

CAN THERE BE TRUE SCIENCE WITHOUT TRUE RELIGION?

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Science, philosophy, and religion are considered as limited aspects of a given body of truth. Attention is given to careful definition of each term. Then science and philosophy are discussed as two branches of religion. Faith, reason, and revelation are mentioned with regard to the creation account. The author concludes that Christian thinkers should agree that philosophy may be understood to be the activity of right reason, and science may be said to be the knowledge of things knowable to sensory perception (direct or indirect), and these cannot be studied without reference to religion, but must serve religion which is Christian truth and life.

Introduction

In considering the relationship between science, philosophy and religion, I will pose the basic assumption that only in the framework of Christian orthodoxy can these three categories be seen as limited aspects of a given body of truth, which may be properly distinguished without being seen as in any way repugnant or contradictory to each other.

On any other assumption, both philosophy and science must be seen simply as false religious systems—false not only because they depart from the truth of the Christian religion, but also because they entail a lie. The lie is in renouncing dependence upon religion; for both are inextricably bound up with religion.

Philosophy involves much discussion about all matters religious—matters of the being and nature and attributes of God, a view of origins and a doctrine of destinies, as well as morals and law. Science, while it may not involve discourse about God directly, can proceed as science only when scientists assent to the truth of Christian doctrine regarding universal order.

The orderly universe which must be postulated in all scientific endeavor is the universe made by the eternal Wisdom of God, who is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It is not mere happenstance that the discipline known as science is a product of the Christian society. Science could neither originate nor flourish within the societies of the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Mohamadan, or any other non-Christian system.

To those who might object that modern science is overwhelmingly evolutionary, I would point out, first, that such a statement automatically incorporates a religious error into science, namely the heresy of pantheism, the ancient pagan view of Lucius Varro that God is the "soul of the universe"; and, secondly, I would offer the observation that as long as evolution is taught or studied, there is no science studied.

That is, of course, not to say that a science course may not be divided into two parts: the one concerned with pantheism, or evolution; and the other with the study of the created order as

science. While this may present a mild schizophrenia, an examination of the speculations about evolutionary origins need not blind anyone to a pursuit of a science, which involves the assumption that what is being studied was created by the Eternal Wisdom and Power and Goodness of God. It is to observe, however, the truth of what many college students have said about their course in biology: "We studied very little biology, mostly evolution."

The use of the word "religion" to designate a genus of disciplines, as though there are many religions, came into use very recently and reflects a gross misuse of language. In all European tongues the word "religion" was used to mean Christian monastic life: a "religious" is a monk or a nun. The Order of St. John of Jerusalem, popularly called the Knights of Malta, was known as "The Religion." Certainly even in the United States, at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, religion meant Christianity and nothing else. Freedom of religion meant the governmental guarantee of Christianity: there was to be no interference with its free exercise, or with its assemblies or publications.

Religion as a monastic discipline embraced all learning. Monasticism was the powerhouse of intellectual endeavor and moral guidance for society as a whole, as well as for individuals. Pagan philosophers were read and evaluated. Practical skills were highly cultivated, and there was an active and fruitful pursuit of the knowledge of things created which today is often called science.

It is inconceivable in Christian thought to hold that there is any endeavor of man with which religion is not directly concerned. It is a commonplace to say that theology is the queen of the sciences. Since God is the Creator and Preserver of all that is, it is absurd to imagine that anything can be studied without reference to Himself and what is known about Him.

To departmentalize branches of learning or study in such a way as to exclude religion is to leave the Christian faith. Or to maintain that there are disciplines which may be studied without being controlled by truths about God—that is, theology—is to say there are some things over which God does not rule.

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Two Branches of Religion

Based upon these considerations I will take the position that both philosophy and science are branches of religion. This is the basic relationship of science, philosophy and religion. Where science is held to be outside the purview of religion, it is thereby a branch of false religion, generally atheism.

Anyone who would claim that science is outside religion would be saying that the Creator has nothing to do with what He has created, and nothing observed by the senses need be associated with our Maker. It is not without reason that scientific thought is popularly held to be atheistical, despite the fact that all sound science accords with religion. That philosophy deals with basically religious matters is beyond dispute.

Where this thesis is denied, that is, where philosophy is seen either as independent of religion or hostile to it, and where science is viewed in a similar manner, the fault lies in religious understanding. And the particular fault is that of assuming that religious matters are above and beyond the realm of right reason. Probably no single point of doctrine has aroused more serious controversy in Christendom than the misunderstanding of reason or a wrong evaluation of it. This controversy includes the issue surrounding what is called natural law.

Biblical doctrine is built on the proposition that all truth is one, and that within proper limits truths are made known to man through right reason. Revelation makes known truths which are beyond the powers of reason. It is false, however, to say that therefore revelation and reason are repugnant, or that one has no need of the other, or that revelation confounds right reason, or (and this is most often heard) that faith requires believing that which is unreasonable, or in a God who acts unreasonably.

The Apostles and the early Church Fathers, that is, the great preachers and teachers of the first three centuries of our era, would have been dumbfounded to hear it put forth as Christian doctrine that faith is repugnant to right reason. St. Paul habitually disputed with the Jews and with Jewish scholars to convince them thereby of the reasonableness of the Gospel.

In the oft mentioned sermon to the Stoics and Epicureans on Mars Hill, the Apostle also presented his case in reasonable argument. It is a textbook principle that the first stage of growth in grace centers in reasoning, and depends upon an understanding of articles of belief.

Reason and Faith Related

That right reason is grounded on faith is also a textbook principle of logic. It may be stated simply that the first rule of right reason is to

believe things are what they seem to be. This might be called simply "good faith." It is impossible to learn, or even to talk or listen reasonably, without good faith. Augustine of Hippo was fond of quoting Isaiah (Septuagint), "Unless ye believe, ye shall in no wise understand." Neither Augustine nor Isaiah, nor St. Paul in the famous passage on faith in Hebrews II, says anything about what is to be believed, or whom.

We may therefore assume that they were speaking of good faith—belief that reality is real and not a sham or an illusion.

Both in Romans and in Hebrews, St. Paul declared the first act of faith is something like just good faith. It is to believe in the reasonableness of creation: "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) That is, things that are seen were made *ex nihilo*.

In Romans, having established that "The just shall live by faith," St. Paul immediately turned to creation, and said, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." (Romans 1:20) Right reason applied to what is seen and heard all around, the Apostle argued, should lead any human being to understand the existence of God, His Eternity, and His Power.

Having both sensory perception to see the created order and a mind to reason rightly, it follows that all men who do not give God thanks and worship him as God are "without excuse." This great truth is not a matter of revelation but of right reason, or true philosophy. Christian thinking has thereupon taken the procedures of philosophy in hand to serve right reason and so reach correct conclusions from revealed truth.

Revelation is best defined as the personal testimony of an eyewitness.

Since created minds are, as may be shown by reason, limited and therefore incapable of understanding fully the unlimited and eternal, the only testimony we can receive about heavenly things is that of God Himself—either God the Spirit, or God the Son.

Of the Lord Jesus, John Baptist said, "What he hath seen, and what he hath heard, that he testifieth." (John 3:31, 32) Since He came from heaven, what he hath seen and heard are heavenly things. God The Spirit has spoken through the prophets and He also, as God, testifies of personal knowledge to "the things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:11)

Creation Account Known by Revelation

The account of creation in Genesis is known to man by revelation, that is, by testimony of the

Holy Spirit very possibly given through Adam. Thus the details provided by this inspired record could not be known except they were revealed in this way. But the Spirit also testifies through the Apostle that all men are held accountable for believing through right reason that all things were made. The testimony of what the Holy Spirit saw and heard may be supported by both the disciplines of science and philosophy.

Ancient philosophers, by such reasoning as Aristotle's on cause and effect, showed that right reason demands a first uncaused cause, which is a correct if altogether inadequate way of speaking of God. Just as certainly men who devote themselves to the study of what can be seen and heard and touched, that is, men of science, are driven by their everbroadening observation of design to conclude that there must be a designer.

Just because such philosophical reasoning and such scientific conclusions do not contain an adequate account of God, does not mean that either is contradictory to revelation, or harmful to religion, or that religion can be understood without reference either to sensory perception or right reason.

There is no warrant in St. Paul's warning against ". . . philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men and after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8), for someone to criticize philosophical speculation which is after Christ. Philosophy after the rudi-

ments of this world is obviously philosophical speculation divorced from theology and wedded to temporalities and materialism and exclusive of religion. Such speculation is not built on the processes of right reason, because right reason must take account of spiritual as well as temporal realities.

Those who would imagine that they are somehow placing a limit on God's will and his power by believing there is such a thing as eternal and immutable right reason should be careful lest they find themselves doing away with Him who is the Wisdom of God, the Word of God, the Mind of God, as well as the Power of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Wisdom is immutable. He has made himself known to men as Wisdom and as the Word. Through Wisdom, man comes to know the Father. God's laws are immutable, and He himself cannot will to violate them, even though he may surprise men by doing the unusual or by skipping secondary causes and thus working what we call miracles.

Christian thinkers, then, should agree generally that philosophy may be understood to be the activity of right reason, and science may be said to be the knowledge of things knowable to sensory perception (direct or indirect), and that these cannot be studied without reference to religion, but must serve religion which is Christian truth and life. "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)

A BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A COURSE IN PHYSICAL SCIENCE

EMMETT WILLIAMS AND GEORGE MULFINGER*

(Editor's Note: Since the relationships of science and faith and teleology arise partly at least in connection with schools, the following material should be of special interest to readers who wonder how appropriate discussions might be handled in an actual course in physical science.

Williams and Mulfinger have described methods of treatment of the subject in their forthcoming ninth-grade textbook, Physical Science, expected from the Bob Jones University Press, Greenville, South Carolina 29614, by December 15, 1974. Price, \$11.95.)

Limitations of Science

Physical science needs to be put into a proper perspective for a Christian high school student. The limitations as well as the accomplishments of scientists should be pointed out.

Science is generally overglorified in existing physical science textbooks. But the discipline of science is a human activity, and therefore subject to all the limitations of human nature.

Adhering to a Biblical framework we point out that man is a fallible, fallen creature, severely re-

stricted in what he can ascertain and accomplish. (Isaiah 55:9, I Corinthians 1:18-21, 3:19-21) Yet the many limitations inherent in science are usually glossed over in the standard textbooks. It is important that the student of science be apprised of these shortcomings.

The failure of scientists to explain the nature of such basic things as matter, energy, and gravity, the tentativeness of scientific ideas, and the inability of scientists to make legitimate pronouncements on the subject of origins, are but a few of the many shortcomings that can be made explicit to beginning students.

Observation should be stressed as being the key ingredient of the scientific method. If a

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