

SCIENCE AND CHRISTIANITY IN HARMONY?

L. J. Gibson

Geoscience Research Institute

Science has achieved great success as a method of learning about and controlling nature. Probably every person on earth has benefitted in some way from the efforts of scientists. Medicines have been discovered that relieve our pain and cure our illnesses. Advances in electronics reduce our labor, improve our communications, and provide entertainment for our leisure. Perhaps the crowning achievement of science is development of the technology to send humans to the moon and bring them back, together with samples of moon rocks. What is it about science that has led to all these achievements, and many more?

Some characteristics of science

Many attempts have been made to describe the scientific process, yet it is difficult to generalize. The traditional steps of "the scientific method" are often taught in elementary school, but the actual practice of scientists varies considerably. Despite the variation, there are certain steps that seem necessary if one is to "do science". Foremost among the requirements of scientific inquiry is the ability to test one's ideas. An explanation for an observation may be quite reasonable, but if it cannot be tested, it is not considered to be a scientific explanation. Scientific methodology can be considered to include two necessary parts: an idea, or hypothesis, and a test. The idea is called a hypothesis, and the test is normally some kind of experiment.

Testability. Designing and conducting an experiment that will test a hypothesis is the heart of science. A scientific hypothesis must be stated in a way that permits testing. The source of a hypothesis is not important. Some scientific hypotheses may have come from dreams, from speculation, even from the Bible. The important thing about the hypothesis is that it must be testable. A scientific test is designed to give different results depending on whether a particular hypothesis is true or false. An experiment cannot be used as a test unless it has the potential to falsify the hypothesis.

Repeatability. Another characteristic of science is that results are freely described, so those who have doubts about the results can examine them for errors or propose different interpretations. They may try the experiment for themselves to be certain the results are reliable. Repeatability is critical to the acceptance of scientific conclusions, and contributes to our confidence in those conclusions. A result that cannot be repeated is not accepted by the scientific community. An example of such a result is the "cold fusion" experiment reported by scientists in Utah in 1989.

Naturalistic. Another characteristic of modern science is that it is naturalistic. No explanations are allowed that call for unknowable forces. This has been helpful in eliminating explanations that credit the results to "nature spirits" or other such superstitions. Unfortunately, many scientists have grown so accustomed to using only naturalistic explanations that they have come to believe that nature can be understood without considering the existence of God. Where appropriate, I will use the term "naturalistic science" to indicate this restricted view of the nature of modern science. When not so restricted, "science" refers simply to the systematic study of nature.

Tentative. Because science is constantly testing new ideas, new interpretations are sometimes given. This means that old ideas may be replaced by new ideas. Thus scientific ideas are always subject to challenge and the possibility of change. Scientific conclusions are always tentative. Scientists

recognize this as one of the strengths of science: there is always the possibility that new discoveries will improve our understanding of nature.

Summary of nature of science. To summarize, science deals with hypotheses that can be tested and either confirmed or rejected. Naturalistic science is restricted to explanations that do not include superstitions or references to unknowable causes. Finally, scientific explanations are always open to improvement. These characteristics of science have contributed to its success. However, amidst all the success of science, many people have failed to notice that science has some inherent limitations.

Some limitations of science

Although science has been very successful, it suffers from certain problems and limitations. For example, two groups of scientists may investigate the same question and arrive at different conclusions. Actually, differences of opinion among scientists are not at all unusual. In fact, conflicting interpretations may be the rule in science rather than the exception. If science is so reliable, how can different scientists come to opposite conclusions?

Untestable or untested hypotheses. One limitation of science is that it is not applicable to all situations. Despite the theory of what science should be, not all hypotheses can be tested. Some hypotheses involve such events of such magnitude that humans are not capable of manipulating them. For example, the evolutionary hypothesis involves such long periods of time that it cannot be tested experimentally. The worldwide flood cannot be repeated or tested experimentally. Many historical events are unique, and it may be impossible to know what conditions led to the event. It might not be possible to choose among several possible causes of an event such as the Pleistocene large mammal extinction. Hypotheses for the causes of earthquakes are very difficult to test because earthquakes are unpredictable, and the interior of the earth is inaccessible. Although scientists are interested in each of these ideas, none of them has been adequately tested. In addition, hypotheses involving supernatural activity cannot be tested, because God's activities are outside of man's ability to study or test. By excluding supernatural activity, naturalistic science automatically excludes some hypotheses because they are untestable, even though they may be correct.

There are other reasons an idea may not be tested. Theoretically, no scientific idea is free from challenge. However, if an idea is generally accepted, and if no alternatives have been proposed, there is little motivation for spending the time and money needed to test the idea. For example, the idea that the continents are fixed in position was so well accepted that continental movement was not seriously considered, except by a handful of scientists, until the last few decades. New information obtained in the 1960's and later seemed to suggest continental movement. This stimulated a great deal of research to test the idea of continental fixity. The result was a new theory, known as the theory of plate tectonics. Most earth scientists now believe the continents have moved, although no one really knows what causes the movement. Until the new information was discovered, there was no motivation to test the common assumption that the continents are fixed in position.

Incomplete data. The example of continental movement illustrates a more general limitation of science. Science rarely, if ever, deals with all the possibilities. Scientists never have all the data, nor have they thought of all possible explanations. For example, some data are not accessible. For example, study of the floor of the oceans was impractical until the necessary technology was available. Discovery

of paleomagnetic reversals in sea floor rocks was a major factor in rejection of continental fixity and development of the theory of plate tectonics.

The availability of data may be limited by other factors. In many cases, it would be impossible to gather and store all the data, so some kind of sampling must be done. This means much of the potential data will not be collected. Which data is collected and which is ignored may be determined by the expectations of the scientist and his colleagues. Such sampling bias may give results that appear to support the expectations of the scientist, whether true or false. For example, the paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson studied fossil mammals. Simpson could explain the distributions of fossil mammals from stable continents. He used this explanation to oppose the concept of moving continents. However, fossil reptile distributions tend to support the plate tectonics theory. If Simpson had been studying fossil reptiles rather than fossil mammals, he might have come to a different conclusion.

Interpretational bias. Two scientists, when confronted with the same data set, may come to different conclusions as to the meaning of the data. The reason for this is that data is interpreted in a context that depends on the experience and philosophy of the scientist doing the interpreting. Each scientist has some general picture of nature that forms the basis for his or her assumptions. A generally accepted view is called a paradigm. Shared assumptions make it possible for scientists to compare results and agree on conclusions. But the assumptions are not themselves tested, and may be wrong. Two scientists with different presuppositions may each see the same data as supporting their own viewpoints, even when the viewpoints are mutually exclusive. Interpretational bias is an important factor in the controversy between science and scripture.

Sociological pressures. Scientists are often considered to be coldly objective in reaching their conclusions. Such is usually not the case. Sociological factors influence scientific work. Scientists form working groups, often in rivalry with competing working groups. Even though scientists tend to be individualistic, there is some pressure to conform with the group. This pressure may be exerted by control of acceptance of papers for publication, or by control of research grant money. Some conclusions may be rejected by the scientific community by majority agreement, rather than because they have been disproved experimentally.

The example of plate tectonics illustrates the power of the paradigm. Before the early 1970's, anyone who believed in plate tectonics was considered outside of mainstream science. At the present time, anyone who does not believe in plate tectonics is considered out of date. This change in paradigm from stable continents to moving continents is an example of a scientific revolution. A change in paradigms is often referred to as a "conversion" experience. Plate tectonics is a paradigm change in which many scientists were "converted". However, conversions are not always so common. Very often, a new idea takes over, not because opponents change their minds, but because they die and are replaced by those who accept the new idea. Despite the supposed objectivity of scientists, no one likes to recant publicly.

Not all "science" is equal. Science has been so successful that all sorts of groups have borrowed the term. We now have "consumer science", "political science", "behavioral science", etc. Since the term "science" is applied to a variety of different methods and disciplines, it might be useful to point out that different kinds of "science" may have different properties. Distinguishing between the efforts of scientists to explain repeatable events and their efforts to reconstruct unique past events is of particular interest in the present discussion.

"Experimental science." In general, science involves the study of the relationships between specific initial conditions, a result, and a mechanism linking them. Any one or more of these qualities may be unknown. It is not likely that the linking mechanism can be determined unless both the initial conditions and the result are known. Unknown results can be determined by experiment, assuming the event is repeatable. Mechanisms can be inferred by varying the initial conditions and repeating the experiment. These kinds of activities are what I mean by "experimental science." Nature is so repeatable that we believe that only a single outcome is possible when all the initial conditions are specified. Experimental science has been highly successful, and its results have been reliable.

"Historical science." The situation is less clear when the initial conditions are unknown. Although a specified set of initial conditions may have only one possible outcome, the converse is not true. A specific result may occur from more than one set of initial conditions. A unique event, such as a historical event, cannot be repeated experimentally. One may attempt to construct a model to assist in trying to understand the event. The model may make predictions that can be tested. However, it is likely that other models could also be constructed that might yield similar predictions. Even if a model is successful in explaining the data, there is always the possibility that there may be another explanation that is just as good, or even better. The kind of activity involving attempts to use results to infer initial conditions is what I mean by "historical science." Explanations for historical events inevitably reflect the presuppositions of the scientist and involve a greater amount of subjectivity than is the case for experimental science. Historical scientists may experimentally test predictions made from historical explanations. Falsification of the predictions may not, however, falsify the explanation for the event. Instead, another prediction may replace the falsified prediction. For example, evolutionary theory originally predicted the existence of a relatively continuous record of change in the fossil record. This prediction has been falsified, but the evolutionary theory has not been abandoned. Instead, other explanations have been proposed, such as an incomplete fossil record, and punctuated equilibria.

Not all scientific activities can be neatly categorized as either "historical science" or "experimental science." If an event occurs repeatedly, it may be possible to detect the initial conditions, and perhaps to discover a mechanism. This may be possible even though the initial conditions cannot be controlled experimentally. This kind of study does not fall neatly into either "experimental science" or "historical science."

Summary of limitations of science. In theory, science deals only with ideas that can be tested. However, some ideas cannot be tested, because they involve events on too large a scale, or that are too complex, or that have occurred only once, or that cannot be controlled, or that involve supernatural activity. Science is built on certain naturalistic presuppositions, and its reliability depends on the truthfulness of its presuppositions. Scientists rarely if ever have all the data, and rarely if ever think of all the possible explanations. Scientists are influenced by their own expectations when deciding which data is important and which hypotheses are worth testing. Peer pressure and the power of the prevailing paradigm may also influence how a scientist interprets his data. The term "science" is often applied to different kinds of study. Experimental science is much more reliable than historical science, because experimental science can be repeated, whereas historical events cannot.

Science and Christianity- Partners or Antagonists?

A History of conflict. Science and the church have a long history of conflict. Copernicus was afraid to publish his view that the earth moved around the sun, because the church taught a different view. Galileo was persecuted by the church for supporting the views of Copernicus. Darwin's theory of evolution was greeted with hostility by the churches, especially at first. There is a widespread belief that science has corrected the scriptures wherever there has been conflict. However, this is not an accurate description of history.

The flat earth, the geocentric universe, and fixity of species are commonly used as examples of scriptural teachings that were corrected by science. However, none of these teachings is found in scripture. Each of these ideas goes back to secular sources, especially Greek science and philosophy. In each case, the church tried to support its acceptance of secular ("scientific") ideas by tying them to certain Bible texts. For example, the flat earth concept was supported by texts referring to the "four corners of the earth" (e.g. Isaiah 11:12). However, Isaiah 40:22 uses the expression "the circle of the earth", which could suggest a round earth. These biblical expressions indicate the worldwide scope of God's activity, not the shape of the earth.

The situation is similar with the two other examples given. The scriptures do not teach fixity of species. The expression "after his kind" in Genesis is not even referring to reproduction at all. This expression in the creation account merely indicates that God created many kinds of organisms during creation week. In contrast to the fixity of species concept, change in species is explicitly predicted in Genesis 3:14, 18. Although the sun is described as rising and setting, the relationship of the motion of the sun and the planet earth is not discussed in scripture. The real conflict was not between science and the scriptures. It was between science and the church. An important cause of the conflict was that church leaders incorporated ideas from science and philosophy into their religious teachings. When science changed, the old scientific ideas taught by the church were in conflict with the new scientific ideas. There is still a temptation today to repeat the error of basing doctrines on current hypotheses from science. We should not do this.

"The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science . . . not one or all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith." Great Controversy 595:1.

The basis of conflict. When modern science first developed, it was seen as a study of the Creator's handiwork. Science and scripture were expected to agree, since both had the same "Author." Many of the founders of modern science were devout Christians who saw harmony between science and scripture. The fact that science and religion have coexisted harmoniously in the past suggests that there may be a way to resolve the present tension between the two systems. However, given the present circumstances, such harmony does not seem possible. Two factors make conflict between science and religion appear unavoidable. These are differences in presuppositions and differences in certainty. Other factors, such as human pride (on all sides), also contribute to the conflict.

Theism and naturalism. The appropriateness of naturalistic presuppositions is one cause of tension between science and Christianity. Science is built on naturalistic presuppositions. Although it would be unscientific to deny the existence of God, scientists tend to assert that His existence is irrelevant to understanding nature. There is absolutely no room for God in the scientific method. In contrast, the scriptures are based on theistic presuppositions. The scriptures teach that there would be no nature

without God, that God is active in nature, and that nature can only be understood in the context of God as creator and sustainer. Given the contrast between naturalism and theism, conflict between naturalistic science and scripture should not be surprising.

Faith and uncertainty. Differences in opinion on the knowability of absolute truth is another potential cause of conflict between science and scripture. Because science is tentative, scientists often tend to be cautious about making positive statements. Many scientists have learned that it is best to qualify statements, such as "This appears to be true" or "The data suggests this is true". The scriptures, however, teach the necessity of faith in the absolute truth of God's word. Faith is confidence that something is absolutely true, even in the absence of demonstration. Such an acceptance of absolute truth is difficult for a scientist to accept, especially when the supporting evidence is not compelling. This is another, understandable, source of conflict between science and scripture.

Science and the supernatural. The chief source of conflict between science and scripture seems to be over the role of God in nature. But whether God is or has been active in nature is considered to be an unscientific question. Such questions cannot be answered within a naturalistic worldview. The most that naturalistic science can say about a supernatural event is that it seems to have no scientific explanation. It is no more scientific to deny the possibility of God's special activity in nature than it is to affirm it. The scriptures affirm that God is active in nature. There is no scientific basis for rejecting that affirmation. Many scientists, including Sir Isaac Newton, have seen the consistency of natural phenomena as evidence for God's hand controlling nature.

Natural law. God's activity in nature is so consistent that generalizations can be made in the form of the "laws of nature." Natural laws are so consistent that some scientists consider them to be inherent properties of matter and energy. However, these laws are not inherent in nature, but were established by God, and represent His continuous activity.

"It is not by inherent power that year by year the earth yields its bounties and continues its march around the sun. The hand of the Infinite One is perpetually at work guiding this planet. It is God's power continually exercised that keeps the earth in position in its rotation." (Ministry of Healing 416:2).

Since natural laws were established by God, He is not limited by them. Natural law reflects God's choice of method in controlling nature, and He could change them if He willed to do so.

Our perception of the "laws of nature" actually represents our limited understanding of how God works in nature (see Patriarchs and Prophets 114:3). As our understanding of God is incomplete, so our understanding of the laws of nature is incomplete. Situations occasionally arise in which God works in an unfamiliar way. We may call these events miracles, but it is probable that generalizations could be made concerning them if they could be observed repeatedly. We simply are not aware of all the relevant conditions, either because they occur infrequently or because we have no means of observing them. Viewed in this way, ordinary phenomena and miracles are both controlled by God, acting through the laws of nature He established (see "Laws of Nature", 8 Testimonies 259:2). There need be no qualitative difference in the laws producing common and rare phenomena. However, there is a difference between them in our experience and understanding. It is for this reason that different terms are used. Familiar events that follow known patterns are called natural events. Those events that are rare and do not follow known patterns may be called supernatural events, particularly when they seem contrary to expectation based on previous experience.

Identifying supernatural activity. Supernatural activity implies purposeful activity by a being in which some of the pertinent conditions are not observable. For example, if an invisible angel picked up a visible book and carried it across a room, an observer would probably consider the event to be supernatural. Clearly, no law of nature need be broken for an angel to carry a book across a room. However, the presence of the angel is an important initial condition that would be unobservable. There would simply be no satisfactory scientific explanation for such an event unless the presence of the angel became known. Since supernatural beings have the ability to avoid detection by humans, their presence may not be known unless it is revealed. Supernatural revelation is often the only way to detect supernatural activity. When the scriptures identify an event as involving supernatural activity, this means that it is highly probable that some of the initial conditions cannot be determined through science. In such situations, the scriptures are necessary to understand events in nature.

Should science exclude the supernatural? Scientists are justifiably skeptical of claims of supernatural events. The large number of obviously fraudulent claims of extrasensory experiences has understandably resulted in skepticism toward the idea of the supernatural. The impossibility of verifying supernatural activity makes it difficult to convince skeptics of its reality. Many phenomena that were once believed to require God's direct intervention have been explained by natural processes (e.g., planetary motion, blood circulation). For these reasons, scientists tend to ignore claims of supernatural events. However, the inability of science to test it does not mean that divine activity is non-existent.

Naturalistic science's exclusion of explanations involving supernatural interference has both positive and negative aspects. Excluding such explanations from experimental science seems reasonable. After all, one cannot do experimental science unless the results can be repeated. When one performs an experiment repeatedly with the same result, it is illogical to attribute the results to special supernatural activity. Scientists have chosen to act as though God does not interfere in nature, regardless of whether this is true. This assumption has not hindered the development of experimental science. Scientists can proceed with their experiments without concern over whether God will cause the results to vary. However, this does not justify the conclusion that God is not active in nature. It merely means God's activity appears to be consistent.

What about divine intervention? Does it occur, and if so, how can it be detected by humans? Since God works through His laws, divine intervention must come about by controlling the initial conditions in such a way as to produce the desired result. Knowledge of supernatural activity in an event may be unavailable except through revelation. Therefore, exclusion of supernatural activity by science is illegitimate when God reveals that He was active in an event. This point is fundamental to understanding and resolving the conflict between science and scripture. Without consideration of revealed supernatural activity, historical science cannot be considered reliable.

Summary of science and Christianity. Science and the scriptures should be in harmony rather than antagonistic to each other. This is because God is the Creator of nature and the Revealer of scripture. Indeed, there seems to be no disagreement between the scriptures and experimental science. It is in historical science, particularly in the area of origins, that significant conflict has developed. This conflict has deep philosophical implications that touch the lives of everyone, and make resolution of the conflict between science and scripture an important objective. The fact that science and scripture once were in harmony gives some hope that they might once again achieve harmony. However, some changes seem necessary.

Disagreement between science and scripture seems to be centered around the issue of divine activity. There can be no agreement between the two unless divine activity can be identified. But naturalistic science refuses to consider the possibility of divine activity. Scientists are interested in explaining events in terms of natural laws. Divine activity cannot be reproduced at the will of the scientist, and hence cannot be explored scientifically. Such events cannot be explained by scientific methods. The only reliable method for determining God's activity is through His revelation of Himself, such as in the Bible. Once God's activity has been identified, it should be possible to move toward resolution of apparent conflicts between science and Scripture.

Can conflict between science and the church be resolved?

Although it may appear that conflict between science and scripture is unavoidable, there may be ways to resolve, or at least reduce, the conflict. Understanding the causes of the conflict is a first step toward resolving the conflict. In the view presented here, conflicts between science and the scriptures are largely due to incomplete knowledge, differences in presuppositions concerning the relationship of God and nature, and to differences in belief concerning our ability to know absolute truth.

The importance of the issues in the conflict between science and religion compels one to attempt some kind of resolution. Three different ways of dealing with conflicts between science and scripture will be considered here. They can be called "compartmentalization", "exclusivity", or "integration-dominance.". These are briefly described below.

Method 1. Separate but equal (compartmentalization). Some individuals feel that scripture is authoritative in speaking about God, while science is authoritative in speaking about nature. Since they deal with different areas of human experience, there is no need to try to integrate them. This approach breaks down when one deals with areas addressed by both sources in conflicting ways, such as in the area of origins. Some individuals attempt to compartmentalize the two sources, accepting both even where they are in conflict. But this is not a stable position, and eventually it must yield to one of the other positions. The inherent instability of this position prevents a systematic development of a coherent worldview based on compartmentalization.

Method 2. Ignore one or the other (exclusivity). Some persons accept the authority of science and essentially ignore the contributions of scripture. Others do the reverse, accepting scripture and ignoring science. Those who hold one of these views tend to regard the rejected source with suspicion. For example, science may be considered to be a tool of the devil, or belief in scripture may be regarded as a mark of stubborn ignorance. Although either of these positions is stable, neither of them is satisfactory to one who is looking for a fully-integrated, internally consistent worldview.

Naturalistic evolution is an example of scientific exclusivity. This theory holds that nature is controlled by natural processes. The existence of God is not relevant, because if He exists, He is restricted by the laws of nature and therefore He cannot intervene in any supernatural sense. Truth is determined only by logic and observation. In this approach, scripture is given up in favor of science. I assume that a Christian could not accept the basis of this naturalistic worldview.

"Ecclesiastical creationism" was an example of religious exclusivity. All knowledge was to be obtained from the (Catholic) Church. Biblical statements were interpreted according to Church tradition. A serious difficulty with this approach was that some of the Church's interpretations (e.g., geocentric universe, flat earth, fixity of species) were actually derived from secular sources (e.g., Greek philosophy)

rather than from the scriptures. The Church's failure to recognize this led to a series of embarrassing confrontations from which it has still not fully recovered. This religious-exclusivity position is no longer tenable, although its basis is still implicit in the teachings of the Church. Despite this history, some modern creationists essentially ignore science and hold an "exclusivity" type of philosophy. Such a philosophy may protect one against the errors of naturalism, but it leaves one in a precarious position when challenged by new ideas. I assume most Christians believe that nature can tell us something about God, and would attempt to integrate nature and scripture.

Method 3. Attempt to harmonize them (integration-dominance). Those who take the scriptures seriously expect to find agreement between revelation and nature. If both sources of knowledge could be perfectly integrated, the conflict would be resolved. This should be the goal of those who study in the "area of overlap". However, there are areas where scripture and secular science do not yet agree. Here one must choose which is dominant. Both types of philosophy, "scripture-dominant" and "science dominant", are widely accepted.

Theistic evolution, the theory that God used the evolutionary process to create, is an example of science-dominant integration. According to this view, God is active in nature, but chiefly by directing events within the limits of natural laws. Divine activity is allowed in this philosophy, but only in areas which are not within the normal range of scientific inquiry, such as the spiritual nature of man. Theistic evolution shares with ecclesiastical creationism the fault of incorporating secular ideas into a religious framework, subverting the authority of scripture while purporting to defend it. Because it substitutes human authority for the Bible, it could be considered a modern form of ecclesiastical creationism. Theistic evolution is presently a popular view, representing the dominant view in the Catholic Church and in many "mainline" Protestant churches. Theistic evolution is incompatible with biblical teaching, and it must be rejected by any who would maintain the integrity of Christianity.

Biblical creationism is the position of many Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists. Many variations exist, but the SDA position is best considered as a "Bible-dominant integration" philosophy. God is seen as the Creator, not only of nature but of nature's laws. As such, He transcends natural law and sometimes intervenes in nature. Nature is seen as the handiwork of God, but corrupted by sin. Therefore the scriptures are more reliable than science for finding ultimate truth. Nature is to be interpreted in the light of revelation. This is especially important with non-repeatable historical events identified in scripture as involving supernatural activity. Rightly understood, science and scripture will be in harmony.

Working toward harmony. Achieving harmony between science and scripture will require an understanding of the nature of both sources of knowledge. It may be appropriate for science to be operationally naturalistic, but the study of nature should not be restricted by philosophical naturalism. It is not legitimate to challenge the role of God's activity in nature with the use of a system that rules out such a possibility in advance, and philosophical naturalism should be abandoned. This change should have little effect on experimental science. It may however, significantly affect some aspects of historical science, particularly those questions dealing with events which scriptures identify as involving divine intervention. The scriptures are admittedly incomplete, nevertheless, they are probably the best way to identify events in which divine intervention has occurred. Scientists who refuse to consider the possibility of divine intervention, despite scriptural affirmation, are unlikely to arrive at correct conclusions. This does not mean such events cannot be studied. Scientists may legitimately investigate whether a divinely directed event involved a particular mechanism. Predictions based on that mechanism may then be tested

scientifically. However, should results indicate that the proposed mechanism was not the one used, the reality of the event is not thereby refuted. Such an approach should help to reduce, and perhaps even resolve, the conflict between science and religion.

However, total resolution will require that religious people also recognize and respect the nature of scientific inquiry. Christians must avoid reading into the scriptures ideas from their own biases. The tendency of religious people to incorporate scientific ideas into their religious teachings is especially troublesome. In our day, this threat is well represented by the theory of theistic evolution. Theistic evolution takes the theory of evolution from secular historical science and attempts to make it a religious teaching about God's method of creation. It is much safer to accept the scriptural account of earth history, not reading into the text any ideas that we might have acquired from science or elsewhere. Ideas derived from science may be helpful in explaining the scriptures, but they should always be regarded as tentative, and not defended as religious. Doing this should help make science and Christianity partners, rather than antagonists.

Conclusions

Understanding the nature of science can help resolve conflicts between science and scripture. The success of science can be largely attributed to its insistence on testable hypotheses and repeatable results. The prestige of science has come from the success of experimental science. Historical science is much more limited in its power and its success. Science has limitations which deserve greater recognition. An important limitation of science is its inability to deal with supernatural activity. As long as science, especially historical science, refuses to acknowledge the activity of God in the natural world, conflict with the scriptures will continue.

Science should never be used as a proof of biblical doctrines. Christians who look to science to prove their religious beliefs are looking in the wrong place (see Ministry of Healing p 462). Christian beliefs are based on a presupposition of theism and an acceptance of God's word as absolute truth. For the Christian, proof of a religious belief can only be achieved by demonstrating that the teaching is clearly supported by scripture.

" . . . the deductions of science . . . should [not] be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith." Great Controversy 595:1.

Such a use of science is both inappropriate and dangerous. It is inappropriate because the naturalistic presuppositions of science are in conflict with the theistic presuppositions of scripture. Naturalistic science may discover anomalies, but it is not capable of identifying supernatural activity. It is dangerous to base doctrine on science because scientific understanding changes frequently. But truth does not change. Man is incapable of understanding nature without divine illumination. It is only in the light of the scriptures that nature can be correctly understood (8 Testimonies 257-258).

However, science may inform religious people with regard to their interpretation of scripture, as scripture may inform science about events involving supernatural activity. The interaction between science and scripture may help Christians reach a better understanding of both science and scripture. When approached in this manner, science and Christianity can be partners in the Christian's efforts to learn about himself, his world, and his Creator.