



SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE



BIBLE CONFERENCE

by Carl W. Deems, Th. D.

WHAT IS SCIENCE?

INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson I will be covering the topic of science. First, I will give various definitions for science. Then I will give four assumptions that science is based on and show that not all things important in life are scientific. Next, I will discuss some problems with “uniformitarianism” (one of the tenants of “naturalistic” science) and then finally, I will discuss why the Bible is important when it comes to scientific thought and study.

WHAT IS SCIENCE?

The word "science" itself is derived from the Latin "scientia" ("knowledge"), and this is essentially what it means. A more formal definition, as given in the Oxford dictionary is:

"A branch of study which is concerned either with a connected body of demonstrated truths or with observed facts systematically classified and more or less colligated by being brought under general laws, and which includes trustworthy methods for the discovery of new truth within its own domain."

Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary gives this definition:

"In a general sense, knowledge, or certain knowledge; the comprehension or understanding of truth or facts by the mind. 'The science of God must be perfect.' In philosophy, a collection of the general principles or leading truths relating to any subject. Pure science. As the mathematics, is built on self-evident truths; but the term science is also applied to other subjects founded on generally acknowledged truths, as metaphysics; or on experiment and observation, as chemistry and natural philosophy; or even to an assemblage of the general principles of an art, as the science of agriculture; the science of navigation."

Dr. Henry Morris views science in this way. He says that science involves facts that can be observed and scientific laws that can and have been demonstrated. He notes that the scientific method involves experimental "reproductability", with like causes producing like effects. It is knowledge, not inference or speculation or extrapolation. With true science, this is necessarily limited to the measurement and study of present phenomena and processes.

Morris says that scientific laws are formulated when it is observed that you can get the same "data" (results) by doing the same experiment over and over. Morris calls this "predictive value for the correlation of similar data obtained from like experiments in the future." Therefore, science deals with the data and processes of the present, which can be experimentally measured and observationally verified. Said another way, you more or less have to "be there" and "see" the results.

Dr. Jack Sears, who is an instructor at the University of Texas, and a tour lecturer for the American Chemical Society, says that science is a dynamic enterprise. It is an approach to truth that is ever changing. He gives the example of how much Chemistry has changed in just the few short years he has been studying and teaching it. The "truth" of science has a habit of changing in time. Science he says is based on four basic assumptions:

1. Nature is understandable
2. All nature is subject to the same laws
3. Measurable cause underlies all observable effects
4. The simplest explanation is the accepted one

Put another way, Sears says that science deals with only that which is timeless, repeatable at will, dependable, and universal. In other words the scientist works only on phenomena that won't change tomorrow or the next day. For example, the scientist expects the laws governing gravity to be the same today as tomorrow. But science is not all that exists.

Nor is the realm of things in his definition of science the only things important. Here again, Sears gives the example of a birth. It happens but once for the individual and cannot be duplicated but it is important. So too the signing of certain documents like the Declaration of Independence. These are individual events, which occur in a moment's time, yet they cannot be duplicated. As a result, they cannot fit into the realm of science.

With respect to the repeatability of "uniformitarianism," the premise on which evolution and naturalistic science is based; Morris has this to say:

"The principle of uniformity is a philosophy, or faith, by which it is hoped

that these processes of the present can be extrapolated in the distant past and the distant future to explain all that has ever happened and to predict all that will ever happen. But, when viewed in these terms, it is obvious that uniformity is not proved, therefore is not properly included in the definition of science. There may be any number of other assumptions that might serve as the basis of such extrapolation, and all would similarly be mere acts of faith. It is perfectly possible and reasonable, as we shall see, to assume that the processes studied by science were themselves created at some time in the past and will be terminated at some time in the future. The processes themselves then could tell us nothing about the creation or termination - this would be outside the domain of scientific investigation. Such information could come, if at all, only by revelation from their Creator.

HOW THE BIBLE FITS IN WITH SCIENCE

Dr. Isaac Asimov was a well-know award-winning author in both science fiction and in non-fiction (He died in 1992). He wrote over 200 books and thousands of articles and short stories on many topics, most of them dealing with the sciences. Most of his works were intended for the general public but they still contained a lot of "meat" and were detailed in their science and documentation. As far as writers go, he ran on 12 cylinders and was no doubt a genius by any standard.

Unfortunately, Asimov held the view that there was no God. This view permeated all of his writings. In fact, he was such a good example of an atheist that he could have been the "poster boy" for the modern, "Man is the measure of all things - atheistic - Darwinian - scientist - intellectual."

One book he wrote was a commentary on the book of Genesis. I found this intriguing that even though he didn't believe Moses wrote it, or even that God had a hand in it for that matter, he apparently decided "Genesis" was not a waste of his time to read or write about. Of course, it is not written from a "Bible Believer's" point of view, but he did make it to chapter 11 with about two hundred pages plus of comment.

The preface to his book, "In the Beginning God, Science Faces God in the Book of Genesis," Asimov is a little bit smug and shows a bit of contempt towards the "Bible Believer." He is confident of what "modern science" knows to be fact compared to what those who ignorantly believe "what the Bible has to say." If that wasn't bad enough, he didn't think too highly of those who are ignorant enough to believe that the King James Bible is inspired and infallible. Here is his statement,

"The Bible is the most-read book that has ever existed, and there are uncounted millions of people in the world who, even today, take it for granted that it is the inspired word of God; that it is literally true at every point; that there are no mistakes or contradictions except where these can be traced to errors in copying or in translation. There are

undoubtedly many who do not realize that the Authorized Version (the "King James Bible"), the one with which English speaking Protestants are most familiar, is, in fact, a translation, and who therefore believe that every one of its words is inspired and infallible. Against these strong, unwavering, and undeviating beliefs, the slowly developing views of scientists have always had to fight. Biological evolution, for instance, is considered a fact of nature by almost all biologists. There may be and, indeed, are many arguments over the details of the mechanics of evolution, but none over the fact - just as we may not completely understand the workings of an automobile engine and yet be certain that a car in good working order will move if we turn the key and step on the gas. There are millions of people, however, who are strongly and emotionally opposed to the notion of biological evolution, even though they know little or nothing about the evidence and rationale behind it. It is enough for them that the Bible states thus-and-so. The argument ends there."

When Asimov said, "It is enough for them that the Bible states thus-and-so. The argument ends there," he actually spoke too soon. For while he was writing that paragraph, "theistic" scientists had already begun to form associations and societies who believed what the Bible had to say about a whole host of issues like biology and creation, and they were using hard core scientific evidence to back up their beliefs.

These scientists began to mount an incredibly impressive and effective counterattack against naturalistic science and began winning the battle for the minds of Christian children and layman and for the lost world through books, tapes, and videos. They were not going to just "stop the argument there" as Asimov put it, "with just the Bible", but they were going prove the Bible was true with the cold hard facts of science.

A good example of this type of "theistic scientist" is Dr. Henry Morris who was the co-founder of the Institute for Creation Research in the early seventies. Morris was contemporary to Asimov. He too is a scientist who has written many books, mostly in the field of science, although he has written commentaries on Ezra and Colossians.

He too, like Asimov, ran on 12 cylinders (he died in 2006). But unlike Asimov, who was an atheist, Morris, a Christian, believes what the Bible has to say with respect to creation. Here is what he has to say about the Bible:

"When I was a young Christian engineer, struggling with the dogma of evolution versus biblical revelation, I kept trying to find some means of harmonizing the creation account with the day-age theory (with the days of creation representing the geological ages,) then the gap theory (with the ages of geology pigeonholed between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2), or some other theory, but none of these compromise systems seemed to work for either science or Scripture. I had become convinced that

the Bible was the Word of God, inspired and inerrant in every word. That being the case, it seemed that such a vital doctrine as creation should be clearly set forth in Scripture, leaving no doubt whatever as to its nature and meaning. I proceeded then to go through the Bible verse by verse, to record and organize every verse dealing with creation and related topics. The conclusion from this study was that not one of the compromise theories was biblical. The Bible taught clearly and explicitly that all things were made by God in a six-day week of natural days. There was no room for evolution or the long geological ages at all. Furthermore, the flood was worldwide in extent and cataclysmic in effect, destroying all men and land animals except those in Noah's ark. This also should be clearly evident from the data of science and history, if true. This literal "interpretation" is the only one which satisfies all the biblical data, and so is the only one presented in this book and advocated by scientists of the Institute for Creation Research.

So it's really about the Bible. One scientist believes what it says and the other doesn't. During Galileo's day, the battle was whether or not science was willing to drop Aristotle for Copernicus who, like other scientists of his day, believed what the Bible had to say about creation. During the mid-19th century the battle was whether or not science would drop the Bible for Darwin who, like other scientists of his day, did not believe what the Bible had to say about creation. Today the battle is whether or not science is willing to drop Darwin and return to the Bible.

CONCLUSION:

In this lesson I covered the topic of science. First, I gave various definitions for science. Then I gave four assumptions that science is based on and showed that not all things important in life are scientific. Next, I discussed some problems with "uniformitarianism" (one of the tenants of "naturalistic" science) and then finally, I showed why the Bible is important when it comes to scientific thought and study.