

## ***Question #4 Isn't Christianity Opposed to Science?***

Many people today, Christian and non-Christian, view science and faith either as two competing domains that often contradict or as completely separate which means they may not contradict but they do not work together. But as Christians we believe God created the world and it seems if that is true than science and faith should actually harmonize and work together.

Also, many people view science as “objective” and true for everybody while relegating religion to the subjective realm of values. Is this truly the case?

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## **I. “The Compatibility of Faith and Science” (from paper by Dr. Richard Knopp)**

### **A. Science and Faith are compatible (mutually contributory)**

1. Historical relationship between Christian faith and rise of modern science
2. Philosophical basis that Christian faith provides for science
3. Christian faith offsets and explains the limitations of science

### **B. Historical: Christian Faith was Connected Positively to the Rise of Modern Science**

1. The first modern scientists all had Christian faith:
2. Galileo (1564-1642) - astronomer – “The Holy Bible can never speak untruth – whenever its true meaning is understood.”
3. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) – mathematician and physicist – “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.”
4. Robert Boyle (1635-1703) – chemist
5. Michael Faraday (1791-1867) – inventor using electromagnetism
6. Samuel Morse (1791-1872) – inventor of the telegraph – “The nearer I approach to the end of my pilgrimage, the clearer is the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible, the grandeur and sublimity of God’s remedy for fallen man are more appreciated, and the future is illumined with hope and joy”
7. Summary by philosopher Alfred North Whitehead: “*When we compare this tone of thought in Europe with the attitude of other civilizations when left to themselves, there seems but one source for its origin. It must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah and with the rationality of a Greek philosopher*” (Science and the Modern World, 13).
  - a. It was precisely their Christian presuppositions, beliefs about God and nature, that caused them to investigate creation and do science as we know it
8. See also Alvin Schmidt’s *Under the Influence* chapter 9 “Science and its Christian Connections”

### **C. Christian Faith Provides the Philosophical Basis and Motivation for Doing Science**

1. Science necessarily rests on various assumptions that make science possible
  - a. Nature is real
  - b. Nature is rational (orderly, uniform)
  - c. The human mind is rational and can understand nature
  - d. The physical senses are generally reliable
2. Science, by itself, cannot justify these assumptions on which it is based – needs something else.
3. Biblical Truth supplies a strong motivation for doing science
  - a. Nature is “good” and worthy of study (Gen. 1:31)
  - b. Nature must be studied empirically (because God did not have to create it in any particular way; we need to discover what it is like)
  - c. Humans have capacity and responsibility for supervising nature (Gen. 1:26, 28)
  - d. “Fallen” humanity needs and warrants medical and psychological care and compassion

### **D. Christian Faith and the Limitations of Science**

1. Christian belief does not oppose science, although it does necessarily oppose ‘scientism’ (i.e., science wrapped in the garb of philosophical naturalism)
2. Prominent approach is to claim science is radically different from religion and true science cannot allow any non-natural explanation
  - a. This approach goes like this:
    - i. Scientific hypotheses/theories are based on unquestionable ‘bare facts’ which are the same for everyone

- ii. Scientific claims are empirically confirmable or falsifiable
    - iii. Scientific hypotheses/theories are held tentatively
    - iv. Science is objective and rational
    - v. Science is totally distinct from religion
  - b. Assumption is that science is non-biased while religion is biased – the truth is that all scientists bring in some bias: Michael Ruse, a naturalistic evolutionist who testified against creation science in 1982 later wrote: “In the ten years since I performed, or I appeared, in the creationism trial in Arkansas, I must say that I’ve been coming to this kind of position myself...the science side has certain metaphysical assumptions built into doing science, which-it may not be a good thing to admit in a court of law-but I think that in all honesty we should recognize” (cited in Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 163).
- 3. The prominent approach to science as non-biased and objective has been challenged in the last 40 years, most significantly by Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
  - a. Kuhn argues science is limited in its objectivity
    - i. Science is not simply based on ‘bare facts’
    - ii. Even ‘bare facts’ are ‘interpreted’ through the filter of one’s presuppositions, values, and commitments
    - iii. Scientific ideas are often wedded with metaphysics (i.e., philosophy) and cannot be sharply separated
    - iv. Scientists are sometimes deeply committed to a particular paradigm (model) of explanation
    - v. Scientific ‘proof’ is NOT necessarily absolutely certain and ‘once-for-all’
    - vi. Science often deals with matters that are NOT so empirical (e.g. origins of the universe and life, subatomic particles, black holes)
  - b. Science is limited in its scope
    - i. It can describe apparent uniformities, but it cannot prescribe what must, or what cannot, occur
    - ii. Properly, it is restricted to empirical matters. It cannot, therefore, rightly speak about the existence or non-existence of non-empirical entities (e.g. God, the soul)
    - iii. It cannot answer questions about meaning or ethics (e.g. abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, cloning, stem cell harvesting)
  - c. See also Del Ratzsch’s *Science and its Limits*

### ***E. Conclusion***

- 1. Science rests on philosophical ideas
  - a. “All truth comes from science” is self-refuting for this statement itself cannot be proved scientifically; it is philosophy
- 2. Christian belief that God created the world gives a solid philosophical basis for science; naturalism has no such foundation to trust scientific belief
  - a. Naturalism observes what happens but how can a naturalist know the world will continue to work in the same way? We may observe something happen one hundred times in a row, but without a belief in ordered nature (which naturalism does not give us) we cannot be sure it will happen the 101<sup>st</sup> time

## II “Objective” Science? (\*Relying on Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 172-220)

### A. *Many scientists are, from the outset, biased against any idea of a Designer*

1. Richard Dawkins: “*Even if there were no actual evidence in favor of the Darwinian theory...we should still be justified in preferring it over all rival theories*” (*The Blind Watchmaker*, 287 quoted in *Total Truth*, 168)
2. “*Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such an hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic*” (S.C. Todd, “A View from Kansas on that Evolution Debate,” *Nature* 401 (September 30, 1999): 423 quoted in *Total Truth*, 168)
3. Michael Ruse: “*I must admit that in this one complaint...the [biblical] literalists are absolutely right. Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution still today*” (“Saving Darwinism from the Darwinians,” *National Post*, May 13, 2000, B-3 quoted in *TT*, 172)
4. Point: Naturalistic atheists are biased – even if the best scientific evidence pointed to a designer, they would ignore it due to their assumptions (there is no God)

### B. *Naturalistic Scientists – Naturalistic World*

1. Does science support evolution? That is not a question to be answered today. The problem is that many evolutionists who are naturalistic atheists extend the science of evolution into other areas such as morality and ethics – but what basis does evolution give in such areas?
2. Ethics: Humans simply “function better if they are deceived by their genes into thinking that there is a disinterested objective morality binding upon them, which all should obey” (E.O. Wilson and Michael Ruse, “The Evolution of Ethics” in *Religion and the Natural Sciences* edited by J. E. Hutchingson, 310 quoted in *TT*, 209)
  - a. Interpretation – morality is just something evolution created to help us function better; there is no solid objective morality for morality changes with evolution
  - b. Geneticist H. Allen Orr responds: “The ugly fact is that we haven’t a shred of evidence that morality in humans did or did not evolve by natural selection...in the end a thought experiment is not an experiment...we have no data” (H. Allen Orr, *Dennett’s Strange Idea: Natural Selection: Science of Everything, Universal Acid, Cure for the Common Cold...*, in the *Boston Review*, Summer 1996, quoted on *TT*, 211)
  - c. “*We have to realize, however, that once someone has accepted the evolutionary premise, the question of evidence becomes all but irrelevant. Applying Darwinian explanations to human behavior is simply a matter of logic. After all, if evolution is true, then how else did the mind emerge, if not by evolution?*” (*TT*, 211)
3. Book titled *The Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion* called rape “a natural, biological phenomenon that is a product of the human evolutionary heritage,” akin to “the leopard’s spots and the giraffe’s elongated neck” (Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer, “Why Men Rape,” *The Sciences* (January/February, 2000): 20-28 quoted in *TT*, 211)
  - a. Any behavior that survives today must have conferred some evolutionary advantage otherwise it would have been weeded out by natural selection
  - b. Thornhill said that if evolution is true then “every feature of every living thing, including human beings, has an underlying evolutionary background. That’s not a debatable matter” (*TT*, 211).
4. After national uproar when a teen girl delivered a baby and dumped it in the trash and another girl killed her baby, Steven Pinker wrote an article explaining why some women kill their newborn babies
  - a. Argued that infanticide is so common throughout history that it must have been preserved by natural selection which means it must have some adaptive function: “If a newborn is sickly, or if its survival is not promising, they may cut their losses and favor the healthiest

in the litter or try again later on” (Pinker, “Why They Kill Their Newborns,” *The New York Times*, November 2, 1997)

5. Peter Singer argues that we are nothing but mammals which means that “sex across the species” (i.e. with goats) “ceases to be an offense to our status and dignity as human beings” (Singer, “Heavy Petting” review of *Dearest Pet: On Bestiality* by Midas Dekkers quoted in TT, 214).
6. **If evolutionary psychology leads to such outrageous conclusions why do people accept it? Because many people desire a morality based on scientific “fact” and not religious “myth” (See Diagram in next section)**
  - a. **Logical flaw – if all our ideas are products of evolution than so is that idea (that our ideas are products of evolution) – it is not true, only useful for survival (216)**
  - b. **Thus, morality based on evolutionary philosophies is not based on fact**
7. **Naturalists cannot practically live by these beliefs – they make a leap of faith**
  - a. Robert Wright in *The Moral Animal*: says “our genes control us...we are all machines, pushed and pulled by our [physical] forces...we believe the things-about morality, personal worth, even objective truth-that lead to behaviors that get our genes into the next generation...free will is an illusion...a useful fiction” (Wright, *The Moral Animal: Why We are the Way We Are*, 336, 351, 324-5, 350, 355, 325 quoted on TT, 217)
    - i. Meaning of truth is questioned as all “truth-claims” are merely power struggles
    - ii. Then he ignores all of this and takes a grand leap of faith by urging us to work on “correcting the moral biases built into us by natural selection” (Wright, 376, 336)
    - iii. “If we really are ‘machines’ created by natural selection, how can we ‘correct’ the force that created us?” (TT, 218)
    - iv. There is no basis to believe we can overcome what we have evolved to do; but people such as Wright just declare we can overcome it with no justification for such a declaration (such a declaration is irrational, no reason for it)
  - b. Richard Dawkins does the same thing in *The Selfish Gene*
    - i. Insists that genes “created us, body and mind” and that we are merely sophisticated “robots” built by genes to perpetuate themselves
    - ii. Then he says “We have the power to defy the selfish genes of our birth” (*The Selfish Gene*, 215)
    - iii. Where does this power come from? “Dawkins knows from actual experience that we do make genuine choices. Yet there is nothing in evolutionary psychology to account for this power of choice – so he simply makes a leap of faith to a conclusion totally unwarranted by his own philosophy” (218)
  - c. Peter Singer declares that natural selection has made us “reasoning beings” and we must, somehow, use this reason to transcend Darwinian forces (Darwinian Left, 62, 63)
    - i. Singer never accounts for this capacity that frees us from Darwinian constraints – he simply pulls it out of a hat at the end of his book
    - ii. “If this isn’t a leap of faith, I don’t know what is. Reason is presented as a mysterious capacity capable of creating something de novo... This godlike power will enable us to rise above our evolutionary origins...Singer finds no basis for morality and altruism within the Darwinian worldview in the lower story-so he takes a leap to a hypothetical upper-story realm far beyond the constraints of ‘our evolved nature’” (TT, 220)
  - d. “What these examples tell us is that evolutionary psychology fails the practical test: No one can live by it. Since universal human experience confirms the reality of moral choice, evolutionary psychologists cannot actually live on the basis of their own deterministic theory. They may try to, but when the contradiction between theory and life grows too pressing, they suddenly abandon the theory and proclaim their autonomy from the power of the genes” (TT, 218)

*“Ironically, critics often dismiss Christianity as irrational-yet it does not require any irrational, self-contradictory leap of faith. Because it begins with a personal God, Christianity provides a consistent, unified worldview that holds true both in the natural realm and in the moral, spiritual realm. The biblical doctrine of the image of God gives a solid basis for human dignity and moral freedom that is compatible with the compelling witness of human experience. Unlike the evolutionary psychologist, Christians can live consistently on the basis of their worldview because it fits the real world” (TT, 219).*

### **III. Subjective Religion?**

#### **A. Two-Level Theory of Truth**

1. Our culture, including many Christians, has accepted the idea that there are two levels of truth: public truths (true for everybody, “facts”) and private truths (preference, values)

**Private Sphere – Personal Preferences, Values (Individual Choice), Subjective**

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**Public Sphere – Scientific Knowledge, Facts (Binding on Everyone), Objective**

- a. For study of this see: Francis Schaeffer’s *Escape from Reason* and *The God Who is There* and Nancy Pearcey’s *Total Truth*
2. Examining the Diagram:
  - a. Scientific knowledge is true for everybody – these things are facts that can be debated as “true” or “false” and there is a right answer
  - b. Religious knowledge is in the private sphere and is merely preference – you cannot say that a religion is “true” for everybody for that type of truth does not even apply – it is your belief and that’s it
    - i. When people use language like “it is my personal belief” or “that’s just your interpretation” they are showing their acceptance of this division
  - c. Peter Kreeft, philosophy professor, says of his students: “They are perfectly willing to believe in objective truth in science, or even in history sometimes, but certainly not in ethics or morality” (TT, 107).
  - d. **Point:** Religious choices are preference (like a favorite ice cream; many truths) while science and other beliefs are true for everybody (there is one Truth)
  - e. Question: Do we believe religious and theological ideas are more than just “beliefs”; rather they are “facts”?
    - i. Many assume “science is about facts; religion is about values. This is not even accurate: Christianity does make claims about the material world-about the origin of the cosmos, the character of human nature, and events in history, pre-eminently the resurrection” (TT, 177)

#### **B. Two-Story Truth’s Affect on Christians**

1. Christians have bought into this: many times we live in two separate worlds: on Monday-Saturday we live in the public world of facts and think a certain way but on Sunday we go to church and live in the upper sphere
2. Christians are told to leave their religious beliefs at home and to come into the public world “unbiased”...but in doing that we actually accept a whole other set of biases
  - f. We accept the biases of the naturalistic world that ignores God
  - g. *“Christians often live in two separate worlds, commuting between the private world of family and church (where we can express our faith freely) and the public world (where religious expression is firmly suppressed)” (TT,, 65).*
3. *“Religion has become personal, private, and too often, simply a matter of ‘how I feel about things.’ By contrast, the culture encourages me to invoke my intellect in my secular, public life.*

*By way of example, I'm always encouraged to use my intellect in how I approach my vocation, select a house, or learn to use a computer. But within the sphere of my private, spiritual life of faith, it is my heart, and my heart alone, that operates. The life of the mind is thus separated, broken off, and compartmentalized as a function of the 'secular' life instead of more naturally being integrated with the spiritual" (J.P. Moreland, Love God with All Your Mind, 27).*

- a. Being a disciple of Jesus influences all of life
  - b. Christians do not go to college to get a job – instead we go to follow a calling – whatever field you are in, as a Christian you are called to be the best at it and come at it from a Christian perspective
    - i. Science – God created a world and we study it to learn his creation
    - ii. Other fields – how do you apply God's truth to your field of study – business? Occupational therapy? Teaching? Etc.
  - c. "A Christian goes to college to discover his vocation – the area of service to which God has called him – and to develop the skills necessary to occupy a section of the cultural, intellectual domain in a manner worthy of the kingdom of God" (Moreland, 57).
4. Christianity makes claims that are TRUE for everybody – Jesus really rose from the dead and that really affects all of our life
- a. Evangelism – when we talk to people about Jesus and say he is the way they hear it as our value; he is the way for us
    - i. We must overcome this language barrier – Jesus is the way for everybody

### ***C. Two-Story Truth's Affect on Others***

1. The lower story provides facts – but no one can live in it (see section II.B.6 above)
  - a. No one can live in the lower story where they are told there is no freedom – so they make a 'leap of faith' to the upper story where freedom and moral truths exist even though their own world view gives them no rational basis for this
2. Many attempt to apply science to all fields, such as ethics and morality
  - a. But such ethics based on science (or naturalistic evolution) can only observe what humans do; there is no bridge to get what humans ought to do.
  - b. Morality and ethics in this way is situational and always subject to change – but this gives us little confidence to trust our ethics now

### **Faith – Non-reason – Optimism – Non-rational**

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**Rational – Reason – Pessimism – no purpose or meaning, man is machine**

3. Belief is that all reason gives us is particulars and we are left with no purpose or meaning, humans are just a cog in the machine. This is very pessimistic, but a leap of faith takes us to optimism where there is meaning – yet nothing reasonable supports such a leap
  - a. **Without God we are stuck with the bottom story and nothing else**
  - b. **With God the stories are eliminated – reason and faith (science and religion) work together as a unified truth**

### **D. Conclusion**

- Religious truths are not just subjective – they are either true or false (either Jesus really rose from the dead and that affects all humans or he did not and Christianity is false)
- Christians need to overcome this two-story idea of truth – religion and science both contribute to our TRUE beliefs

What have we learned so far?

- Christian belief in Creator and creation gives a strong philosophical basis for doing science that is absent in naturalism
- Science teaches us many truths but is not the final answer in everything; it is limited and other fields (philosophy, theology) for further answers (ethics, morals, etc.)
- People who do science bring many biases to their work; a scientist hopes to prove her theory; many naturalist atheist scientist are biased against God
- Naturalistic atheist sciences cannot live practically with their conclusions so they take a leap of faith (science shows we have no freedom, believe we have freedom anyway)
- Religion is often relegated to a separate sphere of truth: personal and private. But the claims Christians make are true for everybody and Christianity gives a unified field where science, philosophy, faith and others work together
- Christians must examine how their faith relates to the work God has called them to

**Conclusion:** Science and faith can and should work in harmony in the life of a believer; a Christian accepts truth from both fields. On the other hand, naturalists are forced to see truth only in one field (science) but then, with no reason, live as if there are other truths.

*Which belief system contradicts? Which can be lived out consistently?*

#### **IV. Related question: Can modern, scientific people believe in miracles?**

##### **A. David Hume's (1711-1776) attack on miracles**

1. *"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined...Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happens in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die of a sudden; because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit the appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior" (Essay Concerning Human Understanding)*
2. Interpretation: it is always unreasonable to believe a miracle has occurred
  - a. Much more likely that what appears to be a miracle actually has a natural explanation, or that the person reporting it was mistaken.
3. Hume offered other arguments against miracles

##### **B. Christian Response**

1. Someone may observe a miracle directly
2. Many times testimony against what had been uniform experience of people turns out to be true (i.e. testimony to a miracle may be true even if everything before that happened naturally)

##### **C. Miracles and God**

1. If God exists and created the laws of nature then it seems he could work within them (as supernature) to do miracles (see C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*)
2. Point: If God does exist, miracles are possible: is there is evidence for miracles?
  - a. Quantitative – may not be a large quantity of evidence – evidence shows that most people who die stay dead
  - b. Qualitative – there may be good, high quality evidence – is there good evidence to believe a specific person rose from the dead?

##### **D. Miracles and Science**

1. Miracles are not contradictory to science; they lie outside the realm of science in that they cannot be demonstrated by repeated tests – William Lane Craig: "A miracle is an event which is not

producible by the natural causes that are operative at the time and place that the event occurs” (CfF, 62).

2. Miracles are not nature – they are supernatural; they do not contradict science, they transcend science

**E. Conclusion:** If God exists and if God created the universe with natural laws then it is possible that God can work within that universe in miraculous ways

1. Question: Is there quality evidence that God has worked in this way?
2. Point: A miracle does not disrupt the harmony of science and nature because if there is evidence than the miracle makes sense to believe in

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