Chapter 3

Conflict between the Classrooms

Ken Ham

But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:20–21).

was having lunch with a highly educated man some time ago when he turned and asked with a slight air of cynicism, "Do you take a religious view of Genesis or the scientific view?"

I responded this way, "Let me ask you a question. Can you define for me in the context of this conversation what you mean by the term 'scientific'?"

There was a long silence. "Hmmm, I don't really know. I haven't really thought about that," he admitted.

Part of the problem we see in Christian colleges that are already compromised is that *most* people haven't thought about that! Most people think that the battle over creation and evolution is being fought between "science" and "religion." But there are two problems with this thinking:

- 1. Most people can't define the word "science," and thus they end up misunderstanding how the word is used in our modern world.
- 2. Most people have an incorrect understanding of the word "religion" and, as a result, falsely think in terms of neutrality and nonreligion versus religion.

The primary dictionary definition of the word *science* is basically "knowledge." We need to understand that one can have knowledge concerning what happened in the past (e.g., the origins issue). This is called "historical science." However, this knowledge is based on certain assumptions about the past. If the assumptions are wrong, the conclusions reached will likely be wrong and we will misunderstand history. Understanding the assumptions used to build historical knowledge is extremely important.

But knowledge gained by observation (five senses) and based on the repeatable test (empiricism) is called "observational" or "operational science." This is the knowledge that enables us to build our technology, understand how a cell works, and develop medicines.

When most people use the word science today, they are usually thinking in terms of "operational science." This becomes very confusing when secularists use the word science when talking about aspects of genetics that can be examined in a lab, and then turn around and use the word science when discussing the topic of nonobservable aspects of evolutionary ideas (e.g., life from nonlife, reptiles evolving into birds, etc.). Knowing that mutations in DNA can occur and be measured is not the same as asserting that we know how those mutations occurred in various populations over millions of years.

Because most people (including most students — and most professors) do not understand the distinction between historical (origins) and operational science, they wrongly think that the battle of origins is one of science versus the Bible. That is simply not true. It is a battle between two totally different accounts of the past — a battle between people holding to different accounts of the past based on the conclusions of historical science.

The role of operational (or observational/repeatable) science is that it can be used to confirm which historical science best explains the evidence. Operational science can be used to help confirm or deny which account of historical science is true. Historical science uses certain assumptions to arrive at conclusions about the past. If these assumptions are incorrect, they will lead to a false knowledge of the past.

Actually, creationists and evolutionists both have the same operational science but different accounts of origins based on the assumptions in their methods of historical science. This needs to be clearly understood so people don't incorrectly believe that creationists are against science! Creationists love science; we praise God for making a universe where operational science is possible and for the benefits it has brought to mankind through technology and understanding. We also love historical science, but only when the

assumptions used to understand the past are firmly rooted in what God has revealed to us in the Bible.

We wanted to detail the above for you so that as we continue this discussion aimed at understanding what is happening in our Christian colleges, we will be using the same definition of the word science. Unless otherwise stated, when we speak of *science* from this point on, we will be referring to observational or operational science — not historical science.

Also, when we use the word *religion* in our discussion, it will be used mostly in the context of Christianity. People need to understand that there is no nonreligious position. A religion is basically a system of belief held to with ardor and faith. Atheism is a religion, Islam is a religion, Secular Humanism is a religion, and so on. Although scientists will use operational science when discussing evolutionary ideas, there are also many aspects of belief (or religion) in embracing evolution as the explanation for the life we see on this planet (such as the belief that life arose by only natural processes from matter over time). This can be called a naturalistic worldview since it rejects supernatural explanations of the origin of the universe and the life that we find on this planet.

The same can be said for biblical creationists. We use operational science to help us understand the past. However, there is a major difference: we accept the supernatural account of origins revealed in Genesis as a core belief and use operational science to confirm those ideas. What anyone believes about origins is ultimately based in a faith about the past.

Most people falsely assume that the "facts of science" *support* evolution and millions of years, while biblical creation is supposedly a matter of "religious faith." We hear this type of rhetoric in the media all the time when both the secularists and the theists draw distinctions between the supposed scientific "fact of evolution" and an old earth, and the religious "faith of creation" and a young earth.

In other words, people, even in our churches, have been led to believe that real scientists will adhere to evolution while it is religious people who believe in creation. In fact, the numbers from the survey of Christian colleges prove the exact opposite: in many cases, it tends to be the scientists who believe in the Bible's account of origins and accordingly a young earth, while the majority of those in the religion departments embrace evolution and undermine the authority of Scripture!

When we look at the history of science, we see a remarkable list of amazing achievements (because of operational science) that have made life better in our world. Man's ability to think, critically analyze, experiment, and

imagine have resulted in these remarkable achievements. Space shuttles, instant worldwide communications, satellites . . . operational science is propelling us forward at light speed. It's been a long time since Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Einstein, but our knowledge in physics still continues to grow. Scholars research relativity to quantum physics to string theory in pursuit of an increasing knowledge of how our universe works.

Or consider the astounding advances in medical technologies and practices made possible by science. Greg was attending the University of Pittsburgh during the days the School of Medicine was developing transplantation technology. What was once almost science fiction is now commonplace surgery. Many lives have been saved as a result of this science. And this is just one example of how medical science has amazingly advanced. The growth in medical science has made it possible to understand the intricate workings of the human body. It has made it possible to diagnose an illness and develop cures for diseases once thought impossible to deal with. Formerly high-risk procedures such as heart surgery or organ transplantation have become routine.

Consider the science behind computer technology. Some of us can remember the days before the computer. Some can remember the first computers as massive instruments that could only do simple computations. Today, the average cell phone has far more computational power than the computer that sent the first man to the moon.

Yes, mankind has accomplished incredible things using science. But does a proper understanding of science really support the beliefs of the evolutionist? That was the assumption of the man I was having lunch with when he asked, "Do you take a religious view of Genesis or the scientific view?" His question opened up a really good discussion about historical science, operational science, and so forth. He had never even heard of it before. He (like most professors at these colleges) did not understand the distinction between beliefs about the past (historical science) and knowledge gained by repeatability and observation (operational science) that is used to build our technology. He was actually mixing a naturalistic view of origins (i.e., no supernatural/no God) with operational science.

Many a scientist has become a creationist when he is willing to look beyond the closed-minded presuppositions of the naturalistic worldview and when he opens his mind to using the historical science rooted in the Bible to build his way of thinking about the evidence. Then he can often clearly see that what he observes confirms the Bible's account of history.

We also have a growing number of people from the naturalist community who are looking at current evolutionary belief and saying, "We have

some real problems here!" Many secularists don't want to discuss the problems, as they don't want people given even a hint that there could be problems with evolution and millions of years. They want naturalistic evolutionary explanations presented as fact, regardless.

Of course, those who already believe in the authority of Scripture are not surprised to find the scientific evidences confirm what they already know to be true from God's infallible Word.

Now, surprisingly, when it comes to Christian colleges, the creation/evolution/age-of-the-earth debate takes an interesting twist. The one department that you might think would be the most conservative in their beliefs, the religion department, turns out to be the most liberal — having dismissed what the Bible clearly teaches concerning certain events in Genesis in favor of the interpretation of evidence emanating from the naturalistic worldview.

The Science Department Versus the Religion Department

As was noted in earlier chapters, our survey was taken by 312 people at 200 Christian colleges and universities. The 312 were categorized into four different groups: college presidents, vice presidents, members of the religion department, and members of the science department. We will talk about the presidents and vice presidents in chapter 5, but for now, let's take a look at the responses of those who are actually in charge of teaching your kids in the classrooms of the religion and science departments.

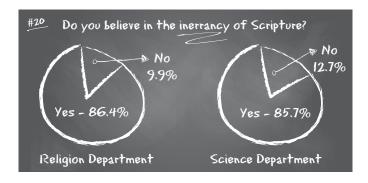
First off, the heads of the science (teaching biology, physics, geology, etc.) and religion (teaching theology, Bible, etc.) departments showed unanimous agreement with important issues about Christ. With very little fluctuation, both the religion and science departments believe in the truthfulness of the New Testament. Both groups strongly affirmed the virgin birth of Christ, His substitutionary death on the Cross, heaven and hell, Christ's Second Coming, and the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Second, their responses (even though we will later show serious issues with how these professors use language to suit their own ideas) to views about the nature of Scripture did not vary with glaring significance either.

Inspiration

Q19: Do you believe in the inspiration of Scripture?

Religion Department Science Department Yes 100.0% 93.0%

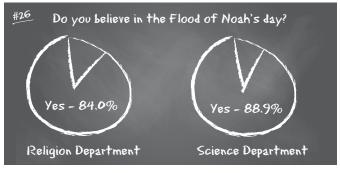


Q18: Do you believe in the infallibility of Scripture?

	Religion Department	Science Department
Yes	92.6%	88.9%
No	6.2%	11.1%

As you can see, the responses are fairly close, with the religion departments claiming a slightly higher view of Scripture than the science departments. But are the rest of their answers consistent with this claim of a high view of the Bible, or is this just more "newspeak"? Answers to more probing questions show the fuller picture:





Q27: Do you believe the Flood was worldwide, local, or nonliteral?

Relig	ion Department	Science Department
Worldwide	56.8%	55.6%
Local	30.9%	41.3%
Nonliteral	12.3%	3.2%

Notice that while 75 percent and 84 percent said they believe the Bible is literally true, only slightly more than half of people from each department believe in a literal worldwide flood! Approximately 25 percent are being inconsistent in their answers. If they really believed the Bible is literally true, they would also believe in a literal interpretation of Genesis that clearly says the Flood was worldwide. But they don't.

How did they answer when we asked questions about creation and evolution?



Q15: Do you believe in the Genesis account of creation as written?

	Religion Department	Science Department
Yes	90.1%	84.1%
No	7.4 %	15.9%

Again, we see relatively high numbers regarding what they say they believe about creation, though the no answers by a significant percentage should greatly concern us in regard to what some professors at these Christian colleges are teaching our kids. But when we ask more specific questions, we begin to see stunning differences.

Q16: Do you believe in God creating the earth in six literal 24-hour days?

	Religion Department	Science Department
Yes	56.8%	71.4%
No	42.0%	27.0%

Q17: Do you believe in God creating the earth, but not in six literal days?

	Religion Department	Science Department
Yes	55.6%	27.0%
No	44.4%	71.4%

This question was so important that we asked it both ways. We first asked if they believed that the earth was created in six 24-hour days. Then we asked if they believed that the earth was created, but *not* in six literal days. The spread on the answers was significant, and not in the direction that most people would think. It turns out that the science department is much more biblical in their beliefs than the religion department! Notice in question 17 that only 27 percent of people in the science department believe in nonliteral creation days. Yet 55.6 percent of the people in the religion department believe in nonliteral creation days.

This question also revealed one of the more graphic examples of the "newspeak" that concerns us in regard to Christian colleges today. In the religion department, 72 percent said they do believe in a literal interpretation of Genesis 1–2, but then 55.6 percent turn around and say, "I do not believe in six literal days"!

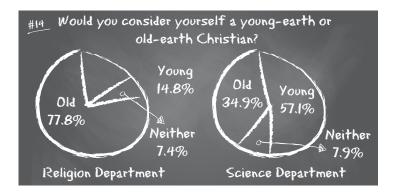
Since we asked this question both ways, it also revealed further confusion in the religion department. Notice that 56.8 percent said they do believe in six literal days, and 55.6 percent do not believe in six literal days. Several people say they both believe and don't believe!

The survey confirmed what I have been seeing on Christian campuses for years. In general, the science department is more likely to hold to the more conservative point of view. The scientists are the ones that I think understand the difference between operational and historical science. Oftentimes the science department is trying to tell the religion department that they are in error. But the Bible professors often point to secular scientists (whose starting point is usually naturalism) to justify their beliefs.

The religion chairs and the Bible departments are choosing to be influenced by worldly philosophy rather than what the Bible clearly teaches

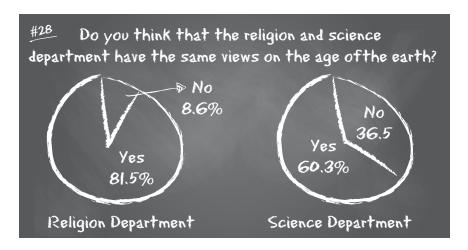
concerning historical science and the facts of observational science that confirm the biblical record. This isn't surprising, considering most of them attended seminaries that adhere to compromise views such as the "documentary hypothesis," a theory that denies that Moses wrote a cohesive historical account of history in the first five books of the Bible. This theory became popular in the late 1800s and claims that the first five chapters of the Bible came from a variety of sources, that the compilers of the Bible borrowed from pagan creation accounts, and that Genesis was written using Babylonian myths and legends. Virtually every seminary, with very few exceptions, liberal or conservative, will teach this "documentary hypothesis" as truth, and nearly everyone teaching in religion departments today came out of that system. They are the ones who are discrediting the Scriptures, they are the ones who capitulate to naturalistic science textbooks, and they are the ones trying to compromise with the world rather than standing to defend the Word of God. Even some of the most historically conservative universities in the country struggle with this issue.

The division between the science and religion departments was most obvious in the question about the age of the earth.



I find this result intriguing and very disturbing. Those who understand how things work on an operational scientific level are some of the strongest advocates for a biblical worldview. In our opinion, based on years of experience, even in the real conservative Christian colleges in America, the science professors, by and large, are the ones who often aggressively support and defend the biblical worldview . . . much more so than those in the religion (or Bible) departments!

Beyond that, the survey also showed that the science department is more aware of these differences than the religion department is. The religion department thinks everyone has the same view, but the science department tends to know better.



Because I have talked to so many professors at so many schools over the years, I wasn't surprised by this result. But what I am finding is that most Christian parents and students are stunned by this discrepancy. They still expect that, if anything, it would be science professors who would be more likely to lean toward evolution/millions of years and that religion professors would be more likely to lean toward a literal creation. But that's not the case — as the survey clearly shows.

When I engage liberals from the religion departments on these issues, most of them repeat the familiar mantra: "Science has proven that evolution/millions of years is true." But when I ask them for specifics, they often don't have much of a clue, as they are depending on some other authority. If I ask them why they believe in an old earth, they invariably answer, "Because of radiocarbon dating." But any scientist should know that the radiocarbon dating method can't be used for something that is supposedly millions of years old. It can only be used to go back 100,000 years at the most. And the presence of radiocarbon in fossils/deposits/diamonds claimed to be millions of years old contradicts such an old age, as after 100,000 years there would be no detectable radiocarbon.²

Can the religion department explain the existence of coal deposits and how they were formed? Can they explain the actual structure of the fossil record? Can they explain the assumptions behind radiometric dating methods? No, they can't. They just say, "Because science has proven . . ." when in reality, science has done no such thing. What they are really accepting is not operational science; they have simply given in to the worldly pressures from those in power who boldly and blindly hold to a naturalistic worldview.

I was recently at a campus where the leaders of the science department wanted me to get together with the religion department so that I could explain this to them. It can be very frustrating for the scientists because the Bible and religion departments of their own schools often won't listen to them. Instead, they listen to scholars who believe in ideas such as the documentary hypothesis and hold to a naturalistic worldview. This unwillingness to listen to creation scientists who trust the Bible can cause considerable consternation between the departments, leading to conflict for the students in regard to what they hear in the various classrooms.

It is surely worse than an eye saying to a hand, "I have no need of you." What is really happening is that many religion professors are, in reality, saying to their science colleagues, "I disagree with you!" It's worse because of the consequences of such compromise with the world: they are causing division that is impacting the souls of the students by undermining biblical authority and creating a doubt of God's Word that can lead to unbelief (Rom. 16:17).

There's no question that this problem is bigger than just colleges and universities. It's a problem at all levels of Christianity. Recently, even the Assemblies of God denomination has rewritten their theological belief statements in order to accommodate evolution and millions of years because they believe "science has shown" it to be true. Again, nothing could be further from the truth.

Science in Perspective

While we celebrate the mind-boggling advances in numerous fields of study made possible through scientific inquiry, it is important for students today to put science in proper perspective. To explain that perspective, let me ask you a question. Choose either comment A or B based on your understanding of science:

- A. Science gives us objective knowledge of an independently existing reality.
- B. Scientific knowledge is always provisional and tells us nothing that is universal, necessary, or completely certain about the world.

The reason this is an important question is that science education in our schools is solidly based on proposition A. This is exactly what you would expect from the science being driven by naturalistic philosophy. Many scientists have become very dogmatic, almost religiously so, about living up to proposition A. Most people believe that the knowledge scientists provide is objective and exists as an independent reality. The scientific method does

work and it provides a knowledge of sorts. It is just not the absolute knowledge that secular scientists have claimed it to be.

Some, like Dr. Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,³ have shown how scientific knowledge is developed. First, the scientist begins with a set of beliefs. These assumptions form the scientific educational process. At the center of the science education literature promoted in the majority of this nation's schools is the Darwinian concept of evolution. Naturalism, the philosophy at the center of most historical science, promotes the idea (in fact, works hard to sell it as truth) that the general laws and forces of nature are enough to explain the existence of the universe and everything in it. The naturalists have no use for a Creator; that concept is unnecessary for them.

This naturalistic science has a tendency to be less than honorable. It has a tendency to be less than academic. Students need to know these flaws and be able to explore them and discuss them and should be able to offer the explanation of the origin of life from Scripture free from the typical scorn and ridicule they receive from naturalistic scientists.

Why is it that scientists are so fearful of the debate with believers about the origin of life? Why cannot both beliefs of origin — creation and evolution — be discussed with students? Why do evolutionists attempt to control this conversation; is there something to hide? What is the real problem?

Astronomer and physicist Dr. Lee Smolin gives us the needed insight. He admits that if science concedes that the universe began at a point in time (some call it the big bang; I call it the moment of creation) then, he says, "It leaves the door open for a return of religion." And that is a problem of biblical proposition for the naturalistic scientist, who, first and foremost, must get God out of the picture.

At the very heart of the science our students have been raised on is the assumption that there is absolutely no room for the supernatural or miracles in the explanation of the origin of life. The point must be made that this is a religious belief — the religious belief of naturalism or atheism. It is all about worldview. There was a time when the Christian faith promoted study and exploration because it was an "act of worship." Science began as the religious pursuit of knowing the mind of God, of learning to "think our thoughts after Him." In other words, the worldview used to understand the evidence in the present was built on God's Word.

Then came the presupposition that the Bible should be left out of the discussion. With this came the suggestion of an earth that had aged millions

of years (geological evolution), followed by Darwin and his speculations (biological evolution). A scientific revolution followed that presented a natural explanation for all that exists with no further need for what was called religion as an explanation for anything (such as astronomical evolution like steady state or big bang and chemical evolution for the origin of life). As the famous evolutionary scientist Ernst Mayr writes, "The Darwinism revolution was not merely the replacement of one scientific theory by another, but rather the replacement of a worldview in which the supernatural was accepted as a normal and relevant explanatory principle by a new worldview in which there was no room for supernatural forces."⁵

This is how science became dishonest. How can anyone who claims to be a scientist turn aside categorically from anything that may be a useful or truthful understanding of the world around us? Yet, when it comes to investigating or promoting — even as a possibility — the creation of our universe and life by a sovereign Creator, they cast it aside. This is intellectual suicide and these scientists should know it . . . and so should the teachers in religion departments at Christian colleges that support and propagate such closed-mindedness.

The extreme some scientists and philosophers have gone to in order to maintain their naturalistic philosophy and keep God out of the picture is astounding. Dr. Francis Crick, in his book *Life Itself*, seems to at least recognize that the origin of life has miraculous features and offers this theory: space aliens brought life to earth from some other planet. Dr. Crick is on the one hand a very serious scientist — the co-discoverer of DNA! On the other hand, perhaps he hopes this theory of his will be picked up by the *National Enquirer*.

Thankfully, there are many scholarly and intellectual scientists who are believers (such as those at organizations like Answers in Genesis and the Institute for Creation Research — and there are many who do leading research in the secular world). Today's student needs to turn to them for perspective and help.

Our survey clearly showed that some scientists and many professors of religion at Christian colleges seem closed to any way of inquiry other than science based in a naturalistic, materialistic philosophy — even though they would claim they believe God's Word as written. If there is a discrepancy between what the atheists say and what God's Word says about the natural world, they tend to defer to those who do not believe in God at all.

The Conflict in Perspective

Another open-ended question shed a great deal of light on these issues.

Q7: What does your institution teach about science and faith?

- We compare and contrast: 43.0%
- We teach science and God are one: 20.5%
- We teach science is valid: 17.6%
- We teach that there is no real conflict: 7.7%

In light of all the things we have discussed in this chapter, these answers are difficult to interpret because we have to ask, What do they mean by science? What is the worldview behind the "science" they are talking about? In *general*, science is usually defined as a worldview and philosophy that includes millions of years of evolution and anything that secular scientists say is true. It is built upon man's fallible ideas. If your science is based on assumptions that have already ruled out the possibility of God, then attempting to add God or the Bible to this requires one to change God's Word to fit with man's word. But if you approach the evidence from the starting point of God's Word, then the facts will have a very different interpretation: observational science will be shown to overwhelmingly confirm the interpretation as God's world agrees with what is recorded in God's Word.

What do these people mean when they say that they "compare and contrast science and faith"? Does that mean that they are teaching secular science alongside of the Bible and trying to get them to fit together? How about those who say that "science and God are one"? A scientist who believes in God could make this statement in good conscience, knowing that the results of operational science reflect the truth about the Creator who designed and brought everything into being. Others might say that "God and science are one" in an attempt to make the creation account in the Bible conform to the ideas of secular scientists who have a godless worldview. See the problem here?

When they say "science and God are one," do they really mean that evolution/millions of years and the Bible are one? When they say that science is valid, are they claiming that secular dating methods for the age of the earth are valid? We can't say so for sure, but this all has to do with how you define the word *science*.

If you define it in the way that it is commonly used today (that science cannot allow the supernatural, only explaining things from a perspective of naturalism), then this is a real mess. As we have stated, the word *science*

means knowledge. Are they gaining knowledge by starting their thinking from God's Word or man's word? As the Bible teaches in several places, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (and wisdom).

Certainly the other parts of the survey showed that the mess indeed exists. There is a strong movement in evangelicalism that is trying to make the facts of the Bible conform to the naturalistic worldview. But we must remember: the starting point determines your worldview, and therefore your interpretation. If you start with man's ideas (humanism) to develop your worldview, there's no question about where your conclusions will end up.

In the end, it's actually very difficult to determine what these people mean by what they say. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that you ask clarifying and probing questions when you're evaluating a school, listening to a lecture, or even reading a written statement of faith. As we discovered in this survey, compromise can come at you from every direction. And in many cases, it will come from those who you might expect it the least — the religion and Bible teachers in Christian colleges and universities.

Let me again make an important distinction here: the battle is not between religion and science but between a biblical and a naturalistic worldview. Please understand this: the scientific method is an absolutely brilliant research paradigm (developed by a creationist, no less). The things that have been discovered and confirmed by using the scientific method have been an indispensable part of advancement in the modern world. The scientific method is perhaps the most beneficial tool, next to the Bible, for investigating the physical world in the history of mankind. Science is not the enemy. The enemy is a naturalistic worldview that is closed off to the possibility of the existence of God and that His Word is true and the only starting point to understand the universe that He created. It's not a matter of "science" versus "faith." The problem is that the naturalistic worldview has hijacked science in a way that has supposedly disproved the existence of God (because they started with that assumption, which is self-refuting anyway). Nothing could be further from the truth.

Christian leaders representing the Church need to stand up in this nation and condemn the compromise with the pagan religion of the age (millions of years/evolution — the pagan religion of the age to explain life without God) and stand for God's authoritative Word. Only then will we see God's blessing on the Church and the resulting change in the culture that is so needed.

I don't question whether such scholars are Christians, but we still need to point out their compromise of accepting man's opinions over God's Word. The problem with many Christian colleges is they will believe the science text

written from a naturalistic worldview *first*, and the sacred text *later*. My heart is also taken by those, like many of my friends and colleagues, who love the Word, love God, love the Church, and, even if in some ways they may need to be "trained" in the truth, serve God out of sincere, heartfelt devotion.

Let there be no mistake: as believers committed to the authority of God's Word, we are facing an epic battle — a "collision of worldviews" in our churches, in the marketplace, and in the secular and Christian colleges and universities. And as you will see in the next chapter, the stakes could not be higher. At stake are our kids and how they will respond to the life-transforming truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

Endnotes

- In fact, few realize that committed Christians were often the ones who developed most fields of operational science (Mendel, Pasteur, Faraday, Newton, Galileo, and others).
- L. Vardiman, A.A. Snelling, and E.F. Chaffin, editors, Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth: Results of a Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative (Santee, CA: Institute for Creation Research and Chino Valley, AZ: Creation Research Society, 2005).
- 3. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, Third Edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 4. Lee Smolin, *The Life of the Cosmos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 183, 264.
- 5. Ernst Mayr, "Evolution and God," Nature (March 1974): 285.
- 6. Francis Crick, Life Itself (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981).

Want to know which colleges were contacted as part of the ARG study? Visit www.creationcolleges.org and also find a growing list of Christian colleges we recommend you search out.

