

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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The Biblical View of Science

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Many non-Christians, and all too many Christians, are of the opinion that science, (*i.e.*, the physical or natural sciences) is an ever-growing body of truth about the universe. The progress of science, its technological triumphs, so we are told, demonstrate its truth. Science is seemingly unassailable. After all, it works doesn't it? And isn't success the measure of truth?

This being the case, so it goes, when the Bible and science appear to be at odds, we need to re-interpret the Bible. For example, since science tells us (and the pope agrees) that (some sort of) evolution is a fact, not just a theory, we need to take a fresh look at *Genesis* 1. No longer can we assert with the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q 9) that "the work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the Word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good." Six-day creationism needs to be re-examined. It is, we are assured, an obscurantist view of things.

To speak against this sort of scientific thinking is almost blasphemous in some circles, because, for many, science is the god of this age. Yet, that is what this paper intends to do, that is, to blaspheme the god of science. Science, it will be seen, is not the main revealer of truth. In fact, science is not capable of revealing any truth at all.

What then is the Biblical view of science? Science enables us to fulfill the mandate of *Genesis* 1:28: "Then God blessed them [Adam and Eve], and God

said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the Earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the Earth.' " Science gives us directions for doing things, or "operating," in this world. It does not explain how the laws of nature work, nor does it accurately define or describe things. Science does not discover truth; it is a method for dominating and utilizing nature; it is merely a practical discipline that helps us live in God's universe and subdue it.

As strange as it might sound to the reader that science never gives us truth, it is precisely that belief that has been held by leading scientists and philosophers.¹ Albert Einstein, for example, speaking of our knowledge of the universe, said: "We know nothing about it at all . . . The real nature of things, that we shall never know, never." The British philosopher Karl Popper wrote: "We know that our scientific theories always remain hypotheses . . . In science there is no knowledge, in the sense in which Plato and Aristotle understood the word, in the sense which implies finality; in science we never have sufficient reason for the belief that we have attained the truth." Popper went on to say: "It can even be shown that all [scientific] theories, including the best, have the same

¹ The quotes used here are cited in the Foreword of Gordon H. Clark's *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God* (The Trinity Foundation, 1987), and in the December 1994 edition of *The Lofton Letter*, edited by John Lofton, 10, 11.

probability, namely zero." Then too, Bertrand Russell, who will be quoted below, asserted that all scientific laws are based on fallacious arguments. And philosopher Paul Feyerabend, in his book *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, writes:

"On closer analysis we even find that science knows no 'bare facts' at all but that the 'facts' that enter our knowledge are already viewed in a certain way and are, therefore, essentially ideational. This being the case, the history of science will be as complex, chaotic, full of mistakes, and entertaining as the ideas it contains, and these ideas in turn will be as complex, chaotic, full of mistakes, and entertaining as are the minds of those that invented them."

John Robbins has pointed out that there are at least five logical difficulties with science, *i.e.*, five reasons why science can never give us truth:²

(1) *Observation is unreliable.* Scientists do not perform an experiment only once. Experiments are always repeated, and the results most always differ in some way. Why? Because the senses tend to deceive us; they are not to be trusted. Hence, numerous readings are taken in an attempt to guard against inaccurate observation. So much is this the case in science, that tests with unrepeatable results are never taken seriously. But if observation is unreliable, if the senses are so easily deceived, if the results frequently differ, why should one ever believe that he has discovered truth through observation?

(2) *All scientific experiments commit the fallacy of asserting the consequent.* In syllogistic form this is expressed as: "If p, then q. q; therefore, p." Bertrand Russell, certainly no friend of Christianity, stated it this way:

All inductive arguments in the last resort reduce themselves to the following form:
"If this is true, that is true: now that is true,

therefore this is true." This argument is, of course, formally fallacious. Suppose I were to say: "If bread is a stone and stones are nourishing, then this bread will nourish me; now this bread does nourish me; therefore it is a stone, and stones are nourishing." If I were to advance such an argument, I should certainly be thought foolish, yet it would not be fundamentally different from the argument upon which all scientific laws are based.

In the laboratory scientists work with a hypothesis. In this case the hypothesis is: "If bread is a stone and stones are nourishing, then this bread will nourish me." The scientist then attempts to deduce the predicted results that should occur if the hypothesis is true, such as "this bread nourishes me." He then performs an experiment to test the hypothesis to see if the predicted results occur. So he sits down at the table and eats the bread, and wonder of wonders, the bread does nourish him. The hypothesis, he concludes, is confirmed: "This bread is a stone and stones are nourishing." Silly you say? Yes! Yet, as Russell has asserted, it is not "fundamentally different from the argument upon which all scientific laws are based." That is to say, all scientific laws are based on fallacious arguments.

(3) *Science commits the fallacy of induction.* Induction is the attempt to derive a general law from particular instances. Science is necessarily inductive. For example, if a scientist is studying crows, he might observe 999 crows and find that they all are black. But is he ever able to assert that all crows are black? No; the next crow he observes might be an albino. One can never observe all crows: past, present, and future. Universal propositions can never be validly obtained by observation. Hence, science can never give us true statements.

(4) *Equations are always selected, they are never discovered.* In the laboratory the scientist seeks to determine the boiling point of water. Since water hardly ever boils at the same temperature, the scientist conducts a number of tests and the slightly differing results are noted. He then must average

² John W. Robbins, *Logic Seminar*, Westminster Institute, July 1995.

them. But what kind of average does he use: mean, mode, or median? He must choose; and whatever kind of average he selects, it is his own choice; it is not dictated by the data. Then too, the average he chooses is just that, that is, it is an average, not the actual datum yielded by the experiment. Once the test results have been averaged, the scientist will calculate the variable error in his readings. He will likely plot the data points or areas on a graph. Then he will draw a curve through the resultant data points or areas on the graph. But how many curves, each one of which describes a different equation, are possible? An infinite number of curves is possible. But the scientist draws only one. What is the probability of the scientist choosing the correct curve out of an infinite number of possibilities? The chance is one over infinity, or zero. Therefore, all scientific laws are false. They cannot possibly be true. As cited above, the statement of Karl Popper is correct: "It can even be shown that all theories, including the best, have the same probability, namely zero."

(5) *All scientific laws describe ideal situations.* As Clark has said, "At best, scientific law is a construction rather than a discovery, and the construction depends on factors never seen under a microscope, never weighed in a balance, never handled or manipulated."³ Clark uses the law of the pendulum as an example:

The law of the pendulum states that the period of the swing is proportional to the square root of the length. If, however, the weight of the bob is unevenly displaced around its center, the law will not hold. The law assumes that the bob is homogeneous, that the weight is symmetrically distributed along all axes, or more technically, that the mass is concentrated at a point. No such bob exists, and hence the law is not an accurate description of any tangible pendulum. Second, the law assumes that the pendulum swings by a tensionless string. There is no such string, so that the scientific law does not describe any real

pendulum. And third, the law could be true only if the pendulum swung on an axis without friction. There is no such axis. It follows, therefore, that no visible pendulum accords with the mathematical formula and that the formula is not a description of any existing pendulum.

From our study of these five logical difficulties, it can be readily seen that science is not capable of giving us any truth. And if the scientific method is a tissue of logical fallacies, why should Christians seek to argue from science to the truth? Simply stated, they should not. Science is useful in accomplishing its purpose, *i.e.*, subduing the Earth. But that is all it is useful for, nothing more.

The question arises, "If science never gives us truth, how can it be so successful?" It all depends on how one defines *success*. We are now able to put a man on the moon; we are also able to destroy our fellow man with one push of a button. Are these measures of success? Scientific theories are always changing (whereas truth is eternal). Is constant change a measure of success?

Science is successful when one understands its purpose, and when one understands that false theories sometimes work. Newtonian science, for example, worked for years. It has been replaced by Einstein's theory. But even though he believed his theory to be a better approximation of the truth than Newton's, Einstein declared that his own theory was false.

Science has its place in a Christian philosophy, an important place. But science is never to be seen as a means of learning truth. Truth is found in the Scriptures alone; the Bible has a monopoly on truth. It is God's Word that must be believed, not the experiments of men. As Robbins has said: "Science is false, and must always be false. Scripture is true and must always be true. The issue is as clear, and as simple, as that."

³ Clark, 57.

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Paul of Tarsus

Imperial Prison System

Dear Paul:

We hope you are well, despite being in prison. (Perhaps you will head our prison fellowship project when you are released.) We missed you at the last meeting of the General Assembly in Philadelphia. It was, as usual, a wonderful experience; we finished our business in record time and had a few days to do some fly-fishing. Too bad you were detained.

We have received a complaint from the Church at Corinth about your letter in which you criticize some of the brothers there for teaching that there is no resurrection. Their complaint is the most recent to be referred to the General Assembly by the Presbytery of Philadelphia. As you recall, the churches at Rome, Galatia, and Colosse have also complained about your letters.

The Complainants from Corinth feel that your attempts to draw out logical implications from their sincerely held views about the resurrection evince a spirit of rationalism and an uncharitable attitude that is improper for a Christian, especially an Apostle. They are concerned that you seem to think that your logic and God's logic are the same. The tone of your letter, they say, is one of arrogant rationalism that delights in embarrassing those who disagree with you over a relatively minor matter.

We also received from the Church in Corinth a copy of your letter (please consult with our Committee on Communications in Rome before you send any

more letters to churches), and after having discussed it in Subcommittee and Committee, we are inclined to agree with the Complainants. Your language about the resurrection is insensitive, but perhaps with the assistance of a good editor, the letter might have been made acceptable to all.

God's revelation contains great mysteries, Paul, and your letter, particularly the paragraphs about the resurrection, does not adequately appreciate the incredible spiritual richness of the Gospel, a richness that is not comprehensible to our mere human faculties. Faith, Paul, must curb our merely human logic, for our logic is not God's logic. Remember what the prophet Isaiah wrote: God's ways are not our ways, and God's thoughts are not our thoughts. The gentlemen in Corinth were particularly hurt by your arguments that if there is no resurrection, then it follows that Christ is not risen, that your own preaching is false, and that their dear departed friends and families are lost. This last statement is most insensitive and un-Christlike.

The Corinthians believe none of these things, of course; they believe only that there is no resurrection. By their humble acceptance of paradoxes, they show that they understand that mere human logic is of no use in theology, that we are not to use our fallen reason to understand or defend our faith, and that we are to humbly bow before those paradoxes that cannot be reconciled before the bar of human reason. Christianity is an experiential religion, Paul, not a verbal, logical, or intellectual religion. Gnosticism is our worst enemy. Christianity is not based on knowledge, but on faith. Knowledge puffs up, but experience humbles. You simply cannot say things like, "If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised." That is human, not divine, logic. As an Apostle, you especially should know that God's knowledge and the knowledge possible to man do not coincide at any single point. To think that they do is to suppose that you have a word from God—an arrogant and rationalist attitude on your part.

Since this is not the first complaint against you, Paul, this Committee, after careful deliberation, has decided to ask you to:

1. Cease writing harsh letters to the churches. If you feel you must write, keep your letters positive and upbeat, encouraging and edifying. Avoid criticism and negativism. You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

2. Apologize to the churches you have offended by your rationalism and offer to work with them in advancing our common message, God's wish that all men be saved. We have taken the liberty of drafting several letters for your signature.

3. When you are released from prison, meet with this Committee so that we may discuss some of the ideas that you have been teaching that seem contrary to the mysteries of our faith and your future role as an Apostle.

In addition, we have heard that you are not a graduate of an approved seminary, having studied at some place called The Wilderness. We must refer this matter to the Committee on Pastoral Credentials, and you should be hearing from them soon.

We hope you can come to General Assembly next year, Paul, Caesar willing. We are holding it in Corinth as part of our church-wide program to increase our awareness of and appreciation for other religions. Your absences in the past seem to indicate a lack of interest in or concern for the work of the church, but we are confident that this is not the case.

Koinoniacally yours,

Charles G. Phinney Amy Simple McFearsome

For the Committee