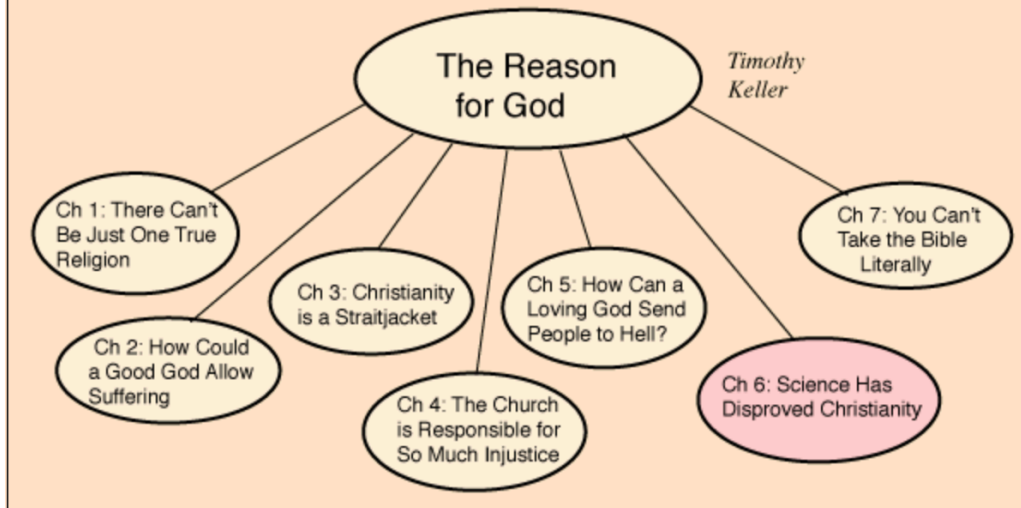


The Reason for God

Timothy Keller

Chapter 6: Science Has Disproved Christianity.



Aren't Miracles Scientifically Impossible?

People may think that science has disproved religion because they observe that "most of the major faiths believe in miracles, the intervention of God into the natural order. The miraculous is particularly important for Christian belief. Christians annually celebrate the miracle of the incarnation ... each Christmas and the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead each Easter."

The statement "Science has proven that there is no such thing as miracles." is definitely not a scientific statement. It is a leap of faith. "science is only equipped to test for natural causes and cannot speak to any others." is a reasonable statement.

"science proves that no other causes could possibly exist." is not a reasonable statement.

John Macquarrie "Science proceeds on the assumption that whatever events occur in the world can be accounted for in terms of other events ... Miracle is irreconcilable with our modern understanding of both science and history."

"when studying a natural event, the scientist must always assume there is a natural cause. That is because natural causes are the only kind its methodology can address."

"There would be no experimental model for testing the statement: 'No supernatural cause for any natural phenomenon is possible.' It is therefore a philosophical presupposition and not a scientific finding."

Alvin Plantinga "Macquarrie perhaps means to suggest that the very practice of science requires that one reject the idea (e.g.) of God raising someone from the dead. [This] argument ... is like the drunk who insisted on looking for his lost car keys only under the streetlight on the grounds that the light was better there. In fact, it would go the drunk one better: it would insist that because the keys would be hard to find in the dark, they must be under the light."

Isn't Science in Conflict with Christianity?

<p>"It is common to believe today that there is a war going on between science and religion." The media needs conflicts. It gives wide publicity to battles between secular and religious people. Dawkins, Harris and the other militant atheists capitalize on this and assert that you must either be scientific and rational or religious, not both.</p> <p>Much attention focuses on evolution. "One young medical student said to me, 'The Bible denies evolution, which most educated people accept. It bothers me terribly ...'"</p>	<p>Keller "Evolutionary science assumes that more complex life forms evolved from less complex life forms through a process of natural selection. Many Christians believe that God brought about life this way. For example, the Catholic church, the largest church in the world, has made official pronouncements supporting evolution as being compatible with Christian belief."</p>
<p>"Christians may believe in evolution as a process without believing in 'philosophical naturalism'- the view that everything has a natural cause and that organic life is solely the product of random forces guided by no one."</p>	<p>"When evolution is turned into an All-encompassing Theory explaining absolutely everything we believe, feel and do as the product of natural selection, then we are not in the arena of science, but of philosophy."</p>
<p>Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, states the view in his book "The Language of God" that the genetic code is part of the "language of God" with which He spoke life into existence. Collins is a devout evangelical Christian. While taking a view of creation that encompasses some aspects of evolution, he categorically denies philosophical naturalism. He "believes that the fine-tuning, beauty, and order of nature point to a divine Creator, and describes his conversion from atheism to Christianity." He is the kind of person that Richard Dawkins says can't exist.</p>	
<p>Stephen Jay Gould, atheist: "Either half my colleagues are enormously stupid, or else the science of Darwinism is fully compatible with conventional religious beliefs - and equally compatible with atheism."</p>	<p>Thomas Nagel, atheist: Berating Dawkins for reducing our morals to neurochemistry, he concludes "conscious experience, thought, value, and so forth are not illusions, even though they cannot be identified with physical facts."</p>
<p>Even other atheists blast Dawkins</p>	

Doesn't Evolution Disprove the Bible?

Conflict	Dialogue	Integration	Independence
<p>For the "Conflict" model Keller includes Dawkins on the atheist end and, remarkably, the Morris & Whitcomb approach. He says "Some Christians in the highly publicized Creation Science movement take the conflict model and insist that Genesis 1 teaches that God created all life-forms in a period of six twenty-four-hour days just several thousand years ago."</p>		<p>Keller on the middle positions "Some hold that God created life and then guided natural selection to develop all complex life-forms from simpler ones. In this view, God acts as a top-down cause without violating the process of evolution. Others, believing there are gaps in the fossil record and claiming that species seem to "appear" rather than develop from simpler forms, believe that God performed large-scale creative acts at different points over longer periods of time."</p>	

Doubts About the Authenticity of Religious Experience

Doubt: Miracles are typically at the heart of this objection.

But it is one thing to say that science is only equipped to test for natural causes and quite another to say that science proves other causes don't exist!

- Put another way, there is no experiment for testing the statement "No supernatural cause for any natural phenomenon is possible."
- If there is a Creator God, there is nothing illogical about miracles!

There are multiple models of the relationship between science and religion.

- Conflict, dialogue, integration and independence.
- The absolute warfare model arose from a cultural strategy rather than intellectual necessity.
- Multiple surveys exist that pretend to tell us the extent of overlap between religious belief and scientific knowledge or occupation.
 - Many are flawed - lumping, for example, those with deistic beliefs with unbelievers.
 - Almost all assume that unbelief is a product of the respondent's science - but Alister McGrath notes that most unbelieving scientists in his experience brought their assumptions about God to their science and did not derive them from it.
 - Perhaps the best we can say is that a majority of scientists consider themselves moderately or deeply religious - and this percentage has increased in recent decades (Stark, For the Glory of God pp 192-197)

Perhaps the best we can say is that there is no insurmountable disjunction between science and religious belief.

The Ongoing Debate About Evolution

But What About Evolution?

- Today the conflict with science issue centers principally on evolution.
 - There are many Christians (the Catholic Church, for one) who believe God could have used natural processes to produce life.
 - But this does not entail "philosophical naturalism," that everything has a natural cause and that organic life is SOLELY the product of random forces.
 - And when evolution turns into a Theory of Everything, we have definitely left the scientific establishment for the philosophical.
- And the debate turns inevitably to scripture, in this case Genesis 1.
 - Correct Biblical interpretation has always required a text be understood according to its literary genre.
 - The problem arises in those cases where the genre is unclear.
- More importantly, anyone considering Christianity should not be distracted by what is essentially an intramural debate.

NOTE: A Theory of Everything: A theory of everything (ToE) or final theory, ultimate theory, or master theory is a hypothetical single, all-encompassing, coherent theoretical framework of physics that fully explains and links together all physical aspects of the universe.

What Lessons Do We Take From Miracles

- Note that even the Apostles doubted in the presence of miracles - in this case the risen Christ. (Matt 28:17)
 - This is a warning that not only modern, scientific people can struggle with miracles.
- Note also that Jesus used miracles not to suspend the natural order, but to enhance and restore it.
 - Think about physical and psychological healing.
 - Think about resurrection - not only His own but Lazarus and others.
 - Feeding the five thousand, and turning water to wine.
- Miracles seen that way are not a challenge to our minds, but a promise to our hearts.
 - In the restored earth, everything will be made new.