

Can We Reconcile the Bible and Science?

Peter Ditzel

There is a move today to reconcile the Bible and science. This can sound like a good and reasonable goal. But can we really reconcile "Thus saith the Lord" with "It has been scientifically proven"? Should we even want to try?

When it comes to the practical value of science, there's not really a problem. Christians not only use the technological advances that science has made possible, but many also work in fields of science. Whether a research chemist believes in evolution or creation, for example, makes no real difference to the work the chemist does. But what about when science claims to tell us of the origins of the universe and of life—and, thus, unavoidably steps into the question of the meaning of human life—or alleges that its model of the universe is true? Is it possible to somehow reconcile this with the Bible?

Debate

Debate is one way that people have used to try to iron out the differences between science and the Bible. Of course, it could be argued that it is used at least as often to try to, not iron out the differences, but hammer down the opposition. But has debate ever really been able to either square the differences between science and the Bible or convince one side or the other that it is wrong?

A debate on February 4, 2014, between Bill Nye (known as "Bill Nye the Science Guy") and Ken Ham, president of Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum, made world headlines. The topic of the debate was, "Is creation a viable model of origins in today's modern, scientific era?" Nye defended science, Ham the Bible. Many called the debate a draw, some said that Bill Nye clearly won, and others called Ken Ham the winner. Interestingly, some people who disagree with creationism nevertheless said that Nye lost because he tried to use scientific evidence to debate religious dogma. Writing on the *Daily Beast* (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/02/05/the-bill-nye-ken-ham-debate-was-a-nightmare-for-science.html>), Michael Schulson makes a good point: "Nye never had a chance. Ham won this debate months ago, when Nye agreed to participate."

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I say they both lost, and that it was a hopeless cause from the start. The reason I say this is that, not only was Ken Ham arguing from dogma, so was Bill Nye. This is because both the Bible and science are based on unprovable axioms. I discuss this at greater length in, "How can I prove the Bible true?" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/bibletrueqa.htm>), but I will just mention that both are believed by faith. It's just that the Christian's faith is a miracle from God.

I sometimes liken the Christian's gift of faith, imperfectly of course, to what happened to Richard Dreyfuss's character in the film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. When he had his encounter with the spacecraft, the aliens put something into his mind to recognize Devil's Tower, Wyoming, and to want to be there for their arrival. Nothing anyone did or said would convince him to give it up. Our faith is something like that. Once God puts it into our minds, we believe the Gospel, and nothing scientists say will convince us otherwise. And we won't convince them either. My point here is that as long as both sides stick to their axioms, neither side is going to convince the other, and there can be no reconciling the two.

Nevertheless, if I can put my tongue in my cheek for a minute, from the perspective of sheer shrewdness and economics, Ken Ham triumphed over Bill Nye. This is because the debate helped Ham raise the money he needed to build a replica of Noah's Ark for his Creation Museum. So, by agreeing to the debate, Bill Nye actually helped to fund his opponent's organization. Thus, Ham proved reverse evolution by making a monkey out of Nye.

Let Us Reason Together

There are people and organizations that seek to resolve the differences between science and the Bible through open dialog and the free exchange of ideas. This can certainly sound good. But what usually happens is that either no progress is made or someone compromises. But there can be no real resolving of the differences between science and the Bible because the differences are absolutely fundamental. Science posits a godless universe that came about by chance and natural law and which has no purpose. The Bible describes a universe that was designed and created by personal God for a purpose. It is simply not possible to bridge such a gap. As theoretical physicist and cosmologist Lawrence M. Krauss says, "Science is only truly consistent with an atheistic worldview with regards to the claimed miracles of the gods of Judaism, Christianity and Islam" ("*God and Science Don't Mix*") (<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB124597314928257169>).

The Bible teaches us of a personal and loving God; science teaches us of an impersonal and hostile universe.

If you think that these differences can somehow be reconciled, ask a scientist this question: "A man is killed by crucifixion in front of witnesses. A Roman soldier then jams a spear into his side so that he loses his blood and bodily fluids. Two men then cover his body with spices and wrap it like a mummy and put it into a tomb. As a scientist, do you believe that there is a scientific basis for believing that this man bodily returned to life and exited his tomb, and not only that, but returned to such a life that he could suddenly, at will, appear in locked rooms and then disappear and that he could rise into the air? And, by the way, since the body is gone and this all occurred a couple of thousand years ago, there's no physical evidence." I think the scientist's answer will show you that Christianity and science cannot be reconciled.

You see, this is what it comes down to. As Christians and scientists try to come to some common understanding over Genesis 1:1 and the big bang, Creation and evolution, the Flood and eons of time recorded in the fossil record, design and blind chance, they are ignoring that science rejects the death and resurrection of the man-God Jesus Christ. And isn't that, after all, the real crux of Christianity? Have we fulfilled the commission Jesus has given us if we spend thousands or millions of dollars to persuade someone that the earth is only six thousand years old but he doesn't trust in Jesus Christ as His Savior? No! And I am completely unconvinced that getting someone to believe in the Creation is a necessary step in getting him to believe the Gospel. As James says, even the demons believe in the one God of the Bible and shudder (James 2:19), but they don't believe in Jesus as their Savior.

Believing the Gospel is a miracle that God bestows on a person, and He can do it despite whatever that person believes at the moment. When we try to win converts by arguing with them over scientific beliefs, we are ignoring the Holy Spirit's part in preparing people to be receptive to the Gospel.

This is what Jesus said about the work of the Holy Spirit:

When he has come, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment; about sin, because they don't believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to my Father, and you won't see me

any more; about judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged.

John 16:8-11

The word "convict" is translated from the Greek word *elegchō*. Writing of this word in *The Greek Testament*, Henry Alford explains, "It is difficult to give in one word the deep meaning: 'convince' approaches perhaps the nearest to it, but does not express the double sense of [*elegchō*], which is manifestly here intended—of a convincing unto salvation, and a convicting unto condemnation:—'reprove' is far too weak, conveying merely the idea of an objective rebuke, whereas [*elegchō*] reaches into the heart, and works subjectively in both the above-mentioned ways." In other words, the Holy Spirit convicts/convinces those to whom He is sent of their sin, and of the righteousness of Jesus Christ proven by His resurrection and acceptance by the Father, and of the fact of God's judgment because He has judged Satan, the prince of this world. Thus, God grants the dual gifts of repentance and faith (Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8). Our part is to preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16). The Creation can be discussed among Christians as they study the Bible, but God never intended it to be a means of evangelizing.

By the way, withdrawing from the debate does not mean that we Christians must live in the dark ages or in some sort of fairyland, as has been suggested. It also does not mean that we are abusing our children to teach them the Bible or that they will grow up good for nothing but digging in the mud, and it does not mean that Christians will ruin the global competitiveness of their nations. Such suggestions are idiotic and ignore European and American history and current events. Christians can be and are as intelligent and intellectual as anyone else, and they hold many jobs in the sciences and are responsible for many advances in science and technology.

But we are wasting our time and resources when we try to either debate or reason with atheistic science. The effort distracts us from what we are supposed to be doing—preaching the Gospel.