

A BIBLICAL FAITH

As I write this a federal judge has just ruled that teaching “Intelligent Design” in public schools is unconstitutional (at least in the State of Pennsylvania). I want to say right up front that regardless of what Pat Robertson says I believe this is a good decision.

A lot has been spoken and written in recent months about this issue and there are those throughout our nation who have held their breath as this case was tried and then again as they waited for the judge to make a ruling.

What has been troubling for me is what I perceive to be the confusion and wasted energy that has been directed at this issue. Many have framed this as a matter of either being on God’s side or not. Pat Robertson even told the good people of Dover, PA that they had better not expect to be able to turn to God for help after having turned their backs on God.

From my perspective, this is nothing but foolishness. When the story of creation was first told and then written down thousands of years ago, science wasn’t the issue, but faith was. On top of that, we who are “western” in our way of thinking, prone to ask the question, “How did God create?” should never ask that kind of question of what is essentially “eastern” literature.

Let me explain. The Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament, is written from an “eastern” or what some might call an “Asian” perspective. For example, the proper question to be asked when reading the Creation story is, “WHY did God create?” This takes us in an entirely different direction than does the “How?” questions.

Faith is about asking a lot of “Why” questions, and is the reason the Creation story was written in the first place. Many of us have chuckled when we’ve watched a Jewish comedian make fun of his own culture by pointing out how questions are often answered with another question.

Neither Genesis nor any other book in the Bible was written to be used as a scientific text. They are books about faith in one God, rather than the many gods worshiped by the non-Jews in that part of the world.

Having said this, if you have been present when I officiated at a wedding, you have probably heard me make reference to both the Creation story and to the Garden of Eden.

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.^a
- 3 He leads me in right paths^b for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,^c

Now you may wonder how I can do that after having just said what I did about this portion of Genesis. Well, it’s easy because I believe that there are many spiritual truths contained in these stories. The exchange between Eve and the serpent is one of my favorites. The promise that the serpent makes to Eve if she eats the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil provides us with the foundation of all sinful behavior: We want to be like God!

Let me give you a few more illustrations as to why I think that it is best not to hold the scriptures up, especially the Hebrew Scriptures, as an example of good science.

In the 28th chapter of Job, God asks Job some very interesting questions. For centuries these questions influenced good people of faith to believe that the earth is

flat. God asks Job: 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements — surely you know! Who stretched the line upon it? 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone.

Ten chapters later, Job still needs to be educated, so God asks: 22 “Have you entered the storehouses (some translations say, “caves”) of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail.” A fourth grader today understands enough about meteorology to know how snow and hail are formed.

Our understanding of human conception has long since done away with the Bible’s concept of the male having the “seed,” which when “planted” the woman becomes its nurturer.

However, when we turn our attention toward our New Testament, we can ask almost any “western” question we want because all of these books were written in our thought form.

If you are interested in growing in your faith, as measured by your understanding of the Bible, I invite you to join me for a Bible study class that I’ll teach each Wednesday evening as part of our First Church Connection. We’ll begin on January 11, 2006.

