

## Creation and educational policy

**The doctrine of creation is well summarised in *The Shorter Catechism*: ‘The work of creation is, God’s making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good’.**

‘God’s making all things of nothing’ involves a great mystery. In Genesis 1:1, ‘God created’ is but two words, yet eternity will not suffice to fully understand what they describe.

Science has to do with humanly devised methodologies for investigating the physical universe. It will never describe how something originated from nothing.

### Limits

It is important for children to understand the limits of human methodologies for describing physical reality. Strictly speaking, creation as a biblical doctrine is outside the realm of science. Creation has to do with spiritual realities only made known to us by divine revelation.

But this also means that Christians have valid objections to science lessons being used for antichristian propaganda. Such occurs when teachers make unsubstantiated claims that science furnishes our only source of understanding the universe, or that scientific methodologies are competent to pronounce on spiritual things. Both claims are completely unreasonable.

The opening sentence of the Bible prepares us to accept that there are many things beyond our comprehension. This does not mean that what is revealed is unreasonable.

It is reasonable to expect that the things of God will be beyond our comprehension. This is true of the Trinity, incarnation and atonement, for example. Indeed, God explains that his method of salvation is beyond our expectation and origination (Isaiah 55:7-9).

We are only given one insight into how creation could take place without pre-existing materials: God created it ‘by the word of his power’. This is revealed, for example, in Psalm 33:6-9. Here the psalmist shows God’s method in creation is ‘by the word of the Lord’ or ‘by the breath of his mouth’; ‘he spoke’ and ‘he commanded’.

God was able to speak the entire universe into existence. This is proposed to us not for argumentation but reverential admiration.

Today, we take for granted the wonder of being able to speak to our computer tablet and a text appearing on the screen. An electronics expert would be able to explain to us how this is accomplished, but without being unreasonable or irrational we still have difficulty understanding it!

It is a smokescreen to pretend that an evolutionary hypothesis of *development* is an explanation of *origin*. There is no scientific explanation of how something can be produced out of nothing. However, Scripture explains how it took place; there is no other rational explanation for the origin of matter.

The processes scientists observe do not account for the origin of matter from nothing, and it is intellectually dishonest to claim that the physical sciences provide total explanations of life. This is no 'fact versus faith' contrast. For the church, faith rests upon the attested fact of Jesus' resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). This is evidence beyond the scientific method.

## **Evidences**

We read in Hebrews 11: 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear' (Hebrews 11:3). Jamieson, Fausset and Brown explain 'we understand' as 'we perceive with our spiritual intelligence the world's creation by God, though we see neither him nor the act as described, Genesis 1'.

Professor Louis Berkhof states that the 'rational proofs' for the existence of God 'are important as interpretations of God's general revelation and as exhibiting the reasonableness of belief in a divine Being' (*Systematic Theology*, p. 28).

We are led to expect such 'proofs' from Romans 1:18-21. Indeed we find testimony to the Creator in various fields of knowledge, including moral, historical and cosmological.

## **Moral**

Testimony to a creator God is found in man's moral awareness. The difference between right and wrong is not acquired by scientific research. We each have an inner moral compass that directs behaviour. This includes those with no scientific education!

This awareness is closely linked to our need for spiritual knowledge, because we are conscious of our moral failure. Sometimes it even asserts itself in connection with the spiritual truth of the gospel.

I met an Iranian Muslim doctor who had been led on to conversion to Christianity as a result of seeing the moral superiority of a religion that teaches 'love your enemies'. He was a scientist, but saw beyond the physical sciences. His willingness to respond to moral knowledge led him to see the excellence of the spiritual instruction of Jesus Christ.

### *Historical*

Historical research confronts us with man's amazing endeavours to secure eternal blessedness. The Pharaohs in their religion and buildings aimed at an enduring, lavish and gigantic world. They constructed, in miniature, replicas of the universe.

This was all very impressive, but also depressing, because, although the pyramids are still with us, they have been robbed of their beautiful, polished, limestone outer casings and the treasures hidden within them.

Such artefacts illustrate the futility of man without the true God.

### *Cosmological*

Creation was miraculous in its brevity. Many want to strain Scripture by transforming the six 24-hour days of creation week into long geological periods, in order to accommodate human theories.

But Genesis 1 is not Hebrew poetry and, if the 'days' were actually long periods of time, the repeated statement 'the evening and the morning were the first [second, third, etc.] day' would be virtually unintelligible.

We do not doubt that almighty God could have created the universe in one microsecond, but this was not the way he decided. There was brevity in his activity, but it was not so brief as to exclude six days of work and one day of rest. The resulting and intended regulation of time from the beginning points us to a Creator.

### **Creationism**

There are aspects of creationism that belong in science and aspects that don't. The findings of creationist scientists, when

correctly using the scientific method, belong legitimately in science. Even if their findings contradict the evolutionary hypothesis, they have a legitimate place in classroom debates about evolutionary theory.

It is also a legitimate part of creationism to illuminate biblical narrative by scientific discovery, as already takes place with archaeological discovery. But this field of knowledge is outside the 'science' curriculum.

It is not the calling of gospel ministers to leave the Word of God to pursue archaeology or geology. On the other hand, it is not the province of Christian scientists to become expositors of the Word of God, for which suitable theological training is required (2 Timothy 2:2).

Scientific creationism does contribute 'proofs' for the existence of God, in that its discoveries lend support to the cosmological argument that everything must have an adequate cause, and to the teleological argument that order, harmony and purpose in the world point to an intelligent designer.

Such arguments, however, also need a broader context for their understanding, including such fields as biblical studies and philosophy.

## **Education**

A number of principles relevant to educational policy flow from these arguments. First, the scientific method is neither an exclusive nor a supreme source of knowledge.

Second, if evolutionary theory is given a place in science lessons, then alternative interpretations of scientific evidence should be considered, such as creationist evidence for a catastrophic past.

Third, other sources of knowledge than scientific should be accorded proper recognition within the curriculum. These include moral, archaeological and documentary historical evidence (Incidentally, the Bible is the best attested ancient document in the world).

Fourth, there must be no secular hijacking of the school curriculum, as though secularism's chosen sources of evidence are absolute.

Fifth, Christian schools should be free to establish their own curriculum. The role of HMIs should be limited to assuring that national standards are covered in them, without promoting any particular world and life view such as political correctness or 'Britishness'. Schools are not the place for political indoctrination.