

EDITORIAL

DO WE NEED TO TURN OFF OUR BRAINS WHEN WE ENTER A CHURCH?

It has been suggested that when scientists pass by the check-in counter of a church, they might as well check in their brains along with their hats, umbrellas and overcoats. The implication is that in a church, you don't need to use your brain; there you are in the realm of faith!

Science is often equated with reason, and religion with faith. We find it convenient to talk about faith and reason as separate entities, but the dichotomy between the two soon breaks down when one considers that it takes a degree of faith to believe in science, especially some of the more speculative areas such as cosmology or evolution. Furthermore, religion, especially Christianity, has a strong appeal to reason. This appeal is the basis of a well-accepted thesis endorsed by such noted scholars as A.N. Whitehead, R.G. Collingwood, and S.L. Jaki. The thesis proposes that modern science developed in the western world because of the consistency seen especially in the God of the Bible. The Bible generally implies cause and effect, which relate to reason and science. The relation of science to a Judeo-Christian (Biblical) background is further supported by noting that the Hindu, Chinese, Mayan, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Greek cultures, all had varying degrees of incipient science, but these initial stages ended in stalemate. The probable cause was overruling philosophical concepts associated with unpredictable and capricious gods. The Bible presents only one God, who is reasonable, consistent, and usually predictable. These principles fit well with science. While we cannot be certain that this is the reason that modern science developed in the western world, the very existence and popularity of the thesis suggests that there need not be a strong dichotomy between science and biblical religion. Thus we don't need to turn our brains off when we enter a church, at least not a Christian, Muslim, or Jewish church.

Other questions further confound the separation we like to make between faith and reason. Can we ignore the faith we have in the reasoning process? How can we be sure that our reasoning

is correct, or be sure that we have enough information to draw proper conclusions? Unfortunately we don't know how much we don't know, but we have faith that we know enough to arrive at major conclusions through reasoning. Conversely, faith is often based on reason. In its most rational form, faith can be a logical extension of our reasoning process. The facts we observe serve as a basis for reasoning beyond the demonstrable, but this moves us towards the realm of faith.

In the ongoing controversy between science and the Bible, some attempt reconciliation by proposing an irresolvable dichotomy between the two. Such thinking has some basis in the dualistic philosophy, promoted by Descartes and others, that mind and matter are totally separate. Matter would be more in the scientific realm, and religion more in the realm of the mind. Such a dichotomy is reminiscent of the comment that some scientists think about God, but only on weekends. Any suggestion of such dualism runs into the challenge of the concept of truth. Truth is truth on weekends as well as during the week, and it is truth whether we are in or out of a church. Truth is reality, and if reality exists (few deny its existence), it should be consistent in all its manifestations, whether in the realms of matter or mind, or similarly in the realms of science or religion. Truth could not contradict itself or it would not be truth. Furthermore, both science and religion in varying ways and degrees seek for truth.

Attempting to separate science and religion can be a convenient way to avoid the truth challenge, but it does not bring us to truth. In the context of the Bible we must acknowledge that the truth that is sought for is manifest in both God's word and God's creation. Each should bring us to the same truth. In the context of science, truth should be consistent with the data of nature, as well as other aspects of reality, including such abstruse components as humanity's spiritual dimension. If science is looking for truth, it needs to be open to those aspects of reality, such as morality or our freedom of choice, that are beyond the cause-and-effect system of science. Reality is too complex to be isolated into the simple components of faith and reason. We cannot neatly turn off one or the other.

There is a further reason why we should not turn our minds off when we enter a church. An impressive body of scientific information has been found that supports the biblical model of origins better

than science's evolutionary model. Since there are hundreds of thousands of scientists interpreting nature in a model that excludes the Bible, and only a small number who include it, the number and the strength of the scientific findings that fit better with the Bible is rather remarkable. What would the picture be if a larger proportion of scientists were interested in seriously evaluating the biblical concept of beginnings? I would venture that we would have a very different intellectual climate of opinion regarding origins.

Much of the scientific data that supports the Bible has been discussed in various ways in previous issues of this journal. A detailed list would be quite long. The leading topics and questions relate to the following: (1) How could life originate by itself? (2) After nearly two centuries there is still no workable model for the development of biological complexity, thus seriously jeopardizing Darwin's model of natural selection. (3) The proposed billions of years for the evolution of life are totally inadequate for the improbable events proposed for evolution. (4) The rapid rates of erosion of the continents challenge their existence for the presumed billions of years. (5) The lack of erosion at assumed gaps in Earth's sedimentary layers indicates that only a short time was involved in their deposition. Other evidence also reflects the rapid deposition of these layers as expected from the biblical flood. (6) The extreme rarity of fossil intermediates between the major groups of organisms suggests that evolution from simple to complex never occurred. (7) A significant number of scientists who do not believe in the Bible are criticizing the evolutionary model. This scientific data demands answers. In my opinion, the creation model of the Bible survives critical evaluation much better than does the naturalistic evolutionary model.

The scientific findings that support the Bible indicate that we don't need to turn off our brains when we enter a church. Truth, which has to be consistent in all aspects of reality, does not fear investigation in all realms. If we are looking for truth, we need to keep our minds functioning at all times, evaluating truth and error as best we can in all realms, whether in the church or in the laboratory.

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