taken seriously by any such professors, as far as I know.

Letter from Professor James Barr to David C.C. Watson of the UK, dated 23 April 1984.

Now, Barr never did believe that the Biblical account of Creation or the Noachian Flood actually happened as described (He has since passed away). Barr was just pointing out the fact that the writer/compiler of these stories did in fact believe that the stories he wrote about happened as described and he wished to convey this to his readers. This concept has important implications for Biblical credibility, in my mind, with regard to other equally fantastic claims about historical and future realities.

Of course, there are those who accept the fantastic claims of the Bible “by faith alone” without any need to appeal to anything other than the Bible to support the credibility of the Bible’s claims. The same can be said for those who make the very same claims for the Qur’an or the Book of Mormon. For these people, there is no argument beyond, “My Holy Book said it. I believe it. That settles it. No discussion or further investigation is necessary.”

But is there any means by which one might rationally discern which Holy Book, if any, is most likely credible in its fantastic claims? After all, they can’t all be true since they make conflicting claims as to the true miraculous nature of reality. What then is there upon which one can be a Christian and believe the claims of the Bible as being most credible? without turning off one’s brain?

Of course, the so-called “higher biblical critics” argue that there is no such rational option – that the stories of the Bible are simply ancient legends or fabrications produced for various social and political purposes. As one contributor to this forum, Abe Yonder, put it, “Of course any reasonable person knows the creation story is not literal, but fundamentalists are not reasonable, they believe everything the Bible says no matter how absurd… The book of Genesis began with Chapter two verse three. [T]he seven-day creation story was added by the Deuteronomist at Babylon during the fifth century BC (See Harper’s Bible commentary).”

If this is the true version of history, and the Biblical version is nothing more than legends and fable, what does this say about Biblical credibility regarding its fantastic metaphysical claims that cannot be tested or evaluated in a potentially falsifiable manner? – such as the resurrection of Jesus? the future resurrection of the dead in like manner? or eternal life in our future heavenly home?

For me such claims, if true, effectively undermine biblical credibility with regard to anything other than what can be explained by human imagination in the production of moral fables. There is no more really solid hope for the future, for a better life after this one or a superhuman power to free me from my attraction to sin and self-destruction.

However, if the “higher critics” are wrong, if the Bible can somehow be shown to be reliable in those empirical claims that can be tested and investigated, then that changes everything – at least for me.

So, as just one example, let’s look at the claims of the higher critics regarding the origin of the Books of Moses, or the Torah, in particular. The view of most modern critics is still based on the well-known, still popular, and yet fundamentally flawed “Documentary Hypothesis”. “The documentary hypothesis (sometimes called the Wellhausen hypothesis), holds that the Pentateuch (the Torah, or the Five Books of Moses) was derived from originally independent, parallel and complete narratives [labeled J, D, E, and P], which were subsequently
combined into the current form by a series of redactors (editors).” These editors supposedly compiled these independent accounts into one work some 500 years BC during the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Now, consider that the documentary hypothesis has been challenged, since it was first proposed in the late 1800s, quite effectively I might add, by numerous Biblical scholars. Consider, for example, the arguments of Rendsburg (1986) where he demonstrates the linguistic unity and artistry of the composer of all of Genesis. For example, the “J” and “E” sections share a large number of theme-words and linking words, puns, etc. It becomes simply incredulous that J wrote 12.1-4a, 12:6-9 about the start of Abraham’s spiritual odyssey and that E wrote 22:1-19 about the climax of his spiritual odyssey, and that these two authors living approximately 100 years apart and in different parts of ancient Israel time and again chose the same lexical terms. Surely this is too improbable, especially when such examples can be and have been multiplied over and over. Admittedly, a corresponding word here or there could be coincidental, but the cumulative nature of the evidence tips the scales heavily against the usual division of Genesis into JEP…

The evidence presented here points to the following conclusion: there is much more uniformity and much less fragmentation in the book of Genesis than generally assumed. The standard division of Genesis into J, E, and P strands should be discarded. This method of source criticism is a method of an earlier age, predominantly of the 19th century. If new approaches to the text, such as literary criticism of the type advanced here, deem the Documentary Hypothesis unreasonable and invalid, then source critics will have to rethink earlier conclusions and start anew.

- Rendsberg, p. 104-105

It seems then like “the Documentary Hypothesis and the arguments that support it have been effectively demolished by scholars from many different theological perspectives and areas of expertise. Even so, the ghost of Wellhausen hovers over Old Testament studies and symposiums like a thick fog, adding nothing of substance but effectively obscuring vision. Although actually incompatible with form-critical and archaeology-based studies, the Documentary Hypothesis has managed to remain the mainstay of critical orthodoxy.”

For a further review of the fundamental problems with the Documentary Hypothesis here is an interesting introduction: Link
As an interesting aside, note that ‘the documentary hypothesis was originally based on the supposition that the events in the Torah preceded the invention of writing, or at least its use among the Hebrews. This is because Julius Wellhausen lived in the nineteenth-century, but nineteenth-century notions about ancient literacy have been completely refuted by archaeological evidence. The documentarians have not updated the documentary hypothesis to take this into account, so we still find them assigning very late dates to their hypothetical sources of the Torah…. Archaeology has shown that writing was common during the time in which the events of the Torah were to have taken place.’

– Kenneth Collins, *The Torah in Modern Scholarship*

As evidence of this, consider that the Ebla Tablets, written some 2200 years BC, prove that writing, even alphabetic-type writing, was in existence well before Moses. Some of the statements about creation found on these tablets also seem to parallel the Biblical creation narrative, suggesting that the Genesis creation story, or something very similar to it, was known well before the “Deuteronomists” or even Moses came on the scene. These tablets also speak of a flood story like that of the flood story in the Bible. The Ebla Tablets also mention the names Abraham and Isaac, suggesting that such names were known and common during this time. They also tell of two sinful cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, and mention all five of the cities of the valley in the same order mentioned in the Bible. This is in the face of “higher critics” who had claimed that Sodom, Gomorrah, Ur and other Canaan cities of the Bible never did exist. However, the Ebla Tablets showed the Bible was correct and that the critics were wrong (yet again). And the list goes on and on.

This is just one of many many examples of the credibility of the Bible being proved superior to those of its “intellectual” critics. The scholarly critics have been shown to be consistently wrong, over and over again, in their claims regarding ancient history while the Bible has proved true. How then can one but conclude that the Bible is by far the most accurate history book known to modern man?

So, if you’re going to go with one’s track record, who has demonstrated the most credibility over time? the Bible or its critics?

**21 Responses to “Why the Bible?”**

1. **Bill Sorensen** *December 16, 2011 at 2:11 pm*

Sean, some of us have pointed to bible prophecy as the most singular and highest point of self validation that can be found. While other points are helpful, they can not equal the prophetic utterances of the bible itself:

After Peter’s testimony of how He lived with Jesus, traveled with Jesus, ate with Jesus and his witness to the many miracles Jesus performed, he concluded….

“We have also, a more sure word of prophecy,…….”

So, Peter admits his personal testimony is valid, but is transcended by the prophetic witness found in the old testament.

If science gives some credibility to scriptural declarations, it is well and good. But science can not and will not supercede the bibles testimony concerning itself and its validity and authority.

Science can not validate miracles or how they happened. Only God’s word can do that.

Bill Sorensen
2. ken December 16, 2011 at 5:50 pm

Re Sean’s article comments

“As evidence of this, consider that the Ebla Tablets, written some 2200 years BC, prove that writing, even alphabetic-type writing, was in existence well before Moses. Some of the statements about creation found on these tablets also seem to parallel the Biblical creation narrative, suggesting that the Genesis creation story, or something very similar to it, was known well before the “Deuteronomists” or even Moses came on the scene. These tablets also speak of a flood story like that of the flood story in the Bible. The Ebla Tablets also mention the names Abraham and Isaac, suggesting that such names were known and common during this time. They also tell of two sinful cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, and mention all five of the cities of the valley in the same order mentioned in the Bible. This is in the face of “higher critics” who had claimed that Sodom, Gomorrah, Ur and other Canaan cities of the Bible never did exist. However, the Ebla Tablets showed the Bible was correct and that the critics were wrong (yet again). And the list goes on and on.”

Hi Sean

This is all very interesting.

Of course it is quite possible that the Bible is simply a redacted and edited version of earlier creation and flood stories, right? Take the earlier Sumerian Epic of Gilamesh flood story vs that of the later recorded Noachian flood. Quite a few similarities.

What is to say that Moses, or whoever were the author(s) of the Pentateuch, did not borrow, build upon, amend or adapt from earlier Babylonian and Sumerian stories.? Obviously the earlier versions could not borrow from the latter right?

Those questions need to be asked as well in assessing the credibility of the Bible being historically accurate versus earlier narratives.

Your agnostic friend
Ken

3. Steve Billiter December 17, 2011 at 4:28 am

What does it for me, as someone who has accepted Christ’s sacrifice for my sins and given the Holy Spirit–He reveals to me that the Bible (Received Text only)is 100% true. Moreover, a serious study of Bible prophecy, checking it against the historical record, reveals the stunning accuracy of hundreds of prophecies that reveal to us the Bible is the inspired, supernatural, divine Word of God.

No other Book—not the Qur’ran or any others, can make this claim. More than sufficient evidence exists within the Bible’s own sacred pages that testifies to its truth.

With virtually every turn of the archaeological spade, Bible facts are being verified once again proving its reliability through the ages. When we consider the total and complete list of the prophetic record—what is the chances of Jesus Christ coming again in unimaginable splendor and power to rescue His church and execute the wrath of the lamb upon the ungodly, and the despisers of His grace? 100%!
4. Shining (d bindernagel) December 17, 2011 at 4:38 am

@ken:
Ken,

The account of the beginning of the world would have been at least as important in the days of Moses as today. The stories could have been passed down like the griots of Africa. I have no more trouble with Moses hearing various accounts than the Gospel writers hearing many accounts. If Moses was inspired to write everything down, doesn’t mean no one had ever talked about anything before, or even that he didn’t use things already circulating, as he was led by the Holy Spirit. I trust the Bible because of Prophecy, archeology, science, and logic. But I also have tried it out in my own life, claiming its promises and following its injunctions and it has brought peace and joy into my life.

5. Tom Harebottle December 17, 2011 at 7:59 am

@ken: Well in that case why is it the book of Genesis and not the book of Gilgamesh? Quite simply, because one was G-d inspired and the other not. Quite possibly they did not borrow from each other, but merely wrote down what they observed/heard that which was passed down by others. In Moses’ case, it was divinely inspired. With the other authors describing similar events, who knows what their outside inspiration, if any, was. No, I have no definite proof. I do have the evidence of 66 separate books written by 30+ authors, somehow coming together in what we call the Old and New Testament today. Chance or divine inspiration. What are the statistical chances…

6. Bill Eichner December 17, 2011 at 8:10 am

Ken,

Over time I have read and observed your comments. Although very polite and of a friendly demeanor, much appreciated by the way, you seem to carry your position of agnosticism as a badge of honor. I don’t know your connection with the SDA educational system, if any. However, If somehow you do have the posture of educator, in the SDA system, perhaps it would better be served in the secular venue instead.

Bill

7. Sean Pitman December 17, 2011 at 8:20 am

@ken:

What is to say that Moses, or whoever were the author(s) of the Pentateuch, did not borrow, build upon, amend or adapt from earlier Babylonian and Sumerian stories.? Obviously the earlier versions could not borrow from the latter right?
If the stories told in all of these versions of creation have an element of truth to them, who is to say that they all did not receive these stories from their ancestors who were closer to the actual events described? After all, according to the Bible anyway, Shem, one of the sons of Noah, almost outlived Abraham himself. This is why some suggest that it was actually Shem who was the “King of Salem… without beginning of life or end of days” to whom Abraham paid tithe after his win over the armies that took his nephew Lot captive.

Such stories as were transmitted by Shem for a very long time after the Flood to the peoples of all the world at that time, were not that far removed from the generations during the time of Moses. The only difference, of course, is that Moses was the direct descendent of Abraham who personally knew Shem. Also, not to be forgotten, Moses claimed to have talked directly with God “face to face”.

Taking all these claims into account, which of the creation stories among all of those from all nations that are available to us are most consistent with the evidence that is currently available? By far, whoever wrote Genesis, is more accurate in numerous details regarding historical artifacts and geological features than are any of the other records of the creation account and worldwide flood.

Also, the prophecies noted in Genesis and elsewhere in the “Old Testament” are not to be discounted as evidence for Biblical credibility as no other book or historical record is so extremely consistent in the accuracy of its predictions regarding the future.

Sean Pitman
http://www.DetectingDesign.com

8. Sean Pitman December 17, 2011 at 8:26 am

@Bill Sorensen:

If science gives some credibility to scriptural declarations, it is well and good. But science can not and will not supercede the bibles testimony concerning itself and its validity and authority.

It is through science, or scientific/rational thought, that the credibility of the Bible’s claims concerning itself, to include it’s prophetic claims, can be determined. The credibility of Biblical prophecy is based on the historical sciences. If Biblical prophecy was shown, as is the case for many other books claiming to be prophetic, to be completely inaccurate or too vague to be statistically useful with regard to known historical science, the credibility of prophecy as a basis for determining the Divine origin of the Book would be undermined. The Biblical claim to be The Word of God would be effectively falsified.

It is for this reason that the “higher critics” of the Bible try valiantly to undermine the concept of Biblical prophecy, arguing that the most striking prophecies of the Bible, especially those written by Daniel, were actually written far far after the historical predictions prophesied. They do this from a humanistic mindset in order to challenge the Bible’s claim to Divine origin… in an effort to effectively falsify this claim.

The potential for effective Biblical falsification alone is what puts the Bible, and no other faith really, into the realm of science and/or rational thought. Christianity need not be based on blind faith because the Bible itself actually strives to appeal to the intelligent candid mind with regard to the credibility of its own claims to Divine origin. One does not need to turn off one’s higher God-given reasoning powers when approaching the Bible and it’s fantastic claim to be the Word of God.
Again, the Bible is not “self-validating” as nothing can validate itself without any reference to the external realities to which it speaks…

Sean Pitman
http://www.DetectingDesign.com

9. Lydian December 17, 2011 at 8:48 am

Dear Sean,

You said things I’ve wanted to say for a long, long time but in an eloquent way I never could have said them. Thank you so very, very much! I’m sure God gave you the words to speak and is smiling down at you for speaking them!

This site is not just fighting misguided humans but is fighting the prince of darkness and all the evil angels cast out of heaven him as well.

The road often seems hard and rough at times but we have the assurance that right and truth WILL win out in the end and that is truly comforting.

Keep up the good work and be assured many are praying with you and for you!

Lydian

10. Faith December 17, 2011 at 9:03 am

I fully agree with the above statements regarding the accuracy of the Bible and its prophecies. And that should be enough proof to believe in the Bible.

However, I will go one step further and declare that there are many promises in the Bible and I have seen some of them fulfilled in my life.

Without going into a lot of detail, I can remember when we needed drinking water (the water where I live is too vile to drink) and I had two 5-gallon jars that needed to be refilled. While that would have cost only $6, I didn’t have any money at all at that time. I prayed and claimed the promise that our bread and water would be sure, put the jars into the back of my car and started backing out of my driveway, when a friend pulled in beside me honking her horn. She jumped out of her car and rushed over to me. “This is for you,” she said, “I hope you can use it.” Inside the envelope was a gift certificate for the grocery store. I could now get the water we so badly needed. Coincidence? You will never convince me of it.

I have many more stories such as this of events in my life that are irrefutable evidence to me that not only is there a God, He knows me personally, He knows my needs, and He cares for me.

His Word is a special letter to His followers giving wise instruction, faithful promises, and never-failing prophecies. The Bible stands above all other literature on the face of the earth, followed closely with the SOP, which is an extension of the Bible as it is also messages from God. Nothing else comes close. To
compare the Bible to the Qur’ran or the Book of Mormon is like comparing a Rolls Royce to a VW bug.

God has shown its importance to mankind in the way He has miraculously preserved it from error throughout the ages. If you compare the book of Isaiah found in the Dead Sea Scrolls written around the time of Christ, you will see it is virtually the same as the scripture we now have contained in the Bible. If you have ever played the parlour game Telephone, you will know how quickly things can change as they are passed on from one to the other. It can happen in a matter of a few minutes; yet the Bible has the same message for us today as when it was written.

For thousands of years God has protected His Word from being lost or distorted. That is a huge proof of the supernatural quality of the Bible.

As an amateur student of archaeology, I have seen the Bible vindicated over and over. For example, in the 19th Century, scholars claimed that the Hittites mentioned in the Bible never existed. Yet the archaeologist’s spade has unearthed proof after proof that these scholars were wrong, and the Bible was right. The Hittite language is now an open book to us.

Any way you want to slice or dice it, the Bible is what it claims to be: the Word of God, who is the Creator of our Universe. Anyone who rejects it is unwise, to say the least, and does so at the peril of his own soul.

11. Brian Holland December 17, 2011 at 11:09 am

This entire discussion is the reason why I view the prophecy of Daniel 2 as THE MOST important portion in scripture.

It is a verifiable miracle.
It can be verified by everyone.
It can be verified anywhere.
It can be verified at anytime.
It leads the way for the interpretation and verification of all of the other prophecies in Daniel and finally for Revelation.

It is the clearest and simplest of all the prophecies in Scripture.

12. BobRyan December 17, 2011 at 11:51 am

Sean Pitman: After all, according to the Bible anyway, Shem, one of the sons of Noah, almost outlived Abraham himself. This is why some suggest that it was actually Shem who was the “King of Salem… without beginning of life or end of days” to whom Abraham paid tithe after his win over the armies that took his nephew Lot captive.

According to the Bible timeline – Shem lived until just before Jacob is born to Isaac.

Same author – same book – showing declining longevity in the human race over generations of time.
For those who take man-made-ideas “As their Bible” the ancient pagan religions of Babylon, Egypt and Nineveh are “the sacred text” from which we get “the Bible”.

But for Christians “no scripture is a matter of one person’s interpretation but rather men of old moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” 2Pet 1:20-21

in Christ,

Bob

13. BobRyan December 17, 2011 at 11:54 am

ken: What is to say that Moses, or whoever were the author(s) of the Pentateuch, did not borrow, build upon, amend or adapt from earlier Babylonian and Sumerian stories.? Obviously the earlier versions could not borrow from the latter right?

Those questions need to be asked as well in assessing the credibility of the Bible being historically accurate versus earlier narratives.

your agnostic friend

I believe you have stated the agnostic view of the Bible well.

Certainly without looking at examples of objective evidence supporting the supernatural nature of the Bible – such as we find in Daniel 2, and Daniel chapter’s 7 through 9 – your suggestion is at least possible.

in Christ,

Bob

14. Hubert F. Sturges December 17, 2011 at 2:47 pm

Sean, to quote:

The Bible makes many extraordinary, even magical, claims about the nature of human history and about the nature of reality in general. Of course, so do many other fairytale books and well-loved moral fables. What, if anything, makes the magical claims of the Bible any different? Why should should anyone believe in the historical existence of talking donkeys and snakes, a truly virgin birth of an incarnate God-man, people raised from the dead, someone walking on water, splitting the Red Sea to walk through on dry ground, the creation of all life on this planet in just six literal days, a worldwide flood that destroyed every land-dwelling animal except for those on Noah’s ark, and on and on and on?

I don’t like the word “magic” to describe the supernatural acts of God. The supernatural is very different from magic. Such acts are always very practical and necessary to the situation at hand. I believe that if a person knows God and His creative power as He is declared in the Bible, all these
questions are answered. But how can a person “know God?” He cannot, a person can only believe what the Bible says, and then “experience” Him.

15. Faith December 17, 2011 at 3:11 pm

“I don’t like the word “magic” to describe the supernatural acts of God.”

I agree with Mr. Sturges. That word, as well as the word “fairytales”, has been bothering me ever since I first read the above article. I have been trying to figure out how to express my thoughts without hurting Sean’s feelings, but I believe it is important to differentiate between the “magic” that Satan and his agents practice and the miracles that God works.

Forgive me, but magic and fairytales have nothing to do with the Bible. The Bible doesn’t contain fairytales it contains facts and accurate histories. I get the point of your article, Sean, but it needs to plainly separate God’s works from the run-of-the-mill fairytales that contain Satanic magic. To use these words to refer to the Bible and God seems sacrilegious to me. I do understand, however, it wasn’t meant that way.

16. ross duane kendall December 17, 2011 at 3:16 pm

I appreciate this site which often voices my beliefs better than I or most others can. We need an intelligent response to those who are are casting doubt on the very foundations of our beliefs. Even the agnostic views of Ken serve to enlighten me on the alternate choices of belief.

17. Sean Pitman December 17, 2011 at 5:55 pm

@Hubert F. Sturges:

I don’t like the word “magic” to describe the supernatural acts of God. The supernatural is very different from magic. Such acts are always very practical and necessary to the situation at hand.

And Faith wrote:

I agree with Mr. Sturges. That word, as well as the word “fairytales”, has been bothering me ever since I first read the above article. I have been trying to figure out how to express my thoughts without hurting Sean’s feelings, but I believe it is important to differentiate between the “magic” that Satan and his agents practice and the miracles that God works.

I am well aware of and sympathize with these concerns and even considered them before I wrote this article. However, you must understand that I was writing from the perspective of someone approaching the Bible for the first time – before one becomes aware of its truly Divine origin. From this perspective, many of the stories would at first appear to be quite magical or like a fairytale indeed (in the best most innocent children-story sense of the words).

I know that there is a difference between the Satanic magical arts (and I’m not talking about illusionists or card tricks here) and truly Divine miracles. However, for the average person who is not aware of the
distinction, who first starts considering the claims of the Bible, the miracles described in the Bible would appear, at first approximation, to be very similar to what is generally referred to as “magic” or to nothing more than made up fairytales for children. How then does one end up telling the difference? That’s the question I’m asking here.

In any case, please do consider the context and intended perspective of my argument, as well as my conclusion that there is a very clear and evident difference between the Bible and fairytales or moral fables as well as between the miracles or “magic” that Satan is able to produce. The Bible is so far beyond any of these as to be clearly Divine in origin for anyone who considers and researches it carefully and with an open candid mind.

Sean Pitman
http://www.DetectingDesign.com

18. Ken  December 18, 2011 at 7:01 am

Dear friends

I am really enjoying this thread and appreciating the comments regarding your strong faith in the Bible. Nothing will likely shake that and that is good for your peace of mind.

I have many friends of different faith and non faith. The differences for their beliefs are as varied as those expressed on this forum. As an agnostic what I try to understand why as much as what they believe. That means I ask a lot of questions, hopefully in a respectful manner.

The diversity of human culture and its various theistic beliefs is a remarkable thing. Although I have not chosen a particular faith it does not mean I don’t appreciate them. In fact i’m immensely enjoying my study of Adventism largely because of how it tries to grapple with the findings of science pertaining to the origins of the universe and life. But also I’m getting a great first hand education on the Bible and also have met many fine folks. This is not a bad thing!

I’m not an atheist, never have been. How can one have that degree of certitude in light of the fact one the universe exists without an explanation for first cause. But I do not that all religions change as time moves forward. For example, it appears there may be a reformation afoot regarding the amendment of FB # 6. Is this God’s work or Man’s work? How does one distinguish who is inspired by God vs. their own personal views? And ultimately who controls the levers of power ( who will appoint the committee and voting members at the GC) to vote upon any change?

There is a great human drama unfolding here that I am privileged to witness. It serves as a microcosm as to how all religions evolve when there are serious differences of opinion and charismatic leaders emerge. I believe that Dr. Pitman is one of them.

Your agnostic friend
Ken
Ken:

Doctrine is not founded on personal views. The Bible is our standard and it states:

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” –Isaiah 8:20.

God Himself taught us what is truth in His word. He is God of the Universe and knows what truth is better than any mere sinful mortal man. We cannot change truth without letting in error. Salvation depends on the truth that God gave us; as SDAs we are firmly founded on this truth.

What is happening with these people who want to remain in the church and change it is a trick of Satan to try to destroy God’s church from within. That is why I am so adamant that these people be removed from any position of power. The lesson of the Trojan Horse should make the reason for that crystal clear even to someone who doesn’t understand our religion. No one can cradle a serpent to his bosom and expect it not to strike. It is vitally important to the church that this movement be quashed as soon as possible.

If that seems uncharitable, so be it.

Faith concluded……

“If that seems uncharitable, so be it.”

True Christianity has always “seemed uncharitable” to non-Christians. We hold specific biblical views that we consider non-negotiable.

We are also aware that others may hold views of the bible we disagree with and so we have many denominations.

None the less, any denomination will specify certain non-negotiable concepts that define their faith. If you don’t agree, you are expected not to join, or, if you are already a member, then leave. If you refuse to leave, then there are grounds for excommunication.

Logic and common sense should be obvious in this case. Or, as Amos has well said, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

If I don’t represent the church and/or the church does not represent me, it is duplicity to try and remain and create mass confusion.

It seems more than amazing that so many fail to see this obvious reality. And then claim a church is not “charitable” if they chide and threaten to separate a “non-believer”.

As though a church must tolerate those who attack the stated faith so that every “Tom, Dick and Harry” is patronized and supported, no matter what they believe and/or teach.
No denomination can support Pluralism and survive as a viable entity. Its meaning and purpose and identity are lost in the shuffle. So a church must discipline and even disfellowship those who agitate a view contrary to stated doctrine.

But we must also confess, that if a church is always defined by stated doctrines and must censor members who attack and disagree, even so, members must also be ready to censor the church for the same reason. This principle works both ways.

To do this, there must be some non-negotiable teachings that are not subject to attack nor change.

We could only wonder why there seems so many who fail to see this obvious reality?

Bill Sorensen


Re Bill’s Quote

“True Christianity has always “seemed uncharitable” to non-Christians.”

Dear Bill

Respectfully, i do not think this statement is generically true. There are many non Chritians such as myself that think that Chchristianity has been invaluable to the world. I think the lesson of Christ’s selfless servive to mankind is a pervasive moral ethic deeply embedded in our western culture. For that I and many others are most grateful.

Charatibly
Your agnostic friend
Ken