



Why Christians should be Scientists

***“Magnitude does not overpower Him,
minuteness cannot escape Him and variety cannot bewilder Him”***

Thomas Chalmers penned these words nearly 175 years ago to describe the complete knowledge God has of his creation. During and subsequent to his time, our civilisation has undergone a scientific and technological revolution. From the telescopes of Copernicus and Galileo, to the mechanical laws of Sir Isaac Newton; from the natural selection of Darwin to Einstein's theories of general and special relativity, we have become 'scientific' – *homo scientia*.

Likewise, whereas in pre-Enlightenment Western civilisation, the clergy were the figures of ultimate authority, we now treat such with diffidence and apathy, preferring the dominion of Dawkins and Attenborough, with their parasitic atheistic agendas.

So where does this leave the Christian? Should the Christian withdraw from the natural sciences for fear of treading on unholy ground? Many young Christians are dissuaded, either directly or subliminally, from pursuing careers in science. However, such withdrawal bodes poorly both for the scientific and for the Christian world.

I want to offer eight solid reasons why Christians should not be afraid of the natural sciences and how Christians can find fulfilment in following careers in these areas. Incidentally, the eight reasons also explain why Christianity alone has provided, and continues to provide, the best foundation on which to pursue the scientific endeavour. So why should the Christian be a scientist?

1. In obedience to the creation mandate (Genesis 1:28)

God is not neutral about science. God is not apathetic towards science. God is definitely not anti-science. In the film 'Contact', starring Jodie Foster and Matthew McConaughey, the villains are fanatic Christians, who try to stymie scientific advance, even using violence to gain their ends. The same is true of the mad priest in Conan Doyle's 'Lost World'. However, rather than God being neutral, apathetic, or even anti-Science, God commands us to be scientists. Science is the pursuit of knowledge. Compare the effort expended in the search for knowledge (science) with God's creation mandate to mankind, *“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it”* (Genesis 1:28). When Copernicus and Galileo were scrutinizing the heavens through their telescopes, they were obeying God's creation mandate to know, map and subdue the cosmos. When Einstein drew up his theories of general and special relativity, he was doing what he was made to — filling the earth and subduing it. Do not scorn science; it is after all what we were made to do! Just as we humans were made to be fruitful — procreation and the sexual urge come naturally to us — so we were made to subdue the earth and be scientists.

2. Because it allows the creation to tell us about God's glory (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18ff)

Whenever you gaze at the stars and planets, you hear the voice of God speaking through them telling you of his glory. Whenever you scan and calculate the crystal structures of complex solids you are hearing the voice of God telling you that this is a made thing — something made by God for his glory. The more you gaze into the created order the more you hear the voice of God noiselessly but forcibly impressing upon you that you were made for God's glory. Hence, the pursuit of knowledge (science), in its purest form, is a chasing after the voice of God in his

creation. John Calvin in his *Institutes*, Book I, Chapter V, Paragraph 2, bows before this glory and writes

“those who are more or less acquainted with (astronomy, medicine and all the natural sciences) are thereby assisted and enabled to obtain a deeper insight into the secret workings of divine wisdom ... To investigate the motions of the heavenly bodies, to determine their positions, measure their distances, and ascertain their properties, demands skill, and a more careful examination; and where these are so employed, as the providence of God is thereby more fully unfolded, so it is reasonable to suppose that the mind takes a loftier flight, and obtains brighter views of his glory.”

3. An orderly Creator gives rise to an orderly creation

Christianity points to God the Lord as Creator. According to Genesis 1, God brings order out of chaos. The six days in which God created list the progressive ordering of a chaotic system, so that on the sixth day ‘*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*’ Because our God is a God of order and not of disorder, we can expect his creation to be ordered. Science is not the invention of order, but the discovery of Creation’s already inherent order. Scientists do not start with a chaotic system and impose order upon it, they start with an ordered system and attempt to quantify and qualify its order. Science, as Johannes Kepler said, “*thinks God’s thoughts after him*”. The whole of the scientific enterprise is based on the assumption that the universe which we inhabit is ordered. If the universe was purely chaotic and disordered, it would be impossible to pursue science; there would be no universal laws which describe and predict the natural system. In other words, science would be pointless — Newton could never have accurately described whether when an apple fell from a tree it would have gone up or down. There could be no universal laws. (I do acknowledge that through Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, there is indeterminacy at the quantum level, but such uncertainties become negligible on a system scale).

4. A contingent creation requires an empirical methodology

The scientific method sprang from the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. They sat and thought about the world; they drew up equations and calculations to describe the way the world worked, because for them, the world could only operate in one way. However, Christianity teaches that the Universe is contingent. It does not have to be; it is not necessary. God did not have to create our universe; it was a personal decision. Our existence is not like his — God is... period. We tend to think, using the Latin expression, *Ego sum Deus igitur est* — I am, therefore God is, whereas the truth is *Deus est ego igitur sum* — God is, therefore I am. Since this world is contingent, and not necessary, you cannot sit and hypothesise about the way it should be — you need to suck it and see. You must observe, measure and experiment. This is called Empiricism. The fathers of Empiricism were the astronomers Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo — all nurtured in a Christian environment.

5. The creation is itself not divine

According to the pantheists, who believe that ‘*All is God*’, this world must not be treated as an object, but with the same reverence with which we would treat God, because for them the world is God. But Christianity drew a sharp distinction between God and his world, insisting that whilst God was present in his world, the world was not divine. So we can prod and investigate it without any fear of committing a blasphemy. God, according to Christian teaching, is immanent (he is present in His creation) but is also transcendent (he is above and beyond His creation). You do no disservice to God by straining to understand the world he has made.

6. Because all truth is God’s truth

Some Christians worry endlessly about whether science will ever disprove God. Some scientists take an almost gleeful spite in declaring this or that discovery to herald the death of God. However, let us have confidence in our God. We will never find anything which is true in God’s book of works (his creation) which contradicts the truth in his book of words (the Bible). Just as we think God’s

thoughts after him by determining the genetic code of the fruit fly, so genetic truth cannot contradict Scripture. Both are created and established by God. Both have revelatory content. They do not and cannot stand opposed to each other — any apparent contradiction is just that, apparent and not real. So don't worry — you will not open Pandora's Box!

7. Because God takes pleasure in what he has made

Psalms 104:31 informs us of the possibility that God can rejoice, or take delight in his works. God the Father takes pleasure in the Creation because it was made by and for his Son (Colossians 1:16). Likewise the Son sustains all things '*by his powerful word*' (Hebrews 1:3). If such a creation can bring delight to God the Father because it bears the stamp of his son's workmanship, it should also bring us pleasure. It is possible for this pleasure to be enhanced by probing the boundaries, whether real or apparent, of this awesome cosmic theatre.

8. Because the world is God's creation, it's worthy of study

Christianity glorifies and adores the God of Creation. Love delights in the giving of gifts. God loves to give us his Creation. We love to receive it. Just as a young woman counts her engagement ring precious because she loves her fiancée, so we count God's world precious because it is a gift from him. So we study it to try and understand the magnitude of the gift that he has given us. We dive to the bottom of the ocean trenches and discover whole new ecosystems given to us by God; we fly to Mars and discover new and strange environments given to us by God; we investigate the human body and all its behavioural and physiological features because it's God's gift to us. Just as the young woman runs her finger over her ring to feel its perfection, so we run mathematical simulators to understand the motion of the planets and the stars. It is God's world, therefore it is worthy of our study.

Having given you these eight solid reasons why Christianity provides the perfect springboard for the scientific endeavour, I hope none of you will feel that in engaging in science you are somehow treading on God's shoes or engaging in a blasphemous activity. Rather, you are obeying Him. So explore and experiment and observe and measure. Boldly go where only God has gone before — that is his command!

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