



Can a Christian be a Good Scientist?

by Pastor Robert Hein

(September-October, 2007)

Can a Christian who accepts the Bible as literal truth also be a good scientist? Many secular scientists insist that is not possible. Christians receive insults to their scientific intelligence all the time. Consider this statement from Jude Dougherty, dean of the School of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America, "I don't think anyone who is at least minimally, scientifically literate doubts that the theory of evolution is correct." The conclusion? If you don't accept the theory of evolution as scientific fact, you are not worthy to be called a scientist.

And so Christians studying and preparing for careers in the scientific world often feel the pressure to compromise or reject what the Bible teaches in order to gain acceptance from the scientific community.

But is that really necessary? Can a Bible believing Christian also be a good scientist? It depends on which kind of science you are talking about. It is useful to make a distinction between "**operational science**" and "**origins science.**" **Operational science** is based on the laws of physics, chemistry, biology etc. that God established when he created the world. The discoveries and applications of observational science are based on the scientific method of observation and experimentation. We use observational science to understand how a computer works, how to send a spaceship to the moon and back, how plants and animals reproduce after their kind, how medicines fight disease, and how gravity affects our world. While Christians humbly admit there is still much we do not understand of how God governs this universe, we really have no conflict with the findings of operational science. In fact, we expect the world to follow the rules of operational science since an orderly God established them in the beginning, and keeps them in working order to this very day. We do recognize however that present findings can be proven wrong, and replaced with new scientific discoveries.

Bible believing Christians also believe in **miracles**. Miracles, by definition, usurp the laws of operational science. For example, operational science teaches us that people can't walk on water and dead people don't rise to life again. Christians don't deny these laws of operational science; we simply believe that our supernatural God who established those laws also has the authority to intervene in human history to usurp them.

Some of the greatest scientific discoveries and advances were made by scientists who also accepted the Biblical account of creation. Consider Isaac Newton who co-discovered calculus, formulated the laws of motion and gravity, calculated planetary orbits, and invented the reflecting telescope. Consider Johannes Kepler who discovered the three laws of planetary motion, or James Maxwell who discovered the four fundamental equations that light and all forms of electromagnetic radiation obey. A belief in the evolutionary claims of origins science was not required for any of these great scientists to advance their work.

Bible believing Christians do not have a problem then with the findings of operational science when it comes to how our present world functions. Rather we disagree with the claims of origins science. Origins science is not based upon observation and experimentation of the present, but rather on speculation and unproven assumptions concerning the past. For example, operational science teaches that everything reproduces after its own kind. That is what we see happening today. Within a specific animal kind there is a great deal of room of variety and adaptation. However, we never observe microbes becoming monkeys or monkeys becoming men. In fact, the laws of operational science teach us this is impossible. But proponents of origins science insist that in the distant past, things worked much differently. Back then mutations occurred on a regular basis over millions of years which continually added new genetic information to succeeding generations. We don't see it happening. We can't make it happen in a laboratory. The findings of operational science actually say

it can't happen. And yet we are expected to believe that all these beneficial changes did happen over millions of years simply by random chance. Louis Pasteur developed the law of Biogenesis, which teaches that life only comes from life. No one has ever refuted this law of operational science. And yet we are expected to believe that billions of years ago, things worked differently, that life, intelligent life, could spring from non-life, all on its own. Understand then that the claims of origins science are not based on sound scientific observation and experimentation, but more so upon a premise of naturalism that clouds the interpretation of the evidence we observe.

Christians don't have to put their brain in the closet to be good scientists. We do always need to keep our human reason subject to the Word of God. As God's Word teaches, "**We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**" 2 Corinthians 10:5-6. However, we normally expect our world to follow the rules of operational science which God established. This will enable Christians to excel in all sorts of scientific fields such as biology, chemistry, astronomy, botany, medical research, and in the development of new scientific technology. But Christians must always reject the unproven claims of origins science when these theories contradict the clear teachings of the infallible Word of God. *LSI*