



SCIENCE AND FAITH ARE THEY COMPATIBLE?

Martin Walker

Overview

- Two anniversaries
- My personal story
- Christianity and Judaism have a long tradition of seeking after wisdom & knowledge
- The limits of science
- Facing up to the challenge of Jesus Christ

November 11th: Veterans Day & Remembrance Day



October 31, 1517: Martin Luther



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Before we start....

- I'm a chemistry professor – but I don't know everything about science!
- I'm a Christian, but not an expert on philosophy or theology.
- This presentation is a personal one that describes my own particular faith journey and viewpoints, and others may see things differently.

At age 11

Faith

- I was drawn to Christians at my school, who seemed to be different, good people.
- I was challenged by the person of Christ. I believed there could be someone outside of ourselves, a great Creator who is Love.
- I gave my life to Christ, and began a journey of faith that continues today.

Science

- I became fascinated by the order in nature, and wanted to understand it.
- I was particularly drawn to chemistry, which allows us to change the very essence of what something is.
- I decided I wanted to become a chemist, and began a journey that continues today.

No coincidence in my view!

- Faith and science - two sides of the same coin?
- No conflict – both reflect the nature of God in our World
 - In Astronomy?
 - In Evolution?
 - In Chemistry?
- Solomon was rewarded by God for choosing wisdom

Seeking after wisdom – understanding knowledge

Proverbs 3:13-14

*¹³ Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,
¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.*

What type of wisdom? Proverbs 3:19-20

*¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations,
by understanding he set the heavens in place;
²⁰ by his knowledge the watery depths were divided,
and the clouds let drop the dew.*



Understanding, mural by Robert Lewis Reid.
US Library of Congress, public domain
Inscribed with Proverbs 4:7
⁷The beginning of wisdom is this: Get
wisdom. Though it cost all you have,
get understanding.

Solomon's words

from Wisdom of Solomon 7 (Apocrypha)

*¹⁵ May God grant me to speak with judgment,
and to have thoughts worthy of what I have received;
for he is the guide even of wisdom
and the corrector of the wise.*

*¹⁶ For both we and our words are in his hand,
as are all understanding and skill in crafts.*

*¹⁷ For it is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists,
to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements;*

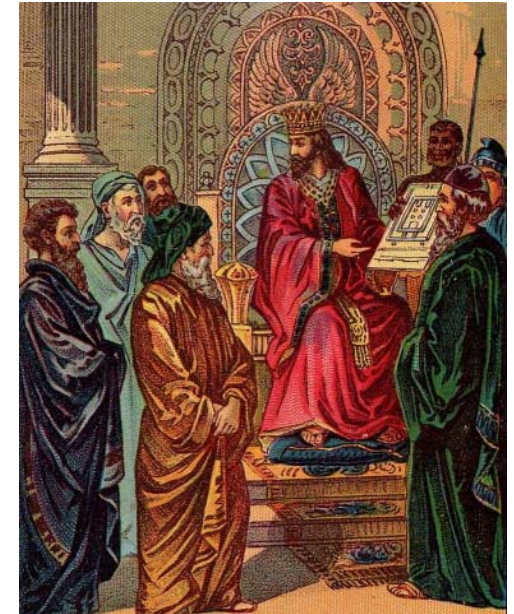
*¹⁸ the beginning and end and middle of times,
the alternations of the solstices and the changes of the seasons,*

¹⁹ the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars,

*²⁰ the natures of animals and the tempers of wild animals,
the powers of spirits^[a] and the thoughts of human beings,
the varieties of plants and the virtues of roots;*

²¹ I learned both what is secret and what is manifest,

²² for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me.



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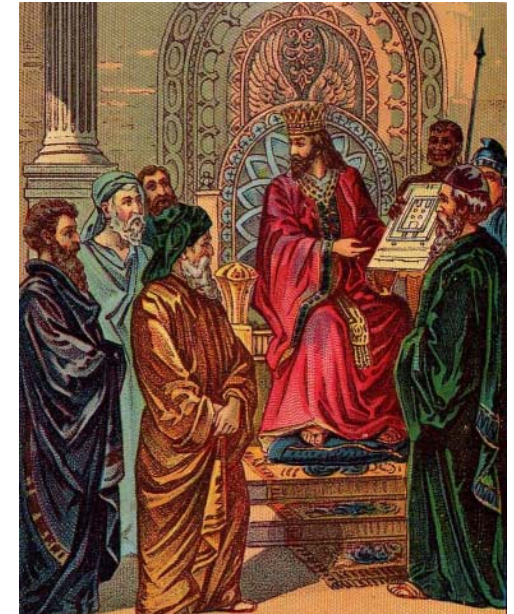
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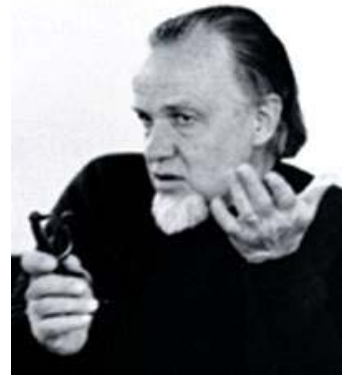


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Christians should not fear science!

- *"The ancients were afraid that if they went to the end of the earth they would fall off and be consumed by dragons. But once we understand that Christianity is true to what is there, true to the ultimate environment - the infinite, personal God who is really there - then our minds are freed. We can pursue any question and can be sure that we will not fall off the end of the earth."*

— [Francis A. Schaeffer](#) (Christian philosopher), [Art & the Bible](#)



Francis Schaeffer
Fair use, from
www.pcanet.org/history/

But....

- Atheists like to try and use science & logic to “disprove” the existence of God



Christopher Hitchens debating religion in Toronto, 2010

[Picture](#) by [Andrew Rusk](#), CC-BY-SA

Isn't Christianity just a nice story made up for weak-minded fools?

- There are lots of “God stories” around the world. Most religions believe that they have the truth, but they can't all be right.
- If they can't all be right, they must all be wrong.

QED?



Picture by [E Hansen](#), CC-BY-SA

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Couldn't it just be that all cultures are seeking God in whatever way they can?



Picture by [E Hansen](#), CC-BY-SA

Isn't Christianity just a silly old myth that's been disproved by scientists?

- Richard Dawkins, British biologist and prominent atheist:

"Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence."

- My mother:

"Surely you can't believe all that nonsense about Jonah and the whale, and things like that?"

- Faith deals mostly with things that cannot be scientifically proven
- Science defines everything, so since faith can never be proven, it must be false.

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QED? Does science really define everything?



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Faith and science

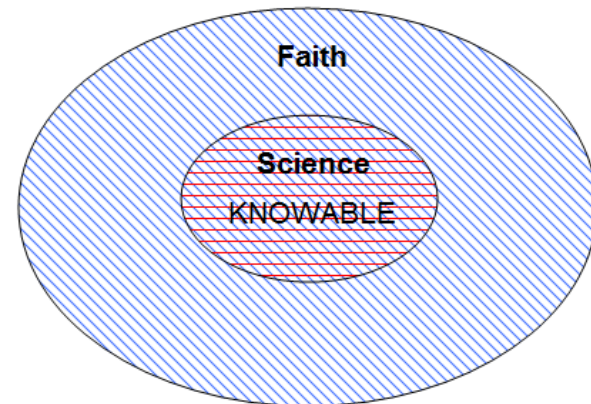
Faith

- Faith covers the observable and non-observable.
- Can't be tested using scientific methods

*"Science without religion is lame;
religion without science is blind."*
Albert Einstein

Science

- Science simply deals with the observable world.
- Makes predictions, testable

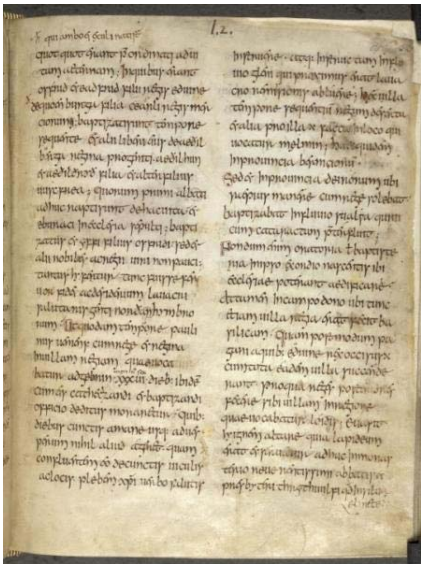


How Christianity came to Saxon England



- In 627 AD Edwin, high king of all England, called a council of elders at Yeavering, near Ad Gefrin, to consider the adoption of Christianity.
- His chief priest, Coifi, denounced his pagan beliefs: *"I verily declare to you that the religion which we have hitherto professed has, as afar as I can learn, no virtue in it."* He went on to profane his own altars.
- However, the winning argument came from one of his elders:

The story of the sparrow



- The present life of man, O king, seems to me, in comparison of that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If, therefore, this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed.
- (*Bede, Book II, chapter 13*)

BEFORE BIRTH

LIFE ON EARTH

AFTER DEATH

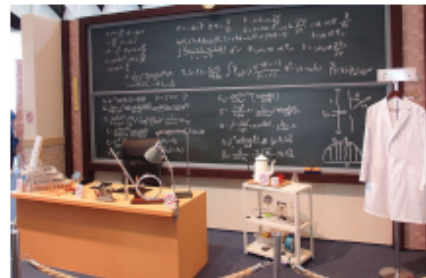
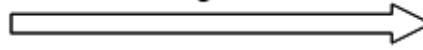


[Image](#): Public domain
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UNKNOWABLE

KNOWABLE

UNKNOWABLE



Christ's disciple, Peter, also saw this:

- *⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*
- *⁶⁷ "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.*
- *⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."*

John 6:66-69

Why Jesus?

- Historical evidence for the existence of Christ is very strong (*though we can never "prove" Christianity!*).
- If Christ never existed, where did Christianity come from? Why were so many early Christians willing to die for their faith?

For me, the person of Jesus – an incarnation of God on Earth, on Earth to live a perfect life and to save humankind – is a challenge I must face. I can't try to hide behind "scientism".



APPENDIX

Pictures

Most pictures are prepared by myself.
All others are CC-BY-SA or public domain

- [File:Passer domesticus flying.jpg](#)
- [Science lecture room](#)

Science helps us separate fact from fantasy & superstition

Proverbs 15:14

- ¹⁴ *The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.*



Earth from space

[Picture](#) by NASA, public domain



Sculpture of Atlas, Santiago de Compostela.

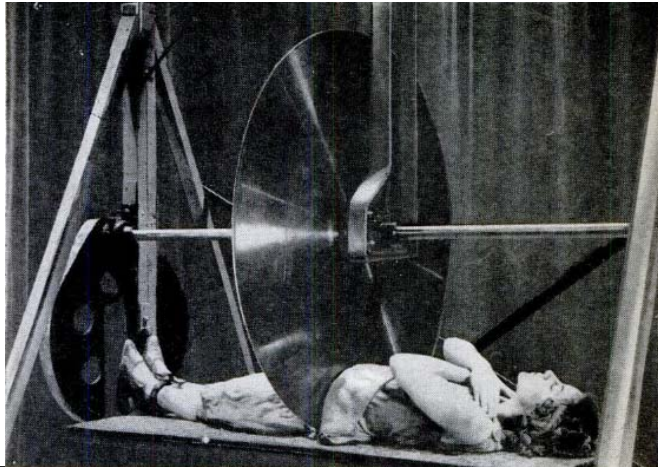
[Picture](#) by Luis Miguel Bugallo Sánchez, CC-BY-SA 3.0

Folly = foolishness

DECEPTION

Proverbs 14:8

⁸ The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.



Picture in public domain

LISTENING TO ONESELF

Proverbs 19:2

² Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.



Picture (caricature) of William Archibald Spooner
From Vanity Fair
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