

# Introduction

SCIENCE AND RELIGION ARE intertwined like DNA. Science and religion provide two perspectives on reality that speak to life's most fundamental issues: purpose, meaning, and morality. "The Truth About Science and Religion" examines pressing issues at the intersection of science and religion by following the chronological unfolding of the universe. At the heart of many of these issues lies the central question of what being human means.

Science has become a powerful force that influences the way people think about religious issues. Extraordinary advances in science over the last two centuries have revolutionized physics, chemistry, and biology. More recently, evolutionary biology, genetics, and neuroscience have pushed the conventional boundaries of experiments with living systems. Several scientific discoveries have challenged historic theological positions through a greater understanding of reality on the one hand and through the development of techniques capable of manipulating the creation of living systems on the other. Addressing the religious ramifications of these scientific advances requires a clear understanding of both the main scientific ideas and the implications of these ideas for classical theology.

Each chapter begins by delving into the science fundamental to discussion between the scientific and religious ideas. In some chapters a rather brief introduction is all that is necessary whereas other chapters, such as the discussion of Big Bang cosmology, requires greater introduction. The style is to fairly evaluate the major themes as objectively as possible. Ideas from science that challenge conventional religious dogma are examined with the same level of criticism as religious implications

of scientific discoveries. Although some author bias is inevitable, with the author having stated Christian convictions (see the epilogue), the intention is to provide a balanced presentation rather than presenting a compelling case for specific Christian beliefs or a scientific position.

Beginning with the Big Bang, the book examines the religious implications inherent in cosmology and evolution. Despite a widespread perception that science and religion are antagonists, history shows that science's development was often motivated by religious belief. Although religious motives are usually absent from recent scientific pursuits, the discoveries often raise valuable questions that impinge on religious belief. Does the vanishingly small chance of a Big Bang point to the absence or presence of God? Does natural selection render God redundant or is the exploration of biological forms under divine guidance? Following the evolution of modern *Homo sapiens* and the differences between humans and their hominoid predecessors, the book explores the religious dimension by focusing on good, evil, and morality. How these religious issues relate to science is examined through consideration of the life of Jesus Christ. Christ's life and teaching raises questions central to understand prayer, miracles, and the resurrection in light of modern science.

Historically, modern scientific discovery blossomed in Europe in Christian cultures that were undergoing tremendous religious change. Many early scientists held strong Christian convictions, viewing scientific study as a way to a true understanding of the world and an insight into God's character. Following the lives of several major scientists, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Darwin, and Einstein, provides a brief history of science to show the influence of personal religious convictions, positive and negative, on scientific discovery. For Kepler, religious convictions provided the motivation for astronomical discovery, whereas deeper scientific study into biological evolution led Darwin from the priesthood to agnosticism.

New findings, particularly from physics and biology, are revealing a much stranger world than expected. The sun does not rise, man is genetically almost indistinguishable from advanced primates, and time and space are not what they seem. Advances in neuroscience reveal insight into human identity, causing a reappraisal of not only what being human means but personhood—the state of being a person with human characteristics and feelings. Understanding what or who controls the mental traffic in the brain impinges directly on fundamental issues of

self-awareness, free will, and what happens at death. Science and religion are not only intertwined but provide mutually beneficial ways of knowing.

*The Truth about Science and Religion* provides a tour of how the world came to be and a framework for approaching existential questions. The book is intended to stimulate personal reflection more than providing an intellectual exercise, furnishing knowledge for personal reflection that in turn challenges core beliefs and provokes changes in behavior. Each chapter concludes with an overview that leads into a series of discussion questions for personal reflection or through a group dialogue of the religious or spiritual topics. The hope is that engagement with the ideas will facilitate individuals in developing a holistic religious and scientific mental framework for understanding of the world.

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