

Christianity and Science: Friends or Foes?

One of the main objections against Christianity is often thought to be science. The popular notion is that Christianity and science are at odds with each other and that a thinking person is forced to choose one over against the other. But this is not true, neither historically when we look at the origin and growth of science nor today when we look at the findings of science.

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Introduction

“Religion is something left over from the infancy of our intelligence, it will fade away as we adopt reason and science as our guidelines.” Bertrand Russell

“All scientists should be militant atheists” Lawrence Krauss in *The New Yorker*, 2015

I. The History of Science

“The university is a European institution; indeed, it is the European institution par excellence ... it is a creation of medieval Europe, which was the Europe of papal Christianity”. Walter Rüegg; *A History of the University in Europe*

“Not only were science and religion compatible, they were inseparable ... Christian theology was essential for the rise of science.” Rodney Stark; *For the Glory of God*

Five Biblical Perspectives Behind Science:

- Man's vocation: subdue the earth
- God is Logos: expect a rational universe (laws)
- God is the One God: expect universal order

- The universe is created: need for observations
- The universe is created *ad extra*: experiment

The Galileo Galilei controversy?

The Charles Darwin controversy?

II. The Limits of Science

The challenge from scientism answered

Science: A wonderful but limited tool

Peter Kreeft: “There is no scientific proof that only scientific proofs are good proofs; no way to prove by the scientific method that the scientific method is the only valid method.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein: “The great delusion of modernity is that the laws of nature explain the universe for us. The laws of nature describe the universe, they describe the regularities. But they explain nothing.”

Different levels of explanations: Primary and secondary cause

III. The Conversation with Science

The Bible is not a scientific textbook. Main emphasis: *that* God created the universe, not *how* and *when* he did it.

Example I of science and the Christian faith in conversation: The beginning of the universe.

Svante Arrhenius, Nobel Prize Chemistry 1903: “the Universe in its essence has always been what it is now.”

George Lemaître: The universe had a beginning (the big bang theory)

C S Lewis (1943): “It was never possible to oppose seriously the dogma of the Creation except by maintaining that the world has existed from all eternity in more or less its present state." This fundamental ground for materialism has now been withdrawn. We should not lean too heavily on this, for scientific theories change. But at the moment it appears that the burden of proof rests, not on us, but on those who deny that Nature has some cause beyond herself.”

Example II of science and the Christian faith in conversation: The fine tuning of the universe.

Alvin Plantinga: “One reaction to these apparent enormous coincidences is to see them as substantiating the theistic claim that the universe has been created by a personal God ... It's as if there are a large number of dials that have to be tuned to within extremely narrow limits for life to be possible in our universe. It is extremely unlikely that this should happen by chance, but much more likely that this should happen, if there is such a person as God.”