**The Foolishness of God: A Biblical Perspective on Science**

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**Preface**

It is a privilege to address you on a topic that has always intrigued me. Having served as a teacher of science for over thirty years in our WELS schools, I have naturally faced the challenge of presenting controversial issues of science to my students in a God pleasing manner. My goal has been to teach science in a way that is (or will be) edifying and useful to them in both their personal and professional lives. I have also observed the dangerous lies that confront students not only in their science textbooks, but also attack from every angle with alarming regularity and methodically attempt to dull their consciences. I am more convinced than ever that the only real answer to these threats is for our students to become ever more firmly grounded in the Scriptures. This paper is not a comprehensive presentation that unveils all of the doctrinal insights that might apply or answers all of the questions that might arise, but it does identify some of the issues involved, provide an opportunity to share some personal insights and to propose a frame work for sorting through the complexities. It also provides an opportunity to gather feedback on what kind of training our future pastors, teachers and staff ministers should be receiving on this topic.

A quick scan of some recent news headlines reveals that science is very much a part of our lives:

* *How Did Life Begin? RNA That Replicates Itself Indefinitely Developed For First Time*; New findings could inform biochemical questions about how life began.
* *Did Volcanoes Spark Life on Earth?*; Classic experiment yields new clues to life's origins.
* *Last Ant Standing* Ants sacrifice themselves even when no threat is present
* *Genetic Code Sees Double*; Protozoan peculiarity may force rethink of 40 years of scientific dogma.
* *Tool Use Is Just a Trick of the Mind*; Primate brains learn how to use pliers and other implements by treating them as part of the body.
* *The Ocean's Biological Deserts Are Expanding*; Global warming may be driving an enlargement of the sea's least productive regions.
* *Human-Driven Planet: Time to Make It Official?*; Geologists propose a new epoch recognizing the primary cause of global change.
* *Scientists Synthesize a Genome from Scratch*;Stitched-together chromosome a prelude to artificial life.
* *Hurt an Organ, Help a Disease?*; Injured pancreas suggests new source of insulin-producing cells.
* *Porous Storage Gives Methane a Leg Up*; New material could increase the amount of the clean fuel cars could store.
* *Passing the Buck on Environmental Damage*; Poor countries incur trillions more in "ecological debt" than they cause.
* *Fire Below the Ice*; An active volcano could be warming the West Antarctic Ice Sheet.
* *No Recovery Plan for U.S. Jaguars*; In a controversial decision, Fish and Wildlife Service says plan would not promote conservation.
* *Human Embryos Cloned From Skin Cells*; Advance could lead to embryonic stem cell lines for treating disease.
* *Out of Disaster, Shrimp Are Reborn*; Climate-induced currents can devastate populations yet may help survivors recover.
* *Building a New Heart From Old Tissue*; When newborn cells are transplanted onto "skeleton" of adult heart, it becomes pumping organ in the lab.
* *Obama's Science Czar Suggested Compulsory Abortion, Sterilization*; John Holdren, the Obama Administration’s director of Science and Technology Policy, penned a book advocating compulsory sterilization and abortion.

Maybe you’ve followed some of these stories. The topics are quite diverse, ranging from abortion to euthanasia, from genetic predisposition to cloning, from environmental issues to evolution. But they also contain a common thread. Each one raises issues that will one day—perhaps sooner than later—face us in our lives. Scientific studies lead to discoveries that profoundly affect human society in ways that can be either useful or destructive. Science can have unforeseen effects on cultural issues well beyond the scope of science itself (Derry, pp. 148-149). While science often precipitates the question, “How will we address the issue when confronted with its ethical or moral implications?” science fails to provide the answers. Science (and its resultant technological advances) gives us power, but not wisdom (Derry, p.151).

1. **The Quest for Truth**

In the broadest sense, the questions being asked today on ethical issues are a microcosm of the ultimate questions asked by all people of all time: Where did I come from? What is my purpose in life? What will happen to me when I die? Humanity generally longs to know how life originated, the meaning of life, and the ultimate fate of humanity. In his book “The Limitations of Scientific Truth,” Nigel Brush suggests that throughout the ages, humans have sought truth primarily in three ways: religion, science and philosophy. Religion, by definition, is the belief that ultimate reality lies in a supernatural realm existing outside the natural universe. In contrast, science attempts to apprehend truth through the natural realm. Scientists confine their search for truth to the visible universe. The famous astronomer Carl Sagan once remarked, “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be” (Sagan, p.4). Science and religion are alike in that they both seek truth in sources external to the human mind. Philosophy, on the other hand, seeks truth within the human mind. Instead of seeking truth through revelation or empirical observation, philosophers seek truth through reason.

If there is only one absolute truth, the pathway to truth should not matter; religion, science and philosophy should all lead to the same result. The fact that religion, science and philosophy often contradict each other in the search for truth is an indication that the pathway does matter. The different pathways often merge, cross and diverge in their search for truth. The methods of one discipline are often used to critique, support or attack the others (Brush, p. 18). It is difficult to talk about one discipline without considering the other two. At various points in this paper, all three vehicles to truth will be examined.

1. **Science and Values**

Since the focus of this paper is on science, it might be wise to attempt a definition. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines science as “a system of knowledge concerned with the physical world and its phenomena.” There are probably as many different definitions of science as there are attempts to define it. A simple, brief and comprehensive definition that is widely accepted is not easily achieved. Gregory N. Derry defines science as “the total sum of all the facts, definitions, theories, techniques and relationships found in all of the individual scientific disciplines. In other words, science is what is taught in science textbooks.” An alternate view that has gained recent acceptance suggests that “the heart of science is in its methods of investigation and ways of thinking, not in specific facts and results . . . [but rather] the activity going on in laboratories and fieldwork” (Derry, p. 3). The definition I prefer comes from MLC Professor Emeritus Martin Sponholz: “Science is a changing body of knowledge based on human attempts to explain the natural world” (Sponholz, p. 5). As great as the challenge to define science might be, the challenge to keep science in its proper perspective is even greater.

Centuries ago, Francis Bacon predicted that science would contribute many practical benefits to society. He hoped that society would return the favor by devoting resources to science in a way that would hasten scientific progress. Although it is fair to say that Bacon’s vision was on target, science has brought problems along with the benefits (Derry, p. 133). The purpose of this paper is to review and evaluate some of the tools at our disposal in addressing the problems and conflicts that arise from the realm of science. God elevated man among all creatures by creating him as a rational being. He has provided humans with an innate curiosity that, combined with the ability to reason, has led to the development of a discipline and a body of knowledge we call science. He has provided us with a moral code of conduct by writing his law into our hearts. That moral code provides a value system that has the potential to form an ethical framework that guides our decision-making process. As created, God intended man would use all of these gifts in their perfection. But since the fall into sin, both these gifts and their application have become imperfect and tainted by sin. Fortunately, God has continued to pour out the generosity that began at creation following the fall. He gave us the gift of his Word and, through the Holy Spirit, the complementary gift of faith in that Word. While even the usage of these gifts has been affected by sin, all of these tools remain at our disposal as we go about our daily lives. The challenge is how to use them individually or collectively in a God-pleasing manner.

The community of scientists shares certain values. Perhaps the more obvious ones are honesty and curiosity. While everyone would agree that honesty is a virtue, not everyone would say the same thing about curiosity in all situations. Science also has an inherent value system that opposes secrecy and isolation. Scientific progress has always depended on the free flow of information within the scientific community. A commitment to open communication of results through professional conferences and journals is one of the bedrocks of science. Yet there are times when military scientists, working in the interest of national security, have and will keep their findings secret. Their values as scientists are in conflict with their values as members of society. Individual scientists must come to terms with this conflict; it often causes society to have a certain amount of distrust and skepticism toward scientists and their activities. A good example of this conflict occurred during the Manhattan Project when General Groves (the project director) tried to keep the scientists from sharing their findings by compartmentalizing and isolating them from each other (Derry, p. 146).

Some suggest that science knowledge is value-neutral and that only society can decide whether it will be used for good or for ill. The historic record suggests that while science itself may be value-neutral, it has often had an impact on societal values. Heliocentric theory provides a case in point. From a purely practical point of view, it doesn’t matter whether the earth or the sun is at the center of the universe. But in the cultural milieu of late medieval Europe, the central location of the earth in astronomy was inextricably associated with the central importance of humankind itself in the grand scheme of things. The central position of the earth could not be dislodged without having peoples’ understanding of their own nature severely shocked. A peoples’ self-image is intimately connected with their values. As the debate over heliocentrism unfolded, academic questions of astronomy became increasingly bound up with a more general struggle between the forces of progress and reaction in Europe (Derry, p. 151).

A more recent illustration of the close relationship between science and values can be seen in the private thoughts of President Harry S. Truman as expressed in his diary on July 25, 1945. Take a moment to read the excerpt. How does it illustrate the close relationship between science and values (or ethics) in President Truman’s mind?

We met at 11 A.M. today. That is Stalin, Churchill, and the U.S. President. But I had a most important session with Lord Mountbatten and General Marshall before that. We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire distruction [destruction] prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark. Anyway we think we have found the way to cause a disintegration of the atom. An experiment in the New Mexican desert was startling--to put it mildly. Thirteen pounds of the explosive caused the complete disintegration of a steel tower 60 feet high, created a crater 6 feet deep and 1200 feet in diameter, knocked over a steel tower 1/2 mile away and knocked men down 10,000 yards away. The explosion was visible for more than 200 miles and audible for 40 miles and more.

This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th. I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old Capitol or the new.

He and I are in accord. The target will be a purely military one and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I'm sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance. It is certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler's crowd or Stalin's did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful (Truman's writings are in the public domain).

The head to head confrontation between the development of technology through science and the ethical use of that technology plays out in President Truman’s diary. On August 6 and 9, 1945, the first and only nuclear weapons ever used for warfare in the history of mankind were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By the end of the year, over 200,000 Japanese were dead from the immediate or after effects of the bombs. Although Truman’s diary obviously reflects a struggle with the ethical issue of destroying innocent lives through the use of these weapons of mass destruction, he later confessed that he had no regrets and would do it all over again in order to save American lives.

Science and values are clearly related, but resolution of the debates that arise must ultimately depend on wisdom that comes from outside the realm of science. Society as a whole must be involved in making decisions that cut across the boundaries of science, values and ethics (Derry, p. 157). Most often people try to deal with ethical dilemmas by using humanistic systems that have evolved apart from God’s Word. Such systems basically fall into two categories. They are *deontological* (duty-oriented) or *teleological* (goal-oriented) systems. The duty-oriented systems require that we judge the right or wrong of an action according to the duty we are to perform. The goal-oriented systems focus on the outcome desired and then judge the right or wrong of an action on the basis of whether it achieves a noble goal.

Neither of these systems is in accord with Scripture. For example, a system of deontological ethics suggests that an individual simply does what he perceives to be his duty. Religious legalists fall into this trap when they ignore the gospel as the power that moves us to seek God’s will and carry it out. Only when a believer “does his duty” through faith in Christ Jesus, motivated by God’s love and in accord with his will, can his actions be considered pleasing in God’s sight. Furthermore, even a Christian’s sense of duty is tainted by sin. Teleological ethics reject God’s law as an absolute authority and view the commandments as relative. The popularization of situational ethics in the 1960’s fostered the notion that the end justifies the means and nothing else. Decisions following this model are made situationally and not prescriptively (Lange, pp. 174-176).

1. **Science, Faith and Reason**

The ability to make decisions on matters relating to science is further clouded by the relationship between science and religion. One of the challenges we face is to understand that there are fundamental differences between religion and science. Cambridge scholar and author Stephen C. Meyer suggests that the relationship can be categorized in three ways: 1) Science and religion (more specifically, Christianity) are destined to be at war with each other; 2) Science and religion represent two distinct realms that don’t and can’t interact with each other; and 3) Scientific evidence actually supports theistic belief (Strobel, p. 74). In his book “What Science Is and How It Works” Gregory N. Derry also delineates those differences (pp. 125-132). I have provided a summary from his perspective below:

* Science attempts to bring coherence to our experiences.
* Religion attempts to infuse our experiences with meaning.
* Scientific statements are about sensory information.
* Religious statements are about what cannot be perceived with the senses.
* The discourse of science is always public, with precisely defined terms.
* Religious experiences are often private and ineffable.
* The results of science are tentative and subject to revision.
* Religious statements are not intended to be tentative or subject to revision.
  + Science is concerned about understanding the world.
  + Religion is concerned with eternal truths.

Derry admits that agreement with these points depends on one’s definition of religion. He also admits to using a broad definition of religion that encompasses many kinds of religious experience including faith, mystical insight, scripture and authority. While the statements made about religion and science by both Derry and Meyer are perhaps all true to some degree and may in fact be at the root of some conflicts between the two areas, at the very least they have the potential to be misleading.

Over the years, these differences have brought science and religion into conflict with each other. Some examples follow.

* Copernicus’ work on a theory of heliocentrism was banned by the church after his death in 1543.
* Giordano Bruno was accused of heresy and burned at the stake in 1600 because he held the view that man’s perspective of the world is relative to the position in space and time from which we view it; in other words, there are many possible views and there is no absolute truth.
* In 1611 Galileo was tried by Inquisition for supporting Copernicus’ views.
* During the 1700’s the use of lightning rods was viewed as impious.
* Anglican clergy of the 1800’s attacked and ridiculed Darwin’s work.
* Today Fundamentalists attempt to discredit evolutionary theory and replace it with Scientific Creationism or Intelligent Design.

In a Trinity 2002 essay in “The Cresset,” Bruce Hrivnak, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Valparaiso University asks: “How did we arrive at the supposed opposition, or even warfare, between science and religion?” He goes on to cite examples of famous scientists who were deeply committed Christians: Johannes Kepler (determined the shape of the orbits that planets follow around the sun); Galileo (turned the newly invented telescope towards the heavens for study); Isaac Newton (formulated the basic laws of gravity and motion); Michael Faraday (the great experimenter in electricity); and James Clerk Maxwell (formulated the laws relating electricity and magnetism). Some historians say that it was Christianity, with its belief in one God with a definite character and the expectation of an orderly and knowable universe that provided a foundation for modern science (p. 11).

The late evolutionist Stephen J. Gould contended that science and religion, if properly viewed, exemplify what he called NOMA, or Non-overlapping Magisteria. Gould’s view of religion, like Derry’s, was taken in a broader sense, either as a philosophical theism free of superstitions, or as a secular humanism grounded on ethical norms. While Gould purported that science and religion cannot be unified into a single conceptual scheme, he saw them flourishing side by side like two independent nations at peace with each other.

Science, Gould reminds us, is a quest for the facts and laws of nature. Religion is a spiritual quest for ultimate meaning and for moral values that science is powerless to provide. To echo Kant and Hume, science tells us what is, not what ought to be. “To cite the usual clichés,” Gould is quoted as saying, “[scientists] get the age of rocks, and religion retains the rock of ages; [scientists] study how the heavens go, and [religion] determines how to go to heaven (Gardner, paragraph 3).

In his book ***More*** *Prepared to Answer: Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told,* Prof. Mark Paustian provides a more useful perspective on the relationship between science and religion as he addresses a related question: “Isn’t religion discredited by science?” He introduces his answer with a reference to the classic work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by science historian Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn depicts science as a sea of shifting sand. From our direct observation of the historical record, science is not the unchanging, absolute authority that the current generation proclaims it is. We can all think of science that has changed over the years. Anyone who has taught long enough knows that even what is taught in textbooks changes.

Kuhn summarizes scientific progress in this way:

A community of practitioners forms under the umbrella of a *paradigm*, a governing point of view that, for a time, seems to fit the facts and wins the intellectual field. Institutions are founded on that model, careers are made, textbooks are written, and theories (in name only) harden unnoticeably into concrete fact. But then that paradigm, unquestioningly embraced by a generation, painfully and inevitably gives way to another . . .

Here’s how it happens. An anomaly is observed. Some new phenomenon appears, and no matter how the standing theory’s box is stretched and pulled and modified, the problematic fact refuses to fit inside it, creating a crisis in the scientific community. Eventually, the old theory, so colossal and far-reaching and seemingly invincible, cannot be sustained any longer. It comes crashing down under its own weight in what Kuhn describes as a “revolution.” And at last a new idea, a new theory, a new paradigm emerges and takes hold—one that both explains the data originally gathered and one that could have predicted the anomaly as well (Paustian, pp. 38-39).

A fairly recent example illustrates Kuhn’s point. Even in the late 1960’s geology text books featured the land bridge theory to explain the occurrence of species in separate continents and the similarities of geologic formations on different continents. The best-known example is the Bering land bridge, which joined present-day Alaska and eastern Siberia at some time in the past and enabled humans to migrate from Eurasia to the Americas. This theory prevailed even though echo soundings in the Atlantic Ocean between 1924 and 1927 made during the laying of the trans-Atlantic cable found no evidence of land bridges, but instead suggested a large scale motion of the earth’s crust known as plate tectonics. But it wasn’t until the 1970’s that the paradigm had shifted and textbooks were updated.

In my opinion, we may be watching a significant scientific revolution occurring in our present day. The target? Evolution. What is the new paradigm? Perhaps intelligent design. The evidence? Over the last thirty years I have been a regular participant in professional organizations like the National Science Teachers’ Association and have attended many related science conferences and conventions. The NSTA has adopted a forceful position statement that “strongly supports the position that evolution is a major unifying concept in science and should be included in the K-12 science education frameworks and curricula. Furthermore, if evolution is not taught, students will not achieve the level of scientific literacy they need.” Over the years it has not been unusual for the topic of evolution to appear on the program or to serve as a presupposition or assumption for many of the presentations. But in recent years I have noticed that the tone of the presentations has shifted from matter of fact to a more defensive posture. Proponents of the current paradigm appear to be digging in their heals to support their view. Where they were once content to let their dissenters comment without too much excitement or emotion in response, now they have gone on the offensive, even resorting to unprofessional behavior by poking fun at those who disagree with them.

Surprisingly enough, most often the disagreement isn’t over the role of religion in this debate. Perhaps this is because the NSTA has a declaration stating that “science teachers should not advocate any religious interpretations of nature and should be nonjudgmental about the personal beliefs of students.” But another NSTA tenet provides a clue as to the real issue: “Policy makers and administrators should not mandate policies requiring the teaching of "creation science" or related concepts, such as so-called "intelligent design," "abrupt appearance," and "arguments against evolution." Administrators also should support teachers against pressure to promote nonscientific views or to diminish or eliminate the study of evolution.” In my opinion, intelligent design seems to be gaining a lot of momentum even among scientists. It will be interesting to see what happens to this debate over time.

A well-constructed scientific argument generally rests on two foundations: reliable empirical evidence and sound logical reasoning (Derry, p. 89). As noted earlier, man’s ability to reason is a gift from God unique among all created beings. It is a tool that God expects us to use for our good and his glory. From a scientific perspective, reason can be used for experimentation, observation and drawing conclusions. The development of science over time is a strong testimony to the value of God’s gift of reason to human beings. But reason has been corrupted by sin and does have limitations; with Luther we confess in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed that “I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.” Reason can never serve as a source for our doctrines or as a judge over the teachings of God’s Word (this is what is called the *magisterial* use of reason). Rather, reason is to be a servant of God’s Word (the *ministerial* use of reason). “Reason can be used to study God’s Word, think about it, treasure it, share it with others, and arrange the truths of Scripture in an orderly way to present them to others” (Lange, p. 15).

The historical record gives plenty of evidence that reason has failed scientists in their attempts to explain the natural world. Luther acknowledged “that reason could discover many things, but he did hold that natural reason, which does not know God, is also ignorant of that which has been created by God . . . No one can understand a single work by God fully by the use of reason” (Becker, p. 60). But modern science often elevates reason above Scripture and ridicules those who question the authority of science. In much the same way, modern science ridicules scriptural truths that are beyond human comprehension. The virgin birth is one of many mysteries confronting us in God’s Word. A short list of additional examples might include the creation of the world, Jesus’ miracles, the resurrection from the dead and the doctrines of the Trinity and election. The rational human mind rejects the notion that any of these examples are reality or anything but foolishness. God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never find God through human brilliance. God’s way has nothing to do with human wisdom (Toppe, p. 19). As the Apostle Paul reminds us, “The foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom” (I Corinthians 1:25). For the Christian, reason gives way to revelation and logic gives way to faith. The *how* of these mysteries is far beyond us, but we believe it because Scripture says it (Lauersdorf, p. 29).

In today’s era of religious tolerance, the world is willing to accept the limited role that reason plays in matters of faith. Theological truths of the Bible may be accepted in faith, but in all other matters the statements of Scripture are subject to the same kind of rationalism that would apply to any other book (Becker, pp. 60-61). This is especially true in matters of science. For example, while the world may scoff at the idea of a virgin birth and makes no effort to prove it scientifically, there is no denying the existence of the world. Perhaps that is why there is no more prominent example of the clash between religion and science than the creation vs. evolution debate.

The real question is one of authority. If one accepts the Genesis account of the creation of the world in a literal sense, there is no need to develop alternative explanations. But there are those who do not accept the authority of God and the revealed truth of his Word. They look for alternative answers to the world’s mysteries, often searching the depths of the earth itself. For the Christian, science cannot provide its own answers to ethical dilemmas and humanistic approaches to ethics prove unsatisfactory. The decision making process will be guided by God’s Word and motivated by his gospel rather than guided by these humanistic approaches.

1. **God’s Word—The Ultimate Authority**

While the questioning of biblical authority is not a new issue or restricted to the realm of science, its prevalence and prominence are certainly flourishing in our modern world. The 21st century has seen the rise of a group of thinkers and writers who make up a movement dubbed the "New Atheism." The list includes Oxford scholar Richard Dawkins, philosopher Daniel Dennett, columnist Christopher Hitchens and best-selling author Samuel Harris. What these “New Atheists” share is a belief that religion should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized and exposed by rational argument wherever its influence arises. Their tone is overtly confrontational rather than gently persuasive. Science and human reason are often touted by these aggressive “New Atheists” as preferable and superior to organized religion in general and the bible in particular.

The need for a visible and aggressive Christian apologetic is clear in the face of such attacks. The apostle Peter exhorts us to defend the Christian faith against those who attack the Church, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (I Peter 3:15). While it is not necessary for us to justify the ways of God to an audience like the “New Atheists,” an active Christian apologetic can break down intellectual barriers and expose errors. The goal is not to prove the Christian faith or make the gospel reasonable. A more productive and useful approach is to refocus on Scripture and provide a point of contact for preaching the gospel.

What is the best approach—the only God pleasing approach—to sorting through issues of science? No matter how enlightened we become or how much knowledge we gain through science, the Bible is the only source and standard for a Christian’s life and faith. The apostle John exhorts us to “study the Scriptures . . . that testify about me” (5:39). When confronted with scientific questions of ethics or authority or truth, the first step is to reach for the Bible. If we want to know what is right and wrong or, more specifically, what pleases God, we turn to his Word to search for the Biblical principle or principles that apply. Although the end goal may be to establish a rule by which we act or solve the dilemma, Professor Em. David Kuske provides some important advice, “Whenever a question arises about God’s will in regards to a certain aspect of a Christian’s life, there is always a tendency for us to think in terms of rules instead of a general principle” (p. 19). For example, in matters of life and death like birth control, euthanasia, abortion, or harvesting of fetal stem cells, the applicable principles might include “Be fruitful and multiply . . . Love your neighbor as yourself . . . Help and befriend him in every bodily need . . . Do not murder.”

Once the appropriate scriptural principles are brought to light, the challenge of properly applying them can be addressed. Even then the task may not be simple. God uses these struggles as an opportunity for us to stay close to his Word. Our study of that Word helps us to know God’s will and strengthens our faith. It is

faith that distinguishes this decision-making process from all humanistic systems. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). Christian ethics cannot be merely a legal sorting of applicable principles and rules from Scripture nor should it ever be separated from Christian dogmatics. The whole counsel of God must be presented by the pastor or counselor seeking to bring forth the right action. How important it is for the counselor to remember this when talking to a family about removal of artificial life support. How essential it is for the conscience of a woman who must place her aging mother into a nursing home. How critical this is for a young couple struggling with the options of birth control and family planning to know that the gift of faith from God precedes any moral good. Before we do our duty to a rule and before we judge any action by its consequences, there must be faith, or our best efforts will be sin (Mueller, p. 5).

Since the Bible is the ultimate authority, any attempt to strengthen that authority by bringing scientific evidence to bear on the topic will not be God-pleasing. A case in point is the creation science effort. Once again Mark Paustian comments:

It would be a mistake for me to move the argument . . . from the “Thus saith the Lord” of the Bible to the “Here’s what we know” of even the most brilliant and well-meaning human authorities. In my mind, should I appeal to the numerous underreported findings of science that could support creationism, for example, even if I win the point, I surrender too much. I will have silently conceded that the real reason I know I am right is that some folks with Ph.D.s in quantum physics agree with me. But that is not the reason at all. I refrain from making the hesitant glance in that direction. I give up the passion to avoid sounding stupid, and I cheerfully make my confession of faith in the God who fashions snowflakes. I won’t even concede that the Bible is true in spiritual matters and is only mistaken in matters of biology or botany or astronomy. The Bible makes no such distinction. You see, my belief is simply not anchored to prevailing scientific theory, and it is certainly not tied to . . . “Christian science” . . . My confession dangles miraculously in midair, held only by the hand of God. Any attempt to buttress God’s revelation with human thinking only diminishes his revelation and obscures the mystery and marvel of it (p. 41).

Dr. Siegbert Becker, in *The Foolishness of God*, uses the epilogue of his book to flash back to the time of the Exodus. He reminds his reader that Israel must have thought God’s plan for returning his people to the Promised Land seemed foolish to human reason. Traveling south when their destination lay to the north, through the desert, the Red Sea before them, the chariots and horses of Pharaoh to the rear . . . all of this seemed like the worst possible plan, a recipe for destruction. So it is with us. Our enemies may not ride in chariots, but they are very real. It may seem as though God is leading us the wrong way into the intellectual desert. To follow God’s Word is to become a fool in the eyes of men—to say and to think and to do what no man in his “right mind” would say and think and do.

But the biblical account of the Exodus reminds us that God’s plan for Israel was not foolish. He delivered his people in his mercy and grace. And so it is with us. When the light of the Word leads us into a place where we see only the Red Sea ahead, the desert to the right and left, and the Egyptian army behind, we must learn to stand still and wait to see the glory of the Lord. He led us into this difficulty with his Word and he will lead us out. He is our God, and his Word is still the only guide to the Promised Land (pp. 241-242).

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