

## Essay - Science and the Bible

### *Fast Facts*

Science is based on the principle of working out what is known to be true or most probably true and then seeking further knowledge on its terms. It sternly avoids trying to explain what is not known through something that is unknown. Religion is about assumptions and speculations dressed up as knowledge and wisdom so science is definitely against religion.

You have no right where evidence is concerned to believe in many religious doctrines. Even if Jesus came back from the dead it would not mean there is evidence that God did it. It only means somebody came back. Yet it is central to Christianity to have God raising Jesus.

Science is the best thing to show how we work and how the universe works. But it is also the the only thing. Religion denies both of these. Alleged revelation from God is put first.

### *Foreword*

The biggest challenge to the reasonableness of the Bible and its truth is the view that science and Bible based religion are incompatible and locked in conflict. It is my intention to answer that perception by examining how the Bible responds to it.

Christianity would need to be more than just tolerant of science. It would need to embrace and encourage and praise it with utmost sincerity. For some Buddhists, science is mysticism without the magical thinking (page 114, WHY I AM A BUDDHIST, No Nonsense Buddhism for Modern Living, Stephen T Asma, Watkins, London, 2011 - sadly maligned but wonderful book, a gem!). Christianity does not give science true respect. It says all truth comes from the one source - God. If so, then science because it is always checking itself out and revising and being cautious with evidence and logic then should come before anything else as a source of truth. The fact of the matter is that a learning discipline based on evidence is good but one that even more based on it science alone occupies that place, is better. Christianity in principle does not give science its rightful place and thus should be walked away from.

### *Claims of the Bible*

We are suspicious of miracles and revelation from God - seeing them as hangovers from a pre-scientific age. Yet the Bible states that it is the revelation from God and it endorses a worldview based on miracles including the power of God to change even the hardest of hearts.

If the Bible does not claim to be the word of God, then there is no point in worrying that it might disagree with science. It is just another ancient work.

The Bible claims to be the word of God - and all of it is breathed out by God. 2 Timothy 3:16, All Scripture is God-breathed (All Scripture Quotations except where stated otherwise: New International Version, Study Version (Zondervan, 2011)).

It presupposes that God is all-powerful: Matthew 19:26, Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." So God then will not need to resort to lying Numbers 23:19, God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?. To tell a lie is to try and assert control over something that may not be controllable. Deep down we do not want to believe in a God who is capable of being deceived or who can deceive. Such a God cannot be our rock and our fortress. Psalm 18:2, The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. If the Bible is God's word it cannot err and it claims to be revelation from God and therefore a miracle - result of direct supernatural divine activity.

### *It is said that Science needs Bible Ethics*

The scientist is searching for truth. Thus science indicates a need for the scientists to follow ethical principles.

People think that the Bible urges people not to change their views while science is continually revising and updating. It was the norm for Jesus to answer a question with a question, Newman, R. Questioning Evangelism (Kregel Publications, 2007), p. 27. This is said to show that he encouraged people to think coherently and therefore scientifically where it was possible. Believers say he gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us all truth and that cannot happen unless we are willing to open our minds, John 14:26 "Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things" [7]. But Jesus only permitted questioning within certain

religious parameters. He even went as far as to accuse those who thought the Holy Spirit was doing fake casting out of demons of an unpardonable sin so that he could scare others off examining his religious affairs too closely.

Jesus said he was the way and the truth John 14:6, Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.". Believers say he wanted to save us through the word of God from the tyranny of opinion which can only lead to us being swept by every wind of doctrine[9] Ephesians 4:14, Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Jesus may have given us dogma. But the point is not that dogma and rules about what we are allowed to believe and not to believe save us from chaos. The point is, is the dogma and the rules about it justified? You can't set up rules about what to believe just for its own sake.

Science's cardinal doctrine is that claims and opinions must have suitable support from evidence. If Jesus is the truth, and unbiased science is the truth, then both come from the God of truth. Truth cannot contradict truth. If Jesus was just as prone to error as anybody else, or if it cannot be proved that Jesus spoke only the truth, then science comes first. If it contradicts Jesus then drop Jesus.

The Bible forbids deceit even for a greater good Rom 3:7,8 Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just! and Proverbs 29: 27 The righteous detest the dishonest; the wicked detest the upright.

That is good but Christianity with all its sects inventing new doctrines and new divisions does not take it seriously. At least science gives you the tools to check things yourself.

The Church says the scientist who obeys God's command to love our neighbour as ourselves will want to know scientific truth and share it with others. Unless it is shared with other scientists, there will be no growth in scientific knowledge. But we must also praise the scientist who does not love his neighbour but who loves propagating scientific knowledge.

### *Limits of Science*

Christians say that science is restricted in what it can discover for us so it is wrong to assume it necessarily rules out the biblical worldview. The limit needs to be seen as honouring science not as an excuse for looking down your nose at it. It is not sciences fault and it is a pity it cannot tell us more. It is a pity if it cannot debunk a religion.

Christians argue that, "Science can only deal with what came to be at the big bang. It cannot show that God does not exist or does not exist for that is outside its scope. If the universe came from something at the big bang, where did the something come from? Christianity answers that it was made by God who is a non-physical entity - spirit John 4:24 "God is spirit"and who did not make it from anything: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" Hebrews 11:3 (KJV). Science only deals with physical energies and entities Vernon, M. The Big Questions, God, (Quercus, 2012), p. 29

The problem is that this sees creation as merely a past act. Creation in Christian theology is seen as continuous. It is like a woman baking bread. Unless she focuses a magic ray on it, it will revert to dough. She has to continuously act on it to keep it baked. Science will tell us the apple fell off the tree because of gravity. Christianity will say that that it is not gravity for gravity is just God's action. Those two views are incompatible. Both mean something different by the word gravity.

Science cannot verify many non-physical realities. It cannot prove that we love God. It is thought that there is no conflict between the core biblical theory that God made all things and what science has learned about the origins of all things. But who decides what the core is? And the Bible spends very little time caring about God creating - it is very interested in his miracles and what terrible laws he gives out.

It is said, "The scientist knows that there are non-scientific realities such as love. He cannot prove it. He also knows there is no reason to assume there are non-physical realities outside of our experience such as God." But just because science cannot test for love does not mean love is a non-scientific reality. An illness can be a medical reality though no doctor can find it.

It is said, "Science cannot prove that we really have free will for it admits that we might be programmed to feel we really are making decisions and have freedom. If we are programmed, we cannot trust ourselves to know the truth. The Bible says we know what is right and wrong in our hearts even if we do not admit it. It is necessary for science to assume we have free will or to believe perhaps the Bible that we have it. The Christian who says, "God said I have free will", is better off than the unbelieving scientist who merely assumes it. It is more scientific to believe a testimony from God than to merely assume it." This clearly makes religion the master. It is put over science. Science does not care how we manage to learn

things but just cares that we do learn.

The claim that science tells us how things came to be; the Bible tells us why is untruthful. The Bible does say how things came to be. Jesus did not rise from the dead so we could simply wonder why he did it. The answer to the how of the resurrection is that God, the master of life, raised Jesus Acts 2:32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. The how is inseparable from the why because if God was not the cause of the resurrection then the why does not matter.

Science ignores the supernatural. To say something has come from nothing - that is has been created - is supernatural. It is not naturally possible. The Bible teaches that only God can create or make from nothing. The Bible sees creation as a miracle endorsing a supernatural worldview.

### *Miracles*

A miracle is to be defined as something God does to inspire us to be holier people that does not have a natural explanation. For example, Jesus dying a cruel death and being alive and well a few after days is naturally impossible. It is however supernaturally possible. God has the power to do that. The Bible speaks of the resurrection of Jesus as a supernatural sign from God verifying the claims Jesus made to be our God and Saviour. Mt 12:39,40 Jesus answered, A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Believers say that science will be limited to showing that there is no natural explanation. It cannot do experiments on the supernatural so it can say no more than that. However, think about what they are saying. Science will not test a claimed miracle exhaustively so it cannot really rule out every natural explanation. It is impractical. And science has more important things to worry about than if God took away your tumour. It prioritises what to investigate.

The view advocated by Mark Vernon that a miracle is any event strange or otherwise that makes a person feel they have just encountered God Vernon, M. *The Big Questions, God*, (Quercus, 2012), p. 77 is inadequate. It is too subjective because some people believing their cow is God, feel they have experienced it. We would be unable to take such miracles seriously. Scripture tells us to live by faith and not feeling so that we might take faith very seriously - 2 Corinthians 5:7 For we live by faith, not by sight.

Most Christians accept the scientific doctrines that all things including space and time began at the big bang and that there wasn't anything until then Stannard, R. *Science & Belief, The Big Issues* (Lion, 2012), p. 55. Should we think that there is no conflict between miracles and science primarily because the greatest miracle of all is creation from nothing and both science and Christianity concur with that?

Christians complain that materialistic naturalist scientists refuse to deal with the agreement and focus on the following line of thought to deny that miracles are possible or believable.

Science says dead men stay dead.

Jesus was claimed to have risen from the dead according to the New Testament evidence.

The claim is untrue for dead men stay dead.

Line 3 should be,

The claim is probably true for the evidence that Jesus rose is sufficient.

That version of the argument honours science. Science is fundamentally concerned about evidence. The previous version of the argument only pays lip-service to science.

Mc Grath approvingly puts forward Pannenberg's conviction that "The decisive factor in determining what happened ... is the evidence contained in the New Testament" McGrath, A. *Bridge-Building* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1954), p. 164. This teaching appears in scripture John 20:30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Science is about external ways of checking things out. For example, equipment is used to measure and test. The Christian encounters the risen Jesus in her or his heart John 6:56 "lives in me and I live in him" The Christian does not test the

relationship that he experiences. He just experiences it and that is better than using any experiment or test. What is more scientific than that?

### *Science and Bible Interpretation*

There are some interpretations of the Bible that conflict with modern science. Many people today think that to be a Bible-believer you have to accept Archbishop Ussher's dating of creation at 4004 BC. It is important to point out that this was based on assumptions he made about the Bible genealogies rather than Bible teaching "'it is precarious in the highest degree to draw chronological inferences from genealogical tables" Warfield, B B, On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race (The Princeton Theological Review, 1911), p. 3

If we try to water down scripture for the sake of what we perceive to be scientific knowledge, then we are guilty of wresting the word of God. Do we really want to take sinful and often deceitful man as the authority of the truth and not God?

The Book of Genesis speaks of six days of creation in Genesis 1. God made all things in six steps. Adam was made from the dust of the ground and a rib was taken from him and built up into his wife Eve Genesis 2:21,22, So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. How can these details be reconciled with modern science which says creation was a process that took billions of years and that the order given in the Bible is wrong?

Most believers today suggest the following approach to the story: "Take the core assertion that, somehow or other, God created the world, the events of the six-day narration being regarded as a form of poetry" Stannard, R. Science & Belief, The Big Issues (Lion, 2012) p. 54

It seems dishonest to reason that scripture is nonsense if you check it out against modern science and to postulate that it cannot be meant literally. That is reading today's scientific claims back into the scriptures which were produced in a pre-scientific age.

### *Adam and Eve and Evolutionary Theory*

Many Christians do not take Genesis seriously when it says God made man from dust and woman from the rib of man. Yet the apostle says God made man from woman and woman from man 1 Corinthians 11:8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man.

Are those Christians influenced by the bias against miracles that exists in science? Yes because nobody denies that there is a lot we don't know.

Is there a conflict between the Bible teaching and the doctrine of evolution that random chance is behind the existence of all things?

Science is unable to examine the whole evolution process so its largely assuming that the system produced us. It has some pieces of the puzzle and has faith that evolution is the explanation for human existence. The Christian needs to see there is a puzzle and admit that the miraculous may have been at work rather than random forces.

The claims of science and the claims of the Bible may seem impossible to reconcile. But there is no need to go that far. We could simply say that we do not understand how the problems are to be solved and put our trust in God who may give us the answer. A good wife trusts her husband even though he seems to be doing terrible things. She waits for understanding. The Bible commands similar faith. We read how God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to him to test his obedience in Genesis 22. God revealed his approval for Abraham's obedience despite the fact that Abraham would have thought God was contradicting his promise to make Isaac the father of a great nation.

### *Science is Based on Faith too!*

Some Christians complain, "Why do so many people today insist on adopting a literal approach to Genesis - one that inevitably puts them on a collision course with science?" Stannard, R. Science & Belief, The Big Issues (Lion, 2012), p. 19

This contains the hidden assumption that God telling us something was the case is unscientific.

The fact that the scriptures give evidence that God has spoken doesn't make them unscientific. We put faith in what the scientists tell us and trust that they conducted experiments honestly. We just cannot get away from faith and faith is unscientific. The Bible like science requires faith. The importance of the Bible is that it gives us a way to 'divinise' science and fill it with light and life so that it is not a source of insipid and dry facts.

When science is based on testimony, surely the person who grounds himself on divine testimony is the most scientific person of all? God is in a better position to tell us than anybody else Matthew 6:4, Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### *The Bible fits True Science*

The Bible is not a scientific textbook, but it touches on matters that are relevant to science. It states nothing that contradicts science. Examples follow.

Job cries that the earth hangs upon nothing, Job 26:7. The earth floats in space. Job was right. That somebody had that view in a time when people believed all sorts of nonsense about the earth and what supported it is truly remarkable.

The Bible asserts that God made man from dust.

Genesis 2:7 “the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground”

And science shows us that the ground and the body all share the same elements.

### *Significance of the Bible*

Christians claim, "God's word was significant to the people of Bible times for it developed their knowledge and thus science was able to develop. God saved us from pre-scientific forms of dangerous and blasphemous religion - for example, the worship of human type gods. Ex 20:4-6 You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. The Bible is the foundation of modern science."

Evaluation: If Bible religion was an improvement on paganism, that is a very weak argument in its favour. Many forms of paganism were civilised and humanistic.

Such vital truths as evolution are not even mentioned. We read about the Virgin Mary having not known man and the most important truth of all is not even considered worthy of mention. Nobody can say that the Bible approves of evolution. That is only guessing for it never gives any hint that the fact of evolution is a fact.

### *Conclusion*

The Bible despite being written by ordinary and often poorly educated people should contradict science. And it does. Faith in the Bible is about non-experts wanting to feel they know better than scientific experts. Loads of lies are told to make Christianity look like the friend of science. It is its fairweather friend.

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