

Faith or science

Should we consider how science opposes or supports what God has revealed concerning creation? Scripture reveals the divine origin of the cosmos, and belief in creation is a matter of faith (Hebrews 11:1)—need we go any further? Should Christians be concerned about investigating the workings of the universe, the mechanics of the things round about us?

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In posing the question of Christians and science, we raise a question that everyone asks sometime in life. How are we to answer those who do not believe in creation and base their opinions on biological and geological evidence?

Christian perspective

Perhaps we sense that something is wrong with the question itself. The alternatives wrongly separate our Christian faith from the world in which we live. The question implies that our faith has nothing to do with the universe—the study of plants, animals, rocks, oceans, planets, humans, and all things. Posing the question this way suggests that Christians simply bury their heads in blind faith and don't care about the world we inhabit.

True, the knowledge of the visible things of God—the things seen from creation—does not bring us true knowledge of God, who loves us in Christ. The universe reveals God's goodness, not yet God's grace (Romans 1:14-23). But faith in the true God turns these matters around. By grace Christians gain the right relationship with God. By grace through faith, we stand before God the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. Now, in this turnabout, God's goodness becomes truly wondrous in the light of God's grace in Christ. Believers echo the psalmist's praise and thanksgiving: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1). And "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful" (Psalm 139:14).

Therefore, we must never separate the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed from the First, divorcing Christ's kingdom from Adam's world. Christ's kingdom rightfully restores everything that Adam once received in Paradise when God said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and of the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26).

What Adam received in Paradise—and then lost—now rests under the feet of Christ Jesus. In this way God destroyed any notion that Christ's kingdom is so special and different that it has no connection with that of Adam. True, Christ's kingdom is not of

this world. Yet it has everything to do with the world of God's making. "Where would we Christians go, if this were not so?" Martin Luther asked in a moment of reflection.

"If Christ's kingdom had nothing to do with Adam's, where else would we live? Where would we eat and drink, if the world was so foreign to us as to deprive us of the ingredients of our bread? Where indeed would we go to receive the daily bread for which we pray? Where would we go for our home, our cattle, and all good things?" The secret of our life in the world lies hidden in Christ and his work and is perceived in repentance and faith. What makes Christians interested—yes genuinely interested—in the world about them is that they have a new outlook on life (Romans 8:5,6). Jesus' life-changing work on behalf of his creation moves believers to seek knowledge of God's good and gracious will, also in his creation.

Christian investigation of God's world

Set free by Christ, Christians no longer remain in bondage under the elements of the world (Colossians 2:8), in bondage to creation itself. Apart from Christ's redemption, all people born of Adam's sperm are subject to the created world. The universe becomes our master, and we are not its lord as God originally intended. The beggarly elements—divide, count, and scientifically enumerate them as we will—are then all we desire for food, drink, shelter, and sex. Human desires and passions are earthbound.

But by faith God releases believers from a life of bondage. By renewing our mindset and attitude, we are united in and with Christ. What our Lord possesses, we possess—unworthy though we remain of such high honor. Christ, King of creation and Lord of lords, rules over the universe. And he shares that lordship with us! "All things are yours," the apostle tells Christians in Corinth, "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God" (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). In Christ, we return to our rightful place and calling, not to a life of subjection under nature but as lord over it. Though sinners still, we are called upon to exercise responsible rule over the earth (Genesis 1-3).

Is this not a humbling task?

Can Christians pursue science? By all means! Led by God's Word and Spirit, we will be more than interested in the "visible things of God" as seen, in creation (Romans 1:20; Hebrews 11:3). We are no longer on a quest for origins. By faith we see the universe as a marvelous gift of a good and gracious God, who in love continues to let it rain on the righteous and the unrighteous for the gospel's sake (Matthew 5:45). Getting to know the world continues to be tainted by our sinful desires. Yet we strive to use the things of creation—fallen creation as it is—as God intended them to be used. We investigate them and sadly also abuse them because of our wayward ways. Little wonder that the whole creation groans under sin, waiting for the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Creation too has been subject to vanity because of our folly (Romans 8:19-22).

Yet we continue seeking knowledge of God's creation in the spirit of thankfulness for God's goodness and grace. God's Word inspires us to the "wow" factor, to stand in awe of God, who prepared this wonderful universe for Adam's kin. And his Spirit moves us to pursue knowledge of creation, realizing that there is nothing inherently wrong with creation itself. It is God's work. At the same time we remain fully aware that creation has been made subject to deformity because of sin.

So with God's Word to guide us, Christians can and will pursue science because this universe is God's creation, the work of his hands. The heart set free by the secret wisdom of God—revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ as God's gracious work (1 Corinthians 2:6-10)—turns freely to his visible works seen in creation. Christians join all mankind in investigating the created world and seek to understand the functions of the universe for good reason. They want to use them rightly to God's glory and for service to mankind. In so doing, we give honor, praise, and thanksgiving to God, for he created everything that is.

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