

Publishing Editor's column

THE words of Daniel 12:4, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased", have a very apt ring to them when we look at the world of today. The amount of information available is said to be increasing at an amazing rate, and the enormous growth in the World Wide Web is making that knowledge available to more and more people.

Much of this knowledge involves the living world around us, the plant and animal life which is so abundant and varied. A scientist will concentrate on a particular form of life, an insect for example, and try to understand how it lives and feeds, reproduces itself or protects itself from enemies. This can take a lot of observation and research, and the results are often amazing. Especially remarkable are the discoveries that have been made about the human body; the complexity of the brain or the construction of the cell, for example. The more these things are studied, the greater the awareness of the complexity of them, and the greater the awareness of how little we know and understand.

There is a parallel here in some ways with the attention that is paid to the Bible in the academic world. Vast amounts of material are produced in the form of commentaries, learned journals, monographs on particular themes from Scripture and so forth. The length of these publications seems to be growing; in one series of commentaries the volume on Genesis published in 1964 has 379 pages, whereas it takes three volumes (totalling 2,700 pages), completed in 2000, to deal with Leviticus. Most of what all this detailed study produces is unlikely to be of interest or value to us, and may be directly harmful, but such scholars do bring out evidence of themes in the books of Scripture, or of quotations from and allusions to other parts of Scripture, which might not be apparent on the surface.

In carrying out all this study the scientists and scholars are considering the two ways in which God has said He has revealed Himself: His Word and His works. Yet it has not led to any greater belief in God; rather the reverse. We live in a world where evolution is virtually taken for granted, despite the fact that the more complex the various forms of life are that inhabit our planet, the less sense evolution makes. The scholars who produce such detailed studies in the Bible do not believe that it was given by inspiration of God. Yet if it is just the thoughts of men of many years ago, why spend so much time and effort studying it? And how is it that the more Scripture is analysed and considered the more it is found to contain? We can benefit from what scientists and scholars tell us about the world and about the Bible, whilst being cautious of their ideas and theories. However, simply by observing nature, and the way our own bodies work, we are driven to recognise that there must be an all-powerful Creator behind it all; and by reading and studying the Bible we are driven to recognise that it is not merely the work of many human hands over many years, but that one supreme guiding hand has ensured that it is correct and consistent with itself.

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