Science and the Christian Faith

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Last Week:

truth vs. Truth

• Empirical vs. Revelatory
• Provisional vs. Absolute
• Tentative vs. Eternal
• Skepticism vs. Faith
truth vs. Truth

• So how do the two truths relate to each other?
• Truth is more important than truth, right?
• Can Truth inform truth?
• Does Truth trump truth?
• Can truth change Truth?
Goals: Week 3

- Review and elaborate on S&R Models
  - The taxonomical approach
  - Many conflicting viewpoints
- Take a look at some of the issues involved in the creation/evolution debate
  - Lots of quotes
S&R Models: One Approach

Philosophical Naturalism (PN)
There is no God.

Naturalism/Scientism
This world is all there is. Religious belief is either irrelevant or harmful. The scientific method is the only valid way to answer questions in life.

Methodological Naturalism (MN)
Science should restrict itself to only natural mechanisms.

Complementarity/Partnership
What different ideas do science and religion contribute as they describe the same reality?

Compartmentalization/Independence/NOMA
Use each, but don’t mix

Templeton Foundation, ASA, Bube, Van Till, Barbour, Polkinghorne

Open Science
Scientific philosophy should not rule out God. Theologically minimalist.

Neo-Creationists
Old Earth (Progressive), Qualified Agreement

Intelligent Design
Discovery Institute, Johnson, Behe, Dembski

Scientific Creationism
ICR, CRS, The Genesis Flood

Theistic Science
God’s revealed word supersedes science, so may be used scientifically

Classical Creationists
Young Earth Creationism, Catastrophism

Creationist Evangelism
AIG, Hovind, Ham
S&R Models

Let’s look more closely at the five main boxes:

1. Naturalism
2. Theistic Science
3. Open Science (Qualified Agreement)
4. Compartmentalism (Independence)
5. Complementarity
Naturalism

• The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be -- Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*.
• *The Blind Watchmaker*, Richard Dawkins
  • cf William Paley’s Watchmaker Hypothesis
• ...we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door. --Richard Lewontin
• Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such an hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic. --Scott C. Todd
• Any thoughts?
Theistic Science

• In its broadest sense, theistic science is rooted in the idea that Christians ought to consult all they know or have reason to believe when forming and testing hypotheses, when explaining things in science, and when evaluating the plausibility of various scientific hypotheses. --J. P. Moreland

• It is my contention that recognizing the Bible as a reliable source of information for the conduct of science is essential for an effective use of resources and for correct results. --Larry Vardiman, ICR
Theistic Science

- No geological difficulties, real or imagined, can be allowed to take precedence over the clear statements and necessary inferences of Scripture. --Henry Morris, *Biblical Cosmology*
- A number of Christian scholars reject theistic science and advocate what is sometimes called methodological naturalism, which is basically the idea that theological concepts like God or direct acts of God are not properly part of natural science. Thus, theistic science is fundamentally misguided because it has a faulty philosophy of science and an improper view of how science and theology should be integrated. --J.P. Moreland
- Comments?
Open Science

• **Open and Closed: What is the difference?** The most common type of non-open science is "closed" by methodological naturalism (MN), a proposal to restrict the freedom of scientists by requiring that they include only natural causes in their theories. The difference between science that is open and closed is the difference in responding to a question: Has the history of the universe included both natural and non-natural causes? In an open science (liberated from MN) this question can be evaluated based on scientific evidence; a scientist begins with MN, but is flexible and is willing to be persuaded by evidence and logic. In a closed science (restricted by MN), evidence and logic are not the determining factors because the inevitable conclusion — no matter what is being studied, or what is the evidence — must be that "it happened by natural process."

--Craig Rusbult

• Comments?
Compartmentalism/Independence

• The Two Realms View: Propositions, theories or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two distinct, nonoverlapping areas of investigation. For example, debates about angels or the extent of the atonement have little to do with organic chemistry. Similarly, it is of little interest to theology whether a methane molecule contains three or four hydrogen atoms. --J.P. Moreland

• Stephen Jay Gould and the NOMA Principle (Non-Overlapping Magisteria):
  • Each subject has a legitimate magisterium, or domain of teaching authority– and these magisteria do not overlap... The net of science covers the empirical universe; what it is made of (fact) and why does it work this way (theory). The net of religion extends over questions of moral meaning and value.
  • Hoimar von Ditfurth writes “To this day science is by definition the attempt to see how far man and nature can be explained without recourse to miracles.” This is not a statement of materialist philosophy. This is an explanation of the rules of the game. The rules are well understood. The game has been a highly successful one in the past and continues successful today. Playing the game according to the rules does not make one an atheist. --Jean Pond
Compartmentalism/Independence

For the origin of the universe the current consensus in cosmology and physics is that the big bang theory accounts best for the observational data we now have and is supported by excellent and straightforward evidence, including the (approximately) 2.7 degree Kelvin cosmic background radiation. The age of the universe, although still under discussion, seems to be within the ten to twenty billion year range.

Such an ancient universe is rejected by young-earth creationists on biblical grounds. On the other hand, old-earth creationists and others, as discussed earlier, feel that it is supported biblically and, in fact, that the big bang is evidence for the existence of God.

For the adherent to NOMA, of course, the Bible neither supports nor refutes the big bang, or vice-versa. We are happy to accept the cosmological knowledge that the big bang offers, but we recognize that (as a scientific theory) it is subject to revision. We may find, personally, that the big bang fits well (or does not fit well) with our overall worldview, including our idea of what is aesthetically pleasing in nature. If we are Christians, we do not worry about it too much one way or the other. --Jean Pond
Compartmentalism/Independence

• I find her [Jean Pond’s] view of scripture and science (along with NOMA) to be an elaborate cop-out that gives total precedence to science at every point in the discussion carrying any significance for discovering physical reality. Pond (and NOMA) seem to overlook the turbulent nature of scientific theories throughout history while discounting the possibility that the Bible has a divine author capable of giving a general but accurate description of physical reality that science is yet to fully discover. --Roy Massie

• Independence is a way of resolving the conflict by affirming separate spheres of validity for science and religion, with a demilitarized if fuzzy boundary... Neo-orthodox religion is comfortable with this resolution, and most working scientists are also quite happy with this pragmatic approach. Lutherans may feel at home here, seeing this as a version of Luther's "two kingdoms," and there is the air of Copenhagen and Bohr's complementarity about it. --Daniel Johnson

• Strengths and Weaknesses?
Complementarity

- Science and faith have different methodologies, but they are complementary, not contradictory; a faith without reason is as stultifying as a reason without faith. --R. J. Berry
- If to the request “Describe an apple for me,” from one who has never seen an apple, I reply “An apple is usually red like a cherry, juicy like a peach, and firm like a pear,” I have used three similes. Each gives a partial insight into the reality of an apple but no one separately, or even all three together, gives a totally accurate description of an apple. By knowing all three similes I know more about an apple than by knowing only one or two of them. If to these similes I add, “An apple is like a Japanese persimmon except that its inside is white rather than pink,” I would know still more about an apple, while still not knowing exactly what an apple *is*. Such similar descriptions could be multiplied many times over, giving a greater and greater awareness of what an apple *is*, but never converging on a totally accurate statement of what an apple *is*. Descriptions that give partial insights (with limited accuracy, exactness, or correspondence with reality) may be said to be complementary. --Richard Bube
Complementarity

Paul Dirac invented something called quantum field theory which is fundamental to our understanding of the physical world. I can't believe Dirac's ability to invent that theory, or Einstein's ability to invent the general theory of relativity, is a sort of spin-off from our ancestors having to dodge sabre-toothed tigers. It seems to me that something much more profound, much more mysterious is going on. I would like to understand why the reason within and the reason without fit together at a deep level. Religious belief provides me with an entirely rational and entirely satisfying explanation of that fact. It says that the reason within and the reason without have a common origin in this deeper rationality which is the reason of the Creator, whose will is the ground both of my mental and my physical experience. That's for me an illustration of theology's power to answer a question, namely the intelligibility of the world, that arises from science but goes beyond science's unaided power to answer. Remember, science simply assumes the intelligibility of the world. Theology can take that striking fact and make it profoundly comprehensible. --John Polkinghorne
They [S&R] ask different questions: in the one case, how things happen, by what process?; in the other, why things happen, to what purpose? Though these are two different questions, yet, the ways we answer them must bear some consonant relationship to each other. If I assure you that my purpose is to create a beautiful garden and then I tell you that how I am going to do so is by covering the ground with six inches of green concrete, you will rightly doubt the genuineness of my intentions. The fact that we now know that the universe did not spring into being ready made a few thousand years ago but that it has evolved over a period of fifteen billion years from its fiery origin in the Big Bang, does not abolish Christian talk of the world as God's creation, but it certainly modifies certain aspects of that discourse. --John Polkinghorne
Creation vs. Evolution
A Historical Introduction

• God of the Gaps
  • If science has a gap in its knowledge, one can explain the mystery with God.
  • And even use the gap as evidence of God.
  • So God occupies gaps in scientific knowledge.
  • Problem: As the gaps shrink, so does God.
Surveying Creationism

There is a sense in which every Christian is a "creationist," for every Christian believes that he or she lives in a universe that is a creation, and that the Source of creation is the God who is revealed in the Bible as "maker of heaven and earth." This is true, whether the Christian is a young-earth creationist, an old earth creationist, an intelligent design creationist, or an evolutionary creationist. While these various creationists may strongly disagree among themselves about the "how" of creation, and subscribe to different portraits of creation, they do agree on certain essential beliefs or doctrines about creation, and these beliefs are anchored in the revelations of Holy Scripture. --Dr. Robert Schneider, ASA Listserv, Jan 12, 2003.
Varieties of Creationism: A List

- Young Earth Creationism (YEC)
- Scientific Creationism: The ICR and the CRS
- Creationist Evangelism: AIG
- The Omphalos Hypothesis (uncommon)
- Old Earth Creationism (OEC)
- Day-Age (uncommon)
- Gap or Ruin & Restoration (uncommon)
- Progressive Creationism (Hugh Ross)
- Intelligent Design
- Evolutionary Creationism
- Theistic Evolution
# Surveying Creationism

- Creationist Interpretations of Genesis
- Reproduced from Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists*

## Interpretations

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<th>Day-Age</th>
<th>The Beginning (eons ago)</th>
<th>Advocates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Matter Created</td>
<td>JW Dawson, GF Wright, WJ Bryan, WB Riley</td>
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<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Life Created</td>
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<td>Day 3</td>
<td>Fossils Formed</td>
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<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Humans Created</td>
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<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Noah’s Flood (perhaps local)</td>
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<td>Day 6</td>
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## Gap or Ruin & Restoration

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<tr>
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<td>CI Scofield, H Rimmer, LA Higley, J Swaggart</td>
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## Flood Geology or Creation Science

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<th>Perhaps a Lifeless Earth</th>
<th>Advocates</th>
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<td>EG White, GM Price, HM Morris, JC Whitcomb</td>
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- 6-Day Edenic Restoration (Adam & Eve Created) 4000-8000 BC
- Noah’s Flood (fossils formed) ca 3000 BC
The Omphalos Hypothesis

- **OMPHALOS: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot** by Phillip Henry Gosse, 1857
- “Omphalos” means “navel”
  - Appearance of age: navels, tree rings, starlight
- Publication met with derision and indifference, faded from history
- Chief argument against: God does not lie
- Invincible and untestable
- Anecdotally, I’d say this is a strong folk-creationist variant in the LCMS