

Statement of Principles of the Christian Scientific Society

1. God created the entire natural world and stands as absolute sovereign Lord over it, and is not constrained by its rules, but rather makes all its rules. God is not an impersonal force; like us, God has emotions and intentions and is capable of and enjoys relationships. The Bible teaches us that God as the Trinity has enjoyed relationship between the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from all eternity; love is intrinsic to his being.

2. God has revealed himself in the Holy Scriptures written by the prophets and apostles and passed down to us by the Christian church.¹ We acknowledge differences of opinion among Christians in regard to the canonicity of certain texts and the proper translation and interpretation of various passages, and we encourage continuing study of these questions with the aim of resolving them, but nevertheless we affirm that the Scriptures of the Bible held by the church today are sufficiently clear and authenticated in the great majority of texts, that we may rely on them to be true in all the topics that they address.

2a. These Scriptures are essential for our right understanding of God and our right relationship with him and all of the world, and should maintain a central role in our discussions of what is true about ourselves and the universe. As Christians we are not free to ignore or contradict any part of the Scriptures.

2b. Although we may disagree about interpretation or canonicity of certain texts, and we may bring science and history to bear in these arguments, no theory of science or history has higher authority than Holy Scripture, and changing views of interpretation and canonicity should be confirmed by the coherent testimony of the rest of Holy Scripture itself.

2c. We affirm that the Scriptures as originally given may rightly be called “inerrant.” Although we do not have the original texts, we can gain increasingly better reconstruction and understanding of these texts by careful study, and the assumption that they were inerrant is helpful in guiding that study.

3. God has also revealed himself in nature in ways that are accessible to all people and subject to scientific study. The scientific study of nature is not sufficient for proper understanding of God—we learn many things about God from the Scriptures that we would never learn from nature alone—but scientific study of nature can point us to God in important ways. Scientific study of nature should never be viewed as threatening to the authority of Scripture, but rather as widening our understanding of the context to which the Scriptures speak, and helping to confirm in our hearts that God is the Lord of the whole world in which we live.

¹ The Christian Scriptures include the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament published in standard translations such as the English Standard Version (ESV). Some Christians, notably the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, include an additional 6 deuterocanonical books in the Old Testament. The Society recognizes the debate among Christians in regard to these books and has no official recognition of their inclusion in the canon.

3a. In general, we reject a high wall of demarcation between science and theology, as we may draw expectations about what we expect to see in nature based on our understanding of God who created it, and we may draw conclusions about the nature of God from observation of the natural world, conclusions which even those who reject the Bible may accept. Science can also help us to understand the correct interpretation of Scripture.

3b. While the study of nature alone is not sufficient for persuasion of all people to come to a right relationship with God, we nevertheless affirm that nature points us to God, and for many people the testimony of nature plays a crucial role in their belief that God is real. We therefore encourage apologetic arguments which use science accurately.

3c. We affirm that the conclusions of science are always provisional to some degree, but some conclusions from science can become so widely confirmed that it is valid to say in common language that we “know” certain things about nature. Such knowledge may be profitably used in apologetic, theological, and exegetical discussions, and it is unwise for any person to blithely ignore the findings of science.

3d. Science may legitimately speak of the past history of the world. Although we cannot recreate the past, we may apply scientific tests such as corroboration from many sources, statistical correlations, and self-consistency of scientific theories, to gain confidence in reconstructing what has happened in the past in our universe.

3e. Science is a legitimate calling for Christians, and the church should place a high priority on Christians entering the science professions and becoming competent to critique all types of scientific claims.

4. All humans equally bear the image of God in a way that is different from any other living or nonliving thing in creation. This image of God is reflected in various physical and intellectual differences of humans from other living things, but the image of God is itself not merely a physical or mental attribute, but a status that arises fundamentally from a spiritual action by God.

4a. Because humans have the image of God, human life in all its stages is to be treated as holy and different from animal and plant life. All the stages of human life, from embryonic stages to dead human bodies, should be treated with reverence and respect.

4b. Science has no absolute claim to destroy any human life in the interest of gaining knowledge or improving society. While we acknowledge debates among Christians about occasions in which humans may rightly end other human life for reasons of justice or mercy, the Christian ethic demands that the destruction of human life in any form can never be done lightly, or on the basis of private expedience.

4c. Affirming the image of God in all humans also means affirming the equal worth of all humans. We reject the idea that human worth can be measured by different physical attributes, different economic classes, different intelligence levels, differing degrees of sinfulness, different ages, or male and female. Part of the value of science is in its application to alleviating the suffering and enabling the fruitful work of all people.

4d. God transcends the categories of male and female, but because God is personal, it is appropriate to refer to God with the male personal pronouns “he”, “him” and “his,” as do the Holy Scriptures in their original languages. Care must be taken to communicate in all cultures that our reference to God in this way does not either explicitly or implicitly convey that men have a greater or higher aspect of the image of God than women. We acknowledge that Christians differ on exactly how the image of God is reflected differently (but equally) in males and females, and science and cultural studies as well as Scripture can help to illuminate this discussion.

5. Another aspect of the image of God in humans is their commission from God to rule over and be caretakers of the earth. This role is a high responsibility to act as stewards of all of God’s creation, not a license to wantonly destroy any of it. Nevertheless, humans have a right to alter, control, and even destroy parts of nature and to build and create new things not found in nature.

5a. Because of the holiness of human life, great restraint ought to be taken in regard to altering any aspect of human life without compelling moral reason to do so.

5b. God created all the universe very good, and while the sinfulness of mankind has led to various degradations of nature, we nevertheless affirm that nature is still full of God’s goodness and we therefore should respect the design of the world, so that we do not lightly alter the natural patterns of ecosystems and living things.

6. One man Adam, who lived in a real time and place in human history, acted as the representative of the whole human race, and in his sin, the whole human race fell into sin. Sin is an essentially spiritual term, which refers to discord between humans and God, but sin has real physical consequences both for the human race and for the rest of creation. Talking of sin is not unscientific, but belongs in our discussion of ethics as well as natural consequences of sin.

7. God entered human history by taking on flesh, as the man Jesus Christ who lived in a real time and place in human history. We affirm the statements of the historical Nicene Creed in regard to the work and nature of Jesus and his relation to the Father and the Spirit in the eternal Trinity. The second person of the Trinity, known as the Son of God, who became incarnate as the person of Jesus, was from all eternity in very nature God, and was not created nor did he evolve into God.

7a. No human will ever evolve into becoming equal with God; our ultimate goal is to worship eternally the one, holy God who is creator of all.

7b. Jesus lived a real human life, he acted as a substitutionary atonement to save humans from sin when he died on the Cross, he rose again bodily from the grave and never died again, and he left the world of humans to be with God. These acts of the Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, and Ascension comprise an essential part of the central message of the Christian church. Each has implications for science because they show that God is intimately involved with his creation and that he acts in human history.

8. We acknowledge that there are many things which are at present completely beyond the purview of natural science, such as miracles, angels and demons, and spiritual worlds in parallel to ours. Belief in such things is not irrational, but rather is based on the credible testimony of Scripture and the historical church and the power of God to do anything.

8a. We ought to maintain an attitude of humility, that scientific study of nature, while of great value, does not tell us everything that is possible to know, nor do scientific discoveries about the world around us constrain God to act only in certain ways. However, in the absence of direct experience, we can not go beyond the direct testimony given to us in Scripture, and humility demands that we usually refrain from speculations about the detailed nature of such things.

8b. Christians ought not be known for gullibility. Claims by Christians and others to be witnesses to miracles or supernatural events ought to be subject to normal tests of credibility of witnesses. When miracles do occur, we generally expect they can leave consequences which at least in principle are subject to scientific investigation.

8c. God is not a God of chaos, and therefore we expect that the normal working of the natural world will be comprehensible and subject to regular cause and effect. Although miracles or supernatural events which defy our comprehension can occur, we expect that these will be rare, and in the absence of a clear word from God, Christians should not be predisposed to interpret unusual events in terms of miracles or the supernatural.

9. As an organization we believe that part of our calling is to make public pronouncements on matters of science in which there is controversy or confusion in the Christian church or in the larger world. As part of the universal church, we have a responsibility to speak truth to our culture, especially in areas where there is confusion, if careful consideration leads us to believe we can help clear up confusion or confront sinful attitudes in areas of science and technology.

9a. The society takes no stand on specific political methods of protecting and advancing human life or taking care of God's world, including the laws on abortion, poverty, public health, environmental laws, or capital punishment. We affirm, however, that we have a calling to educate the public on scientific issues which relate to these topics, and if our views favor one side or another of a political debate, we should not shy away from publishing those views.

9b. It is often wise to refrain from making public statements on areas in which there is still significant disagreement among our membership. The Society is under no obligation to make pronouncements in all controversial matters.