

Responding to False Science (Scientism)

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“Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6:21).

A major Pew Research Center survey suggested that a majority of Christians (55%) said that science and religion are “often in conflict.” A large majority of people who reject Christianity *say* they do so because of its supposed conflict with science.

But only false ideas presented as “science” really conflict with Christianity. “Science” simply means “knowledge.” It is propaganda to think that all science is empirical science (“empirical” merely means knowledge gained through the senses, in contrast with purely abstract, logic, involved with metaphysics). The scientific method is an empirical form of study. It uses information gained through the senses. The scientific method follows this process: Ask a question. Do background investigation about the subject. Formulate a hypothesis, a testable theory which takes into account the available data. Test that hypothesis by doing controlled experiments where two groups are treated exactly the same as much as possible except for the one thing being tested, and then comparing them. This is very difficult. Complete control of all variables is usually impossible, but one must do it as much as possible. If the test seems to confirm the hypothesis, publish that result as supported. Others can then independently do research. If the same results are gained by independent testing, this corroborates the hypothesis and gives a higher likelihood that it’s correct.

As a matter of pure logic, it can never establish “proof” (100% certainty), since there’s no way to be sure that all the information has been discovered, or that all the information has been properly and fully understood. It can propose some *likelihood* for its conclusions, but those are always subject to re-evaluation. It requires freedom to test and criticize its conclusions. Nothing is, by definition, final and absolute. Genuine science, in the empirical sense, has very few “laws” – conclusions so strongly established that they can simply be taken for granted.

Open criticism and evaluation and retesting of hypotheses by independent researchers is part of the whole model. By definition, the methodology is inductive, or a combination of induction and deduction. And this means it’s not possible to “prove” anything. Empirical science cannot ever do that. So all claims of “proof” or certainty taken from empirical study are, by

definition, false. False science departs from its proper boundaries, making claims far beyond what it can demonstrate. False empirical science makes absolute statements, when it can only rightly present evidence that *seems* (in the current state of things and with the presuppositions used) to suggest a conclusion. Research presented based on secret information or stated as unquestionable is not genuine science. It has abandoned empirical science’s role, and the scientific method’s safeguards. Many popular, highly regarded theories have later been shown to be faulty, imprecise, or simply false.

Theology is, instead, the **Queen of the Sciences**. Her basis for “knowledge” is revelation, faithfully transmitted from the beginning. What God says is never against reason, never irrational, even if it is often above and beyond reason. (God alone knows all things.) And its deductions are then rooted in metaphysics: what is “above” or “beyond” physics. It is not based on our own perception of data, on empirical evidence, but on pure reason guided and illumined by Jesus in His Church. Jesus says: “When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the Truth ... He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13-15)

We can, and should, study the world God has created in order to better understand reality and to see God’s fingerprints in His creation, so to speak. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19). All kinds of evidence support the claims of Christian teaching and refute atheist and materialist ideas. The unquestioned philosophical presuppositions of much that’s today presented as “science” are false. If we start with faulty premises, we can’t build a valid and sound argument. All genuine knowledge comes from God, both natural knowledge gained from examination of the world following Christian premises and revealed knowledge (“revelation”) given by God. Many specific subjects will require more specific future treatment. But, as St. Paul says, “I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in God’s household, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the Truth” (1Tim. 3:15-16).

Suggested Reading:

James Hannam. *The Genesis of Science*. Regnery Publishing, 2011.

Peter Kreeft. *Socratic Logic*. 2nd Ed. St. Augustine’s Press, 2005.

Stephen Meyer. *The Return of the God Hypothesis*. HarperOne, 2021.

Nancy Pearcey & Charles Thaxton. *The Soul of Science*. Crossway Books, 1994.