

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-21-10 AM
 “A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF SCIENCE”
 1 TIMOTHY 6:20
 #6 in Series, “A Biblical Worldview”

Everybody has a worldview whether they know what it is or not. Fritz Ridenour defines worldview as, “The set of assumptions that make up your personal outlook on the nature of the world and how to live in that world day by day. It is your set of beliefs about the most important issues of life” [Fritz Ridenour, “So What’s the Difference?” Pages 6-7].

1 Timothy 6:20 (KJV) “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of **science falsely so called**”. One translation (Nor) translates that last phrase “pseudoscience”. If we are going to examine a Biblical worldview of science, we need to understand what science is and expose what Paul wrote to Timothy about – pseudoscience. The English word “science” comes from the Latin word “*scientia*” which simply means knowledge. For instance, God is “omniscient”. “Omni” means “all” and the suffix “scient” is from the Latin word *scientia*” and it means that God is all knowing or has all knowledge. When we use the word, science, we have more in mind that just knowledge. The National Academy of Science defines science as “a particular way of knowing about the world. In science, explanations are limited to those based on observations and experiments that can be substantiated by other scientists. Explanations that cannot be based on empirical evidence are not a part of science” [Maranatha web site]. One dictionary defines science, “A system of knowledge obtained through the scientific method.” That brings up the question, “What is the scientific method?” The scientific method is simply that conclusions are drawn from observation and experimentation. Pseudoscience (“science falsely so called”) is when that which professes to be science speaks authoritatively about matters that cannot be observed or repeated for experimentation. In order for conclusions to be “scientific”, they must be observable, testable, and repeatable. Many would call Francis Bacon the father of modern science. Bacon lived from 1561-1626. Bacon was a Christian and argued for limitations to science. He was an empiricist (facts are ascertained through observation and experimentation) and focused on the practical value of science. On a cold winter day in March of 1626, Bacon’s inquisitive mind began to wonder if snow could be used to preserve animal flesh. He was driving his carriage near London and decided to find out. He stopped at a cottage and bought a chicken that was plucked and ready to cook and began stuffing it with snow. Unfortunately, Bacon caught a chill and died within days of bronchitis. He was 65 years old and died doing what he had tirelessly been advocating for years – learning about nature by observation and experimentation [adapted from “Science’s Blind Spot” by Cornelius Hunter, Pages 14-15].

Many think that science and the Bible do not mix. It is true that pseudoscience and the Bible do not mix, but true science began with a mandate from God in Genesis 1:28-29 when He told Adam and Eve to have dominion over the earth and subdue it. In a sense, man is to conquer the universe in which he lives and the scientific enterprise is a part of that. Man is also to be a good steward of the earth because it belongs to God by right of creation. As we read through chapters 4 and 5 of Genesis, we see what we would call scientific development as man, even in a fallen state, begins to have dominion over the earth and domesticate animals, grow crops, develop musical instruments, and craft tools from bronze and iron. When we come to the time of Noah, we see that Noah has developed the skill and the tools to build an ark that was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high that is a marvel even by today’s standards. It floated; it didn’t leak; it provided for the needs of the animals and Noah’s family until the flood was gone and the earth was dry.

As we look at a Biblical worldview of science, I want us to do it by asking and then answering two questions.

I. Is There a Conflict Between the Bible and Modern Science?

Before I answer this question, I must go a little deeper into what is meant by “modern science”. Much of what is called science today really goes beyond the bounds of science. Science is limited in its domain where it can speak authoritatively. By modern science, I am speaking of the view of science that Bacon pioneered. I am talking about that which can be observed, reproduced for experimentation, and have conclusions drawn from those observations and experiments. In our time, science has overstepped its bounds and has been passed off as our savior. The atheist Bertrand Russell wrote in “Why I Am Not A Christian”: “Science can teach us, and I think our own hearts can teach us, no longer to look around for imaginary supports, no longer to invent allies in the sky, but rather to look to our own efforts here below to make this world a better place to live in, instead of the sort of place the churches in all these centuries have made it”. From popular culture we can see how our view of science as Savior has developed through the 20th Century into the 21st Century. In the late 1990’s one of the biggest movies was *Independence Day*. Some of the older people who watched it may have thought it reminded them of a much earlier movie. It was basically a re-make of the 1953 classic science fiction movie, *The War of the Worlds*. There was however a major difference. While both movies involved aliens invading earth, in the 1953 movie, scientists came up with a weapon, but it was destroyed. The panic stricken population then turned to God. Churches were jammed with people praying for God to deliver them. Their prayers were answered as the aliens had no immunity to earthborn bacteria and eventually die off. The last scene is amazing. A voice over says “All that men could do had failed”. The last scene as the film closes shows people gathered on a hillside singing praise to God. Fast forward to the remake forty something years later. *Independence Day* shows deliverance coming through science in the deployment of advanced military technology. A few well placed bombs blow up the aliens and save the world. For those who see science as savior, there is indeed a conflict between this pseudoscience and the Bible.

One of the main reasons that so many people think that there is a conflict between science and the Bible is the media. In order to gather more interest (higher ratings or an increasing circulation) the media needs protagonists and antagonists (protagonist is a hero, a leading person; an antagonist is a person who opposes or is an adversary). When it comes to subjects like evolution being taught in school, stem cell research, in vitro fertilization, and many other such issues, you have the “science type” person facing opposition by the “religious type” person. It is then widely assumed that there is a conflict between the Bible and science. Again, the conflict is between the Bible and “science so called” or “pseudoscience”. Perhaps the conflict is most visible in the area of origins. There are many caustic remarks and printed words by scientists who believe the theory of evolution that say those who believe in creation are not true scientists. Yet there are numerous scientists who believe the Bible’s account of creation both now and in the past. We looked at a list of just a few of them in the message on origins a few weeks ago. Ph.D. cell biologist, Dr. David Menton is a creationist. He said, “The fact is that though widely believed, evolution contributes nothing to our understanding of empirical science and plays no essential role in biomedical research or education” [Quoted in “War of the Worldviews”, various authors, page 122]. That is one of many current scientists who believe in creation. If we go back to the 17th and 18th Centuries which was the “golden age” of science, the list of Bible believers (including creation) reads like a “Who’s Who” of science.

Perhaps the view that there is a conflict between the Bible and science finds its roots in the conflict between the eminent Italian Astronomer Galileo (1564-1642) and the Catholic Church. The view of the Church was that the earth was the center of the universe. Galileo, following the lead of Copernicus, said that the earth and other planets revolved around the sun. He was strongly criticized and eventually his writings were condemned by the Catholic Church. Thus it is assumed that there is a conflict between the Bible and true science. Let’s examine it a little closer. History reveals that the scientists were as opposed to Galileo as the Bishops were. Galileo challenged the accepted orthodoxy of science as much as he did the accepted orthodoxy of the church. In addition, the Bible does not teach that the earth is the center of the universe. The conflict was in reality between Ptolemaic astronomers and Copernican astronomers. The

church had simply sided with the theories of Ptolemy. It was not a conflict between true science and the Bible.

Because of the misconception that there is a conflict between the Bible and science the prevailing view is that one must be a sort of schizophrenic to be a scientist and a Christian. Some would take it farther and say even if one is not a scientist, just because of the general knowledge of science most reasonably intelligent people have, anyone must be a schizophrenic to be a Christian. It goes like this: On Monday through Saturday, I believe in Darwinian Evolution – that man emerged as a cosmic accident and evolved by blind chance with no rhyme or reason to it. On Sunday, I go to church and profess that I am created in the image of God with a distinct purpose. These two viewpoints are utterly incompatible, but people want to be spiritual and at the same time scientific. What solves this dilemma? It is very simple. Anything that contradicts the Bible (correctly interpreted) is in reality pseudoscience or “science falsely so called”. All truth is God’s truth. Let me illustrate that through the teaching of a 13th Century theologian named Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas taught that there are two ways that God has revealed truth. He called these two ways nature and grace. I am changing it to nature and written revelation. Aquinas did not separate nature and written revelation and see them as not connected; he simply distinguished between them but saw both as having their source in God. Aquinas said that there are some truths that can be learned only through the study of nature, and other truths we can know only through written revelation. For instance, we can memorize the whole Bible and not know some details about the human body. We can know that we are as we read in **Psalms 139:14b (NKJV)** “...fearfully *and* wonderfully made...” However from the Bible I cannot know the path of the blood in the circulatory system and the details of DNA. On the other side, we can have a Ph.D. in science and another in Math and another in Philosophy and still not understand the incarnation of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, and the details of the return of Christ. This information comes through revelation in the Scripture. Aquinas also said there are “mixed articles” that can be learned from nature and written revelation. An example is the knowledge that God exists. Theologians after Aquinas have called these two complimentary revealers of truth general revelation (nature) and special revelation (what Aquinas called grace). Aquinas’ correct assumption was that all truth has its source in God and there is therefore no conflict. The great scientist Isaac Newton had no fear of science contradicting the Scriptures. He said that the activity of the scientist is to think God’s thoughts after Him.

I remember a statement by one of my heroes, Adrian Rogers: “If there is a contradiction between ‘science’ and the Bible, be patient; science will catch up”. That statement is true. In 1861 the French Academy of Science published a little brochure that they said contained “51 scientific facts that contradict the Scripture”. Today, there is not a scientist in the world who believes a single one of those “scientific facts” [Information from Paul Little, “Know Why You Believe”, Page 123]. A common statement concerning science and the Bible is this: “The Bible is not a book of science.” Usually when people say that they are meaning that you can’t trust anything the Bible may say concerning science because science is outside that realm covered by the Bible. The fact is that there is a tremendous amount of truth about science in the Bible that is revealed before scientists ever discovered it. I am talking about hydrology, geology, astronomy, meteorology, biology, and physics.

The bottom line is that there is absolutely no real conflict between the Bible and true science.

II. Is There a Connection Between the Bible and the Discoveries of Modern Science?

The modern scientific method and philosophy originated in only one culture. That culture was not among the Arabs who were dominated by Islam. Since fatalism dominates Islam, there was no reason to manipulate the natural world to change anything since it was already fatalistically determined and thus unchangeable. Modern science could have never begun among the animists of Central and Southern Africa since they would not experiment with the natural world because everything – stones, trees, animals, and everything else – contained within it living spirits of various gods or ancestors. This view is spotlighted in the Disney movie “Pocahontas”. The young Indian woman scolds the white man for thinking that the earth is, “just a dead thing”. She informs us that “every rock and tree and creature has a

life, has a spirit, has a name”. That’s a good description of animism. Modern Science could not have developed in countries dominated by either Hinduism or Buddhism because both of those religions teach Pantheism – that the material world is not real and the only reality is the world’s soul. The greatest reality anyone could know is that the physical world is not real. Why spend your life observing and experimenting with what is not real anyway? Modern science developed in one culture – predominantly Christian Europe. Why? Because Genesis 1 says that the physical world isn’t God, but it was created by God for his purposes. Theologians call the Biblical view the “de-deification” of nature. When it is thought that nature commands worship, digging into nature’s secrets is thought irreverent. God however told man in the Bible to dominate and subdue the earth.

Let’s examine why a Biblical worldview enabled science to develop and prosper. The reason is found in some Biblical presuppositions as we come to creation. Let me give you several:

A. Nature Is Real, Not Imaginary

The Bible contradicts the pantheism (all is god) of the eastern religions and says that God created a real, material world. In Genesis 1, there is a formula. God says, “Let there be...” and the refrain is “and it was so”. Here is an example: **Genesis 1:11 (NKJV)** “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed, *and* the fruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed *is* in itself, on the earth’; and it was so.” Since the earth is real, it can be observed and experimented with and subdued for use by man. Only a Biblical worldview paves the way for science.

B. Nature Is Good, but It Is Not to Be Worshipped

One of the attributes of God we see in the Bible is His transcendence. Transcendence means that God is separate and above all else. He brought about creation, but He is separate from it. Creation is from God, but it is not God. Therefore we are not violating deity when we probe the secrets of God’s creation.

C. Nature Is Orderly and Predictable

Because God is a God of order, His creation is orderly. We communicate this by the term, “The Laws of Nature”. No other religion or culture has ever used the word “law” in relation to nature. The concept of laws controlling nature came from the Biblical presentation of God as being both creator and lawgiver. The early scientists were acting on faith that the world they were studying was orderly and operated according to laws. That’s why a many early scientists described their work as thinking God’s thoughts after Him. It is interesting that the rise of modern science with its scientific method is attributed by many historians to the renaissance, but the time frame fits something else that was going on during the rise of modern science – the Protestant Reformation. What was one of the cries of the Reformation? It was *Sola Scriptura* – the Bible alone is our authority. One of the great organizations that helped propel science and scientific advances was the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge. It was founded in 1660. Most of its members were professing Christians. The society began in Gresham College in London. Gresham was not only a Christian College; it was a Puritan college and therefore taught from a purely Biblical worldview. Seven of the ten scientists who formed the nucleus of this group were Puritans [James Kennedy, “What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?” Page 98]. Dr. Malcom Jeeves in his book, “The Scientific Enterprise and the Christian Faith” said, “It was with the rediscovery of the Bible and of its message at the time of the Reformation ... that a new impetus came to the development of science. This new impetus, flowing together with all that was best in Greek thinking, was to produce the right mixture to detonate the chain reaction leading to the explosion of knowledge which began at the start of the scientific revolution in the sixteenth century, and which is proceeding with ever-increasing momentum today” [Quoted in Kennedy, Page 94]. Not only is a Biblical worldview not in conflict with true science; a biblical worldview laid the foundation for modern science.

CONCLUSION

Don’t ever be intimidated by rash and incorrect claims that science and the Bible do not mix. It is the Bible that lays the foundation for true science. Never forget that not all that calls itself science is truly science. When one speaks authoritatively about that which cannot be demonstrated by the scientific method, and calls it science, he or she is dealing with what Paul called in 1 Timothy 6:20, “science falsely so called”. True science depends on a Biblical worldview. (3155)

