



# SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE



## BIBLE CONFERENCE

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## THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR SCIENCE

### INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson I will show that modern science actually is due in large part to Christianity and Christian beliefs. I will detail the seven perceptions needed in order to have “science” as given by Eric Snow, and how Christianity encompasses those perceptions. Finally I give a short list of scientists whose beliefs were “Christian” and the sciences they either founded or advanced.

### MODERN SCIENCE AND CHRISTIANITY:

Most people today, when they think of modern science, think of something that is totally outside of the realm of Biblical research or religious thought. Today's scientist is supposed to look for the natural cause of "things," (e.g. the universe, man, and life itself) apart from any religious view or any filtering through supernatural prejudice. In short, God has no place in science. It has not always been that way. Eric V. Snow, who has written about the role of Christianity in science, points out that modern science is not only compatible with Christianity, but in fact finds its origins in Christianity.

Having said this, how does the average person view the relationship between science and Christianity? Did Christianity help or hamper it? The usually view today is that Christianity is something that hampered it. Snow makes this comment:

"What do we usually think of (Christianity in relation to science)? Usually we think that Christianity actually hindered it, such as the conflict between Galileo and the Roman Catholic Church in the seventeenth century? Or, perhaps, do we think of Thomas Huxley debating<sup>1</sup> evolution with Bishop Wilberforce in the nineteenth century?"

But the actual truth of the matter is that Christianity was a benefit to science. Snow notes that modern science arose among avowedly Christian men, theologians, monks, and professors of Roman Catholic universities and

monasteries. He says that if science gradually arose during the Renaissance and Reformation periods, which it did, how is it that Christianity and science are seen as totally incompatible, and how did science occur? For example, neither Galileo nor Copernicus, both who believed the sun was at the center of the solar system, were skeptics or unbelievers. The remarkable truth is therefore, according to Snow, that the worldview of Biblical Christianity was absolutely necessary for the rise of modern science.

Not only Snow, but Stanley Jaki, who is a well-known Christian apologist, presently teaching at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, says "western science" owes its existence to the Bible. Jaki writes:

"Nothing irks the secular world so much as a hint, let alone a scholarly demonstration, that supernatural revelation, as registered in the Bible, is germane to science. Yet biblical revelation is not only germane to science — it made the only viable birth of science possible. The rise of that science, so crucial for Western man and for the modern world, has distinctly biblical origins."

Jaki makes the point that true science and the Bible do not conflict. He says that science, as we know it, may be a refined form of common sense, but at times it is all too refined and complicated. As a result, the Biblical basis for science becomes obscure. For example, one can give the full truth of the three laws of thermodynamics by saying that, first, you cannot win; second, you cannot break even; third, you cannot even get out of the game.

As a result, those three laws mean that ultimately all physical activity tends toward an absolute standstill. This is true even if the present expansion of the universe were followed by its contraction. The next cycle of expansion and contraction would be less energetic, and the one after that even less so. Jaki says, "Physics, the most exact form of science, tells us, if it tells anything, that all physical processes are part of a one-directional, essentially linear process."

Although science tells us in its laws that things are running down, it was not the first to tell us so. Actually it was the Bible that first revealed that all things were running down. First, in the Genesis account, the world is seen as being under a curse and men being a fallen creature:

Gen. 3:22-24 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Then finally, in the book of Revelation, the world will end in judgment, and a

new Heaven and Earth created:

Rev. 20:11-14 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev. 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

The fact that modern science owes its existence to the Bible and Christianity is not well known even among Christians. Jaki, writes:

"Whether modern man would be willing to learn in detail about the dependence of science on the Bible is strongly doubtful. But Christians will overlook those details only at grave peril in a great cultural contestation where science plays such a prominent role."

### **SEVEN PERCEPTIONS NEED FOR SCIENCE:**

Snow says that in truth, there were seven perceptions of the physical world that needed to exist before the birth of "modern science." All seven of these perceptions are found in the Bible and Christianity.

First, there must be a "linear, potentially quantifiable conception of time that clearly distinguishes past, present, and future." This concept of time promotes a scientific view of nature because there is belief in a cause and effect relationship among the things that exist in nature. In the Bible, this idea comes from the act of God creating the universe from nothing at some specific point of time in the past. The alternative view of time, termed by Snow, the concept of the "Great Year," maintains centuries-long time cycles exist in which the future repeats the past exactly or almost exactly, making progress of any kind theoretically impossible. Snow believes that this idea of time breeds a sense of complacency ("we know it all already") and/or hopelessness, hindering the development of science in a given culture.

Second, if science is to exist, explanations of natural phenomena must come from observable phenomena and not pseudo-scientific "explanations" that really do not describe the causes of events. Snow gives as an example, astrology, which has some scientific basis in that the movement of celestial objects can be predicted, but after that, astrology is devoid of any true science.

Third, Snow writes that modern science is not possible if one believes that there is life in all matter. This idea conceives that all the universe as alive, as if it was one huge organism which goes through the above mentioned cyclical process from birth, to maturity, then death, to be born again. (The tie to pantheism, which I discussed earlier in unbelief systems, is obvious here.)

Fourth, according to Snow, science is hindered if the reality of the basic orderliness of the universe ("the external real world") is denied. Humans will not often investigate carefully what is considered not to really exist, or that which will be changed at whim by the God(s), or nature herself.

Fifth, Snow expands on reason number three, by saying that the heavens (outer space) must not be considered alive, or divine, if a scientific astronomy is to exist.

Sixth, Snow says that in order for modern science to exist, there must be a balance between reason and faith. In other words, it is necessary for "religious" people not to totally reject science or natural laws, and for philosophers/scientists not to totally reject "religious" truth. The scientists who came up through the Renaissance and Reformation held this balance.

Seventh, and finally, Snow says that man needs to be seen as fundamentally different from the rest of nature, as having a mind that makes him qualitatively different from the animals, etc., not just quantitatively different. Snow says, "The foundations for this view are laid in the Judeo-Christian world view in Genesis where man and woman were made in God's likeness and image, and were told they had dominion over the animals (Gen. 1:26-29.)"

According to Snow, as long as "all or most of the false ideas in these areas are believed by a great majority of the intellectuals/wise men of a given culture, a self-sustaining science will not come to exist in a given civilization, especially any true science of bodies moving in the external real world." He noted that some civilizations had all or most of these false ideas, such as Hindu India, while others had fewer of them (China), and others still fewer (Islam). (The corresponding growth or lack of growth in these societies is a matter of documented history.)

As a result, the Muslim progressed in science further as compared to the other two in direct proportion to his acceptance of the seven perceptions, and the second more than the first. On the other hand, Snow points out, Hindu science concerning the material world was hampered by almost all of the faulty intellectual ideas (e.g. the external real world and its orderliness were denied, eternal cycles and the view that life was in all the material universe view of nature were held, and the heavens were seen as divine). In addition, Islamic science would have become a self-sustaining possibly if the Koran had not emphasized God's will and power so much as against His reason, and if Muslim philosophers and scientists had not become so "mesmerized" by Aristotle's physics and philosophy.

Jaki also makes the point that science owes to the Bible and the Christian faith "the very spark" that made Newtonian science possible." It does so because Newtonian science is based on the three laws of motion (cause and effect). Once those laws were formulated, "a science was at hand which from that point on

developed on its own terms, with no end to its progress, with no end to its ever new findings...."

Jaki says the seed of Newton's first law is seen more than three hundred years before Newton:

"The formulation of the first law preceded Newton by more than three hundred years. It first appears in the commentaries on Aristotle's book on cosmology, *On the Heavens*, which John Buridan gave at the Sorbonne around 1348. By then many other medieval philosophers had commented on that book and radically disagreed with Aristotle's claim that the universe was eternal, and that the celestial sphere rotated eternally. The Aristotelian world machine is a perpetual motion machine. As such it blocks the possibility of perceiving an absolute beginning for physical motion. It was, however, this perception that sparked Buridan's insight. Buridan said, 'in the beginning when God made the heavens and the earth, he gave a certain quantity of motion to all celestial bodies, which quantity they keep because they move in an area where there is no friction.' This is, of course, an uncanny anticipation of Newton's first law, the law of inertial motion. Only after that first law had been formulated was it possible to think about the other two laws."

Jaki quotes Whitehead who says:

"It is no coincidence that science sprang, not from Ionian metaphysics, not from the Brahmin-Buddhist-Taoist East, not from the Egyptian-Mayan astrological South, but from the heart of the Christian West, that although Galileo fell out with the Church, he would hardly have taken so much trouble studying Jupiter and dropping objects from towers if the reality and value and order of things had not first been conferred by belief in the Incarnation."

Jaki makes this final observation, "Whether a dent will be made on that resistance to the biblical origins of Western science depends, first, on the Bible being read intelligently and, second, on the history of science being studied sedulously (zealously). Both are needed if one is to make not so much a spirited, but an intellectually respectable case on behalf of the biblical origins of Western science."

### **THEISTIC SCIENTISTS:**

Snow's and Jaki's reasoning is backed up by the fact, as has been mentioned to a certain degree already, that many of the greatest scientists of the past were not only creationists, but many were also "Bible Believing" Christians. They believed that God had supernaturally created all things, each with its own complex structure

for its own unique purpose. They believed that, as scientists, they were learning to understand and control the laws and processes of nature for God's glory and man's good. They believed and practiced science in exactly the same way that a modern "theistic scientist" would do. These scientists also seemed to maintain a proper "scientific attitude" for it was these men (such as Newton, Pasteur, Linnaeus, Faraday, Pascal, Lord Kelvin, Maxwell, Kepler, etc.) whose research, discovery, and analysis led to the laws and concepts of science which brought about our modern age.

It should also be noted that they were not only committed to theism and creationism because it was all that they knew. Indeed many of the greatest scientists of all time were contemporaries of Darwin (Pasteur, Lord Kelvin and Maxwell to name a few) and strong opponents of him as well. That means that much of what Darwin had to say was repudiated by his contemporaries. Even those who lived before Darwin were opponents of earlier evolutionary schemes, not to mention such things as polytheism and pantheism. This fact has been erased from the "memory" of the 21st century. Strobel makes this comment concerning his research:

"As a high school and university student studying evolution, I was never told that there were credible scientists who harbored significant skepticism toward Darwinian theory. I had been under the impression that it was only know-nothing pastors who objected to evolution on the grounds that it contradicted the Bible's claims. I wasn't aware that, according to historian Peter Bowler, substantive scientific critiques of natural selection started so early that by 1900 its opponents were convinced it would never recover."

Below I have listed just a few of the many "big name" "theistic" scientists who helped establish scientific fields of study. As you can see these men are well known and laid the foundation for the work that was to follow in the 20th and 21st centuries:

SCIENTIST	FIELD OF STUDY
Joseph Lister (1827-1912)	Antiseptic surgery
Louis Pasteur (1822-1895)	Bacteriology
Isaac Newton (1642-1727)	Calculus
Johannes Kepler (1571-1630)	Celestial mechanics
Johannes Kepler (1571-1630)	Physical astronomy
Robert Boyle (1627-1691)	Chemistry
Robert Boyle (1627-1691)	Gas Dynamics
Charles Babbage (1792-1871)	Computer Science
James C. Maxwell (1831-1879)	Electrodynamics

Isaac Newton (1642-1727)	Dynamics
Michael Faraday (1791-1867)	Electronics,
Michael Faraday (1791-1867)	Field theory
Lord Kelvin (1824-1907)	Energetics
Henri Fabre (1823-1915)	Entomology of insects
William Herschel(1738-1833)	Galactic astronomy
Gregor Mendel (1822-1884)	Genetics
Leonardo da Vinci(1452-1519)	Hydraulics
David Brewster (1781-1868)	Optical mineralogy
John Woodward (1665-1728)	Paleontology
Rudolph Virchow (1821-1902)	Pathology
James Joule (1818-1889)	Thermodynamics
John Ray (1627-1705)	Natural history
Humphrey Davy (1778-1832)	Thermokinetics
Louis Agassiz (1807-1873)	Glacial geology

### CONCLUSION:

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