

IS GOD GUILTY OF FRAUD?

Chapter 7

Science and Faith

People live in a competitive world, even those who do not like to “compete.” From young ages, people play games and sports, engaging in friendly, and not so friendly competition. Winning and losing are deeply imbedded in the human psyche. The Darwinians will go so far as to say that competition is in the DNA. Citing “natural selection” a core tenet of evolution is the competitive idea that those who are most fit for the day and age will outlast and survive those less fit. The famous British biologist Hebert Spencer (1820-1903) called this, “survival of the fittest.”

Into this reality that readily finds things in competition, comes the issue of God and the corresponding relationship between faith and science. Some believe that faith is averse to science, as if the two convictions are in competition. A number of prominent atheists list faith as a concept that can’t co-exist in science. Richard Dawkins goes so far as to claim that, “faith is belief in the teeth of evidence.”¹ He, and many others, set faith on one side of a teetertotter and science on the other. For Dawkins, the “science” side of the teetertotter is heavily loaded with “evidence,” i.e., “fact,” while the “faith” side is whisper thin, a vapor holding only wishful and fanciful thoughts of the uninformed and deceived.

The Cynic’s Competitive View

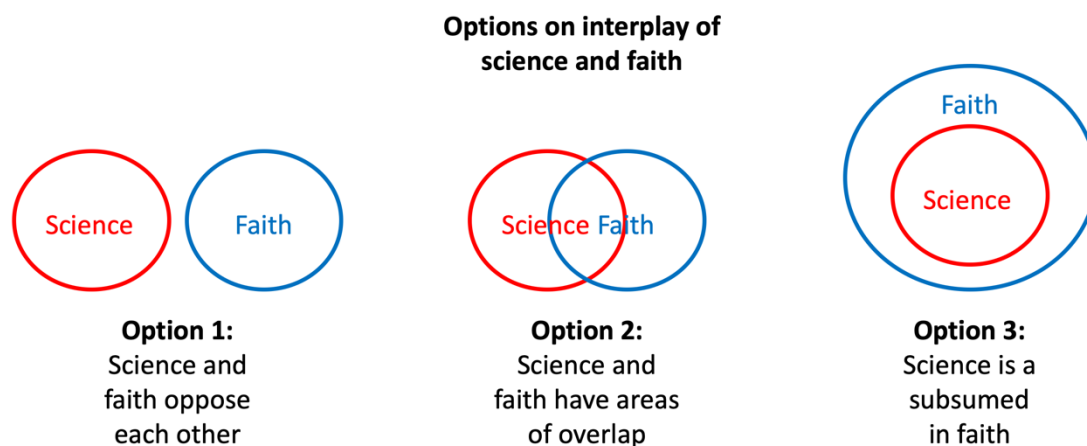


¹ Dawkins, Richard, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p 198.

Some are even more blunt in ascribing an adversarial posture between faith and science. Alex Rosenberg wrote *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions*. Admittedly, this book is a textbook example of fallacious reasoning that employs “confirmation bias” on steroids, but without going into criticizing Rosenberg’s reasoning, which could be done in volumes, rather than a chapter, simply consider his claims.

An unblinking scientific worldview requires atheism... [T]he claim that religion and science don’t compete is good politics. It’s also confused.²

One can chart three options of interplay between science and faith. Science and faith can exist in different worlds and circles. Science and faith can have independence but have areas of overlap. Or, science and faith can be subsumed by faith. (Some might argue that faith can be subsumed by science, but few would posit that position.)



Rosenberg asserts option one, arguing that science is truth and faith is illusion. For Rosenberg, to the thinker, Science is the only circle on the page as the faith circle evaporates to any serious thinker. A fundamental mistake among those made by Rosenberg is his failure to fairly understand faith and what it says about science.

To best chart through these views of science and faith, and to best understand the Biblical view of science and faith, it is helpful first to set definitions of certain terms.

² Rosenberg, Alex, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions* (Norton & Co., 2011), p 7, 13.

DEFINITIONS

Faith

In the context of this book, “faith” is used in the Biblical context. This “faith” is a conviction that God exists both outside the universe (the “transcendence” of God discussed earlier) and within the universe (including the “immanence” of God discussed earlier).

Biblical faith extends to an acceptance of the truths set out through a proper reading of the Bible. The Bible is, in some ways, a complicated collection of books written over a thousand-year time span, from innumerable cultures in ancient languages. It was written for a variety of purposes to a variety of audiences with a variety of mindsets. For any reader to read the Bible ignoring these truths about the composition of the book is to risk severely misreading it. The Bible must be read within its own confines before trying to expand its meaning to our language, thoughtforms and culture of today.

Science

From its earliest roots in the Latin *scientia* (“knowledge” or “understanding”), “science” is the study of physical reality to arrive at reliable knowledge. In the age in which we live, that is most reliably done by observation, the forming of an hypothesis, the testing of that hypothesis, and drawing conclusions following the hypothesis testing, commonly called “the Scientific Method.”

Worldview

A German word, *weltanschauung*, is defined by Merriam Webster as “a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world, especially from a specific standpoint.”³ That definition fits into the idea of what is meant in this work by “worldview.” A “worldview” is the conception that one holds that has ramifications and implications for any aspect of viewing reality. The logic flows from this view into many aspects. For example, the worldview of Rosenberg allows him to give short answers to key persistent questions of many. Since Rosenberg believes that science is full reality and there is no God or anything beyond science, he gives a list of common questions and answers that come from his worldview:

Is there a God? No.

What is the nature of reality? What physics says it is.

³ "weltanschauung." *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com> (23 May 2019).

What is the purpose of the Universe? There is none.

What is the meaning of life? Ditto.

Why am I here? Just dumb luck.

Does prayer work? Of course not.

Is there a soul? Is it immortal? Are you kidding?

Is there free will? Not a chance!

What happens when we die? Everything pretty much goes on as before, except us.

What is the difference between right and wrong, good and bad? There is no moral difference between them.

Why should I be moral? Because it makes you feel better than being Immoral.

Is abortion, euthanasia, suicide, paying taxes, foreign aid, or anything else you don't like forbidden, permissible, or sometimes obligatory? Anything goes.

What is love, and how can I find it? Love is the solution to a strategic interaction problem. Don't look for it; it will find you when you need it.

Does history have any meaning or purpose? It's full of sound and fury, but signifies nothing.

Does the human past have any lessons for our future? Fewer and fewer, if it ever had any to being with.⁴

This worldview is a good snapshot of one that exists apart from faith. It gives its meaning and draws implications from science *sui generis*.

The Biblical worldview, in contrast, is starkly different. It answers the questions posed by Rosenberg with almost diametrically opposed answers:

Is there a God? Yes.

What is the nature of reality? Physical reality is what physics says it is. Non-physical reality also exists beyond the realm of what we see, smell, hear, taste, and touch.

⁴ Rosenberg, at 20-21.

What is the purpose of the Universe? To show God's glory while giving humanity a chance to fulfill its purpose.

What is the meaning of life? To live in relationship with the divine creator to his glory and to humanity's benefit.

Why am I here? Ditto.

Does prayer work? Yes.

Is there a soul? Is it immortal? God created souls. God can also destroy them (Mt. 10:28).

Is there free will? Absolutely!

What happens when we die? There is a transient period when disembodied souls commune before God or in darkness and torment (Heb. 11:1-12:1; Lk. 16:19-31; Rev. 5 and 6). Subsequently comes a final judgment when those who belong to Jesus are raised in an imperishable body (1 Cor. 15:23, 42-58).

What is the difference between right and wrong, good and bad? Right and wrong draw their definition from the morality of God. What God would do in the same circumstances we call "right" and what God would not do we call "wrong."

Why should I be moral? Because this world is set up where doing God's will works out best.

Is abortion, euthanasia, suicide, paying taxes, foreign aid, or anything else you don't like forbidden, permissible, or sometimes obligatory? See the previous two questions.

What is love, and how can I find it? This depends on the definition. Love of a good meal is different than love of a soul mate which is different than love of a parent or child, which is different than love of one's country or favorite sports franchise, etc. If speaking of "true love" that forms the basis for romance and relationship, then love is the decision to put another's interests ahead of, or in line with those of your own. It is the caring that comes in cultivating this decision, often regardless of feelings. This love is found through investing in people. Where you spend your time, you money, your emotion, give of yourself, you will find your heart in love.

Does history have any meaning or purpose? It teaches certain truths from which we can learn. It also gives context for better understanding today.

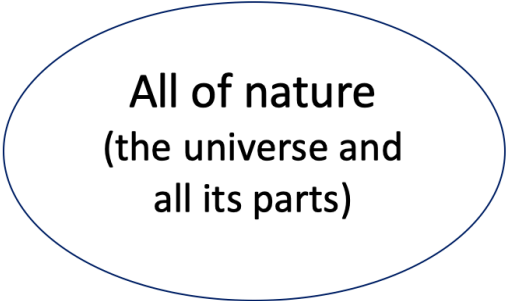
Does the human past have any lessons for our future? Yes. See previous answer.

Miracle

If we consider a normal definition of a “miracle,” it would generally point to an event experienced in life that came about through a measure of divine intervention. If one looks carefully at Scripture, however, one sees a bit of distinction between different types of miracles or divine intervention.

The miraculous events that stand out most readily are those of some event that could never have happened absent divine intervention. Consider nature as God’s creation set up and following the laws of physics. Add to this understanding that God exists independent of nature.

GOD



**All of nature
(the universe and
all its parts)**

Nature on its own runs according to the laws of physics as God has set the cosmos into motion. This is a universe of cause and effect. On an individual level, this means if I drop my pen, unless some force intervenes, gravity will take that pen downward until it rests on a surface (the ground, a floor, a rug, a desk, etc).

I liken the idea of nature unfolding into history with the image of a tapestry. The tapestry is woven of various threads or yarns with different colors. As time passes, threads called the laws of nature and the actions of people weave a tapestry that becomes stable and is called “history.” This is the normal course of events, and it occurs without regard to God entering the picture.

However, when God enters the picture, things change. God can enter the picture in one of two ways. One is by interjecting himself into the flow of nature in a way that

could not be replicated by anyone or anything. This is something brand new that God brings into the picture. An example is the virgin birth. One minute Mary was not pregnant and the next minute she was. This pregnancy was not a result of any human action and didn't occur by the laws of nature. It was a miracle. It is as if God took his finger from the supernatural/outside of the universe realm and reached into this cosmos causing something brand new. In the tapestry example, this was God introducing a brand-new thread that was never present before in the tapestry. Of course, once Mary was pregnant with Jesus, the laws of nature continued and Jesus became part of the tapestry (or the cosmos). Then Jesus' actions weave into the fabric of history and are subject to the laws of nature. This type of interaction between God and the cosmos is what most people think of as a "miracle." It is God creating the universe out of nothing. It is Jesus healing the lame without regard to medical intervention. It is the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. But these are not the only way God intervenes in history.

The Bible teaches that God violating the laws of nature is not normative. God usually works in nature using the laws of nature as he designed them to achieve his purposes. This is a second type of miracle, and the one that the Bible shows most prominently. This type of miracle is akin to God taking the threads in a tapestry and changing the way those threads are woven to provide an alternate end product.

From cover to cover, the Bible is replete with examples of these miracles. When Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, Abraham's son, the servant prayed for God to intervene, but not by miraculously making a woman out of nothing. The servant sought God to use what was already present in the cosmos to provide the appropriate wife for Isaac.

And he said, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master." (Gen. 24:12-14).

Before the prayer was over, God answered the prayer, sending Rebekah with the very words set out in the prayer.

This type of miracle/divine intervention doesn't happen only relative to prayer. Several chapters later, in Genesis 26, a famine besets the land. God could have done some created grain from nothing. Or God could have provided rain in the area for Isaac and his family. But instead, God used what was there and operated within the

rules of physics to tell Isaac to stay in the land of King Abimelech rather than going to Egypt, with the promise God would bless Isaac there.

God teaches over and over in Scripture that this world is a world of rules and consistency. The Bible never portrays the world as a Harry Potter existence of hocus pocus and magical spells. Does this mean that there is a natural explanation for all miracles? Of course not! God can work miracles in any way he chooses. However, the Biblical example is one of God performing most of his miracles by working within nature rather than contrary to it.

God's work in the natural order of things can be spiritual or physical. In the physical world, he can move atoms about (or create or destroy atoms) contrary to the laws of nature. He can also move atoms about through the laws of nature. A movement of atoms need not be contrary to the laws of nature to be moved by the hand of God. There came a point in history when God was going to send the nation of Israel into exile, stripping them of their native land for several generations. God could have exiled Judah in violation of nature's laws simply by a Star Trek-esque beaming of Judah into Babylon. Instead, the Bible makes clear that God used the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar as a tool in executing the exile. This was God working in and through the natural order of things, but it was no less an act of God.

God's hand works miracles both in the natural order by using nature within its laws, as well as by instigating something contrary to the laws of nature. We err if we consider only the latter a miracle. After all, from a Biblical perspective, God is responsible for the laws of nature. The laws that govern this material world are laws established by God, and the usage of those laws by his hand is no less a miracle than altering those laws.

With these definitions, the Biblical view of science can best be set out, considering the "problem" that comes about from a distorted Biblical view of science and then the Biblical perspective with its ramifications on issues of medicine, ethics of modern science, creation vs. evolution, and more.

THE PROBLEM

I am not a scientist. I am a lawyer by trade, a husband and father by practice, and one who dabbles in many areas by hobby. Even though I am not a scientist, my life is affected by science all day long. I am typing this lesson on my laptop, a product of great scientific work. I am sitting in a Chick-fil-A. The lights overhead, the air conditioning, the Styrofoam cup holding my drink, and the car I drove here are all products of science. Science infuses almost every aspect of my life, even though I am not a scientist. I may not think in terms of science, but the thoughtful and rational manipulation of nature is central to my existence.

Where was faith in all of this? Some might say, I had faith in getting into the car and starting it. I didn't rationally think it through, I just got in trusting and expecting it would work. That may be called "faith," but it is faith in science, not God. So the more specific question is, "Where was faith in God in all of this?" (It should not be lost on the reader that faith in God is what drove me to get up and take my computer to Chick-fil-A to type on this lesson. But more on that later...)

Many may not be thinking in terms of "science" and "faith," especially those who aren't involved in the disciplines of either subject, but even the most non-scientific or non-believing person has times where she or he considers the interplay of faith and science. For some that happens when growing up, trying to understand who we are and where we came from. For some, that happens when faced with a health crisis, trying to figure out what to do while desperately scared, staring mortality in the face.

These two areas of evolution and medicine are prime candidates for understanding the issues that are often placed at opposite ends of the teetertotter.

Evolution or Creation

How did we get here? From an earliest age, most everyone asks that question. As young children become self-aware, and as they enter the inquisitive stage, many ask their parents, "Where did I come from?" The parents then begin the process of explaining on some level how children come to be. Before long, the question gets dated further back. The question is no longer, "How did *I* get here?" but becomes, "How did the first person get here?" For some extra bright or well-informed kids, it might even be, "How did the first *two* people get here?", recognizing it takes two to produce offspring.

This question can get answered in a variety of ways, but ultimately most teach a child either that humanity evolved from some primates we typically call "apes," or that humanity was created by God. The questioning doesn't always end there either.

For those parents who say that people came from apes, the logical question that follows is, "Where did apes come from?" This begins the succession of answers that chart the current version of the evolutionary chain taking humanity through apes, through uncountable genetic alterations until one has a fish climbing out of the sea. The questioning continues back further until some pre-life soup of wet chemicals forms protein strands that are charged to life in some way. (Although in fairness, some well-informed parents might have an asteroid landing on earth at the right place and time bringing some progeniture of primitive life to seed the earth. Of course, then one must ask where the asteroid got the seeds of life.) Eventually, one works back through cosmic stardust, assembling the universe itself from some

compact substance that exploded in a big bang, hurtling matter throughout space. The musings on the genesis of the matter that exploded in that big bang is still debated among the cosmologists.

For those parents who say that God created life, the questioning doesn't always end either. I can remember in third grade asking my mother, "Then where did God come from?" My wise mother answered, "That is part of what God is... one who isn't created, but one who has always been." When I expressed that I didn't understand that, mom added that I was created, so my mind had trouble comprehending one who wasn't created. On a very basic level, my mom was teaching me the idea that God exists outside of this creation, so the creation becomes an expression of work by God, rather than something self-generated.

Many think that the choice between evolution or creation is synonymous with the choice between God not existing or existing. If evolution happened, the reasoning goes, there must be no God. If there is a God, then creation is mandated. However, this reasoning is not the necessary conclusion of a fair reading of the Bible, nor necessarily of science, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Medicine

Another way faith and science are set against each other is found in the realm of medicine. When one is sick, should one find solace and healing by faith or by medicine? Does one simply need to pray and trust God, or does one need to go to the doctor and leave prayer behind?

The Bible is replete with examples of people being healed by God. Consider Matthew's gospel recounting key moments in the life and ministry of Jesus. Matthew starts with Jesus's genealogy and birth. Shifting nearly 30 years, Matthew then sets out the calling of Jesus into ministry and the temptations to choose another path in life. Jesus chooses the path of God, and Matthew then gives a summary verse of Jesus' life:

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people (Mt. 4:23).

Matthew expands that summary station with Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, followed by Jesus healing disease and affliction. In the first chapter after the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus heals a leper, heals a paralytic, heals a woman who lies sick with a fever, and brings sanity to a man demon-possessed. In the midst of all that healing, Jesus also takes on the physics of nature, calming a great storm that threatened his boat.

All of those are miracles, and most seemed tied in some way to faith. The storm that threatened Jesus and his followers was a concern to the scared disciples because they were “of little faith” (Mt. 8:26). The paralytic was healed with Jesus remarking at the faith of the one asking for help. Jesus healed the paralytic at the moment of Jesus’ explaining,

“Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” (Mt. 8:13).

As a result of these and many other passages, various people have developed religious beliefs that set up a conflict in treating medical conditions that are at odds with the best understanding of doctors and the medical community. A 2005 study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* noted that,

Conflict introduced by religion is common and occurs in 3 types of settings: (1) those in which religious doctrines directly conflict with medical recommendations, (2) those that involve an area in which there is extensive controversy within the broader society, and (3) settings of relative medical uncertainty in which patients “choose faith over medicine.”⁵

In the first category of conflict, the most cited example were Jehovah Witnesses refusing to allow blood transfusions believing it against Scripture. The second category of conflict were ethical decisions about ending life or dealing with pre-natal problems in consideration of terminating a pregnancy when one knows the child will be still born or will die briefly after birth. But the largest area of conflict was found in the third category.

The most frequently described domain for conflict is one in which a patient expresses no moral objection to the therapy offered but still “chooses faith over medicine.” “I have had patients,” the theme went, “who, when faced with a diagnosis that there was a traditional treatment for, chose instead to rely on faith and prayer [interview 15].”

The doctors described patients who “trust God more than they trust us.” One example was a patient who refused a colonoscopy after hundreds of polyps were revealed by screening, “because she and her daughter believed in the power of prayer.” Others refused or delayed treatment for conditions believing, “It’s in God’s hands.” Some refused important tests explaining, “I know God will provide – I don’t need that test.” Some put off tests. One doctor told of the problem of a lady diagnosed with breast cancer who declined treatment, choosing instead to simply pray on it. The doctor found that tragic, knowing that six months would dramatically change the profile of what might be done medically for the woman.

⁵ Farr A. Curlin, MD; Chad J. Roach, BS; Rita Gorawara-Bhat, PhD; et al, “When Patients Choose Faith Over Medicine”, *Archives of Internal Medicine* (Jan. 10, 2005), p 88.

These are issues that should be confronted by people of faith. We should consider what we believe is the correct course of action in the midst of medical decisions. But at the center of this is the first basic question: where is God in all of this? Does God direct us to be “people of faith” instead of “people of medicine or science”? Or is this a false choice? I believe this is a false dichotomy. Faith versus science should not exist in competition. The Biblical view has those two on the same team. Faith and science sit on the same side of the teetertotter.

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF SCIENCE

A proper Biblical view of science rightly finds itself in the early chapters of Genesis, but not necessarily the way one might think! One can glean much by delving into the verses of creation. But more direct roots of the interaction of humanity and science are found in the story of the Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam and Eve.

The storyline is well known, but a few details aren’t always clearly emphasized. God has created Adam and placed him in a lush garden. God then gives Adam a clear charge:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it (Gen. 2:15).

This was humanity’s responsibility. It was two-fold. Humanity was to “work” the garden and “keep” the garden. The Hebrew words are instructive. Working the garden is the Hebrew verb *avad* (עָבַד). This verb speaks to laboring, like tilling a field or tending a vineyard, but it also speaks to serving, as one might be called to serve God.⁶

Humanity’s charge from the beginning was to do that work in the world that under service to God, would bring about the fruits of nature. The charge, however, wasn’t simply to work the earth, but also to “keep” it. The Hebrew word translated “keep” is the verb *shamar* (שָׁמַר), often the first verb Hebrew students learn when conjugating verbs! This word also has a broad semantic range, speaking to one having responsibility or charge over something (the garden, a flock, etc.). But importantly, it also speaks of one watching or observing something with intelligent reasoning. Consider the word in these two contexts (the Hebrew verb *shamar* is italicized and bolded for clarity):

⁶ Brown, Francis, *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew And English Lexicon: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. (Hendrickson Publishers 1996), “עָבַד”.

1. Jacob tells his father-in-law that as a part of a deal for a daughter in marriage, “I will again pasture your flock and **keep** it” (Gen. 30:31).
2. The priest Eli watches the barren mother of Samuel praying for a child, “As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli **observed** her mouth.” (1 Sam. 1:12).

In the first passage above, one readily sees the idea in the verb being to have charge over a flock, tending to their care. But in the second passage, one sees the struggle translating the verb as “keep” because the usage there is more oriented to the idea in the verb of “watching carefully and with intelligence.” Of course, if one is to properly tend to sheep, one must be watching them carefully and thoughtfully, but we lose that aspect of the word if we aren’t careful.

Understanding this fuller sense of the word often translated “keep,” helps inform other passages of Scripture as well. Isaiah frequently uses the word and it is translated as “watchman” (e.g., Isa. 21:11-12). One who “keeps” is one who watches carefully and thoughtfully. Isaiah even comments that there are those who see things, without “observing” (the Hebrew word for “keep”) them, paralleling it to people who hear things but don’t pay attention (Isa. 42:20).

In the full sense of *shamar*, humanity is instructed from the beginning to not only work in the earth, but to intelligently observe the earth as a part and parcel of working it. To a scientist, we can perhaps best translate this Hebrew idea of *shamar* in ways that echo typical language of the “scientific method.”

The “scientific method” is the method that is given to scientific discovery and processing often dated back to the 17th century, if not earlier. Although philosophers of science debate the merits of details within the scientific method, the general approach of “(1) observation, (2) hypothesis, and (3) testing” as the method is taught today in most every scientific textbook.⁷

The charge of Adam to “keep” the garden includes the ideas of “observing” the garden intelligently, with any eye toward doing the work necessary to keep the garden in its fullness.

The backdrop for science in our world today grows as we consider the later development of the account of Adam and Eve. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, bringing sin and its consequences to the forefront. God had warned them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As the ESV translates it,

⁷ A good review of this is found in, Blachowicz, James, “How Science Textbooks Treat Scientific Method: A Philosopher’s Perspective”, *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* (June 2009), pp. 303-334.

Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen. 2:17).

Without burdening the reader too much with Hebrew, the word translated “day” (*yom* - יום) has a full range of meaning from an actual 24-hour day to an “age” or “era.” One may fairly see it as a period of time. God instructed, and as the story unfolds we see, that eating of the forbidden fruit would bring about an age of death. That era of death is where humanity lives from the expulsion of the garden until today. This is a critical underpinning to a Christian view of science and worthy of unfolding a bit more.

The consequences inherent in the world in the era of death are found in the things around us as well as the implications of those things on humanity. No longer are we fully in control of nature, working and keeping it. Now we are often at its mercy. As God explained the curses that sin brought forth in the age of death, pain is present and multiplied in childbirth, the toil associated with bringing food from a cursed land of death is greatly multiplied as well, and ultimately, people will die.

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.... And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen. 3:16-19).

This era of death was not without promise, however. God promised that through the offspring of woman would come one who at personal cost, would crush the head of the tempter who aided in bringing about this tragedy (Gen. 3:15).

Into this world, the Biblical view of science properly unfolds. From a Biblical perspective, science is an understanding of how God’s nature works, with a realization that humanity is responsible for learning such things and putting them to work. This Biblical responsibility is heightened by the era of death where humanity lives. People are not to be complacent about the pain and horrors of the age. People should know that pain and difficulties in life are results of sin, not what was made by God as the ideal for life. Science, in its Biblical perspective, then is humanity’s tool for fighting against the misery of the consequences of sin. With science humanity can attempt to alleviate some of the suffering and pain in this world. Science can help people find better ways to grow food in spite of what nature might otherwise dictate.

A Biblical View of Science

Science is faith's physical tool for fighting the physical pain and difficulties of the fallen world.

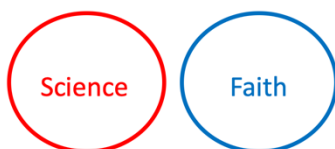
Sometimes science can win, sometimes it can't.



This Biblical view of science is foundational to understanding why science and faith are not at odds. Science isn't on one side of a teetertotter set against faith. Science is faith's tool to conquer the monster unleashed on the happiness and fulfillment of humanity. Properly used, science can alleviate levels of want and need, make life more comfortable and less painful, heal diseases and restore health. Science isn't a panacea that restores Eden. But in the era of death, science can work toward a better world and better living. That is a godly accomplishment!

Consider in this light, the diagram used earlier in this chapter.

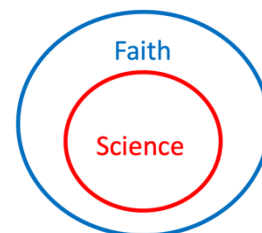
Options on interplay of science and faith



Option 1:
Science and faith oppose each other



Option 2:
Science and faith have areas of overlap



Option 3:
Science is a subsumed in faith

From a Biblical view, faith and science are not opposed to each other, and Option 1 doesn't explain the Biblical role of science. Option 2 is the position to which many Bible believing people adhere. This allows faith to exercise independent of science and allows science to exercise independent of faith. Each have their place, so to speak, and occasionally they occupy the same space. This is not the full Biblical picture of how the two fields relate, however. This view does a disservice to both faith and science.

The Biblical picture is that science is subsumed by faith. This means that valid science is fully embraced as a valid way to understand the world that God has provided. When science finds truth, it is God's truth, no less than if the truth were a moral truth. When Einstein proposed that mass and energy are the same physical entity and could be changed into each other, setting forth his formula for the relativity ($E=Mc^2$), he was not finding truth that is apart from God. He was doing the charge God gave Adam in Genesis. He had observed nature, and put those observations to work.

Perhaps one of the best extended passages of the Bible to illustrate this incorporation of science into a faith worldview is Psalm 19.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat (Ps. 19:1-6).

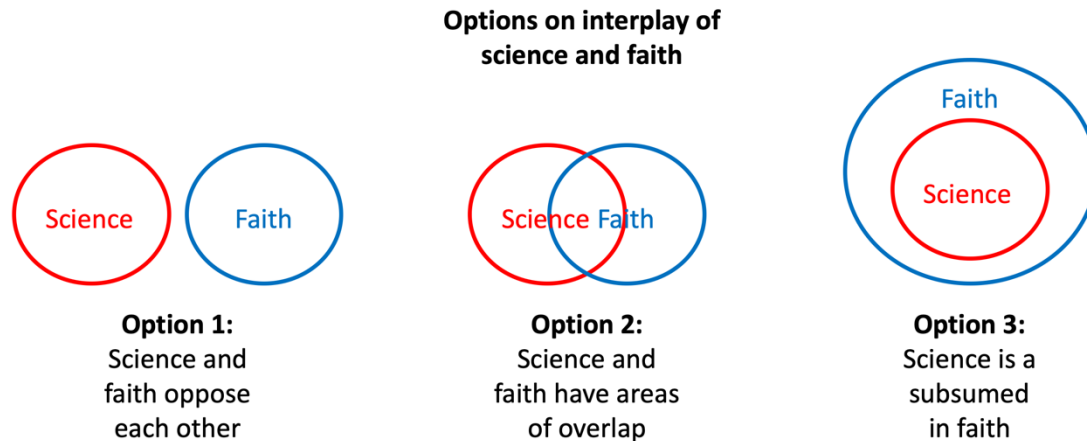
The Psalmist is proclaiming that nature itself is God's work. The rules and laws of nature are not happenstance. They are products of a wise God

CAN'T CHRISTIANS SIMPLY IGNORE SCIENCE?

Does this seem too much? Can't Christians simply ignore science, or, if not ignore, at least compartmentalize it in a different part of our brain and life than our faith? Of course, Christians can, and many do, but more to the point is the issue of whether or not a Christian *should*. As some argue that faith and science are natural enemies – that faith leads to theism (“belief in God”) while science leads to atheism (“disbelief in God”) – Christians should stand firm on the Biblical view that

integrates the two. Christians must recapture the ground that science is not only fully compatible with faith, learning of nature is the charge of God to humanity. People are to explore, understand, and dissect nature in order to better serve God and his purposes.

Return to the options of faith and science diagram:



To divorce science from faith (Option 1) shuns the very charge God gave humanity at the outset of his revelation in Scripture. If the two areas of study and life seem to conflict, the solution is not severing them, the answer is found digging deeper. A deeper dig in science might reveal an alternate truth. The disciplines of science continue to develop more accurately and deeply. But the interpretation and understanding of Scripture also gets refined by understanding science.

Consider the example of whether the earth is the center of the universe, with the sun and stars revolving around it (“geocentrism”) or whether the sun is the center of our solar system with the earth and other planets revolving around it (heliocentrism). In the early 17th century, Galileo was brought before the church’s Inquisition tried for teaching heliocentrism. The church viewed the teaching contrary to passages in the Bible. Galileo was sentenced on June 22, 1633. The judgment announced Galileo’s guilt for:

having believed and held the doctrine—which is false and contrary to the sacred and divine Scriptures—that the Sun is the center of the world and does not move from east to west and that the Earth moves and is not the center of the world; and that an opinion may be held and defended as probably after it has been declared and defined to be contrary to the Holy Scripture.⁸

⁸ *Giorgio de Santillana, The Crime of Galileo*, (U. of Chicago Press 1955), pp. 306-310.

In truth, the insights of Galileo should have informed the reading of Scripture. The passages that seemed to concern the papal authorities were ones like:

- Psalm 51:1 speaks of “the rising of the sun to its setting.”
- Psalm 104:5 “He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.”
- Psalm 119:90 “you have established the earth, and it stands fast.”
- Ecclesiastes 1:5 “The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.”

Similarly, as the earth was determined to be round (or at least an oval!), passages like Psalm 72:8 that speak of the “ends of the earth” are not invalidated. (See similarly Psalm 74:17 “You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth.”) These poetic words do not mandate a view of a flat earth with edges. These are poetic expressions that make a point using the language and concepts of the writer and listener over 2,500 years ago in the hills of Judah. That doesn’t mean that the words aren’t inspired. Nor does it mean that the words don’t speak truth. But the words aren’t God’s scientific pronouncement of the earth’s geography. The words are written in a historical and cultural context, and must be read and understood in that vein.

As believers pursued science, including in this group Galileo Galilei, himself a believer in God and Scripture, it became apparent that the readers of Scripture had folded upon the passages above, meanings that the passages never intended. The point of the passages was not a scientific dissertation on astronomy. To read them in that context was to read them out of context. Psalm 51:1, for example, in speaking of the “rising of the sun to its setting,” means simply “all day long”! This is language written from the perspective of the author and hearer. It is language we still use today. One can easily Google on the Internet and find out “sunrise” and “sunset” times.

The reading of Scripture is enriched through the truths revealed by science. Scripture is not diminished.

A second reason Christians must not divorce faith and science is the effect on evangelism. In 2006, Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins published a best seller entitled “*The God Delusion*.” Dawkins pushed his agenda of disbelief citing what he claims is compelling evidence that belief in a personal God is belief in a delusion. He writes, “When one person suffers from a delusion it is called insanity. When

many people suffer from a delusion it is called religion.”⁹ His book has helped propagate the falsehood that no sincere scientist can be a person of faith.

How does the integration of faith and science help spread the gospel? In a number of ways: for one, people who live in arenas of science will not be receptive to a faith that shuns the reliability or truth they know in their everyday experiences. How can the church take its faith to people connected to science if the faith refuses to accept or connect with science?

In this sense Kansas State geologist Keith Miller writes,

Any Christian theology which hopes to compete in the world of ideas must take seriously the conclusions of modern science just as it must take seriously contributions from all other areas of human knowledge.¹⁰

Among some Christians who wish to ignore science, a typical response might be, “But science used to think the world was flat! You can’t trust science!!!” That is not a fair response. One can always find instances or examples to deny a broader general truth. It is no different than the unbeliever saying you cannot trust biblical faith because it was used to teach that the sun moved around the earth.

Of course, everyone knows that scientific knowledge itself grows and changes, leaving some cynical of its reliability, yet there is certainly core scientific knowledge that is part of everyday life, from the computer used preparing this lesson to the car many people drive or ride in daily. So while all may not agree on the reliability of all that is claimed in the name of science,¹¹ most recognize that two plus two is four. It is right to take science seriously and our hope of taking the gospel to those involved in science depends on it.

Another way integration of faith and science helps spread the gospel is similar to the way Greek philosophy assisted in bringing the gospel to countless people in the early church. In the early church some distrusted philosophy as unreliable and constantly changing (much like science), as opposed to the faith in One who is pure

⁹ Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion* (Houghton Mifflin 2006) at 406. A well reasoned response to Dawkins is found in the hands of another Oxford trained scientist, Alister McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*. See, McGrath, Alister, *The Dawkins Delusion* (SPCK 2007).

¹⁰ Miller, Keith, *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation* (Eerdmans 2003) at xi.

¹¹ “Science” covers many different areas and many sub-divide it into “hard” and “soft” science. Hard sciences are more objective areas like computer sciences, geology, physics, etc. The soft sciences are much more subjective, and accordingly more open to opinion and change. These sciences include psychology, anthropology, etc.

truth – the same today, yesterday and tomorrow. While many distrusted philosophy, others saw it as a fertile groundwork seeded¹² by God and ripe for harvest.

A well-known challenge in the early church from Tertullian (160-225), a North African lawyer turned theologian (a dangerous thing!). In his writing “*On Prescription Against Heretics*” Tertullian wrote chapter seven challenging pagan philosophy as the parent of a number of heresies in the church. From this is his famous line: “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”¹³ The question targeted why Greek philosophy (Athens) was so readily discussed and used in the church (Jerusalem). Tertullian’s conclusion was to do “away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition.”¹⁴

Among the responses was a scriptural parallel discerned in the exodus of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. The Jews were able to “plunder the Egyptians” taking valuables from the Egyptians as they left. In like manner, many in the early church saw the taking of truth from philosophy into the church as a legitimate plundering. They would point out that truth belongs to God, regardless of where it is found.

With an eye toward this historical usage of philosophy as the theological handmaiden of the early church, Alister McGrath has argued that with care, hard science can and should serve the church similarly today:

To appeal to the natural sciences as the handmaid of Christian theology is thus merely to modify the grand tradition of cultural engagement, in the sense that a different handmaid is being proposed.¹⁵

In other words, we can and should use science to help people understand God, his nature, and his marvelous deeds. As McGrath emphasizes, care must be taken, however, because historically many scientific judgments have been shown to be provisional, sometimes with significant shifts in what is believed true.

So Christians shouldn’t shun science, nor silo science into its own area of existence apart from faith (Option 1 in the drawing). Neither should the Christian partially

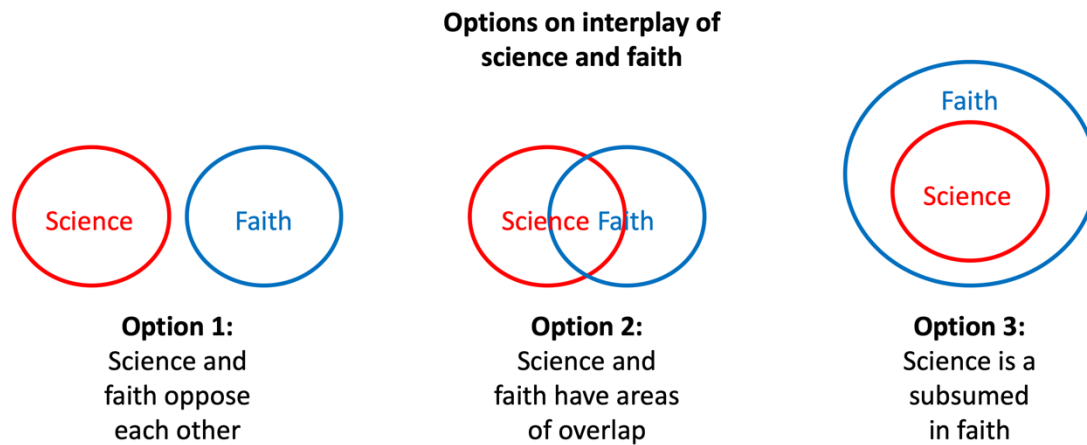
¹² Justin Martyr, who was born in the early 100’s and died between 162 and 167AD was an early Christian apologist (“defender of the faith”) who argued forcefully for the truth of philosophy and reason as part of God’s truth. He wrote two apologies (“defenses”) we still have today. In both, he reasoned that people living in the Greek world of philosophy were actually believers in Christ even though they only knew him as the “logos.” *Apologia* I.xlvi.2-3; II.x.2-3; II.xiii.4-6.

¹³ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 7. Translated by Peter Holmes (T&T Clark 1950).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ McGrath, Alister, *A Scientific Theology: Nature* (T&T Clark 2006) at 19.

integrate science and faith, as if science has areas of truth outside of what faith produces (Option 2).



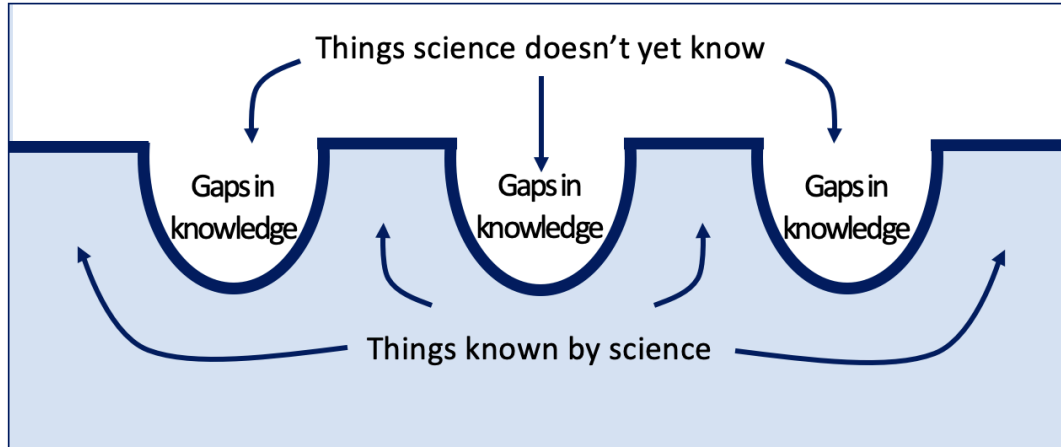
Science does not produce truth that sits outside of faith in God. All truth, whether truth in science or faith, is rooted in God. Christ made a bold claim when he told Thomas, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). “Truth” has plagued humanity since the beginning. Finding truth, proving truth, relying upon truth, even defining truth has challenged the world’s greatest minds. Christ made the claim for personal and identifiable truth. The orthodoxy of the church has recognized in this claim that God is not simply “honest,” but is both holder and definer of all that is true. As God, Christ can properly claim to be “the truth.”

In this sense, as the church readily acknowledges that all truth, like all wisdom, is rooted in God, the church has nothing to fear from truth — in whatever arena it is found. The truths found in science proceed forth from the truth in God.

Sometimes people have a glitch in their perception of God and his work in the world that merits addressing here. The church has consistently stubbed its toe in this area with a problem descriptively labelled the “God of the Gaps.”

The God of the Gaps theory explains that many have set God up as the force behind things that occur outside the areas of scientific knowledge. People have done this throughout history and many do still today. These people wrongly understand that a “miracle,” unlike the definition provided earlier in this chapter, happens when God does something contrary to the laws of physics. Consider the illustration below.

The Cosmos (“Nature”)



Consider the box the natural world (meaning everything in nature, the universe, etc.). Below the line are things that are known by science. For example, science has explained an eclipse, when the moon gets between the earth and the sun. There are some areas, however, where scientists have not yet learned what is happening in nature. These are places where there are gaps in knowledge. There are times in history when an eclipse would have fallen into this unknown area.

There is a certain tendency in some people to credit God as the cause in the areas with gaps of knowledge. For certain primitive people, it might mean God was displeased when the sun was hidden by what was really just the moon's preset course through the heavens (an eclipse). Today, the God of the Gaps idea is a bit subtler. Today, things that make no ordinary sense are sometimes termed "God things."

From a Biblical perspective, it is right and proper to give God credit for things. Scripture teaches us that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (Jms 1:17). But Scripture and faith assigns God credit for everything, whether it is understood by physics or not.

God should never be relegated to the gaps of knowledge. God is the force and source for all matters, those that makes sense, as well as those that do not. When I drive safely to work, "It is a God thing" just as much as when I seem to accidentally bump into someone with whom I need to speak.

But when God is assigned to the special places in the gaps, an unbiblical view of God and of nature arises. As scientific knowledge grows, not surprisingly, faith and understanding seems shallow. God seems to disappear. Science becomes God and displaces faith. This view grows the divide between faith and science. If God is only in the areas of "what science doesn't know," then for the curable disease, one

trusts in medicine, and gives medicine the credit for the healing. But if medicine hasn't figured out how to cure a disease, then one turns to God and seeks the divine intervention in the gap. Of course, God is able to divinely intervene, Scripture makes that clear, but God's intervention is no less real when medical solutions to disease work. It would be unbiblical to think one needs God to "heal" someone only when medical science is unable to do so. As discussed earlier in the definition section, God's miracles occur above and below the line of knowledge.

God can interrupt the processes of cause and effect in the world. God is able to come in from beyond nature (from super-nature or the "supernatural") and make a virgin conceive a child. In that sense God is above the line, or in the gaps. But God is also able to work within nature to ensure that Ruth and Boaz have a son who will be grandfather to King David, continuing to bring forth generations later Joseph who would marry the virgin. God is not only in the gaps, he is also in the aspects of nature understood today. When gaps are filled with understanding, they are no less filled with God. Instead, echoing the Psalmist, such understanding displays the beauty of God's handiwork (Ps. 8).

A proper Christian view, and one that embraces science, sees the workings of this world in truth (including here scientific and medical truth) as proceeding forth from the God of truth. In the box illustration above, God is in the whole box – in all of nature. God is not simply in the gaps where science has not provided a natural understanding. The line between what science knows and understands is irrelevant in placing God in the cosmos.

To be continued....