

truth! If, however, it does not so conform, then reject it, for it is ignorance."

The Origin Of The Universe

Bahá'ís believe that the universe has always existed in some form, but that it evolves from state to another. Any reference to "creation" in the Bahá'í Writings does not imply an instant appearance in a static form. Scientific theory has likewise concluded that the universe has no beginning, because the current "Big Bang" theory can only trace the history of the universe to a fraction of a second after the "Bang", and is not yet able to discover what form the universe took before the "Bang" or why the "Bang" occurred.

The current theory is therefore a theory of evolution of the universe, and not a theory of its creation. Time is one of the dimensions used for comparison and measurement within the universe, as are the three traditional dimensions. The implication is that the questions, "Where did the universe come from?" and, "How did it begin?" are simply the wrong questions to ask. Science is currently unable to answer these questions, just as it cannot make any statement on the existence of God as the Creative Force. For this reason, we have to turn to religion for guidance:

"Know that it is one of the most abstruse spiritual truths that the world of existence, that is to say this endless universe, has no beginning....Know that....a creator without a creature is impossible, a provider without those provided for cannot be conceived; for all the divine names and attributes demand the existence of beings. If we could imagine a time when no beings existed, this imagination would be the denial of the Divinity of God. Moreover, absolute non-existence cannot become existence. If the beings were absolutely non-existent, existence would not have come into being."

The Bahá'í Writings affirm the existence of creatures on other planets:

"Know thou that every fixed star has its own planets, and every planet its own creatures, whose number no man can compute."

The Evolution Of Humanity

The Bahá'í Writings use the development of the human embryo as proof of the development of man as a species. From a tiny cell, it passes through various stages, in some of which it really does not resemble a human being at all. At one stage the embryo even has a tail. However, at every stage it is destined to reach human form:

"...it is clear that this terrestrial globe in its present form did not come into existence all at once; but....gradually passed through different phases until it became adorned with its present perfection....Man, in the beginning of his existence and in the womb of the earth, like the embryo in the womb of the mother, gradually grew and developed, and passed from one form to another....It is certain that in the beginning he had not this loveliness and grace and elegance, and that he only by degrees attained this shape, this form, this beauty, and this grace....man's existence on this earth, from the beginning until it reaches this state, form, and condition, necessarily lasts a long time....But from the beginning of man's existence he is a distinct species."

The story of Adam and Eve has been taken literally by many people.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh (the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith), comments on this story:

"If we take this story in its apparent meaning....it is indeed extraordinary.

The intelligence cannot accept it, affirm it, or imagine it; for such arrangements, such details, such speeches and reproaches are far from being those of an intelligent man, how much less of the Divinity - that Divinity who has organised this infinite universe in the most perfect form, and its innumerable inhabitants with absolute system, strength, and perfection....

Therefore this story of Adam and Eve....must be thought of simply as a symbol."

Harmony of Religion and Science

As mankind moves into a new era, the advantages bestowed by both religion and science need to be woven together in order for civilisation to progress. There are a number of implications in this principle:

Religion should be able to give moral and ethical guidance in areas where scientific advance could lead to new areas of uncertainty, as in genetic experiments, transgenic experimentation, fertilisation of eggs from foetuses, etc.

Religion should guide science ethically, and put to good uses rather than bad.

It should be able to create new bases for human happiness. Bahá'ís look to the creation, in the very near future, of a world peace treaty. The excesses of unbridled military invention will be curbed, and technological advance be encouraged as the servant of world peace.

Science should be able to provide more answers to those global problems which as yet have not been seriously addressed, such as initiating a genuine worldwide administrative communications system, solving world food production and distribution problems, and meaningfully tackling worldwide pollution.

While the exact course of the future is clearly speculation, the general principle remains that religion and science, as complementary aspects of human life, need to be seen as two wings which must work together.

A Glorious Future

Scientific investigation has shown that all human beings are of the same species, and therefore one in principle. It is the Bahá'í view that religion must unite humanity to become one human family in practice, and that this is one of the major purposes of the Bahá'í revelation. The scientific recognition of humanity as one kind must replace the prejudice of race, class, colour and creed so prevalent in the world today. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

"When religion, shorn of its superstitions, traditions and unintelligent dogmas, shows its conformity with science, then there will be a great unifying, cleansing force in the world, which will sweep before it all wars, disagreements, discords and struggles, and then will mankind be united in the power of the love of God."

"There is no contradiction between true religion and science. When a religion is opposed to science it becomes mere superstition: that which is contrary to knowledge is ignorance."

"'Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, said: 'That which is in conformity with science is also in conformity with religion.' Whatever the intelligence of man

cannot understand, religion ought not to accept. Religion and science walk hand in hand, and any religion contrary to science is not the truth."

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