

SCIENCE, THE BIBLE, AND OUR CULTURE

God made a perfect world which is now flawed by sin, decay and degradation and death.¹ Destruction will continue to wreak havoc in the cosmos until Christ sets up His New Creation as described in Revelation 21-22.

In contrast to this Biblical scenario, evolutionary philosophy leads us to expect things of the physical world that do not seem to be -- things like spontaneous improvement, with the cosmos, the earth, and life itself continuously reaching higher states.² Physical data, however, show that the entire creation -- the earth, the solar system, and the universe -- are quite young,³ a fact in agreement with Biblical chronology,⁴ but which leaves too little time for eons of evolutionary improvement.

The realities of the physical creation -- destruction in the earth, the extinction of life, physical processes pointing to a young age for the earth and the universe -- all these are in line with the Biblical record of history. Nevertheless, people sometimes claim that the Bible is unscientific. The truth is that the Bible is scientifically reliable. By contrast, non-Biblical cultures, because of their lack of knowledge of the Creator, have often held unscientific ideas about the creation. **Far from being unscientific, a foundation of belief in the Bible is really the basis for productive science.**⁵

I. SCIENCE CANNOT FIND TRUTH

The perception that the Bible is not scientifically reliable stems partly from a misunderstanding of what science is. People think that "seeing is believing," that observations made with our physical senses is the guide to truth. From this perspective, the Bible by comparison must be unscientific, because it deals with many things we *can't* see -- not only spiritual things, but also very ancient history, history so ancient it reflects a world very different from our own. But the fact is that physical observation is anything but reliable.

Optical illusions demonstrate the fallibility of our physical senses. When we see an optical illusion, we have a warped perspective. Though no one understands how this happens, and what causes a person's mind to perceive a twisted reality, it is very clear that our physical perceptions are limited. Though God gave us our physical senses, they are limited like all of our abilities. This means that science, which is "knowledge or observations about the physical creation," also has limited accuracy. **The fallibility of our senses limits the accuracy of our scientific observations.**

Since we cannot discern truth with our physical senses, science -- the study of the physical creation -- cannot really be a search for truth. The Bible, however, is absolutely true and infallible. All information in the Bible, even statements about the physical creation, is reliable. Since science deals with "knowledge about the physical creation," therefore, the Bible is a source of much helpful, even indispensable, scientific information.

Because our physical senses are not dependable for perceiving truth, what can we know about physical reality?

Our observations are based on our perspective, but if our perspective is wrong, our conclusions may be wrong. Clearly, fallible man needs more than physical data to arrive at truth, and it is a serious fallacy to reject the revelation of the Bible. **Indeed, science is only *one* aspect of reality.** Physical reality is not the whole of reality, but is only that part of reality discerned with our fallible physical senses.

II. SCIENCE IS FOUNDED ON FAITH

Since our perspective determines what we expect to see, our physical senses are an almost worthless guide to the ultimate realities of life. This is why a person's philosophical perspective, or more to the point, the person's *faith*, is what really shapes his view of reality. This is also why science -- the study of the physical creation -- is always based on our spiritual or philosophical presuppositions. In other words, science is founded on faith.

As mentioned, only a foundation built on biblical principles makes for productive, healthy science that produces useful technology to care for the earth and help mankind. **Non-biblical foundations produce unhealthy, stagnated dogma, "science so-called," based on human speculation.**⁶

Despite the limits of our physical senses, God expects us to use them to study His creation. Biblically based science -- the study of God's creation -- paves the way for exercising good stewardship over the earth, the caring stewardship the Bible calls "dominion" in Genesis 1:28. But the starting point for true understanding the physical creation is the Biblical record.

Cultures without a Biblical foundation, rather than seeing the physical creation as a revelation of the Creator, have tended to view nature and its parts as a god or gods (Romans 1:18-23). This results in the forces of nature being feared rather than being studied. After all, how can one do experiments on nature if he believes he would be experimenting on "god"? **On the other hand, history shows that science has prospered when the Bible is revered, as in Western culture since the Reformation, especially in the three centuries spanning approximately 1600-1900.**⁷

III. GOD HAS INTERVENED IN HISTORY

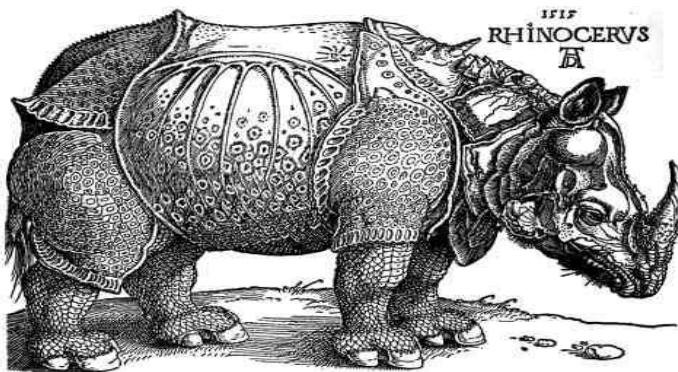
The Creator has repeatedly intervened in human history, with the Reformation itself being the latest global intervention. If we were to choose one date for beginning of the Reformation, it would have to be October 31, 1517. This is when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the Wittenburg Chapel door. **The Reformation was the providential working of God that lifted Western culture out of its Dark Ages.**

Even secular historians agree that the Reformation has no simple technological cause, and that there was a "spirit" of renewal throughout the West.⁸ Thus, secular historians acknowledge in this way the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the Reformation.

The Reformation was actually a miraculous revival. Of course, the Holy Spirit used human technologies such as printing. Modern printing, first accomplished in 1453

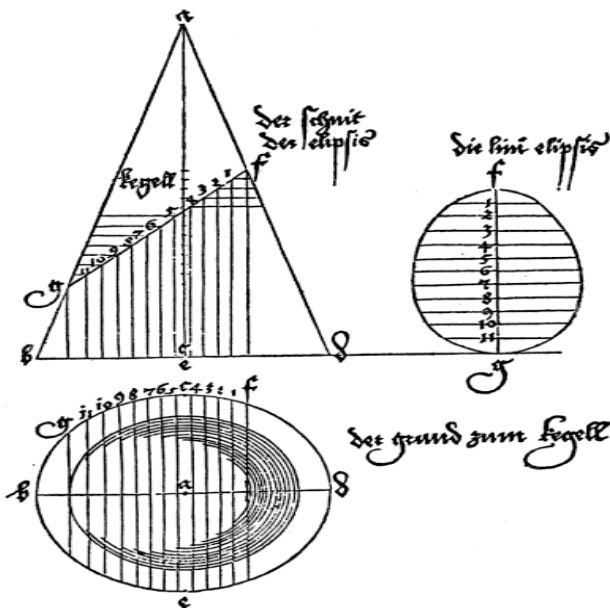
with the production of the "Gutenberg Bible," allowed the dissemination of information and ideas. The Bible says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:22). As God worked out the movement we call the Reformation, the Bible, which had been a closed Book, was made available for the common people chiefly by the process of printing. Gradually the Reformers and others in Europe took an interest not only in Scriptural and theological studies, but also in the natural world around them.

As people learned about the Creator by reading His Word, the realization grew that the creation itself is worthy of study. As mentioned, Genesis 1:28 teaches that we must exercise dominion, or *stewardship*, over God's creation. Since we cannot care for that which we do not understand, **science -- the study of the physical creation in order to understand it -- is a direct outgrowth of the command to have dominion.**

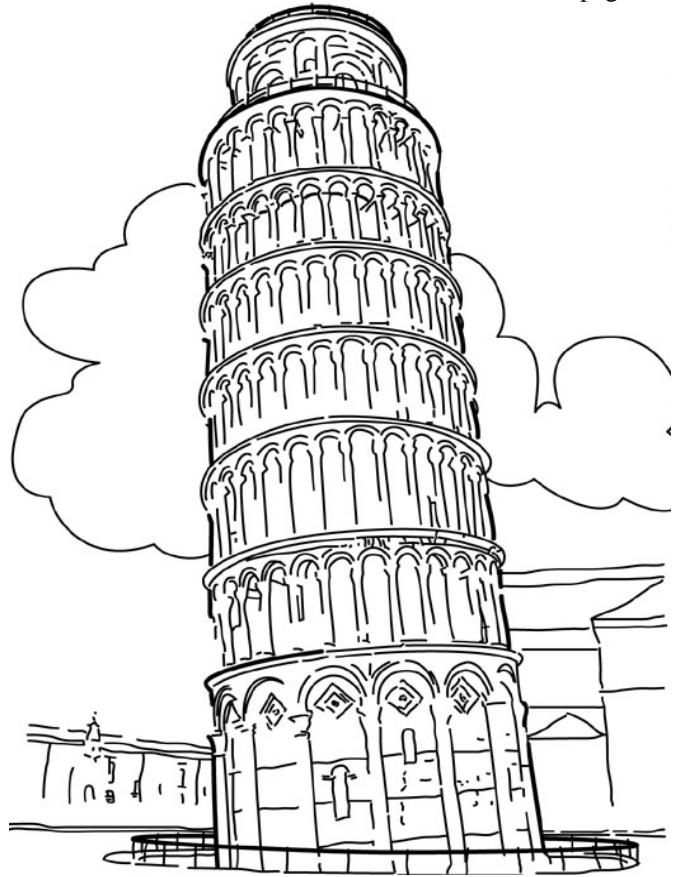


Albrecht Durer's Anatomical Study of a Rhinoceros: A Woodcut Engraving from 1515

Not only scientists, but artists such as the German Albrecht Durer began scrutinizing God's works, examining them closely and realistically to understand their structures and purposes.^{9,10}



Durer: Exercises in Descriptive Geometry Made to Master Perspective



Galileo Is Supposed to Have Publicly Demonstrated the Effect of Gravity on Objects Dropped from the Bell Tower at Pisa, Italy, Constructed from 1063 to 1350

Galileo was a major experimenter in the Reformation era. Measuring gravitational forces and acceleration, he found intimations of what later came to be known as the First Law of Motion, formulated finally in later years by Isaac Newton. Galileo was notable because he defied the ancient anti-experimental Greek tradition promulgated by Aristotle. Like Durer, Galileo was influenced by the biblical ethic sweeping through Europe in his day.

Isaac Newton was another prime scientific figure coming out of the Reformation. He discovered the laws of motion still in use today for everything from roadbeds to rockets, and his basis for these laws was partly the experiments of Galileo. In 1687, he described the laws of motion in his famous book *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. **Newton stated he was motivated to study nature by his desire to study God's works.**

Moving to more recent centuries, there was Michael Faraday, active in the early 1800s. Drawing on Newton's idea of gravitational "action at a distance," Faraday experimentally confirmed that electricity and magnetism can also propagate through empty space. Faraday was motivated by the belief that through scientific discoveries, man could learn about God's creation, and by doing so, the scientist was conveying God's gifts to others. **Faraday was a Christian, and like Newton, he was motivated by the biblical ethic beginning its resurgence in Western culture with the Reformation.**

James Clerk Maxwell followed Faraday in the mid-1800s. He predicted the existence of radio waves based on the work of Newton and Faraday. **Maxwell stated that his scientific motivation came from God's command to have dominion over the earth.** He clearly realized the scientific implications of the dominion command recorded in Genesis 1:28. A few years after Maxwell predicted the existence of radio waves, in 1887 the German scientist Hertz generated radio waves for the first time.

PHILOSOPHIÆ
NATURALIS
PRINCIPIA
MATHEMATICA.

Auctore J. S. NEWTON, Trin. Coll. Cantab. Soc. Matheseos
Professore Lucasiano, & Societatis Regalis Sodali.

IMPRIMATUR.
S. P E P Y S, Reg. Soc. P R Æ S E S.
Julii 5. 1686.

L O N D I N I,

Jussu Societatis Regiæ ac Typis Josephi Streater. Prostat apud
plures Bibliopolas. Anno MDCLXXXVII.

*Title Page of Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural
Philosophy, the Most Influential Work of Science in the Last
Millennium*

The ability to send and receive electronic communications is the very basis of modern culture and technology. Thus modern culture with its reliance on long-range telecommunications can be seen to have followed a developmental pattern stemming all the way back to the days of Newton and Galileo. It would be easy to mistake the technological development since the Reformation as a sure sign that human progress is always upward. **However, progress since the Reformation actually has been rooted in the Divine intervention in human affairs that was the Reformation.** Apart from Divine intervention, degradation, not evolutionary progress, is the natural state of affairs.

IV. SCIENCE MINUS GOD LEADS TO IGNORANCE

If we ignore the Creator's view of reality -- the *Biblical foundation* -- in our study of nature, we have secular "science" which cannot apprehend the true significance of the physical

creation or its parts. 1 Timothy 6:20 calls this secular study of the creation "science falsely so-called."

For instance, secular science views the earth as unimportant, rather than as a unique and special life support system.¹¹ To secular science, the earth is merely another evolving planet, orbiting an average star,¹² in a mediocre solar system, in an evolving cosmos so vast that ... well, no one knows or cares that we are here. This secular, man-centered view, is expressed in Psalm 8:4 which asks, "What is man?" The secular answer to this question is, "Man is only an evolving blob of protoplasm, no more special than the extraterrestrial aliens surely evolving everywhere else." The Creator's response in Psalm 8:5 -- the Biblical foundation -- is that God made man "a little lower than the angels" and "crowned him with glory and honor."

The Creator's view is that man and all the creation are valuable, but that only He is to be worshipped. On the other hand, the secular view asserts that man is no more valuable than the rest of nature. With this demoralizing view, man made in God's image is reduced to groveling before God's creatures in a vain attempt to worship them. This process leads to abject perversion and every type of bondage. Romans 1:20-32, as well as extra-biblical history, document this sad chain of events for pagan cultures of the past.

Right discernment of nature has always depended knowing the Creator. Over 2000 years ago, the Greek astronomer Hipparchus viewed the heavens, and declared -- based on his physical observations -- that there are only 6000 stars in the heavens. Like many of the ancients, Hipparchus claimed that the stars he saw were the only ones that exist.¹³



Hipparchus of Rhodes, Third Century BC

Critics through the ages ridiculed Biblical statements like God's promise to Abraham, "Tell the stars, if thou be able to number them ... so shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:5), a promise which believers in God and His omnipotence found easy to accept. This criticism was commonplace until Galileo in 1609 trained his first telescope on the heavens and saw countless of stars for the first time.¹⁴ The scientific accuracy of the Bible was demonstrated once again -- as was the fallibility of human observations!

V. WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR OUR CULTURE?

The Reformation in the West not only gave birth to freedom of scientific inquiry, but to political freedom. By the Middle Ages, the Orient and most of the rest of the world had descended into feudalism, but the winds of freedom eventually brought democracy to these places as well. Democratic movements around the world reached their peak in the 1800s. So great was the respect for Western freedom by the early 1900s, that China and many other countries honored the American constitution on its 150th anniversary in 1938.

Since then, atheism in the form of communism, and chaos in the form of terrorism, have brought a new Dark Ages to many parts of the world, and atheism in the form of evolutionary humanism has the restricted freedom of scientific inquiry in the West.¹⁵ Despite questions about the future strength and vigor of Western culture under the stranglehold of atheism and its offshoots, **the impact of the Reformation remains as the biblical message of gospel truth continues to penetrate previously closed countries.**

What is the future for Western culture? Will the Lord intervene to grant the West another spiritual revival, or will the tightening grip of evolutionary humanism grow stronger? Maybe Christ will return for His church and the redeemed will soon enter the New Creation, described in Revelation 21, when the earth shall be "full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:9). Meanwhile, believers in the Messiah must practice a biblical ethic in all areas of life, even in our understanding of science and technology.

Notes

Unless otherwise noted, J. Henry authored the sources below.

- 1 Was there death before the Fall?: a further critique of the progressive creationism of Hugh Ross. *Creation Research Society Quarterly*. 43:160-167, 2006, pp. 161-163.
- 2 Using care in defining evolution as mere change in astronomy and biology. *Creation Research Society Quarterly*. 40:124-127, 2003, pp. 124-125.
- 3 Evidence from beyond the earth for a young earth. <creationconcepts.org>, 2005.
- 4 A critique of progressive creationism in the writings of Hugh Ross. *Creation Research Society Quarterly*. 40:16-24, pp. 17-18, 2006, 20-21.
- 5 Christianity and the rise of modern science. <creationconcepts.org>, 2006.
- 6 The rise of the new scientific priesthood. <creationconcepts.org>, 2006.

- 7 Biblical perspectives on the philosophy of science. <creationconcepts.org>, 2006.
- 8 Thinking biblically about science. <creationconcepts.org>. 2003.
- 9 "This drawing has a curious history. Dürer never saw a living rhinoceros. It was not common to find a rhinoceros in Europe at that time, but in 1515 the king Manuel I of Portugal brought from India an elephant and a rhinoceros. The news of those huge animals produced a strong impact. Both animals were sent from Lisbon to Rome, in a ship, as a gift to Pope Leo X, but the ship [sank], and the animal died. Durer used a Portuguese draft as a basis for his own work. Notwithstanding all difficulties, he was able to produce a 'real,' living, tridimensional figure.

"The drawing "is not a correct representation of the animal. Dürer draw the body of the animal as if it were covered by hard plaques (something like a shield). He also put in the back of the rhinoceros a small horn that does not exist. The saw on the hear back of the animal is also purely imaginary, the feet are different from Dürer's drawing, and they have no scales. Although it is not a faithful image of the animal, the drawing is extraordinary ..." (Group of History and Theory of Science, "Durer's Rhinoceros," <ifi.unicamp.br/~ghtc/rhino1-e.htm>, March 12, 1998).

Durer represents the new spirit of observation and investigation sweeping Europe as the Reformation broke out. The Medieval sketch below of a mythical unicorn, with its total lack of anatomical detail, shows the contrast between the striving for accuracy characterizing Durer's day and the attitude of credulousness existing before then.



Medieval Drawing of a Monoceros (Unicorn)

- 10 John H. Lienhard, "Albrecht Durer," <uh.edu/engines/epi138.htm>, accessed January 12, 2007, is the source of the Durer descriptive geometry sketches.
- 11 Designing the earth without a designer. *Technical Journal*. 18(3):58-60, 2004, p. 60.
- 12 The sun is not an average star. *Technical Journal*. 17(3):35-42, 2003, pp. 36-38.
- 13 Charles Dudley Warner, "The Project Gutenberg E-Book of the World's Best Literature Ancient and Modern," <gutenberg.org/files/12788/12788-h/12788-h.htm>, accessed January 12, 2007, is the source of the likeness of Hipparchus.
- 14 *The Astronomy Book*. Master Books, 2002, p. 50.
- 15 The deadly influence of evolutionary beliefs. <creationconcepts.org>, 2002.