

Faith and Science

What bearing does Science have on Christian Faith? In a previous article I made the point that Faith applies to things you can't prove. You *don't* need faith to believe in gravity. You *do* need faith to believe God created gravity. This has important implications for how Christians should relate to Science.

We should distinguish between Faith, Science, and Reality

Science is the study of physical reality.¹ Faith is belief in something about Reality that cannot be proven at the moment of belief. Science is an attempt to understand something in physical reality through a process of observation and experimental verification. Faith is a belief about Reality that has not been verified yet.

Faith may disagree with Science but Faith should *never* disagree with physical reality. While Science sometimes gets its interpretation of physical reality wrong, the same is also true of our faith. Our faith is just as capable of misunderstanding and misinterpreting physical reality as Science is. It doesn't deserve to be put on a pedestal and given special consideration over Science when it comes to that interpretation or understanding.

Perhaps this is the wrong question

So what should a Christian do when he encounters Science that disagrees with his Faith? Does he reject that aspect of his Faith or does he reject the Science? I submit that perhaps this is the wrong question. The goal should instead be to discover Truth. Let's look at the core tenets of the Christian faith regarding Reality.

- We believe that God exists.²
- We believe that God created the universe.³
- We believe that God reveals himself through inerrant Scripture.⁴
- We believe that God reveals himself through physical reality.⁵

If our Faith is in these facts, then we should expect Scripture to illuminate our understanding of physical reality. We should also expect physical reality to illuminate our understanding of Scripture. Yet we often ignore or neglect that last one. We tend to think that any challenge to our beliefs must be resisted thoroughly. What if instead we looked to see if Science is revealing something about God that we had not previously known? If the goal is to know Truth then these challenges are not a contradiction but an opportunity to know God better. This is the same principle we should employ when we encounter Scripture that we don't understand. It is an opportunity to know God better. A contradiction between what we believe and what Science says indicates a lack of understanding somewhere. That lack of understanding could just as easily be in what you believe as in the Science. Assuming that Science can not inform your faith is assuming that God can not speak through His Creation.

What does this mean in practice

A hot button issue for many Christians is Evolution. They see it as an attack on the very foundations of their faith. In some sense they are right. Many Evolutionists see it as a way to explain their world without relying on the existence of a God. They interpret the facts that science verifies in that light.

¹Science: Definition - <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/science> systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation.

²Gen 1:1 In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.

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⁴2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

⁵Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Our reaction, however, is often to attack the facts rather than the interpretation of those facts. When we attack the underlying science of Evolution we tend to do so with the operating assumption that, because of the presumed motivations of the scientist, we must disbelieve their observations of Reality. This causes us to miss some rather illuminating information.

As an example, a core tenet of evolutionary science is that life is adaptable and changes to better survive its environment. This tenet is experimentally verifiable and provably true. Yet our knee-jerk reaction is to dismiss it since it is seen as an attack on our faith. But no amount of faith on our part will change the fact that life *is* in fact adaptable. God designed life that way so that when our environment changed life, including humans, could survive and adapt to that environment. This was an excellent part of His design and recognizing this truth about the world tells us something about God. It illuminates the first chapter of Genesis. And nothing about this truth takes away from the Creation story. You can accept these facts *and* be a literal 7 day creationist if you want. The facts that the Science revealed are not an attack on our faith. If we treat them as such and therefore reject them, we arm the Atheist with a completely *valid* reason to reject our faith. Our witness will be harmed if we allow our faith to motivate us to promote a lie and believe an untruth about God. I don't think we should celebrate such an outcome.

A proper approach

So what *should* our approach to Science be as a Christian?

- Recognize that Science is merely the study of our physical world.
- Distinguish between the facts that Science reveals and the interpretation of those facts.
- Don't reject a verifiably true fact just because it would force you to modify your faith.

Truth is not subject to our Faith. Our Faith is subject to the Truth.
