

## **Science and Sin**

Johan D. Tangelder

A scientist is never neutral in his work. He always interprets his findings through his worldview, and is always bound by his own presuppositions. These facts should be self-evident. However, Christian scientists are still accused of working with naïve, biblically conditioned presuppositions, while only secular scientists can produce “proven results.” They see clearly the facts before them, and are not restricted by their faith. This way of thinking is firmly rooted in the minds of many. However, the issue between the creationist and the naturalistic-evolutionist is not a conflict between faith and science, but between belief and unbelief. They should clearly be kept in mind. Opposition to creation at the level of science is in many cases, simply vocalize opposition to the Christian position.

Evolution has been used by atheists to mock the Bible believing Christian and to bolster their own anti-Christian metaphysics. God-fearing scientists are rare at major secular universities and science has developed independently of God. It has become secularized. Thousands of students are passing through science courses deeply influenced by a secular humanist approach, and with naturalistic convictions, unaware of the validity of the creationist view. H.G. Well’s famous work, *The Outline of History, The Whole Story of Man* demonstrates this thesis. His whole work is based on his faith in evolution. He says: “We do not know certainly how life began upon the earth. Biologists have made many guesses and suggestions and there seems to be a general agreement that life began in warm, sunlit shallow water, possibly in pools and lagoons along the coast of the first formed seas.” He continues on to state, “The idea that life appeared on the earth as a natural and necessary chemical and physical process, without the intervention of any miraculous factor, seems to be very repugnant to many religious minds. But that repugnance is due perhaps, rather to a confusion of thought in their minds than to any essential irreligiosity itself.

The current state of affairs in science is a dramatic reversal of previous conditions. For centuries, whether one was a Christian or not, the starting point was generally, the existence of God, the creation of the world, the fact of sin, etc. Scientists worked with a common consensus, as Dr. A. Kuyper remarked, “A few might have expressed some doubt concerning one thing and another, a very few might have ventured to deny them; but for many centuries, the common consciousness rested in these fixed conceptions.”

The consensus has now become largely secular; like men, science is now also autonomous. Modern man believes that he can save himself through secular science. He is no longer sinful and has no need for the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Secular man is the way, truth and light. In his apostasy, he worships the creation, rather than the Creator. History and man are no longer seen as abnormal. But Christians view the world as abnormal. Man, separated from God, can never have a clear picture of reality. Without sin, the world would be an open book for everyone to read. But the fact of sin in the world has destroyed our ability to clearly read this book. For the Orthodox Christian, the autonomy of freedom has never existed. This is only a humanistic myth. The sin factor has consequences for scientific knowledge and investigation. In accordance with Scripture, Christian theology, has always taught that sin involves error, and thus has not only corrupted the heart and will but also blinded the understanding. Sin does not only affect our personal lives, but also works in every sphere of life. Alongside the deliberate falsehoods, we have the unintentional mistakes in observation, thought and memory. Also in science, there is an antithesis between truth and falsehood.

Through the powers of darkness at work, wrong premises have been developed to start scientific inquiry. Dr. H. Morris rightly contends to that: "every non-Christian philosophy is an attempt to reduce ultimate truth concerning the universe without submission to the revealed Word of God. All of man's religions and philosophies apart from the grace of God revealed in his word, are man-centered. Or perhaps more generally, creature-centered rather than Creator centered." Having asserted a fatal influence of sin, it does not mean, however, that anyone should skeptically doubt all science. It simply means we cannot depend upon our theory of knowledge.

The non-Christian takes pleasure in making the gap between science and Christianity as wide as possible, while in reality he is voicing his own unbelief. The good fight of faith which Paul urges God's children is not confined to the inner chamber, the prayer cell, the institutional church, and the secret in imaginings of the heart. It is fought, also in the laboratories and lecture halls. The result of our scientific research is affected by this conflict between truth and falsehood. Since every man starts from his faith position, the work he does is influenced by it. He is always subjective. Therefore we can never talk about assured results of science. Even the evidences are subjectively conditioned. It is not the evidence discovered versus the Biblical faith, but the interpretation of these evidences. Dr. A. Kuyper asserted that, "even in demonstration there is no certainty for you because of the proof, but simply because you are bound to believe in the force of the demonstration. Both the non-Christian and the Christian are driven to investigate the same object, but they don't have the same starting point. Since the basis of investigation is different, there will be a conflict of interpretation. A Christian will work from the basis of revealed truth, the Bible. Is this position not intellectual suicide? Not at all! Once we have submitted ourselves to revelation, or to use the Biblical language, once we have seen the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit on our minds (we can do nothing without that), then we begin to use our reason in a manner that we have never been capable of before. We now use it at full strength, and we begin to see reason and meaning in everything."

Both the Christian and non-Christian can be at work in the same scientific endeavor. But as soon as there is any discussion between the regenerate and unregenerate, the different faith positions immediately appear. The Christian has Biblical insights. He views the physical and spiritual as one reality. The fact that there is a God, that a creation took place, that sin exists can never be established by scientific inquiry. They are accepted by faith, and from valid working presuppositions, and a Christian is bound by it. Does this mean that Christian scientists always agree with each other? They can't. They have the same faith position, but are still influenced by their own subjective disposition. Let no one think before therefore that Christian science, if we may so call the science which takes place in Genesis as its point of departure, will all at once lead its investigators to entirely like and harmonious results. This is impossible, because with the regenerate also, the difference of subjective disposition, of manner of life, and of the age in which one lives, remain the same. And because Christian science would be no science, if it did not go through a process in which it advanced from less to more, and if it were not free in its investigation, with the exception of being bound by its point of departure. That which the pursuer of Christian science takes as his point of departure, is to him as little a result of science as it is to the naturalist, but he as well as the naturalist must obtain his results of science by investigation and demonstration. Christian science has a vital place in the struggle against the spirit of the age. Without apology, the Christian scientists can do his work. His position is valid, workable and demonstrable.

cf. p.43 B. Ramm. Christian view of science and Scripture. Grand Rapids 1974 ninth printing  
p.19. H.G. Wells. The Outline of History. The Story of Man. Volume 1, New York, 1971  
p.163. A. Kuyper. Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology. Its principles. New York, 1898 translated  
by Reverend J. Hendrik DeVries.  
p.204 H. Bavinck. The Philosophy of Revelation, Grand Rapids 1953  
p.78 Henry M. Morris. The Twilight of Evolution, Grand Rapids sixth printing 1966.  
pp.113ff A. Kuyper.  
p.143 Ibid.  
p.24 Maryn Lloyd Jones. The Approach to Truth: Scientific and Religions, London 1964  
reprint.  
p.178 A. Kuyper.

Johan D. Tangelder  
May, 1974