

Science, Miracles, and God

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As Protestant Reformed educators we need to grasp for ourselves and communicate to our students the relationship of the material under study to the truth of God. Not only is this something we ought to do in our schools to validate our reason for existence, but also this provides satisfaction in our minds and hearts as we contemplate how all things fit together under God.

Science is an area in which we can readily correlate God's truth. One way is to point out continually the wonders of nature, whether that be in the geologic splendors of mountains and valleys, the physical makeup of the creation in chemistry, or in the wisdom displayed in how God has made His living creatures. The heavens do declare His glory, and the earth does show forth His handiwork.

The purpose of this article, however, is to examine the methodology of science itself and to show that even here God can and must be acknowledged. The scientific method may be used as a means to understand how science works. After a problem or situation is identified, a possible explanation is put forth

called a hypothesis. This hypothesis is tested through a controlled experiment and finally a conclusion is drawn.

Suppose, for example, you wish to produce the most milk possible from your herd of dairy cows. That is the problem. The hypothesis is the belief that the proper feed will produce the most milk. Keeping track of milk production of the cows using one type of feed one month, and another type of feed the next month, and so on, with all other factors kept the same, makes up the controlled experiment. The conclusion consists of evaluating the figures thus obtained and making a choice of which feed to use based on that evaluation.

Notice two underlying assumptions that are made in following this procedure. The first is that the cows, their feed, and in fact all creation must behave consistently. For the results to be meaningful, you must believe that if checked again three months or three years from now, the feed will not have changed its properties nor the cows their production of milk using that feed. Otherwise there would not be any incentive to make systematic trials

since no expectation of future results could be based on those past trials. This is known as the principle of the uniformity of nature.

Perhaps at this point you are saying to yourself, "Of course! Creation is that way. If water boiled at 100 degrees Centigrade yesterday in the lab, then it will do so today in my kitchen; if the right curvature of the wing of an airplane enabled it to fly previously, it will do so now as we go down the runway." You say this because you believe in God, Who being the rational, orderly God that He is, made His creation orderly and rational as well. It can be counted on to perform reasonably and consistently so that the rules that govern it can be found through systematic investigation. The creation is lawful because of the Legislator. This is a proper and correct assumption for the Christian.

What of those people who have not understood the God of Scripture, however? For instance, some peoples of the Far East would toss sticks into the air and note which way they fell and from that receive, in their minds, divine guidance. Their god was a random, impersonal, non-communicative god. Nature was looked upon as being in the same mold: random and unknowable. Thus, even though

they were clever in inventing kites, paper, gunpowder, and fireworks, they never had a systematic, logical framework of principles that explained why their inventions worked nor further developed these basic discoveries. These people lacked the fundamental confidence in nature needed to nurture science because they didn't know nature's God. Christianity gave rise to science.

The second assumption necessary to the operation of science is even more elementary. In all the formulating, hypothesizing, observing, and evaluating that takes place in science, what has to be true is that the person doing all this can think and reason in a valid and true manner. The thinking process has to be something more than a collection of molecules whirring away in the upper portion of a person's body. Just as we pay attention to what a computer prints out onto a page only because we believe that its action has been controlled by a rational programmer, we hold to be valid what we ourselves and other scientists have thought and written about because we feel we too are rationally controlled. If this were not believed to be the case, the results would be considered nonsense and no one could or would do science.

How can it be shown that man thinks correctly? It can't be

shown, because in the process of showing this you are already assuming right then that the thinking process is valid. You have to begin with faith in your own thinking ability in order to commence to demonstrate anything else. As a result, any conclusion which is inconsistent with man's having a logical mind is self-contradictory and therefore must be thrown out. If my findings in science, for example, lead me to the conclusion that my thinking process is the result of evolution from mud-puddles to amoebas on through to monkeys and apes, I could not accept that conclusion, because it would mean that the findings themselves would be based on thinking stemming from irrational sources. The conclusion, therefore, would have to be rejected.

On the other hand, if I accept God's revelation of who I am as being one He made in His image, who would then have His faculties of reasoning (though in a limited, fallen way), I can have a proper foundation for believing my thoughts to be valid. I can go on from there to do science. Only Christians have the solution to the epistemological question of how man can know that he knows. Descartes, the humanist, said, "I think, therefore I am." The Christian confesses, "God is, therefore I think."

Notice the utter foolishness

and irony of the actions of sinful, rebellious man as he, in the name of science, "disproves" God and holds as unthinkable anything being true that is beyond his "scientific" observations. He cheats by taking orderliness and knowledge from God and using them to fight against Him. This sinful "scientist's" damnation is just.

Can a place for miracles be found anywhere in this picture of creation, without ruining it? By the common definition, miracles "break" the laws of nature, as if they are improper or illegal. This would be the case if the physical, mindless universe were the total of reality or if God were a god who created an orderly universe and then wouldn't dare to interfere with its perfect, mathematical operation. But this is a denial of Who God is. First of all, He is the ever-present God sustaining His creation. Secondly, the larger purpose of creation is not just to be a reflection of God's orderliness, but at times to direct attention to Him in special ways. The creation does this by being orderly the vast majority of the time so that when God performs extraordinary events in it, these stand out as pointers to the glory of God. The series of miracles in the Gospel of John, to use one example among many, is expressly said to serve as signs that manifested Christ's

glory and caused His disciples to believe upon Him (John 2:11). The ultimate Master which creation serves is not the physical laws that God put into it, but God Himself. In the great landscape of creation, miracles serve as the signature of the Artist.

Thus it is only by acknowledging God's ordering of creation

and His giving to us reasoning powers that man, honestly and humbly, can do science, realizing its foundations and limitations. As Christians we do our experiments realizing they go in the normal manner, the Lord willing. Of Him and through Him and to Him are science, miracles, and all things.



TOO BUSY?

If you are too busy in your work, civic duties, or social activities to participate in the activities of your children, then you are too busy. There is no substitute for your personal involvement with your children. Your children need you more than they need your money, your record of civic achievements or social standing. Time with your family comes first on your life's list of priorities.

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