

PRESCIENCE PROPHECY: A PYRRHIC APOLOGETIC

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KEYWORDS

Prescience prophecy- prophecies of science rather than history, and so, designed and hidden insights into various facets of nature and science.

Phenomenological- describing things as they appear in nature to the average person, rather than their more literal essence, as seen in the sciences.

Nonpostulational- language and purpose in the Bible that does not address postulates or theories of a scientific nature but rather is teleologically oriented.

ABSTRACT

The worlds of science and the Bible represent two complementary sources of knowledge with different purposes, language, and methods. Linguistics is a main cause of conflict in science and Bible. Biblical language, aiming for relationship with God, is emotive and popular or the language of appearance. Science, concerned with physical and intermediate cause and effect, is precise, mechanistic and reductionistic. Scientific foreknowledge is more than just inerrancy claims and is logically classified as prescience prophecy. Yet, its innate misuse of the nature of science and Bible does not fit any biblical pattern of prophecy. A sampling of prescience prophecy shows a flawed hermeneutic which produces contradictory doctrines and a confused reliance on each generation's science.

INTRODUCTION

Our study will be primarily presuppositional rather than exegeting individual verses. Such is vital due to the perennial metamorphosis of each text which, like the blind man in a dark basement at night with the lights off, is trying to catch a black cat which isn't there. The hermeneutics of prescience will catch the cat anyway.

Science and theology are like the pair of eyes God gave us- both mutually helpful if cooperating. Bible and science bear many similarities from hermeneutics to models and language [1]. While any relation of science and Bible has its problems [74, p.129-149], there are also peculiar problems with something as basic as defining the nature and methods of science [44]; [46]. While there is a general "scientific method", such is the effect of several valid methods to establish laws [54], themselves but logical constructs subject to revision [89].

Kuhn's monumental work [44] showed every scientific method involves nonempirical or nonscientific elements. Antiquated logical positivism, as expressed by Francis Bacon, hinders both science and Bible research. The Baconian fallacy is that one can research with just the raw data or cold facts. There really are no preconceived questions, presuppositions, paradigms, prejudices, hypotheses, etc. Fischer's observation of a historian's work is also true of a scientist's: He is supposed to go a-wandering through the dark forest of the past, gathering facts like nuts and berries, until he has enough to make a general truth. Then he is to store up his general truths until he has the whole truth. This idea is doubly deficient, for it commits a historian to the pursuit of an impossible object by an impracticable method [26, p.4].

The Bible provides neither a scientific method nor a systematic cosmology. It speaks of all creation being totally dependent in its origin and existence on the will of God, Genesis 1.1ff; Acts 17.24; Romans 11.36. As one studies the origins of modern science and the history of the warfare between science and the Bible [43], he perceives that both scientist and Christian were at fault in the matter. Kuhn notes that

Scientist-historians and those who followed their lead characteristically imposed contemporary scientific categories, concepts, and standards on the past. Sometimes a specialty which they traced from antiquity had not existed as a recognized subject for study until a generation before they wrote. Nevertheless, knowing what belonged to it, they retrieved the current contents of the specialty from the past texts of a variety of heterogeneous fields, not noticing that the tradition they constructed in the process had never existed [45, p.149].

Likewise, a parallel exists today in religion. We take today's precise and empirical science and read it back into the biblical text, all the while failing to notice such "had never existed." It is not the nature of the Bible that creates this tension, most Bible-science arguments being philosophical rather than textual.

Thesis

Prescience prophecy is the teaching that the Bible, being God's word, contains many statements that are really forecasts or prophecies of then undiscovered and undiscoverable scientific truths. It is prophecy about science rather than history. If such predictions are truly in the Bible, then they are a powerful source of apologetic evidences. However, if such is not valid, it subverts faith in the Bible.

One reason for prescience prophecy's acceptance is a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of the Bible. Some maintain that the Bible is like science's modern methods- aiming for totality in precision of empirically describing nature. Hence, the Bible is designed by God to be a touchstone for any scientific idea.

A second problem is that prescience often refers to finding a final or ultimate scientific view of the real nature of things. But scientific foreknowledge is premised on scientific knowledge. Thus to claim for Bible verses a modern scientific nature does not give them ultimacy for the simple reason that science is not nor can it ever be a total picture of reality [80, p.20-21].

Such scientism demands an interpretation of verses that must have been meaningless and absurd to the original recipients and would have tied faith into the writer's own dated science. If the Bible had been written so as to reveal and rely upon any or each generations most advanced science or philosophy such would be as strange to them as a "green cheese moon" is to us or miracles to modern man.

In short, the Bible is written in the common man's language. To ignore this simple fact directly contributes to finding fantastic prescience facts only to be rejected the next generation by an updated science and hermeneutics. If the Bible spoke in an "ultimate" language none would understand it. And if it is put in 20th century scientific language, it would be grotesque and meaningless to most people today and to all previous and subsequent generations. To go to the Bible for "proof of science, for proof of prescience, for proof of the Bible, for proof of God" is a procedure founded in a mutated hermeneutic of both science and Bible [39, p.2:624].

Linguistic Labyrinth

"And then he took the helmet off again- but it took hours and hours to get me out [of it]. I was as fast as lightning, you know."

"But that's a different kind of fastness," Alice objected.

The Knight shook his head, "It was all kinds of fastness with me, I can assure you!"

[Lewis Carroll, Through The Looking-Glass.]

The differences in language and purpose of both science and Bible have long been recognized [95, p.142:195-208]. From the perspective of logic or linguistics it is errant to try to force into the scriptures a special Holy Ghost "scienteeese" language which is pregnant with occasional, but brilliant and revealing, insights into distant centuries of science [34, p.319]. These then are allegedly discovered by each generation as technology becomes Providence's sword to cut them open, their brilliance and inspiration shining forth.

Due to logical positivism's impact on science, religious language was considered neither true nor false but meaningless, though recent work in the philosophy of science refutes such treatment of theological language. Even in the most empirical of sciences nonempirical elements inhere [1, p.3-8]. Instead, science and the Bible are complementary, not contradictory, models [p.71-91]. Further, Kuhn historically illustrates that advocates of competing paradigms practice their disciplines in different worlds, and so will see different things looking at them from the same spot in the same direction [44, p.150].

This principle applies to both science and theology [87, p.406] and requires that we see the purpose and nature of what we study, not just "hard facts." The reductionistic and analytical methods of science are legitimate and

helpful but in theology they produce not only the death of God but the death of man. A text without a context is but a pretext, and with prescience is but a physics turned philosopher. Such scientism sees the scientific method as the greatest, if not the only, path to truth and will read biblical texts this way, producing both prescience and false prophecy proofs.

Purpose

Even without any proof of prescience prophecies in the Bible some find it very difficult, in view of the doctrine of inspiration, to accept the fact that the Bible's language is not scientifically precise. To some, taking the language of the Bible as anything less than "final and absolute and perfect" is blasphemy. But the issue involves more than prescience [90].

Purpose is central to shaping the type of language we use. Several points arise here. The "Bible, in its references to nature, is concerned primarily with purpose. Pattern is related to purpose through plan. The Bible has much to say on the subject of purpose, plan, and pattern in nature" [66, p.5:294]. The Bible, in contrast to science, is theocentric or describes things, including nature, in terms of God's role. Thus all causal links are theological rather than intermediate. It is not Aristotle's efficient cause, but the formal and final causes or the plan and purpose the Bible focuses on [41, p.176]. For example, the Bible writers' primary paradigm is that of a theocentric universe rather than a geo- or helio-centric solar system.

Efforts to "scientize" the Bible have led to endless levels of distinctions which the Bible never intended for itself. Calovius' Systema Locorum Theologicorum is a good illustration of ancient scholastic distinctions of *causes* being applied to theology: 1) *causa efficiens*, 2) *causa impulsiva*, 3) *causa instrumentalis*, 4) *materia creationis*, 5) *forma creationis*, 6) *fias creationis*, 7) *tempus creationis*, and 8) *consequentia creationis* [21, p.94]. Even "meaning" has twenty three definitions [64 p.186f] and "word" fragments into many specialized definitions [91, p.27]. Causation in science is not equal to purpose in theology. Even "truth" is different in logic and Bible [60; 31, p.23].

Both the respective works of McMillen and Barfield show that in the Bible there are many dietary and preventive laws that make excellent health sense and are uncorrupted by pagan concepts. Yet, the Bible was not designed to be an anthology of medical practices any more than it is to be for any other discipline. England [24, p.146], sympathetic to the possibility of a few cases of "scientific forethought" in health areas, yet wisely says that the OT "medical" practices such as not eating blood Lev. 3.17; 17.10-13; 1 Sam. 14.31-35; Ezek. 33.25 were for spiritual reasons. This was the most important element in the Bible's paradigm of redemption [35, p.191]. Being popular language, it is wrong to charge the Bible with error from ignorance in its times. Yet, since it is not written as some special ultimate language and modern medical law, it is thus also wrong to charge it elsewhere with brilliant prescientific insights, as if such were its purpose.

Second, purpose always limits a topic whether theological or scientific. If the primary purpose for the Bible's existence is to secure man's fellowship with God (1 Jn. 1.1-3), then everything within the Bible is designed from before creation to meet this goal (Eph. 1.3; 3.10f). Yet, we see that some things within the Bible are themselves limited, even for this goal. Thus, the Bible can speak of God's revealed will being spiritual, holy, good and perfect (Rom. 7.12ff) yet also being imperfect, weak and useless (Heb. 7.18f). It speaks of Christ's perfect sacrifice for sins "once for all time," (Heb. 7.26f) yet there being a lacking in it (Col. 1.24). It speaks of the Bible being the very mind and words of God (1 Cor. 2.13) yet it is in the koine or common man's Greek, with all of its limits. It speaks of Jesus as Deity (John 1.1) yet living in the flesh as human (v.14; Phil. 2.5ff) with its many limitations.

From a hermeneutical perspective, prescience is the result of a concordant view of science and Scripture, treating Bible topics as but simple points to look up as with words in a concordance. From a philosophical perspective its presupposition is that of a concordist view of Bible and science. Such appears to be but an updated version of Origen's allegorical method of interpretation. To Origen's literal, moral, spiritual and analogical senses was added a fifth, scientific meaning [41, p.259]. Such an allegorical method capitalizes on imagination and ignorance, breeding a speculative theology reminiscent of cultic abuse of analogy, forever envisioning fantastic discoveries of modern times in the Bible text.

The Bible nowhere presents a systematized hermeneutic even of itself, much less a single "scientific method." Its very purpose is to spiritually prepare man (2 Tim. 3.16f). It is not arranged as a systematic psychology [19] a systematic history [52], a systematic cosmology [71, p.69] or a systematic theology [13, p.65-95]. We are not to bring our own modern scientific categories into the ancient texts as if these categories and doctrines are either ultimate standards or concepts the original writers were aware of. Such a Pyrrhic victory, while embellishing the Bible with glory, elevates science into a holy dogma [3, p.26]

Differences in Bible and science statements can be reconciled, but it requires careful handling of matters of both fact and faith [29, p.211-212]. Differences involve the anthropological nature of scripture where nature, God, heaven and hell are described by thought forms common to any age rather than in the dated language of each generation's scientific terminology. In no way does this accommodation affect the truth or the religious value of the passage.

That which is declared is real, but only intelligible to men through their language and in their thought form [22, p.1:34-35]. While God accommodates himself to man's understanding this "accommodatio or condescensio" refers to the method or mode of revelation, God's infiniteness incarnated in finite form, not to the quality of the revelation" [58, p.19].

Language

To classify the Bible's language as different than science's is not to limit it but to loose it for its rightful role. Without this innate self-limiting, any discipline becomes but a Humpty-Dumpty logic where words mean nothing precisely because they mean everything. Even within the broad area of "science" one cannot automatically equate the same terms from different disciplines. An elementary rule of hermeneutics is that *context* defines each word. Thus, even in strict Bible study one learns to recognize that words do not mean the same thing in different settings- as Alice experienced with the White Knight. A number of points emerge.

First, for God to reach all men of all ages He wrote the Bible so even the least educated and unscientific of men could understand it. This was by using a koine or an "overlap" language used by men of all social levels [63, p.120-125]. He did not aim at meticulous precision but phrased things as they commonly or normally are seen by man. Popular language must of necessity contain generalized numbers, imprecise quotations, and non chronological narration, but such is not error unless intended to be measured by modern scientific precision [27, p.221].

Second, this type of popular language has the value of being permanent and pervasive. Despite "all scientific advancement the world still speaks, and probably ever will continue to speak, of the sun's rising and setting" [86, p.539]. When the Bible speaks of nature, its references are simply observations of things as they appear, without being shaped by some now obsolete theory or without being explained by some as yet unintelligible, ultimate theory of the future. Furthermore, the Bible, as any discipline, develops its own uniqueness in language due to its own peculiar purpose and nature [28, p.166].

Third, the misunderstanding of Bible language may not only create prescience discoveries but may just as consistently create false prophecy proofs where the "methods of modern science are applied to Bible study; thorough analysis followed by careful synthesis" consisting of precise charting out of literalized detail [49, p.60]. It is a failure to understand or utilize the differences in the language of science and Scripture, which creates both the desire to "scientize" Scripture and the attendant problems in so doing. Scientific language is highly specialized and nonemotive, seeking to systematically classify experience under increasingly detailed categories defined by meticulously specialized vocabularies. This is all in contrast to both the purpose and language of the Bible itself. Prescience prophecy is a good example of what Nida terms "a kind of linguistic mathematics" [62, p.223].

Fourth, if the Bible has pre scientific prophecies, then it also has errant verses with false science. The same literalizing, mixing of purposes and etymologizing equally proves both prescience, false science and cultic prophecies.

For example, the Bible's nonscientific classification of the coney and the hare (Lev. 11.5.6; Deut. 14.7), and the ant (Prov. 6.6-8; 30.25), can only be non contradictory to scientific categories by recognizing the phenomenological and nonpostulational nature of Bible language. While there is "cause and effect" in the Bible, it is a very different kind than science studies. The Bible has its focus on the ultimate, not mediate, cause of a thing. Science is just the reverse of this in purpose and methodology.

This is not errancy unless one assumes some sort of scientific precision is intrinsic in the Bible's language, such being a modern categorization superimposed upon an ancient text. Further, the writers of the Bible books were not obligated to digress into a dissertation of some scientific categorization even if the popular view of the reader/hearer was errant according to science's classification]. Popular language always uses this liberty, but it is not therefore chargeable with error [50, p.9:448].

Quite often ancient etymological root meanings and modern terms are sources of prescience proofs. Such is but a radical and mutated form of what Cotterell and Turner call "etymologizing, namely anachronism; that is the explanation to etymologizing in terms of senses which only developed later" [16, p.133]. Indeed, with enough Humpty Dumpty logic and twisted hermeneutics we could ex nihilo create any type of prescience, but a foolish historian of the future may do the same with us from the same linguistic gymnastics.

The Bible clearly does not profess to anticipate later generation's scientific discoveries, historically always "ours." Rather, nature is described as it appears, not as science defines it. Wise expositors of the Scriptures, older and younger, have always recognized this [65, p.1:340].

Errancy?

Truth is like strands of a rope; each complementing the other though each strand may be distinguished. Science

and Bible are like this. The Bible's phenomenological language is intended to present only a descriptive view of how things normally appear. The corollary of this is that the Bible does not speculate on the actual nature of things by giving a systematic theory of the sciences [72, p.210].

In the Bible the whole of the universe is viewed from the perspective of humans standing upon the planet earth and looking all about and above them. This is a universal practice for humans, even though it differs markedly with today's modern scientific language. Each is accurate and useful to its intended purpose [97, p.1:267].

The Bible's purpose being spiritual and not scientific, causes it to lack scientific precision, as is seen in its use of several words, phrases, or books, to describe a thing [4]. If we understood this view of Scripture we would "avoid borrowing modern scientific canons to defend the accuracy and reliability of the Bible" [37, p 9]. The Bible has its own glory and honor in its intended purpose. In this, it is all sufficient and uniquely permanent (2 Tim. 3.16f; Eph. 3.3ff; Jude 3). A true test of commitment to inerrancy is whether ones hermeneutic is tied to scientific or philosophical systems. Anytime the Bible is equated with a particular philosophy or science the Bible dies when that philosophy or science dies [8, p.268-270]. When our physics and metaphysics are married then science and theology will end up divorced [42, p.137].

While but a probability in principle, historically it is a certainty which destroys the Bible's credibility in more important areas [7, p.24:3-22]. We can always look backward in time and laugh at attempts to prove the agreement between Biblical infallibility and scientific findings [68, p.3:21-25]. But we must remember that the same thing will be done by future generations as they look back on our alleged prescience prophecies. Arguing that the tree of knowledge in Genesis 2.17 "could, in modern language, be translated as being a central computer, since knowledge is the important concept rather than the tree" [32, p.60] is a perfect example of this.

Woodbridge shows that accepting the Bible's limits on science is neither unscriptural nor recent [96, p.257-264]. The Bible was well on its way to cutting its ties with science by the second half of the seventeenth century. But, as Carson observed this uncoupling was usually followed by a shift to a liberal theological position that no longer affirmed the infallibility of Scripture [12, p.15].

Such, a shift, however, is not logically necessary. It represented a case of dethroning man's errant views of Bible and science. Scripture is written in popular language, precluding both today's precision and prescience. If it were not so written it would require one to think and see through the eyes of an ideal language framework which is not only worlds apart from the language patterns of the biblical writings but also quite foreign and elusive to our own most disciplined linguistic usage [34, p.259].

This approach does not admit of errancy in any area, but it allows the universality of the Bible to convey its perennial message. It does not contaminate but commonizes the Bible. As Jaki concludes,

the whole history of metaphysics shows that metaphysical systems were to be discredited in the measure in which they were grafted on a particular form of physics. When the physics in question was simply a parody of physics, as a so-called "higher" physics had to be, then the force of logic asserted itself with fearful rapidity [42, p.137].

What Is Prescience?

Though eclectic in usage, the common theme of prescience is that of designed, hidden insights into future understandings of nature, indiscernible until later scientific technologies discover them. Some classify it with prophecy. Others as but natural expressions of an omniscient God. A few claim it is merely unknowable error free statements on nature. Most, however, end up with a combination of these methods, plus whatever else seems to work. One is reminded of the conversation between Alice and Humpty Dumpty:

"You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir," said Alice. "Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called Jabberwocky?"

"I can explain all the poems that ever were invented- and a good many that haven't been invented just yet."

I have never found a lack of ability on the part of some to create meanings in prescience texts- even ones not yet thought up! Let's look at these three main positions in reverse order.

First, if prescience prophecies are only unknowable error free statements about nature then we must (1) prove such was undiscoverable to other nations; (2) prove prescience is the goal of the text; and (3) see that any such statements of prescience will only use normal language.

Second, if prescience proofs are planned and purposeful, what is their purpose but to show the Bible is from a God of prophecy? "Show us the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods" (Isa. 41.23) now

becomes an excellent statement of what prescience is supposed to achieve- prophecy. Hence, we are lead to the only consistent position for prescience. Yet, we must remember:

- (1) Accuracy of a statement of future events is not proof of inspiration or prophecy, for luck or prognostication achieve this.
- (2) A close parallel to an event and a prophecy does not prove it is the fulfillment of the prophecy, prescience or otherwise. Similarity is not the same as synonymous.
- (3) Whatever is allowed as proof of prescience prophecy must also be allowed as proof of historical prophecy. If etymological roots, similarity with modern words, etc. proves prescience then they also may prove false prophecy of cultists.
- (4) There is a pattern to prophecy in the Bible though it may be eclectic, Hebrews 1.1. Prescience prophecy must fit into that pattern if it is to be accepted as genuine. If we claim for prescience the same honors and rights we give prophecy, then it must submit to the same qualifications and traits (51, p.147-184, 277-335).

Science's nature, our first area of concern, is such that it speaks a different language from a different purpose than the Bible. Prescience proofs are not fundamentally arguments on Bible inspiration; rather, they are statements about the nature of science and its language. Thus the Bible should not be used as either a science textbook or a prescience source book. In order to see how defective this approach is, consider applying it in the opposite manner: let us practice going to the technical, scientific journals and books and finding there the answers to the meaning and purpose of life. But is not this the very criticism which is rightly leveled at scientism's abuse of science; that it purports to be some sort of ultimate epistemology and ontology? Then by what hermeneutical process are we to justify it with the Bible toward scientific truths?

When one states that a verse is prescience prophecy, we need to ask, "Whose science?" Is it first or fifteenth or twentieth century science? All science is dated and relative, never final and exhaustive. Is one saying that a word or phrase that is used in the Bible (Hebrew, Greek, English) is identical in meaning with the same word (or word "type") used in today's science? Such no more proves prescience than pretend prophecy.

If prescience prophecy truly speaks of a deeper, hidden nature of reality, then it must speak in the scientific language of a given generation, each of which must change. If all prescience prophecy belongs to one generation then it will prove to be worthless to future generations. If it is not, then it is still cryptic and confusing as the Bible would be filled with hidden and "mixed" science from many ages. How are we to tell which proof is for which age because the relation and practice of each age is that "they all had her" (Matt. 22.28)?

Prophecy's nature is our second area of concern. With any claim of a prescience prophecy we should begin by asking "How do you know such is prophecy?"

First, prescience prophecies are said to be divinely revealed insights undiscoverable to a given generation. To so prove this point one must have an exhaustive knowledge of ancient cultures. Most prescience proofs fail here, either assuming or generalizing the ignorance of the ancients.

Second, what about the central criterion used to test other prophecies, namely, the meaning of such to contemporary hearers? Historical prophecy would be of little or no value to first century Christians if it spoke in detail about Hitler, Pope John Paul II, the Viet Nam war, etc. How much more worthless is it for ancient Hebrew saints to be told cryptically about quantum physics, Einstein's theories of relativity, and modern telecommunications? If pre scientific proofs did exist, the original hearers, the prime recipients, would be able to neither confirm nor understand it. If, as the factuality of the case would prove to be, such pre scientific proofs are stated in vague and cryptic language, then they are worthless precisely because they can mean anything. Hence, they mean nothing! With such prescience proofs one is at a loss to conjecture its real value for the many generations who perused it during the intervening millenniums [fifty-nine centuries], and may marvel still more to observe that after this long waiting it has so slight an influence on the average skeptic! The radical fallacy of all these pompous claims is the tacit assumption that the Scriptures were designed to anticipate the discoveries of science [85, p.43].

The third aspect of prescience and prophecy is their verification in the N.T. There are several NT keys to fulfilled prophecy: "This is that", Acts 2.16; time words, Daniel 2.44; parallels, Isaiah 2.2f & Micah 4.1f; and Christ, Luke 24.25ff. Yet are there any cases where a N.T. inspired writer said, "This is that..." when quoting an O.T. pre scientific prophecy in the N.T.? Never do we find even the vaguest hint of such in the N.T. It is true, that there is a wide variety of the use of prophecy in the Bible (Nicole), but we never find even one case of such prescience prophecy quoted. Why do we, however, find literally hundreds of cases in Scripture of promarturomenon (forewitnessing, 1 Peter 1.11) about Christ yet never one single case of a prescience prophecy? It is for the simple reason that such

does not exist.

For example, over twenty-five percent of the Bible is of predictive material, or prophecy [67, p.13]. Out of the 31,124 verses of the Bible 8,352 (or, 27%) of these contain predictive material. Never once in 31,124 verses does the Bible quote or allude to prescience prophecy. Such a vacuum of data hardly justifies utilization of alleged prescience proofs as strong apologetic arguments, and it weakens the use of prophecy in other areas by diluting its nature. We should expect at least one clear N.T. quotation to establish a "type" or pattern of sorts [67]. Yet, there is not a single one to be found despite a massive amount of O.T. quotations in the N.T. [59; 61]. Without exception, all purported prescience proofs are historically fulfilled a posteriori, itself reflective of a defunct hermeneutic.

Finally, accepting the phenomenological and non-postulational nature of Bible descriptions frees it to be relevant for all ages. Not so if we take them as ultimate or hidden precise concepts. Without such a hermeneutical principle to guide us, prescience proofs become the proverbial enigma wrapped inside a mystery and cloaked within a riddle.

Prescience Proofs

"Reality is harsh to the feet of shadows" - [C. S. Lewis, The Great Divorce]

There are several writers who argue for and cite many alleged prescience prophecies: Barfield, Bouw, Cairney, McMillen, DeHoff, Henry Morris, Rimmer, Schnabel, Segerberg, C. R. Smith, Thompson & Jackson, and Wallace. Wallace, for example, cites five areas [92, p.22-27] and gives ten specific cases [93, p.42-46] which include such proofs "on matters of science and invention" as the telegraph and radio, modern aviation and the atomic theory.

Thompson and Jackson, while rejecting such application of prescience to inventions or technology, yet apply it to fifteen scientific discoveries [88, p.125-137]. Schnabel cites 30 cases from six categories of modern science (astronomy, physics, biology, etc.) which, he says, by a "simple, direct interpretation" [ii] of the Bible's "non-scientific terms" [iii] reveals "an amazingly accurate knowledge which will "predescribe later scientific discoveries" [iii]. Cairney claims the Bible "predicts" in "phenomenal detail and with incredible accuracy" [11, p.125] such modern discoveries. These all are but a few in the long history of failures, not only of specific cases but, of this whole approach [10; 43; 71].

Ravens & Desks

Rarely do those who cite prescience prophecies bother to develop their hermeneutical proof. Even rarer is their exegesis of the fundamental interrelation of science, language, and prophecy. If cultists were as hermeneutically negligent, we would reject their proofs a priori on the basis of viable presuppositional premises. Indeed, this same hermeneutical approach is used by religions of every nature to prove their divineness. Such a hermeneutic logically requires that we:

- (1) apply it consistently throughout the Bible, creating unavoidable contradictions.
- (2) allow it with all other religions from Nostradamus' prophecies [73, p.167] to Islam's Qur'an [9; 38] to Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism [84; 98].

For example, while Plato accepted the logical possibility of a multiplicity of powerful and intelligent beings, the great Isaac Newton, also from a philosophical basis, added a new element to it, showing it is a universe, not a multiverse. Around this analogy he would build all of his science [25, p.1:674]. In more modern times, Henry Morris [55], uses such analogy to prove creation reveals "the Trinity."

Analogy is an innate part of reason in any discipline, being historically the most fruitful way of integrating science and theology [21, p.286-287]. But, Lewis Carroll's question "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" is rhetorical, pointing out anything can be compared to anything and thus similarity is not sameness [57, p.163].

Prescience prophecy commits the hermeneutical fallacy of what Lockhart termed "disconnected particulars" [48, p.176-178]. By the overextending of parallels in an analogy, as some do with parables, or by overstress on peripheral details, it forces passages to yield more than what they were meant to. Our objection is the requirement that biblical interpretation has to keep up with scientific speculation, shifting its hermeneutic and exegesis with each new theory or discovery [23, p.46].

Simply put, it is not enough to show parallels by analogy. If we claim for the Bible the glory of science we must accept what makes it so: "sharp antithesis and rigorous dichotomous divisions based on logical principles of contradiction and excluded middle [15, p. 85-86]. A raven may be like a writing desk for a good number of reasons, but scientifically such proofs are "stuff and nonsense."

Those Ignorant Ancients!

Without a doubt the very thought of an earth that spins about 1000 mph on its axis as it rushes about 70,000 mph around the sun which is 93,000,000 miles away, as it soars about 1,000,000 mph around a galaxy that is flying several million mph through an expanding universe [40, p. 56] would have been laughed at by ancient cultures. Yet a common assumption with prescience prophecy is that the ancients knew almost nothing about nature.

Prescience prophecy, based on such assumed ignorance, is just another form of arguing from silence- "I don't know they knew this so they didn't." History of science is filled with a wide spectrum of facts ancient man knew in Bible days, from medical advancement [5], the revolving of earth around the sun [36, p. 70], the Earth free floating in space [17, p. xiv] and the sizes and distances of planets in our system [47, p.72].

The reason we cite these few cases is not that any or all of them necessarily predate Bible statements, such being irrelevant. Rather, they are cited to show that awareness of them arose independent of special divine revelation. In other words, if the ancients were not nearly as unaware or ignorant in their knowledge of nature and sciences as some assume and argue they were, then many statements of biblical writers could be but expressions of common knowledge or, at least, knowable by uninspired insight. While I have elsewhere [33] examined several cases in greater detail, we will here examine only one case, focusing upon the hermeneutics and exegesis of the practice.

Daily Rotation Of The Earth

Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place; that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like clay under the seal; and they stand forth like a garment. And from the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken, [Job 38.12-15].

It is argued that "changed" connoted the meaning of to change by turning or rotating as, in the context, the signet seal rotates over the clay, changing its appearance. So, it is argued, Job speaks pre scientifically of the yet unknown fact that the sun (= ring) changes the earth (= clay) as the clay/earth rotates daily and the ring/sun is stationary. Clearly, they say, this is a prescience prophecy.

First, when the original readers heard these words what did they mean to them? Did they understand the text to be teaching a spherical rotating earth with a stationary sun or the common optical view of a natural phenomenon? England, sympathetic toward the possibility of a few prescience proofs, observes that Job 38 is one of the most greatly abused sections of nature passages in the Bible [24, p.139].

Second, notice what Job does not say. He does not say the earth rotates/revolves daily around a fixed sun (= eisegesis). He does speak of God's power to control nature (= exegesis).

Third, critical commentators disagree with this prescience view. Delitzsch [20, p.2:316] says that "the dawn is like the signet ring, which stamps a definite impress on the earth as the clay." Rawlinson adds that,

as the seal changed the clay from a dull, shapeless lump to a figured surface, so the coming of the dawn changes the earth from an indistinct mass to one diversified with form and color [75, p.7:610].

Fourth, the verses present a similitude where parts of nature (dawn and earth) are compared to or are "like" something else (a seal and changed clay). One should accept a simple, normal reading of the passage, not a forced reading of etymology. We are told that the primary meaning is to change. The secondary meaning is an imprint itself made by the seal, and the third level of meaning is rolling or rotating with a seal. Finally, the true meaning here, we are told, is the third one. Suppose we did this with heaven or hell in the Bible? This is but an example of the fallacy of etymological primacy.

Fifth, what else does this approach prove? If dawn's coming and earth being "changed as clay" prove a rotating sphere, then dawn's taking "hold of the ends of the earth" proves a nonspherical earth (flat, square or triangular?). In the first case it is specifically called a likeness or similarity ("like", "as") but in the latter (earth's "ends") no such words are used. Further, the dawn "takes hold of" earth's ends. Can we see here a "solar powered" earth rotation (and I had always believed that the winds blew on the mountains and spun it around)? Maybe this refers to the "ghost in the atom" of quantum physics? Also, if this proves a spherical rotation, why not also pantheism, since it speaks of dawn as intelligent ("commanded" and to "know" things)?

Sixth, this passage is enmeshed in the old Ptolemaic vs. Copernican solar system model, both of which have been argued from the Bible. Martin Luther vilified Copernicus' model [94, p.1:126] but Galileo, using the same Bible, argued Joshua's command for the sun to stand still best fit the Copernican model, not the Ptolemaic one. His proof (adopting his opponent's hermeneutics) was Proverbs 8.26 ("hinges" of the earth), where "hinges" would be

meaningless unless the earth turned on them [79, p.47]!

Seventh, let us grant the thesis that this verse does teach a rotating earth and stationary sun. What then is proven: prescience prophecy? Not unless all other Bible references are either silent on the matter or concur with the same paradigm, and further, that we know it took special revelation to learn it. We find neither alternative in the Bible's picture. In it the sun moves (Josh. 10.12f; Ps. 19.6f; Eccl. 1.5; Isa. 38.8) and simultaneously the earth is stationary (Ps. 18.7; 24.2; 104.5; Eccl. 1.4; Job 38.4; 2 Pet. 3.5; Rev. 6.14). What the Bible here presents (to acquiesce the point) as a rotating earth and stationary sun it elsewhere (and in a far more historical, rather than poetic, setting) presents as a moving sun and a stationary earth (Joshua 10.12f). What prescience prophecy ignores is a simple hermeneutical fact: biblical language employs an eclectic range of words and models for greater richness, not science's specialized reductionistic terminology.

If one argues that Joshua does not contradict Job here because Joshua spoke (though in a historical context) of the optical view of things, we simply reply, "Prove it." What is the hermeneutic or exegesis which differentiates the two viewpoints, and why does not Job speak optically rather than strictly empirically in his poetical section? Such remarkable homemade hermeneutics lies at the root of Henry Morris' peculiar prescience prophecies. This leads to our final point on this passage.

Eighth, while prescience prophecy often comes across as a simple "just-believe-the-Bible" approach which glorifies God (with opponents cast in quite the opposite light), it really is often rooted in an inordinate affection for science's analytical and empirical methods and is built on a faulty hermeneutic. Again, we cite the Copernician model as an historical example. It was accepted despite the fact that there were three different types of evidences that were presented against it: theological, philosophical and experiential. Since this relates to Joshua's command for the sun to stand still, it raises the issue of interfacing or correlating the hermeneutics of both theology and science [70, p.283-348; 69].

The philosophical and presuppositional basis of many "Bible-science" conflicts is illustrated here. The basis of moving from one model of creation (or parts of it) to another was based most often in the philosophical rather than the scientific or biblical realms. There were many metaphysical presuppositions inherent in the conflicts, such as whether the solar system was geocentric or heliocentric. These assumptions involved things such as the concepts of the four elements, the immutability of the heavens, the necessity of circular motion, the subtlety of the heavens and of the baser earth, the tendency for things to seek their appropriate place with reference to the heavens and earth, the centrality and immobility of the earth. Only for the latter- the centrality and immobility of the earth- could Biblical passages be marshaled... In this total picture the Biblical and strictly scientific elements were indeed meager [21, p. 23].

If Joshua's command is interpreted, not as a normal descriptive phrase but, in scientific precision, then it means that the sun itself was what was moving around the earth. But this is contradictory to the model and to empirical facts as we now know them. We may summarize the hermeneutical and philosophical problems by stating that perhaps we should argue a more sophisticated interpretation by claiming that "God stopped the sun" means that he stopped it in its motion relative to the earth. This is no longer contradictory to the Copernician system. But now the question arises: Should we adopt a simple mathematical description and a complicated, rather "unnatural" interpretation of the Bible or a more complicated mathematical description (motion in loops) and a simple "natural" interpretation of the biblical text [29, p.211-212]?

When considering the role of the critical precision of modern science and the koine (common) Greek of the N.T. days, the Christian will select a koiné Bible and a critical science hermeneutic. Both are "correct" but for their respective purposes.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is God's plenary inspired book and therefore inerrant in all areas in its intended purpose. Without doubt prescience prophecy arises from a godly desire to defend God's word. Yet, to the degree that prescience prophecies are shown spurious, they will degrade the value of genuine prophecy and inerrancy. We must not throw out the baby with the bath water for "it is one thing to read modern scientific theory into ancient poetry, but it is another to exclude space-time affirmations from the book authored by the Creator of the physical universe" [30, p 13].

Leading men of science once claimed to be able to see flocks of marching sheep, tiny horses, large eared donkeys, roosters, and even humans who married and had children- all inside the seminal fluid of the respective animals. Clark observes that religious folks, not to be outdone in the field of science, used the Bible as a proof-text. Hebrews 7.9f was supposed to prove that Levi was living inside Abraham and paying tithes [14, pp. 20-24]. Indeed, the thought is father to the act, and necessity is the mother of invention.

The history of the tension between science and the Bible, especially prescience cases, reveals a pattern.

Prescience arguments, once so popular and powerful with both the public and Christians, are much like a retarded stepchild we were forced to adopt due to the necessity of circumstances. But then we politely shuffle him off into the back room because we realize he has come with more problems than he solves. To change metaphors, what began as an uneasy marriage has turned out to be an embarrassing divorce. "...your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God", 1 Corinthians 2.5.

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