

EDITORIAL

WHY SCIENCE?

Should creationists be interested in science? Creationists believe that nature came into existence through supernatural action and that God continues to act in nature, both to sustain its existence and to govern its behavior. If this is so, why would a creationist be interested in science, when the dominant voices in science deny any divine action in nature? Creationists reject the materialistic philosophy advocated by leaders in the scientific community; is it not inconsistent for the same creationists to try to integrate science into their own belief system? In other words, why would a creationist be interested in science?

In response to such questions, it should be noted that although science is widely regarded as based on materialistic philosophy, it can also be understood in a theistic context. Science attempts to reveal the mechanisms behind events in nature, and, the theist, understands the results in the context of divine sovereignty over nature. The materialism voiced by many leaders in science can be separated from the actual practice and meaning of science. Thus it is not inconsistent for a creationist to be interested in science.

Furthermore, science and creationism have no conflicts in the major activities of science, which involve controlled experiments. It is in the area of origins that conflict occurs, and philosophical presuppositions have a much greater influence over which interpretations are regarded as acceptable when one is exploring questions of historical causes such as in the study of origins. Indeed, creationists are interested in scientific inquiry for a number of reasons.

One reason for an interest in science is that many people — including creationists — are curious about nature. Some may be satisfied merely to know that God governs the universe. However, there are many others who would like to know more about the details. What causes the rain? Where do the birds go in the winter? What are rocks made of? These and many other questions are of interest to the curious, regardless of whether they believe in creation or in some other theory of origins. Curiosity is a sufficient reason for a creationist to study science.

A second motivation for studying science is to learn more about the Creator God. Since God is all-knowing, He must know of a variety of methods to accomplish His will in nature. Since He is all-powerful, He must be able to utilize any of the methods available. Since He is free to choose His own goals and methods, we may learn something about Him by discovering what methods He uses to accomplish His will. For example,

God certainly has the power to control every event in nature individually. However, this does not appear to be His method. Instead, He acts in certain regular and predictable ways to maintain the universe, thereby making it possible for other persons to have freedom of will. Freedom of choice requires that one be able to confidently predict the results of one's actions; if God acted capriciously in nature, we could never be sure that our intentions would be carried out. Thus, God must value the freedom of will of those He has created. He also seems to value existence. There is no reason for the existence of the universe other than the will of the Creator. These and some other attributes of God may be inferred from the study of nature through science, although there are definite limits to what can be discovered about God through study of nature.

Creationists are also interested in science because they acknowledge that they have been appointed stewards of creation. As responsible stewards, they need to know how the various systems of nature interact, and how cause and effect operate through the regularities we call natural laws. By studying science, they may improve their understanding of how to care for nature and promote its productivity. For example, scientific studies have shown the sometimes devastating effects of over-hunting, of poor agricultural practices that lead to soil depletion, and the harmful effects of certain industrial activities. A sense of responsibility for caring for the earth motivates many creationists to study science.

A fourth reason creationists are interested in science is the potential for improving human health and well-being. Creationists are strongly motivated to improving human health, at least in part, because they recognize the image of God in humanity and desire to preserve the best relationship between Creator and creature. Application of scientific discovery has done much to make our lives more comfortable and to reduce suffering and fear. Science has contributed to the quality and comfort of the clothing we wear, the tools we use in our work, the ability to communicate with friends and family, and many other aspects of our lives. All these technological advances have improved the conditions under which humans live, and provide strong motivation for creationists to study science.

In conclusion, creationists are not only justified to study science, they should feel encouraged to do so. A life of faith demands attention to both the natural world and special revelation. Creationists should not look to science to prove their beliefs, but their scientific study can stimulate a greater appreciation for the Creator's handiwork. Study of science can reveal unexpected or otherwise unknown details of God's actions in nature, increasing our respect and admiration for divine intelligence and power.

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