

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

324

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the limits of science. The word "science", as you know, comes from the Latin "scientia" which means to "know". In recent years extremists have come to "believe" that science is the only way we can "know" anything. This is called "scientism". J. P. Moreland offers this definition: *"Roughly, scientism is the view that the hard sciences—like chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy—provide the only genuine knowledge of reality. At the very least, this scientific knowledge is vastly superior to what we can know from any other discipline."*

This "belief" of course, is patently false. The "hard sciences" cannot answer the most basic questions of a little child: "Where did we come from?" "Why are we here?" "What happens to us when we die?" Science offers no counsel regarding what is right or wrong, whom we should marry, or how to find happiness and fulfillment. Most importantly, by science we cannot know God. The Scriptures are clear: **"For since in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolish of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).** We do not know God through science, but because He chose to "reveal" himself. This is not only the way we come to know God, it is also the way we come to know anyone.

To illustrate this let us consider two very famous young women. First, "Mummy Juanita". She had been dead for 500 years but was discovered in 1995 by anthropologist Johan Reinhard on the top of Mount Ampato in Peru. She is also known as the "Ice Maiden". Being quick frozen preserved her internal organs, tissues, hair, blood, skin, clothing, and even the contents of her stomach. Time Magazine honored her as one of the world's 10 top discoveries. Her corpse was fully clothed in garments resembling the finest textiles from the Inca capital of Cusco. These accoutrements were almost perfectly preserved, providing valuable insight into sacred Inca textiles and on how the Inca nobility dressed. Found with her in the burial tapestry was a collection of grave goods: bowls, pins, and figurines made of gold, silver, and shell.

Radiologist Elliot K. Fishman concluded that she was killed by blunt trauma to the head. He observed that her cracked right eye socket and the two-inch fracture in her skull caused a massive hemorrhage filling her skull with blood and pushing her brain to one side. Science "estimates" that she was 12 – 15 years of age and "assumes" that she was a child sacrifice. Child sacrifice is "thought" to be a key component of the Inca Empire.

Through extracting DNA from Mummy Juanita's well-preserved hair, scientists were able to logically determine her diet. The analysis of her hair indicated that Juanita was eating foods such as animal protein and maize. These foods were the diet of the elite, unlike the standard Inca diet of vegetables. The final six to eight weeks of life for a sacrificial Incan child consisted of the heavy use of drugs and alcohol. With a combination of coca and alcohol, the children would be in a highly intoxicated psychological state. Markers in Juanita's hair indicate that she was given coca and alcohol prior to her death, suggesting that she was in a state of near unconsciousness. IN REALITY, HOWEVER, SCIENCE CANNOT TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT "WHO" JUANITA REALLY WAS! SCIENCE CAN TELL US NOTHING OF HER PERSONALITY, THOUGHTS, AND DREAMS. CERTAINLY, BASED ON SCIENCE, WE COULD NOT KNOW IF SHE WAS HONEST AND WOULD NEVER OFFER HER A JOB, OR A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE!

Rene Descartes made famous the expression “Cognito, ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am). This statement became a fundamental element of Western philosophy. While other knowledge may be important, the ability to think is what identifies who we are as a person. Juanita was not just a bag of chemicals, she was a person. She had her own unique dreams, hopes, and aspirations. Science can tell us nothing about what Juanita thought. Consequently, it can tell us “what” she was, but it cannot tell us anything about “who” she was. Science does have it’s limitations!

Now let us consider another young woman. Her name is Anne Frank. She died in 1945 in Bergen-Belsen, a Nazi concentration camp. She was 15 years of age. Since we do not have her body, the “hard sciences” like chemistry, biology, and physics can make no contribution to our understanding of who she was. We cannot analyze her stomach to see what she ate for her last meal, or scrutinize her DNA. Fortunately, however, we know a great deal more about Anne Frank than we do Mummy Juanita. The reason is, Anne Frank wrote a diary. Her diary “reveals” who she was and what she “thought” about almost everything. By reading her diary we can actually come to know Anne Frank. Her diary has been translated into over 70 languages and a play about it won the Pulitzer Prize in 1955. Shelley Winters won an Academy Award for her role in the film version of that play. Today Anne Frank is one of the most famous young women in the world.

But let us remember that the world in it’s wisdom does not know God. God is a “Spirit” and as we have said, the “hard sciences” offer zero information about a Spirit. Science cannot discover the “thoughts” of God or anyone else. We know a great deal about God, however, because He has “revealed” Himself. He not only reveals Himself in the Bible, but also in the person of Jesus Christ. In Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in a body. Those who preach Christ make God known. God is a real person and He has chosen to made us in His image (Gen. 1:27). Just as God reveals Himself by what He says, so do we. Five minutes of conversation with Mummy Juanita can reveal more about her than five months under a microscope. Thank God our speech is not limited by science! Thank God we have a mind and are more than merely a bag of chemicals. Thank God we have the ability to reveal who we are to whom we please!

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” (Jn. 1:18). To “know” Jesus is to “know” God!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce