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Lessons from the Divine Investigator in Genesis

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Abstract

In the Biblical book of Genesis, God investigates His work and that of others on multiple occasions. Ten separate investigations are examined, and the characteristics of God's investigative work in these cases are noted and compared to the characteristics typically associated with human scientific inquiries. Careful observation, active pursuit of knowledge, and well-crafted questions are characteristics common to several of the investigations. Additional characteristics relevant to the conduct of science include openness to change in response to new data, the value of peer input, and the propriety of experimentation. A message common to all of the investigations is that the purpose of investigation must be to find out information that can be used to further God's will and serve others. The investigative work done by an omniscient, all-seeing God is conducted for the purposes of revealing truth to people and modeling appropriate investigative behavior, and demonstrates that Scripture not only guides us toward correct interpretations and conclusions, but also gives us guidance in the proper conduct of science as we work toward those interpretations and conclusions. This understanding increases our appreciation of the value of the Genesis account and provides additional grounds for the rejection of interpretations that deny the historicity of the events of Genesis.

Keywords: Genesis, investigation, science, observation, question

Lessons from the Divine Investigator in Genesis

The belief that intellectual inquiry and religious faith are in conflict with each other is commonly held, particularly where scientific investigation is concerned. Historical events such as the dispute between Galileo Galilei and the Catholic Church are frequently cited in support of this belief. Modern differences in understandings of natural phenomena, such as the origins of the universe, the earth, and life are considered to additional evidences for an irreconcilable incompatibility of scientific reasoning and religion as means of determining truth.

Many people, however, regard scientific inquiry and religious belief as compatible and complementary means of pursuing truth. Martin Luther King, for example, wrote that “The two are not rivals. They are complementary.” (King, 1987) Hosts of different ideologies have been proposed to reconcile the apparent conflicts between science and faith, which lead to a broad range of conclusions about the nature of reality.

Within the Seventh-day Adventist community, this reconciliation often occurs within a framework that is described by Ellen G. White in the following statement:

“Since the book of nature and the book of revelation bear the impress of the same master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony. By different methods, and in different languages, they witness to the same great truths. Science is ever discovering new wonders, but she brings from her research nothing that, rightly understood, conflicts with divine revelation. The book of nature and the written word shed light upon each other. They make us acquainted with God by teaching us something of the laws through which He works.” (White, 1903)

Within this framework, scientific investigation and divine inspiration both point toward the same body of truth. Each provides correct information in its own way. In practice, we regard the conclusions of scientific investigations to be true only if they are consistent with our understanding of what has been revealed in Scripture. By providing a means for eliminating certain conclusions from consideration, Scripture provides increased efficiency in the process of determining truth. While scientific investigation also has a role in aiding our understanding of revealed truth, the exponential growth in the amount of scientific inquiry leads us to focus more on the protective, corrective role of divine revelation in understanding the answers proposed by science.

Our focus in understanding the science/religion relationship is focused primarily on the conclusions we

Science and Scripture



draw from our studies of nature and of the Bible. Because it is the conclusions we draw from the search for answers that inform and motivate the actions we take and the manner in which we choose to live our lives, this emphasis is important. Yet, it is important for us to recognize that at its core, science is not the set of conclusions, facts, theories, and laws that we teach and learn—it is the process by which these concepts and details are discovered. Therefore, if science is to “speak in harmony” with Scripture, not only must its conclusions align with Scripture, but the way in which scientific inquiry is conducted must also align with Scripture.

What, then, are the Scriptural principles that govern how scientific inquiry should be conducted? Is the manner in which science is currently conducted consistent with these principles? Does scientific investigation conducted within a Biblical framework look different from that conducted apart from Scripture, apart from possible differences in the conclusions that are reached? How does considering the ways in which Scripture addresses the conduct of science affect our understanding of God and the importance of Scripture?

Within the Bible’s first book, Genesis, God Himself is depicted on numerous occasions as an investigator—sometimes very explicitly so, and on other occasions more subtly. In these accounts, several common characteristics of these investigations emerge, and although none of the investigations are undertaken in order to answer scientific questions, these common characteristics are applicable to the process of scientific inquiry (and to inquiries that are pursued in other fields as well). The manner in which God investigates individuals, groups, and actions (including His own) lends itself to comparison with the manner in which humans seek answers.

This paper considers the following ten investigations conducted by God in Genesis:

1. The investigation of creation (Gen. 1:1-2:25)
2. The investigation in Eden (Gen. 3:8-24)
3. The investigation of Cain (Gen. 4:6-15)
4. The antediluvian investigation (Gen. 6:5-8, 7:1-4)
5. The investigation of the tower builders (Gen. 11:5-9)
6. The first investigation of Hagar (Gen. 16:7-13)
7. The investigation of Sodom (Gen. 18:16-19:26)
8. The second investigation of Hagar (Gen. 21:17-19)
9. The investigation of Abraham (Gen. 22:1-19)
10. The investigation of Jacob’s wives (Gen. 29:31-35, 30:17-24)

In looking at God’s behavior as an investigator, it should be noted at the outset that God’s investigative work must be inherently different from that done by humans because of the inherent differences between God and humanity. God is omniscient (Job 21:22; Ps. 139:1-4; Ps. 147:5; 1 John 3:20), all-seeing (Ps. 33:13, Heb. 4:13) and omnipotent (Ps. 135:6; Is. 46:10,11; Jer. 32:17). Unlike human investigations, God’s investigations are not conducted to seek knowledge that He does not already know, nor must knowledge be something that requires time and effort for Him to obtain. God’s investigative activity should not be interpreted in a way that limits Him.

God’s purposes in these investigations are twofold. First, God through these investigations makes things known to people that they did not know before, or He makes people aware of His knowledge of things that they do know. This awareness comes either through direct communication or through the actions God takes following the investigation. The divine-human interactions in either case require God to work within the constraints of the human experience of time.

Secondly, as with much of what Scripture records, God’s investigative work is provided as an example of how we are to conduct ourselves. As Paul told the Romans, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction....” (Rom. 15:4). (All Scriptural quotations in this paper are from the New American Standard Bible.) Just as the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan and the ways in which God provided deliverance and discipline along their migration were recorded to instruct us (1 Cor. 10:11), so may the record of God’s investigations in Genesis provide instruction to those pursuing their own investigations. The way in which God investigates reveals those aspects of His character that are important for us to develop in our own lives and work, and we should regard God’s behavior in these circumstances as the model for the way in which we pursue knowledge of the world around us.

The Lessons

God as Observer

The investigative God of Genesis is introduced in the creation account as a God who observes. In Genesis 1, verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 24, and 31, we are told that “God saw...” following the creative work performed on each day, and at the end of the cumulative work of creation on the sixth day (verse 31). These statements are not often considered part of an investigation. However, in each of these statements God’s seeing is followed by the pronouncement that what God sees is good (and the entire creation is pronounced “very good”). It appears that God observes the creative work that He has done and makes an evaluation based upon what He observes. This combination of observation and evaluation adds up to a simple investigation. We conduct investigations of this type on a routine basis with little planning or conscious awareness of the mechanics of the process.

This perspective of God investigating His creative work is supported by the record of man’s creation in Genesis 2. When God finishes creating the man and places him in the garden, He states that the man’s unaccompanied state is “not good” (Gen. 2:18). This evaluation is not stated to be on the basis of what God sees, but the negative evaluation given here suggests that the evaluations given in the prior chapter could also have been negative, depending on what God had observed.

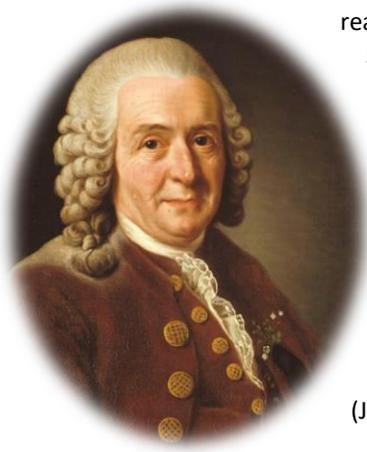
In addition to God’s observation of his own work, God is also depicted as seeing the actions of groups of people. God sees the wickedness of humanity in the time prior to the flood (Gen. 6:5, 11, 12), but Noah “found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” (Gen. 6:8) and his righteousness is seen by God (Gen. 7:1). After the flood, God comes down from heaven to see the city and tower built by the descendants of Noah (Gen 11:5). Later, God tells Abraham that He will go to see what the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah are doing (Gen. 18:21), and chapter 19 relates what is observed in Sodom after their conversation. In each of these cases, what God sees is presented as the basis for what God does. He investigates the antediluvians, the builders in the plain of Shinar, and the people of Sodom, and executes judgment only after drawing conclusions based on His observations.

While God sees the behavior of groups of people, He also sees individuals. In Genesis 16, the angel of the Lord finds Hagar following her flight from Sarai, and after their conversation, Hagar refers to God by calling him “a God who sees” (*El roi*) in verse 13. Given the numerous examples of God’s seeing prior in Genesis, and those which follow, Hagar’s name for God is entirely accurate. God also sees Leah in her neglected state (Gen. 29:31). It is noteworthy that both of these women were in secondary positions in their marriages—positions in which they did not receive the attention they should have received. Yet God did not overlook them, illustrating the thoroughness and diligence of His observations.

In God’s investigations in Genesis, He is not limited to sight as a means of making observations. He is also a God who hears. When God speaks to Cain, He speaks of the voice of the blood of the dead brother Abel crying out (Gen. 4:10). Clearly this blood does not literally have a voice that can be heard, but in God’s investigation of Cain, He uses hearing to describe the way in which what Cain had done to his brother was obvious to Him. Prior to God’s conversation with Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah, He states that an “outcry” has come to Him about the sins of these cities (Gen. 18:20, 21). What God heard about Sodom and Gomorrah provided Him with enough information to decide that a closer visual inspection of their situation was necessary. What God decided to do about these cities was based on what God had both heard and seen. God used a variety of means to collect data during His investigation.

In God’s investigations of Hagar, God’s hearing plays a key role. Hagar is instructed to name her child Ishmael, meaning “God hears” (Gen. 16:11) because He has “given heed to” (or heard) her. To Hagar, God is a God who hears and sees. Later, when Hagar and Ishmael are sent away by Abraham, God hears Ishmael’s cries (Gen. 21:17), and God acts on the basis of what He hears. Likewise, Leah also experiences God as a God who hears and sees (Gen. 29:32, 33), and she attributes God’s work in her life to be the result of God observing her. Later, after both Leah and Rachel gave their maids as wives to Jacob, each of them is heard by God (Gen. 30:17, 22) and each receives what they want from Him.

These numerous instances illustrate the fundamental importance of observation in God's investigations of His creation, and especially His investigation of people as groups and as individuals. That God is depicted as relying on His powers of observation, and as relying on what He observes to make decisions about how and when to act, suggests that God expects our investigations to be based on observation as well. As we look at the scientific



method and its historical and modern use, we see that observation is central to scientific reasoning and investigation. The Swedish biologist Carl Linnaeus concluded his work *Philosophica Botanica* by stating, "In natural science the principles of truth ought to be confirmed by observation." (Stafleu, 1971) The English economist and logician William Stanley Jevons, in his 1874 work *Principles of Science: A Treatise on Logic and Scientific Method*, wrote:

"It is usual to say that the two sources of experience are Observation and Experiment. When we merely note and record the phenomena which occur around us in the ordinary course of nature we are said to *observe*. When we change the course of nature by the intervention of our will and muscular powers, and thus produce unusual combinations and conditions of phenomena, we are said to *experiment*. [Sir John] Herschel has justly remarked that we might properly call these two modes of experience *passive and active observation*." (Jevons, 1874)

Similarly, in 1860 the English chemist Benjamin Collins Brodie stated the following in his role as the president of the Royal Society:

The first step in all physical investigations, even in those, which admit of the application of mathematical reasoning and the deductive method afterwards, is the observation of natural phenomena; and the smallest error in such observation in the beginning is sufficient to vitiate the whole investigation afterwards. The necessity of strict and minute observation, then, is the first thing which the student of the physical sciences has to learn; and it is easy to see with what great advantage the habit thus acquired may be carried into everything else afterwards. (Ellis, 2016b.)

The quotes above, from noted scientists in a variety of fields, accurately represent the general understanding of scientists that observation has a fundamental role in the application of the scientific method to investigation and problem-solving. This emphasis on observation is wholly consistent with the prominent role of observation in God's investigative work in Genesis.

The active pursuit of knowledge

As God investigates in Genesis, He is often portrayed as taking an active role in the pursuit of knowledge. This is first expressed in God's investigation of Adam and Eve following their rebellion at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God is the One who walked in the garden and called out to find them, initiating and leading their conversation (Gen. 3:8, 9). He later began a dialogue with Cain after the murder of his brother (Gen. 4:9).

When the descendants of Noah began to build a city and a tower, Genesis 11: 5 states that "the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built." God's choice to go to see the construction by these people rather than observing them from a distance indicated that He wanted to look more closely at what is happening. He could have called the people to bring the knowledge He wanted to Himself, but He took the initiative in going to where the answers were. Again, while God is all-seeing and all-knowing and has no need to move anywhere, this depiction of His movement within time and space makes an important statement that God regards knowledge as something worth pursuing. In this light, when the angel of the Lord finds Hagar (Gen. 16:7), it is an indication that she is worth pursuing.

The most extensive account of God's active pursuit of information is found in Genesis 18 & 19. God visited Abraham on His way down to Sodom to see closely what He heard from a distance (Gen. 18:20, 21). God told Abraham that He would go look "in Sodom" (Gen. 18:26). After leaving Abraham, the two angels encountered Lot upon entering Sodom and soon had personal experience with the hospitality of Lot and the hostility of the men of Sodom, providing sufficient evidence on which to base the conclusion that Sodom should be destroyed. The

magnitude of the decision to be made about Sodom's future is matched by the willingness of God to be personally involved and present in observing Sodom and in collecting the proof in support of that decision.

Science, as a process of discovery, is dependent on the willingness of those who practice it to be active in pursuing answers. The logician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce emphasized the fundamental role of inquiry in science when he wrote:

"If we are to define science... it does not consist so much in knowing, nor even in "organized knowledge," as it does in diligent inquiry into truth for truth's sake, without any sort of axe to grind, nor for the sake of the delight of contemplating it, but from an impulse to penetrate into the reason of things." (Peirce, 1931)

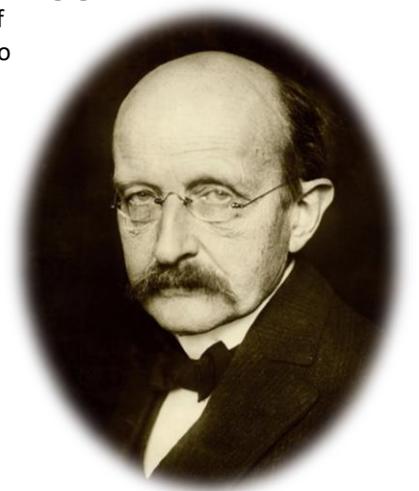
The Nobel Prize-winning physicist Max Planck stated that "It is not the possession of truth, but the success which attends the seeking after it, that enriches the seeker and brings happiness to him." (Planck, 1932) Like Peirce, Planck saw the process of gaining knowledge as being a more important element of science than the knowledge itself, and affirmed that this process requires active involvement by those engaged in it. The active work of God in His investigations in Genesis is consistent with the kind of active investigation Peirce, Planck, and all other successful scientists have worked to incorporate into their scientific practice.

The role of questions in investigation

Another element common in God's investigations in Genesis involves the role of questions in the process of revealing truth. This is first seen in God's conversation with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9) "Who told you that you were naked?" (Gen. 3:11) "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen. 3:11) "What is this you have done?" (Gen. 3:13) Each of these questions led Adam and Eve further along toward an understanding of how their situation had changed and also of the magnitude of the consequences of their choices. As an omniscient God, He already knew the answers to the questions He was asking, but He used these questions to reveal truth to the first couple.

When God encounters Cain after the murder of Abel, He again asks questions. "Where is Abel your brother?" (Gen. 4:9) "What have you done?" (Gen. 4:10) The questions closely resemble the first and last questions previously asked to Cain's parents, and again the questions lead to an understanding of how Cain's choices led to significant consequences. The similarities in the questions asked in each situation suggest that God understands the value of applying a consistent approach to seeking truth. By maintaining consistency in His approach, He was able to successfully reveal truth in each situation.

God also asked questions in His interactions with Hagar. "Where have you come from and where are you going?" (Gen. 16:8) "What is the matter with you, Hagar?" (Gen. 21:17) Again we see God asking questions about location and situation in order to bring Hagar to greater awareness of her separated state. Although she returned to Abram after her first encounter with God and was permanently separated from him after her second encounter with God, she left each encounter with God with an understanding that He was with her.



Asking good questions—questions that are particularly well suited to discovering answers that increase knowledge and improve its applicability—has long been considered to be essential in the practice of science. Francis Bacon is reported to have said, “Half of science is putting forth the right questions.” (Ellis, 2016c). And in more modern times, Albert Einstein expressed the value of questions when he said:



The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science. (Einstein & Infeld, 1966)

In examining how the questions God asks in Genesis play an important role in revealing truth about human behavior and motivations, we should be reminded that the success of our own investigations likewise depends largely on the quality of the questions we ask. Our questions must be relevant, focused, and designed to produce correct answers with the maximum possible clarity and efficiency.

The willingness to recognize change

God’s investigation of the antediluvians points to another important characteristic that must be considered by all who seek to be successful investigators. Genesis 6:6 states that following God’s observation of humanity’s constant evil intentions and actions, He “was sorry” for creating humanity. This presents a drastic change from the assessment of His creation being “very good” following his creative work on the sixth day of creation week (Gen. 1:31), a work which included the creation of humanity. This change, it should be noted, does not mean that the Genesis 1 assessment was flawed or incorrect; instead, we see that the change in humanity that began with the events recorded in Genesis 3 had produced a new set of conditions that required a different assessment if God was to remain intellectually honest. At this point, the creation (especially humanity) was no longer very good.

God’s willingness to change his assessment of his creation in response to the changes in creation should be noted by those who wish to remain truthful and accurate in their own investigations. Conclusions drawn at one point in time, based on one set of observations, may not be warranted at a different point in time, following a second set of observations. But the accurate observations made and logical conclusions derived at both points are essential in order to reveal the underlying truths that apply at all times.

The biologist Ernst Mayr, in his work *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution and Inheritance*, spoke about the necessity for scientists to change their thinking in the presence of new facts. He wrote:

All interpretations made by a scientist are hypotheses, and all hypotheses are tentative. They must forever be tested and they must be revised if found to be unsatisfactory. Hence, a change of mind in a scientist, and particularly in a great scientist, is not only not a sign of weakness but rather evidence for continuing attention to the respective problem and an ability to test the hypothesis again and again. (Mayr, 1982)

The reasons why human investigators may need to change their minds differ significantly from the reasons why God would change His mind. God’s changes of mind are not a function of a failure to observe correctly or to think logically; God changes His mind because different circumstances require different responses. Nonetheless, the willingness of God to change His mind serves as a model for us as we incorporate previously unknown data, see our circumstances more clearly, and revise our thinking to align more closely to known facts and principles of sound reasoning.

The importance of others’ input

God’s investigation of Sodom and Gomorrah is noteworthy because of the way in which Abraham becomes involved in the process. In Genesis 18:17-19, God gives reasons why He should not keep His planned

investigation of Sodom a secret from Abraham. God then tells Abraham what He intends to do. Abraham, beginning in verse 23, suggests that God should have a minimum threshold for deciding not to destroy the cities. The rest of the chapter relates the continuation of their dialogue, in which Abraham suggests a progressively lower minimum number of righteous people needed to prevent God from destroying the cities. God agrees to Abraham's initial minimum and to each of Abraham's five additional requests that the limit be lowered.

Abraham's involvement in God's planning of this investigation points out that God's investigations need to meet two criteria. First, they should be conducted in a righteous way. Abraham asks "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Gen. 18:25) Because God is righteous, He must use righteous means to accomplish his purposes. Second, they should be done in a way that can be justified to others. God's willingness to agree to Abraham's requests indicates that it is important for Him to act in a way that others will understand and agree with (provided that those people are committed to living in harmony with Him—those with fundamentally different goals could not be expected to agree with means that are inconsistent with these different goals).

In order for a human investigator to reflect these principles in his or her work, the investigator must conduct inquiry in accordance with ethical standards. Various scientific organizations have crafted codes of conduct that set forth ethical standards for research done within their disciplines. The Christian scientist should operate in accordance with these guidelines in addition to the moral principles found in Scripture (unless the guidelines contradict Scripture). Adherence to community standards for ethical behavior is one way in which we can act in ways that are understandable and agreeable to others.

Another way in which investigations by Christians can be done in understandable, agreeable ways is to conduct inquiry in a manner that is consistent with the technical standards of one's discipline. It is one thing to do work honestly, but doing work well is a different matter. As with ethical standards, there are community standards that govern what kind of work is considered to be of sufficiently high quality to merit the attention of other researchers and inclusion in the general body of knowledge. Christian investigators should be leaders not only in the high ethical standards by which their work is conducted, but also in the quality of their data, methods, and conclusions.

The peer review process provides another means by which Christian investigators can be involved in ensuring the ethical and technical quality of their work and that of others. Abraham's suggestions about how few righteous people would need to be found in Sodom in order to justify sparing the city are similar to the type of activity typically undertaken during the peer review process, although the timing of Abraham's input might more rightly lead to labeling his work as "peer preview". Although Abraham (like any of us) had no basis on which to be considered a peer of God, God's willingness to share His thinking with Abraham and to allow Abraham to have input into what findings would be sufficient to warrant Sodom's destruction gave Abraham a peer-like status in this investigation. Whether conducted informally among colleagues or collaborators, or through the more formal processes associated with publication, the input of peers in the design, interpretation, and communication of research leads to increased credibility of the work performed.

The role of experimentation

It is at the point when Abraham is the subject of the inquiry that we find an additional aspect of God's investigative activity. Genesis 22:1 states that "God tested (*nasah*) Abraham." In this account, God tells Abraham to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham follows the instruction and at the point when he is ready to complete the assigned task, a voice from heaven tells him to stop. The reason why God tells Abraham to stop is because "...I know that you fear God." (Gen. 22:12) God made this testing request of Abraham in order to demonstrate Abraham's commitment to Him.

This test can be thought of as an experiment. God placed Abraham in a particular situation in order to determine his reaction. In that respect, this story is similar to that of the biologist who changes the environment in which microorganisms are grown, the chemist who subjects a material to previously unexplored physical conditions, or the physicist who explores interactions between newly discovered subatomic particles. In all of these cases, characteristic properties inherent to the subject of the experiment are revealed.

God's interaction with Abraham in this story validates the use of experimentation as a means of determining truth. By careful, ethical manipulation of the conditions under which observations are made, truths become more apparent than they might normally be under uncontrolled conditions. In Abraham's situation, the extent of his willingness to obey God was made more visible in the extreme circumstances he faced than it was in

the regular circumstances of daily living. A similar example can be seen in the story of Job, whose trials also revealed his commitment to God.

Experimentation has always been considered an important part of scientific inquiry. The English physiologist Walter Fletcher succinctly described the importance of experiments in a 1929 speech to the British Science Guild. Fletcher stated, “We find it a law of our state of being that where only observation can be made the growth of knowledge creeps; where experiment can be made knowledge leaps forward.” (Ellis, 2016a) As God’s investigation of Abraham produced a significant increase in our knowledge of Abraham’s character, so may well-conducted experiments allow us to make considerable advances in our knowledge of the universe in which we live.

The goal of investigation

In the ten divine investigations examined above, one characteristic is common to all of them. In every case, once God receives the information sought in His investigation, He acts on the basis of that information.

In the creation account, God’s observations and resulting conclusions lead Him to consider each day’s work finished, and the “very good” declaration on the sixth day leads Him to a declaration that his creative work is entirely complete, leading to the Sabbath rest. (Note that the declaration that “It is not good for the man to be alone” leads to further creative work.) In Genesis 3, the determination that Adam and Eve sinned leads to their exile from the garden and the initiation of the plan of salvation. After God investigates Cain, he is punished for the murder of his brother Abel, but given a sign to keep others from retributively adding to that punishment. God’s investigation of the antediluvians leads to the decision to flood the earth as punishment for their constant evil, but also to offer a way of salvation for Noah and his family. God’s visit to the tower builders in Shinar leads Him to confuse their

languages. When God first investigates Hagar in Genesis 16, He sends her back to Abram, while his second investigation in Genesis 21 results in Hagar’s permanent separation from Abraham. In both cases, He promises a good future for her son Ishmael. God’s investigation of Sodom leads to its destruction, and to the rescue of Lot and his immediate family. God’s testing of Abraham leads to a reaffirmation of His covenant with Abraham. When God investigates Leah and Rachel, he fulfills their desires to have children.

In none of these cases do we see God pursuing information for the sake of simple intellectual curiosity. God sees investigation as a means of producing knowledge that can be used to further His will. Herein lies the challenge for the Christian investigator. For the Christian, knowledge cannot be discovered merely for the sake of accumulating knowledge for oneself. It is to be shared with others so that they may also benefit. Nor can the Christian engage in the pursuit of knowledge without considering how the knowledge obtained will benefit or harm others. Christians need to pay particular attention to the potential applications of their work, and focus attention on lines of research that may be more likely to benefit others, while avoiding work in areas that are more likely to result in the discovery of knowledge that will be used to bring harm to others.

One example of how scientists can organize their work in line with these principles can be found in the career of George Washington Carver. Carver’s work in creating hundreds of products from peanuts, sweet potatoes, and other plants enabled significant improvements in the agricultural diversity of the southern United States, and led to a better way of life for thousands of farmers in that region. (“George Washington Carver,” 1998) The epitaph on Carver’s tombstone summarizes his attitude toward his work:

A life that stood out as a gospel of self-forgetting service. He could have added fortune to fame but caring for neither he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world. The centre of his world was the south where he was born in slavery some 79 years ago and where he did his work as a creative scientist. (Ellis, 2016d)



Conclusions

As we look at the investigative work of God in the book of Genesis, we see that the characteristics God demonstrates as He conducts these investigations are reflected in the behaviors of successful scientists as they conduct their work. Quality scientific work requires careful observation, an active pursuit of knowledge, and the ability to ask good questions. All of these characteristics are exhibited by God on several occasions during the book of Genesis. God's recognition that the state of His creation in the time of the antediluvians had changed from its original created state provides an important reminder that scientists must also be open to recognizing changed circumstances in their work as well, and to be willing to change their work in response to those changed circumstances. God's involvement of Abraham in the evaluation of Sodom serves as an illustration of the importance of community in the design and conduct of scientific work. God's testing of Abraham by asking him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice shows an example of how experimentation can complement observation as a means of revealing truth. In every investigation, God uses the information revealed as a basis for action to further His will and advance His plans to help others.

These numerous examples of God's investigative work are no coincidence. They are given because God created humanity with the ability and desire to inquire and to find answers, and through these accounts God Himself provides guidance in His words and actions regarding how to conduct these inquiries most effectively. By conducting investigations, God shows that the investigative process can be done in harmony with His will—and may in fact be an expression of His will. In a society where religious faith and scientific work are frequently perceived to be conflicting and incompatible, these divine examples of inquiry serve as illustrations that the process of observing, questioning, and seeking answers is not an inherently evil exercise. Instead, it is a process that is entirely righteous if done with the proper motives and in harmony with Biblical values.

In addition, appreciating the value of these accounts of God's investigative work in Genesis, beginning with the role of investigation in creation and extending through the time of Abraham and his descendants, gives us additional reason to eliminate theories that reject the historicity of these accounts. If the stories of creation, Eden, the flood, the tower of Babel, and the people of Genesis are relegated to the status of morality tales without actual historical significance, not only do we miss out on the essential contributions they add to our understanding of our history, but we also diminish the value of God's real portrayals of investigative work and risk ignoring the guidance and correction they provide to our own inquiries. By looking at God's work as a model for our work, we are enabled to conduct our own work with the highest possible level of quality and efficiency.

Scripture remains an essential source for understanding our origins, our present state, and our future. No other book provides such a comprehensive picture of our place in this world, and we would do well to increase our appreciation for the ways in which it can serve as the foundation for our understanding of the right ways to employ other means of discovering truth. The applications of Scriptural principles to conducting investigations in the sciences given here are broadly applicable to investigations in other fields, and as we continue to allow Scripture to guide and direct every aspect of our learning, we can expect to know our world, ourselves, each other, and our God more accurately.

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