

Commentary on True Science

by Patrick Winkler, P.E.

I appreciate when distinctions are made. They are often instructive or at least offer a touchstone for other learning opportunities and discussions. This is especially true in the areas of theology, science, creation, and evolution. Distinctions assist both author and reader in determining not only what is being discussed but also what is *not* being discussed. Distinctions help us by emphasizing and categorizing concepts that would have otherwise remained obscure.

The current issue of the LSI Journal includes two articles ("Two Creation Apologetics" and "A Comparison of Apologetics – and a Personal View") which offer the reader a number of edifying distinctions as two creationist apologetic approaches are contrasted. In so doing, there are several noteworthy points presented which I highlight for our readers:

1) As confessional Lutherans, we know and believe with absolute certainty that God created the universe some thousands of years ago in six 24-hour periods. From this perspective, we therefore conclude that any scientific assertion which says otherwise is in error and offers a conclusion that is false. For example, from the witness of Scripture, we are absolutely certain that the scientific evolutionary theory of universal common descent is not true.

However, knowing from Scripture that the scientific evolutionary theory of universal common descent is a false theory does not necessarily mean that the theory is scientifically unreasonable and nonlogical. Those who have attended classes in evolutionary biology or stellar astronomy often find that the scientific basis is very reasonable and well thought out.

So how can these two exist side-by-side? How can there be scientific evidence suggesting that something is true, yet we know from Scripture that it is false? Under these circumstances it is most helpful for the Christian to recognize how science understands *final truth*. The National Academy of Sciences points out that truths asserted by science are not to be considered *final truth* but are to be considered incomplete since they are always based *only* on what we know and what we assume, *today*.¹ Such definitions are also reiterated elsewhere by other academic institutions.² The implication of this is that while evolution often offers very reasonable, scientific correlations for some observations in the world, this does not mean that such conclusions are finally correct. This is the very reason why *science* can still be scientific yet draw conclusions that are false. Science makes observations, includes scientific and philosophical assumptions, draws conclusions, and makes predictions which correlate with observations (although, such

¹ The reader should take note of the definition of "Fact" in "Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences, Second Edition" (National Academy of Sciences, 1999): 2. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/6024.html> (accessed May 17, 2014). The reader should also note how "final truth" is referred to by the scientific community in "Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science" (National Academy of Sciences, 1998): 30. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/5787.html> (accessed May 17, 2014)

² For example, the reader is referred to "Misconceptions about science." Understanding Science. University of California Museum of Paleontology. <http://undsci.berkeley.edu/teaching/misconceptions.php#b2> (accessed May 17, 2014) as well as "Characteristics of Science" Understanding Science. University of California Museum of Paleontology. <http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evosite/nature/llcharacteristics.shtml> (accessed May 17, 2014)

correlations do not imply that the actual cause and effect is understood). Such conclusions might ultimately be shown to be scientifically false and also might not agree with the Bible.

2) Definitions that are adopted for terms influence what one says and what one doesn't say about any particular topic. For example, if one defines *death* as *ceasing to exist*, what is said about death would be completely different than if one defines *death* as a *separation of soul and body*. In the same way, the manner in which *science* and *truth* are defined influences what is said, what is not said, what is assumed, and what is heard when discussing creation and evolution topics. The *True Science* concept described in the two articles ("Two Creation Apologetics" and "A Comparison of Apologetics – and a Personal View") as Apologetic A assumes one set of definitions while Apologetic B assumes another. I think it best to use the term *science* as it is used conventionally in scientific literature (this definition is reflected by Apologetic B in "A Comparison of Apologetics") when discussing creation and evolution topics in order to be as clear and unambiguous as possible.

The reader should also note that just because the specific term *True Science* might rarely be used in print does not mean that the concept is rarely used. In the same way, even though the term *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, the concept of the Trinity is described quite often in Scripture.

3) Finally, it is beneficial for Christian students to be aware of the potential for substituting other objects of faith in place of God's gracious promises to us through Christ in His Word. This change in the object of one's trust from reliance on the absolute certainty of God's promises to reliance on tentative scientific certainty often involves a very subtle shift in the heart of the individual. When, for example, one grows despondent upon hearing that a creation science conclusion has been shown to be scientifically *not* valid -- that shift has already taken place. This is discussed further in the section entitled "Bypassing the Means of Grace" in "A Comparison of Apologetics – and a Personal View".

The well-substantiated presentation in the two articles, "Two Creation Apologetics" and "A Comparison of Apologetics – and a Personal View" are certainly worthwhile for consideration, study, and discussion among our readership.

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