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Divorce of Reconciliation? (Work Station Two)

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forever change who we are, how we think, what we value, and what we do and say (Col. 1:21, 22; Gal. 6:14). We rest in His love. Our humble response to His love is to be like Him in the world.

The reality is that those who comprehend the holiness of God are immediately filled with dread and horror over personal sin (Isa. 6:3-6). It is a fact that “the most holy person is most in touch with his own depravity, and consequently, with the great mercy and kindness of God.” “The more closely they contemplate the life and character of Jesus, the more deeply will they feel their own sinfulness, and the less will they be disposed to claim holiness of heart or to boast of their sanctification.” “Only God is holy. Man has not holiness apart from what belongs to God, extended to him in Christ.” Holiness begins with a sense of who God is and an appreciation of His grace. Appreciating salvation is where holiness begins. Starting anywhere else leads to legalism or fanaticism, hypocrisy or discouragement.

God would have us hear His person-to-person call to be like Him in the world. And He would remind us of His gracious provision through Christ: “Be holy, for I am holy, and if you love Me, you will want to be like Me.”

REFERENCES

2 Clyde Cranford, Because We Love Him: Embracing a Life of Holiness (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Publishers, 2002), p. 32.
4 God’s Amazing Grace, p. 120.
5 Cranford, op cit., p. 27.
6 The Sanctified Life, p. 79.
7 Cranford, op cit., p. 33.
nature’s God, teaching those simple, holy truths which cleanse the mind, bringing it into close touch with God. These lessons emphasize the truth that science and religion cannot be divorced.2

Yet, those who claim to represent science today have indeed sued for separation from faith. They have, in fact, even sought to prevent those of faith from expressing themselves in the open discourse of learning. This is much like demanding a divorce—and a gag order.

The Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a consortium of scientists and environmentalists, for example, are protesting the National Park Service’s persistence in offering for sale a creationist account of the Grand Canyon’s formation in the visitors’ center there. This organization bills itself as “assisting federal and state public employees . . . to work as ‘anonymous activists’ so that agencies must confront the message, rather than the messenger.”3 This group demands that the public must be protected from the message that there is an alternative to science’s explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon.

Curiously, in the historical battle between faith and science, the two have reversed roles. The Inquisition of the dark ages is a matter of sound, well-documented historical fact, and those who questioned the orthodoxies of faith were dealt with in cruel and inhuman ways.

But without in any way affirming the atrocious methods of the Inquisition of the church that lasted for six appalling centuries, at least it was being operated ideally from a concern for the eternal salvation of the heretics and of the wider society that could be negatively affected by them.

There is, however, no concern over the eternal in the scientific inquisition to which our culture is being subjected today. And with every bit as much enmity and intolerance as the Inquisition of old, those who represent science are seeking to root out what they consider to be heresy.

Yet, on closer examination, science is not truly antagonistic to faith. And scientists are not as unambiguous in their disavowal of the supernatural as some would have us believe. To be sure, the majority, those to whom the media seem to be listening most intently, may have denied belief in the existence of God, but this position is by no means undisputed.

Research by Rice University sociologist of religion Elaine Howard Ecklund reported in 2005 that 41 percent of biologists and 27 percent of political scientists declare disbelief in God.4 Though, of course, the remaining majority would include agnostics and an array of belief in the transcendent, atheism is clearly not universal in science.

The film version of Carl Sagan’s science fiction novel Contact explores the relationship between faith and science. Central character Dr. Ellie Arrington, a lead researcher in a SETI-like project and ardent believer in the religion that science has become, is transported somewhere in the cosmos, where she communicates extensively with other beings in a world that has been constructed to simulate Earth so she will be made to feel comfortable. When she returns to Earth, however, according to the scientific instruments, she has been gone only a matter of seconds, not nearly enough time to account for her experience as she describes it. So now she finds herself before a kind of inquisition, in which she is trying to defend her personal experience, even though it flies in the face of what has shown up in the scientific instrumentation.

The panel before which Dr. Arrington is interrogated ultimately rejects her “Damascus road” experience because there is no empirical evidence for it other than her word, but the film leaves wide open the idea of the transcendent.

At the end of the day, the gulf between faith and reason isn’t between religion and science. True scientists will admit that their basis for belief can no more be proved than that of believers in the transcendent. It is just that the majority of the most influential self-appointed spokespersons for science in today’s culture believe in naturalism: the idea that all phenomena can be explained by natural (as opposed to supernatural) causes. The word believe is used here because they cannot prove naturalism scientifically. They have faith that it is true.

Alvin Plantinga reminds us that “naturalism and evolution together really undermine science . . . because their combination makes it impossible to see how there could arise human beings like us who have a real capacity to understand the world around us in a deep and profound way. Naturalism and evolution together make that impossible to understand.”5

True science isn’t God’s enemy. He initiated it as a means if revealing Himself to us. To the true scientist, “supernatural” isn’t a dirty word. The divorce has never been consummated.

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2 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 274.
3 The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1144.
6 Plantinga, op cit., italics supplied.
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