

Christianity and the Nature and History of Science

Week 1 in the Christianity and Science Series

Series Webpage: www.richknopp.com/lcc-science/

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Introduction

- A. Personal pilgrimage on science and Christianity.
- B. The impact of science on faith.
- C. Science and Christianity: Issues and questions.
- D. Some resources:
 - 1. "Science and Christianity Video Collection" (<https://roomfordoubt.com/science-christianity>)
 - 2. Room For Doubt Animation: "Why Do You Still Believe?" (<https://vimeo.com/327406232>)
 - 3. *Truth About God: What Can We Know and How Can We Know It?* with six short videos. (<https://roomfordoubt.com/truth-about-god>)
 - 4. <https://roomfordoubt.com/recommended-resources/science-and-the-christian-faith>.

I. Prominent Positions on the Relationship Between Science and Religion

- A. Science and Christianity necessarily _____ (e.g., Charles Darwin, Richard Dawkins, Ken Ham vs. Bill Nye debate).

Richard Dawkins: "When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called religion" (*The God Delusion*).

- 1. Science rules out _____.
- 2. Evolution contradicts divine _____.
- B. Science and religion are _____:
Science gives _____; religion requires _____.

Galileo: "The intention of the Holy Ghost is to teach us how one goes to heaven, not how heaven goes."
Stephen Gould (Harvard paleontologist): "The net, or magisterium, of science covers the empirical realm.... The magisterium of religion extends over questions of ultimate meaning and moral value.... To cite the old cliché, science gets the age of rocks, and religion the rock of ages" (*Rock of Ages*).

- C. Neither view is _____ for biblical Christianity.
- D. Science and religion are _____:
 - 1. There is some overlap between science and Christianity—so conflict is *possible*.
 - 2. But, there is a "positive" relationship between them.

II. The Positive Historical Relationship Between Science and Christianity

- A. Most pioneers of early modern science were strong creationists and many were devoted Christians.
- B. Examples: Galileo, Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, Michael Faraday, Louis Pasteur, Gregor Mendel, James Clerk Maxwell, (and the majority of Nobel Prize winners from 1900-2000).

Newton: "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.... This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all."
A sermon from Faraday: "We ought to value the privilege of knowing God's truth far beyond anything we can have in this world. The more we see the perfection of God's law fulfilled in Christ, the more we ought to thank God for His unspeakable gift."
Pasteur: "The more I study nature, the more I stand amazed at the work of the Creator."
"... between 1900 and 2000 over 60% of Nobel Laureates were self-confessed believers in God" (John Lennox, *Can Science Explain Everything?* p. 17).

III. The Positive *Philosophical* Relationship Between Science and Christianity

- A. Biblical creation explains the _____ necessary for science that science itself cannot justify.
1. Nature is _____.
 2. Nature is _____.
 3. The human mind is rational and can _____ nature.

Albert Einstein: “The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible” (*Einstein: A Biography* (1954) by Antonina Vallentin, 24).

4. The physical senses are sufficiently _____.
- B. Biblical creation provides a strong _____ for doing science.
1. Nature is _____ and worthy of study (Gen. 1:31).
 2. Nature must be studied _____, because God did not *have to* create it in any particular way.
 3. Humans have a “dominion mandate” to supervise nature (Gen. 1:26,28 “let them rule” and “subdue” the earth).
 4. Fallen humanity needs the love of neighbor and the benefits of science.

IV. Scientists Are Not Always So “Neutral.”

- A. “Science” does not say anything; _____ do.
- B. Scientists sometimes speak as _____.
1. “Science,” as science, *describes* and attempts to explain what is empirically accessible.
 2. “Scientism” is a *philosophy* that fuses the methods of science with _____ (only physical matter exists).
 3. Sometimes, presuppositions (worldview commitments) heavily influence the interpretation of evidence (e.g., the naturalism of Darwinism).

John Lennox: “The conflict is not between science and belief in God.... It’s a worldview conflict ... between scientists who have different worldviews. What is being presented to the public is: first comes the science and then comes the worldview.... [I want to argue that] the worldview comes first and is influencing the interpretation of science.” [video excerpt]

4. Christianity necessarily opposes “scientism” but not “science.”
- C. Learn to be a good “_____.”

Richard Dawkins: “Any creative intelligence, of sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence only as the end product of an extended process of gradual evolution. Creative intelligences, being evolved, necessarily arrive late in the universe, and therefore cannot be responsible for designing it. God ... is a delusion” (*The God Delusion*, 31).

Stephen Hawking: “Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing.... Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist” (*The Grand Design*, 180).

- D. Science and miracles.
1. Science *describes* and attempts to explain the empirical; science, as science, cannot *prescribe* what cannot occur.
 2. Biblical miracles do not violate the principle of causality; they acknowledge a causal agent (i.e., God).

V. Review and Preview

- A. Part 1: Let’s correct our (mis)perceptions of science and Christianity.
- B. Part 2: Perspectives on biblical creation: Interpreting Scripture.
- C. Part 3: Science and God’s revelation in nature.
- D. Part 4: Biblical creation and evolution.