

Faith and Science

Edwin Chong
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For since the creation of the world
God's invisible qualities—his eternal
power and divine nature—have been
clearly seen, being understood from
what has been made, so that men
are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

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Outline

- Importance of the issue
- What exactly is science?
- Views on faith and science
- Discussions
- More on Bible and science
- Intelligent design movement
- Practical Pointers
- Discussions

Importance of the Issue

Importance of the Issue

- The interaction of faith and science is taken to be one of *Christianity* and *reason*.
- Impacts our dialogue with the non-Christian world.
(Christian vs. non-Christian)
- Impacts our dialogue within the Christian world.
(Christian vs. Christian)

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Christian vs. non-Christian

- “Because Christians are interested in the truth and because they are called to proclaim and defend their views to an unbelieving world, it is important for the believing community to think carefully about how to integrate their carefully formed theological beliefs with a careful evaluation of the “deliverances” of science ...”
[J. P. Moreland, in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*]
- “We must show our Scriptures not to be in conflict with whatever [our critics] can demonstrate about the nature of things from reliable sources.” [Augustine]

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Newsweek, April 9, 2007

- Cover page: “Is God Real? Rick Warren & Sam Harris Face Off”



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Sam Harris quotes



- There is so much about us that is not in the Bible. Every specific science from cosmology to psychology to economics has surpassed and superseded what the Bible tells us is true about our world.
- Whatever is true about us isn't Christian. And it isn't Muslim. Physics isn't Christian, though it was invented by Christians. Algebra isn't Muslim, even though it was invented by Muslims. Whenever we get at the truth, we transcend culture, we transcend our upbringing. The discourse of science is a good example of where we should hold out hope for transcending our tribalism.

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Rick Warren quotes



- I believe [the Bible is] inerrant in what it claims to be. The Bible does not claim to be a scientific book in many areas.
- I believe in both faith and reason. The more we learn about God, the more we understand how magnificent this universe is. There is no contradiction to it.

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Christian vs. Christian

- Creation-evolution debate.
- Variety of views within Christendom
 - See next slide.
- Why is there such a variety of views?

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Views on Creation-Evolution

Views on Genesis

- 24-hour view
- Day-age view
- Framework view

[*The Genesis Debate*, 2001]

Creation Models

- Young earth (recent) creationism
- Old earth (progressive) creationism
- Theistic evolution (evolutionary creationism)

[*Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, 1999]

What Exactly is Science?

What is Science Anyway?

- Knowledge of truth?
- What scientists do?
- Application of rationality and reason to what we can observe about the world?

Some Common Definitions

- Scientific = focuses on the natural world, is guided by natural laws, and/or explains by reference to natural law.
- Scientific = can be tested against the empirical world.
- Scientific = held tentatively.
- Scientific = falsifiable.
- Scientific = measurable or quantifiable.
- Scientific = predicts new test results.
- Scientific = repeatable.
- Which is right?
- All are inadequate!
[J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science*]

Example: Natural Selection

- “Natural selection—a differential, greater survival and reproduction of some genetic variants within a population under an existing environmental state—has no specific direction or goal, including survival of a species.”
[NABT Statement on Teaching Evolution]

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Example: Randomness

- Is this sequence of numbers random?
3141592654...
- Can do statistical test for “goodness of fit”.
- Indistinguishable from a sequence of independent sequence of uniform decimal digits.
- But these are digits from the decimal expansion of π , the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.

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Views on Faith & Science

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Views on Faith & Science

- Two realms view
- Complementarity view
- Direct interaction view
- Presuppositional view
- Practical application view

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Two Realms View

- Faith and science involve two distinct, non-overlapping areas of truth.
- Example:
Faith – God gives purpose to life
Science – organic chemistry

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Complementarity View

- Faith and science offer non-interacting, complementary approaches to the same reality.
- Adopt very different standpoints, ask and answer very different questions.
- Example:
Faith – God created life on earth
Science – Describes the process by which life on earth came about

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Direct Interaction View

- Faith and science may directly interact in such a way that either offers rational support for the other or raises rational difficulties for the other.
- Example (support): Big Bang theory tends to support Biblical understanding that the universe had a beginning.
- Example (conflict): Theory of evolution raises difficulties for creation claims.

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Presuppositional View

- Faith tends to support the presuppositions of science, and vice versa.
- Example: Christian theism supports presuppositions of science: existence of truth, rational orderly nature of reality, adequacy of our sensory and cognitive faculties as tools for studying the natural world.
- Example: Correspondence theory of truth offers justification for some presuppositions of theology.

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Practical Application View

- Faith fills out, adds details to, and helps us apply the general principles of science, and vice versa.
- Example: Scripture teaches that fathers should not provoke their children; psychology adds details about what this means by studying family systems and nature/causes of anger.

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Views of Science in Creation-Evolution Debate

- Young earth creationists tend to adopt the direct interaction view.
- Theistic evolutionists tend to adopt the complementarity view.
- Some reject the debate because they adopt the two realms view.
- Where do *you* stand?

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Methodological Naturalism

- A “rule” of science: In science, use only natural explanations for what we observe.
- Contrast to *metaphysical* naturalism: The natural world is all of reality.
- Is methodological naturalism reasonable?

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Scientific Hegemony

- “[T]he monolithic intellectual authority of science, coupled with the belief that special creationism is religion not science, means that evolution is the only view of origins that can claim the backing of reason. In our sensate culture, science and science alone has unqualified intellectual acceptance.” [J. P. Moreland, in *Three Views ...*]
- If this is true, perhaps we’ve been “brainwashed” into going along with the scientific community on matters in which we need not.

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Discussion Time

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Bible and Science

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Bible and Science

- What should we do if science appears to conflict with the Bible?
- How do we know if science conflicts with the Bible?

Role of Biblical Interpretation

- “If it happens that the authority of Sacred Scripture is set in opposition to clear and certain reasoning, this must mean that the person who interprets Scripture does not understand it correctly. It is not the meaning of Scripture which is opposed to the truth but the meaning which he has wanted to give it.” [Augustine]

Exegetical Considerations

- Purpose of the author.
- Variety of genres.
- Precision of description.
 - 1 Kings 7:23
- Ambiguity of language.
 - Isaiah 52:14
- Phenomenological language.
 - Ecclesiastes 1:5
- Hyperbolic language.
 - Matthew 19:24

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Miracles and Science

- Can we believe both in science and in miracles?
- Under certain assumptions, the answer is *no*.
- Under what assumptions?
- See my paper on “[Defending the Historicity of Jesus Christ: An Examination of the Jesus Seminar](http://www.engr.colostate.edu/~echong/pubs/apologetics)”
[www.engr.colostate.edu/~echong/pubs/apologetics]

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From the website of: *Pagan Origins of the Christ Myth (POCM)*



A scholarly and handsome reader Kicks POCM's Ass



Edwin K. P. Chong, Ph.D.
www.edwinchong.us
Professor of Electrical and
Computer Engineering
Professor of Mathematics
Fellow of the IEEE

to which Greg says

[Defending the Historicity of Jesus Christ: An Examination of the Jesus Seminar](#)

When applied to the consideration of miracles, key to the Jesus Seminar's analyses of the Gospels, naturalism leads inevitably to the conclusion that miracles must be relegated to the realm of magic. This sentiment is clear in the following typical dialog:

Is it possible Jesus resurrection was real? No, it isn't; at least not rationally and scientifically. Resurrections are magical. Resurrections are miraculous. Magic and miracle aren't

Dr Chong's misunderstands POCM's point. He thinks,

"The argument goes something like this:

1. The Gospels record the occurrence of miracles.
2. This is to be expected, because the Gospel authors have a vested interest in the propagation of such stories. They are fabrications with the goal to suggest that God exists.
3. Therefore, the Gospels are false."

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POCM's Response

- "It *is* possible to believe in miracles. But it is not possible then to claim the dignity and credibility of civilized rational thought. **Miracles are a fundamentally stone age, pre-rational, idea.** Have "faith in miracles," and you're standing on the side of the room with Zeus, and Baal, and the naked Pagan cannibals."

[www.medmalexperts.com/POCM/the_end_sailboat_in_the_basement.html#kpa]

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Intelligent Design Movement

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Intelligent Design Movement

- “The theory of intelligent design holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection.”

[www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign]

- ID does not just claim that the universe came about by intelligent design.
- ID asserts that intelligent design is “detectable” through scientific processes.

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ID and Evolution?

- **Is intelligent design theory incompatible with evolution?**
It depends on what one means by the word "evolution." If one simply means "change over time," or even that living things are related by common ancestry, then there is no inherent conflict between evolutionary theory and intelligent design theory. However, the dominant theory of evolution today is neo-Darwinism, which contends that evolution is driven by natural selection acting on random mutations, an unpredictable and purposeless process that "has no discernable direction or goal, including survival of a species." (NABT Statement on Teaching Evolution). It is this specific claim made by neo-Darwinism that intelligent design theory directly challenges.
[\[www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign\]](http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign)

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Is Design Detectable?

- Intelligent design theory is simply an effort to empirically detect whether the "apparent design" in nature acknowledged by virtually all biologists is genuine design (the product of an intelligent cause) or is simply the product of an undirected process such as natural selection acting on random variations.
[\[www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign\]](http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign)

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Practical Pointers

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Practical Pointers

- Develop an overall position.
- Understand the importance of the topic.
- Explore your philosophy of science.
- Study Scripture and theology *rigorously*.
- Understand epistemology.

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Discussion Time

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Further Reading

- J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science*, Baker Book House, 1989.
- *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, J. P. Moreland and J. M. Reynolds, Eds., Zondervan 1999.

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