

## **Gods Of This World: Science**

Mankind has always been fascinated by the world around him. Humans of diverse civilizations and locations have investigated the movements of the stars and planets, the creatures around them, and the physical properties of their world. This attempt to understand the world around us is one of the most basic impulses of humanity.

This is the realm of science. As time has progressed, developments in science and technology have radically altered humans and how they live. We have a better understanding of the natural world, medicine, physics, and a host of other benefits because of scientific inquiry. Science continues to provide many benefits for mankind.

There has been another impulse in humanity that has often gone along with the desire to understand the world around us, and that impulse is not nearly as honorable. Paul wrote, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 1:22-25).

The impulse to divinize the creation has been around as long as humans have been attempting to understand that creation. In Paul's time this divinization took very concrete forms: the pagan nations believed that celestial and natural forces were divine in and of themselves. They would make gods out of the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies, and believe that divinities inhabited rivers, streams, trees, and the like.

Today there are far fewer people who bow down before such gods, but that does not mean that divinizing the creation has gone out of fashion. Today there are many who believe that nothing else exists beyond the natural realm: there is nothing supernatural, and therefore no God. To them, nature is all there is. In order to make sense of their world and their existence, such people inevitably turn to science. In this worldview, "Science" provides the answers to all questions that can or should be asked, and everything boils down to "science." They will deny that "Reason" and "Science" are their gods, and yet they serve the same functions as religion does for the majority of the population.

As we have already established, science can provide many benefits for society. Science itself is not the problem; making science the absolute is the problem. What was true in the first century is true in the twenty-first: the creation points to the Creator, not to itself (Romans 1:18-21). The creation is sustained by God's power and God's will (cp. Psalm 119:90-91; 1 Corinthians 8:6), and that is as true today as it was in the beginning. Since God has made mankind in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27), it is understandable when humans attempt to understand how God's creation works. God has established the creation in such a way that we can understand much about it, and as we obtain the ability to see farther out and also closer in, we will understand the creation that much better.

Science, however, is always limited by human understanding and human perception. There will always be aspects to the universe that are beyond the reach of science because they are beyond the reach of our five senses. One cannot discern the spiritual reality in our midst using the physical methodology of science. This does not mean that the spiritual reality does not exist or is a delusion; it just means that it is beyond the reach of science!

Science does well at explaining how the physical universe works today. It is beyond the reach of science to make dogmatic claims about what happened in the past, and entirely out of the purview of science to establish ethics, morality, or philosophy. Yet there is significant movement in our society to justify all kinds of behavior in the name of science and its theories.

We must remain steadfast in proclaiming that God is God, the creation is the creation, and no matter how well we understand the creation, it is not god. The spiritual realm is no less real because it cannot be seen (cp. 2 Kings 6:15-17; Revelation 4:1-22:6). Let us not find a new way to fall into the most ancient trap of disrespecting the Creator by focusing too narrowly on the creation (Romans 1:18-25). Let us serve God!

Adapted From Ethan R. Longhenry