

PART II. THE NECESSITY OF BEGINNING TO GIVE THE STUDENTS OF OUR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS A PROPER VIEW OF SCIENCE AND OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

1. Introduction

There is a widespread but erroneous idea among Christian teachers that science is an activity in which scientists discover or formulate principles and laws by merely finding a few isolated items of data or evidence and then adding their opinions or interpretations. Thus, many creationists fail to see that we really do not have grounds or reason for taking a position on a scientific problem until we have considered (and understood) all of the main, available data related to that problem. So, we must be careful not to teach our students that science is a sort of game in which we merely take a small amount of data, add our opinions and Bible knowledge, and come up with a scientific principle or law. That kind of science would never have discovered the thousands of hidden oil deposits on which we now depend; nor would it have made possible medical triumphs such as the discovery of the polio virus and the development of a vaccine for it.

We are in great need of correcting the above-described, false idea of science, among our many well-meaning teachers in Christian schools. Science is basically scientific research. We can perhaps reduce this scientific research to the following 3 steps, but none of the 3 can be omitted without invalidating the entire work:

1. Engaging in a systematic process of collecting large amounts of data relevant to the question or problem at hand.
2. Carefully recording and organizing the data which have been collected.
3. Drawing a conclusion based on the data collected--not on preconceived ideas of what the outcome of the research will be.

Christians don't need to be afraid of the scientific method of research. We approach scientific research with some basic presuppositions, e. g., that matter was created by God, and that the world around us is rationally organized and understandable to man, whose mind is designed "in the image of" the Creator. Then we go to work searching for answers from God's natural revelation. It is of course proper that we keep the special revelation of God (the Bible) in mind as we carry out our research, but we must realize that the Bible does not give us many statements which consist of collected scientific data. It could well be that a definite and clear teaching of the Bible will contradict some part of the research project you are carrying out. If so, then you have somewhere gone wrong in your research process, and will have to go back, find your error, and proceed from there. However, if you have been consistently and honestly observing the natural world in order to obtain good data, it is very unlikely that such a problem will arise. The Bible is never really in opposition to the characteristics of the natural world around us, for God does not contradict himself.

It may be, at this point, that someone will ask, "But aren't all earth-science studies inconsistent and unbiblical because scientists hold to a uniformitarian view of processes on the earth?" The answer to this question is definitely in the negative; modern sedimentary geologists do not arrive at their conclusions in research by relying on a stereotyped form of uniformitarianism left over from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Instead of attributing great age to rock strata by applying uniformitarian theory, they examine and evaluate the characteristics of the strata. We now have many reliable ways of determining