

Science and Religion: The New Dialogue

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**Lecture Two
“Warfare . . . and Other Myths of Theology and Science”
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Introduction

Welcome. I am glad you are back.

The course is: Religion and Science: The New Dialogue. This is the second class, titled “Warfare . . . and Other Myths of Theology and Science.”

A few housekeeping points.

- (1) I hope you were able to find last week’s lecture notes. They are not, I repeat not, on the itssm.org website. We have a new site under construction that will be able to handle posting notes and whatnot, but it won’t be ready until the class next spring.
- (2) If you would like to be kept abreast of future offerings, including next spring’s class, please sign in with your email address on the sheets I am passing around. It would help if you could give me the sheets you are holding in your hand at the end of the class.
- (3) At the end, as we approach time for the service, if we could continue discussion in the Welcome center, that would allow people coming in for worship to settle in and say their prayers with a little peace and quiet.

Now: “Warfare . . . and Other Myths of Theology and Science.”

Dan Brown's Experience—and mine

Let us begin by going back to Dan Brown, author of the *Da Vinci Code*. Last week, I reported a little story that Dan Brown had told to *Parade Magazine*. Dan said that in the eighth grade he took a science–religion concern to his local Episcopal minister: what he had read for science class at school about the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe didn't square with what we hear in church through the Bible story of creation. What was he to think? The minister replied, he said, “Nice boys don't ask that question.”

Last week I allowed that, knowing Episcopal clergy as I do, this story “smelled a little fishy. I would like to elaborate on that a bit.

Dan Brown grew up in Exeter, New Hampshire. He would have been in eighth-grade around 1978. Exeter is a prep-school town, home of the distinguished Philips Exeter Academy. I can only assume that the town was a highly educated, intellectually progressive place to live, work and go to church.

I grew up in a much less sophisticated places—Harrison, Arkansas, Jackson, Mississippi, and Little Rock—and I don't know that I ever met an Episcopal priest who would treat a question about the relation between the Bible and science as one that a nice boy shouldn't ask. As a matter of fact, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Day School in Jackson, the seventh graders were reading Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *Phenomenon of Man*, taught by the Rev. Marshall James. That book is still the most famous synthesis ever of Christian faith and evolution.

[And here's another thing: it also happens that I have had some exposure to religious education in New England Prep School towns. For one year, I went to Kent School, in Kent Connecticut—a milieu similar to Exeter. In our ninth grade religion class, Fr. Griffiths, the town Episcopal priest, had us read James Michener's *The Source* as a basic text, which began, if memory serves, with the formation of rocks in deep geologic time. Fr. Griffith's also took it upon himself to disabuse his students of naïve acceptance of the biblical narrative. "Yahweh," he told us, was originally a "storm god," of the Kenites, a nomadic tribe to which Moses' father-in-law belonged. (I believe I mentioned last week that I had been educated as a Christian liberal.)]

I would suggest to you that:

- (1) Either Dan Brown encountered a very atypical Episcopal priest for his time and place—one who, apparently, slept all the way through seminary; or
- (2) He is so steeped in a myth of science-religion warfare, that it has given him a false read on the religion he grew up in.

As much as I enjoy the thought that a lad from Exeter, N.H., could have come on down to Mississippi for a more sophisticated understanding of the science-religion question, I tend to suspect that the warfare myth, pervasive and powerful as it has come to be, has simply re-shaped his recollection of the facts.

That is my reason for telling you this story, and it is going to be one of the main points of this morning's lecture: that the myth of science-religion warfare, as powerful and pervasive as it has come to be, distorts our perception of events.

It is not only that many people have the wrong impression about Christianity's openness to science. We face a deeper-seated problem, a myth that guides us to frame religion and science as though they were natural antagonists, with a long history of intermittent war.

What other than such a deep-seated misconception could cause an educated man to hold a memory so at odds with the on-the-ground reality of his own church's actual theological position?

Recapitulation and Preview

Last week, I argued for two claims and introduced two themes.

First, I claimed that as human beings we really can't be satisfied with less than a comprehensive, integrated worldview where our religion and our science cohere and coalesce. In this connection, I introduced a theme of "reasonable faith and faithful reason."

Then I claimed that, whereas in earlier times religious belief and scientific knowledge were widely felt to cohere and coalesce, in the modern era this hasn't been the case. In this connection, I introduced a second theme: "Beyond fundamentalism and liberalism." We need to think beyond modern liberalism and fundamentalism, to find that comprehensive worldview.

This week, I am going to tackle two competing myths—both misleading—about religion and science, the myth of NOMA, and the myth of science-religion "warfare."

Worldview and myth

First: some definitions. I need to explain what I mean by two terms: “worldview” and “myth.”

I keep saying that we should want an integrated, comprehensive “worldview.” What do I mean by that?

You can get a lot of what I mean in the following formula:

Cosmology + metaphysics + ethics = worldview.

Cosmology, again, is our conception of the structure and history of the universe. My cosmology is “Big Bang” and “evolutionary.” We get our cosmology from science.

Metaphysics is our conception of the universe’s origin (“before the Big Bang,” so to speak) and of its purpose. Metaphysics takes us beyond science. According to the National Academy of Sciences: “Whether there is a purpose to the universe or a purpose for human existence are not questions for science.”¹ That’s one point on which just about everyone agrees.

Ethics is how we think we should live in light of what we take to be the world’s purpose.

¹ National Academy of Sciences, *Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998), 58.

Cosmology + metaphysics + ethics *almost* equals worldview. But not entirely, because a worldview also includes an important subjective, and largely unconscious dimension. It includes not only *what* we think about cosmology and metaphysics and ethics, it also includes *how* we think about them.

A lot of people have used the word “paradigm” to capture this subjective dimension. A paradigm is the lens through which we see, shape, and experience reality.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein talked about a difference between “seeing that” and “seeing as.” “Seeing as” gets to the part that subjective paradigms can play in shaping our perceptions, and experience of life.

If you boxed up fighter jet, took it with you through a time machine, then flew it over Paris in the middle ages, what would people see? A dragon maybe, but not a fighter jet.

If I feel that I’ve been possessed by Satan, and go to the PRI for an appointment with Dr. Smith, what is he going to see? Probably, a dude in need of medication.

Myth

Now what is myth?

By myth, I mean a widely accepted picture or story that people use for making sense of some part of their experience. Two of my favorites: the myth of America as the new promised land: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free;” and the myth of the southern woman as a “steel magnolia.”

Our myths are important in our worldview. With these pictures and stories it is a matter both of “seeing that” and “seeing as.” Our myths will help us notice things and sort them out. They will also filter out the parts that just don’t fit the picture.

Myths, I think, can be relatively true, and relatively false.

Today’s class means to challenge two popular, competing myths about religion and science, neither of which is very true, and both of which are harmful. That is the main point today.

But I also would like to begin to promote a myth that is not very popular in our society right now, but which I do believe is quietly true. If it could catch on, I think it could be enormously instructive. It would be a myth about competing worldviews.

The Myth of NOMA

We will take the N.O.M.A. myth first as the lesser of two evils. (At least, it is the more friendly of two evils).

N.O.M.A. is an acronym invented by the late, Harvard evolutionist, Stephen Jay Gould. It stands for “non-overlapping magisteria.” Gould offered the “NOMA principle,” as he called it, “as a solution to the false conflict between science and religion.”² Although he was himself an atheist, Gould suggested that the magisteria of religion and science “hold equal worth and necessary status for any complete human life,” and that we must integrate the insights of both “to build the rich and full view of life traditionally designated as wisdom.”³ That sounds like a call for a comprehensive, integrated worldview—which as you now know I heartily support!

But there are two problems.

First, Gould also maintained that the two domains must “remain logically distinct and fully separate in styles of inquiry, however much and however tightly we must integrate” their insights. The National Academy of Sciences has said something similar. Science and religion, according to the NAS, are “different ways of knowing.”⁴

² Stephen Jay Gould, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1999), 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

“Different ways of knowing”? What do you suppose this means? I’m not sure. It could be taken in more than one way. Logicians distinguish between deduction, induction and abduction as different ways of knowing. If that is the sort of difference Gould or the NAS would have in mind, then it is an interesting point and probably true to some extent.

But I suspect this isn’t what they intend, and that both Gould and the NAS mean to imply a more radical difference between religion and science, where one’s way of knowing is reasonable, and the other’s is not. If that’s what they mean, then we will have to disagree.

The problems with N.O.M.A don’t end there.

There is another, enormous problem with Gould’s proposal. He asks readers to accept his premise that religion can be reduced to “moral issues about the value and meaning of life.”⁵ But that premise has had few takers because, while religions obviously have a lot to say on moral issues about the value and meaning of life,” they also, some of them, have things to say on other topics too.

Last week, for example, we discussed a belief that Christians and Jews have shared, regarding divine and human freedom. Our religion tells us that we, to some extent, are free, and that God is too. Now

⁴ National Academy of Sciences, *Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998), 58.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 55–56.

science actually has a lot to say about the extent to which humans actually do have freedom. The physiology of freedom is a scientific question. That is enough right there to overturn the NOMA thesis, because it is a case where the magisteria of religion and science clearly overlap.

In the literature of the new dialogue between religion and science, one finds many such examples. In comparison with Gould and the National academy of Sciences, this new approach is much more in line with the full truth about religion.

It is also more in line with common sense. Folks, this isn't rocket science: Religions, among other things, sometimes make factual claims. Science of course makes factual claims too. Sometimes, in any of a variety of ways, these claims may overlap. That is why we need a research program to identify these claims, and explore their logical relations. The literature of the new dialogue between theology and science is full of just that kind of investigation.

Origins of the New Dialogue

In the twentieth century, theology tended to do one of two things about the natural sciences.

- (1) Isolate itself from science (as in the case of fundamentalist theology)
- (2) Accommodate itself to science to the point of equivocation (as in the case of liberal theology).

[That was the Nancey Murphy thesis we discussed last week. I don't think that tells us everything about 20th century theology—it doesn't do justice, I think, to theologians like William Temple, Reinhold Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth, nor to Roman Catholic theology.⁶

But even in those cases, where modern science was accepted and core Christian doctrine was also affirmed, there wasn't much in the way of explicit engagement on the issues that arise when religious and theological claims are examined side by side.]

Karl Barth once said that theology and science are talking about such different things—God in the one case, the natural world in the other—that each pursues its work independently and without interference from the other. But he added that we should expect that workers in the separate disciplines would encounter some interesting problems at the science-religion boundary.⁷

⁶ Murphy places Barth with the isolationists, which I think is not entirely accurate.

⁷ Barth, CD III.1, x.

The new dialogue is among scientists, philosophers and theologians who have not been satisfied with isolation or equivocation.

In 1974, Ian Barbour, a theologian with a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Chicago, published *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion*.

Barbour's thesis was that new developments in the philosophy of science carried implications for theology and philosophy of religion, especially for our understanding of religious language.

Barbour's claim was that a philosophy of science known as logical positivism had under-estimated the subjectivity of science, and that some theologians had under-estimated the objectivity of theological assertions. He had in mind "Christian existentialists," especially Rudolf Bultmann.

He would "try to show," he said, "that science is not as objective, nor religion as subjective" as both logical positivists and Christian existentialists had supposed.⁸

Barbour emphasized the differences, both as to subject matter and method, between theology and science even more than the similarities, but the similarities were there, and in many respects it was Barbour who opened a new dialogue *about* those similarities and differences and about possible points of connection and mutual implication.

⁸ Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 5.

This is important: participants in this dialogue agreed that religion is not only about our private opinions, feelings, values or ethical intentions. Religions make claims that can and should be scrutinized for truth.

After Barbour, a new theological program began to emerge to pick up and develop these ideas.

Arthur Peacocke—a biochemist and Anglican priest—published *Creation and the World of Science* in 1979.⁹ John Polkinghorne, also an Anglican priest and physicist colleague of Stephen Hawking, generated a series of books. Nancey Murphy brought expertise in philosophy of science to the discussion.

Another important figure is Robert John Russell, another physicist, who founded the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences in Berkeley, which produces the journal *Theology and Science*. My doctoral advisor, Mark Richardson, came up through that center. The symbol on the cover of the journal is a bridge. As a graduate student, Mark combed through magazine pictures of bridges to pick out the one they would use for the cover.

To my eye, the bridge looked mangled, and—this is an example of “seeing as”—for years I saw it as the broken Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and interpreted it as a sign of the journals view that the theology-science relation was badly broken. But, Mark tells me, I had been mistaken. It was

⁹ Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

actually the Golden Gate Bridge early in construction. More recently, the cover shows the bridge as complete. We should take this to represent confidence in progress towards that “comprehensive and integrated worldview, where religious belief and scientific knowledge cohere and coalesce.

I hope that you can now see the profoundly important difference between this approach and NOMA. Where Gould and the NAS would make peace between religion and science by erecting a Berlin Wall between them, the new dialogue would connect them with a bridge.

“Warfare”

I don't imagine that I should have to work very hard to persuade you that there is an idea abroad in the land that religion and science are mortal enemies.

Someone who worked hard to encourage that idea once upon a time was Charles Darwin's close associate, T.H. Huxley, who said “Extinguished Theologians lie about the cradle of every science like strangled snakes beside that of Hercules.”¹⁰

[(The infant Hercules was been sleeping in his cradle, next to his brother Iphicles. The Goddess Hera dispatched two giant snakes into the nursery to slay Zeus's bastard child. Iphicles saw the snakes and screamed. Hercules woke up and strangled them, one in each hand.)]

¹⁰ John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

Richard Dawkins is one of our most ardent promoters of the myth of science-religion warfare.

Dawkins writes:

“People like to say that faith and science can live together side by side. But I don’t think they can. They’re deeply opposed. Science is a discipline of investigation and constructive doubt, questing with logic, evidence and reason to draw conclusions. Faith, by stark contrast, demands a positive suspension of critical faculties. Science proceeds by setting up hypotheses, ideas or models, and then attempts to disprove them. So a scientist is constantly asking questions, being skeptical. Religion is about turning untested belief into unshakable truth through the power of institutions and the passage of time.”

I picked up this quotation from a fine, short article in the journal *Theology and Science* titled “Doubt, Deception, and Dogma: Science and Religion in Film.”¹¹ The author is Joshua M. Moritz, who looks at the relationship between religion and science as it has been depicted in three recent films:

- (1) Dawkins’ documentary: *The Root of All Evil?*
- (2) Bill Maher’s documentary *Religulous*.
- (3) Dan Brown and director Ron Howard’s second collaboration, *Angels and Demons*.

¹¹ Joshua M. Moritz, “Doubt, Deception, and Dogma: Science and Religion in Film,” *Theology and Science* 7, no. 3 (2009): 207–12,

Disclaimer: I haven't seen these films. I am curious about you. Raise your hand if you've seen:

- *The Root of all Evil?*
- *Religulous*
- *Angels and Demons*

Anybody seen all three?

According to Moritz, the message of all three films, is that “At its best . . . religion gets in the way of scientific discovery, innovation, and human progress. At its worst, religious belief may ultimately lead to the cataclysmic and violent destruction of all life on planet earth.”¹²

Historians of science and religion have a name for this message. It is called the “Draper-White” thesis, named for two nineteenth century historians who themselves did so much to generate the myth of science-religion warfare.

In 1887, John W. Draper wrote *The History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*. Andrew D. White, followed in 1896 with *The History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*.

¹² Moritz, “Doubt, Deception, and Dogma,” 207.

Early in the 19th century, the best sellers had been books like William Paley's *Natural Theology* that took for granted a gentle harmony between theology and the natural sciences. So Draper and White mark a turning point where the idea of actual science religion conflict began to inflame the popular imagination.

The books were widely read and enormously influential in their day, and are now cited by scholars as important shapers of the popular myth that reason and faith, or science and religion, are natural enemies.

According to Moritz, the new movies from Dawkins, Maher and Brown are “nothing short of a repristination of the Draper-White thesis that Science and Religion have been engaged in a bitter conflict from the beginning and that the Christian church in particular is and always has been the enemy of scientific reason.”

Now if what Draper and White had claimed were true, that would certainly make it hard for us to get anywhere with the idea that we should aspire to a comprehensive and integrated worldview, where religious belief and scientific knowledge cohere and coalesce.

How can natural enemies cohere and coalesce?

So it is rather important that you know that, as Moritz says, the Draper-White thesis “has been largely discredited.” Some of the most important work in the new dialogue between religion and science has been by historians, who got curious about Draper and White and put their thesis under

critical historical review. Under scrutiny, the thesis largely fell apart. It turned out that most of the episodes Draper or White presented as instances of science-religion conflict were better understood as conflicts about something else. Often, they were conflicts between two sides who were equally religious—specifically, equally Christian—and were quarrelling, as scientists, over a new scientific method or theory that had come along. To a surprising extent, that is even what we see with Galileo. If you would like to check his sources, go on-line for this lecture and check the footnote.¹³

¹³ Moritz, 207. Moritz cites two books for critiques of the Draper-White thesis: John H. Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Ronald Numbers and David Lindberg, eds., *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* (Berkeley: university of California Press, 1986).

The myth has been historically debunked and theologically discredited; but, that, so far, has not meant that it has been drained of its cultural power. This power is such that it shapes the conversation even of people who say they don't believe it.

So, instead of refuting the myth, they reinforce it by casting themselves in the guise of “peacemakers”—an offer that begs the question of whether there was ever a war in the first place. It is the same as the old saw, where the innocent man is asked “Have you stopped beating your wife?”

Two recent examples:

An article in last Sunday's *New York Times* by the science editor, Nicholas Wade, promotes his new book *The Faith Instinct: How Religion Evolved and Why It Endures*.¹⁴ Wade offers an evolutionary perspective on the origin of religion that he suggests might serve as “the basis for some kind of détente between religion and science.”

In the same newspaper, in August, there was an article similar in spirit and tone by a writer, Robert Wright, with an argument framed in the same way, as a question of what to do about “the ‘war’ between science and religion.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Nicholas Wade, “The Evolution of the God Gene,” *New York Times*, Sunday, November 15, 2009, “The Week in Review,” 3.

¹⁵ Robert Wright, “A Grand Bargain over Evolution,” *New York Times*, Sunday, August 23, 2009, “The Week in Review,” 10.

Wright and Wade both wish to be of help in putting a stop to the wife-beating. The flaw with their approach is their underlying assumption of a war between science and religion that needs a cease of hostilities. It is true that there is a battle going on. What is not true is that it is best characterized as a battle between science and religion. It is better understood as conflict between competing worldviews.

[In the short space of one lecture, there is only so much one can say about this, beyond alerting you to the pervasiveness of the paradigm, and pointing you towards scholarly books that undermine its historical basis. Of course, this class and the one next spring are an attack on the myth.

By the time all this is over with, I hope to have enlisted you as recruits against the Scylla of NOMA and the Charybdis of science-religion “Warfare.”

We need all the help we can get. As my father used to say: a fib can get up in the morning and make it half way around the world, before the truth has gotten out of bed and put its boots on.]

Reply to Dawkins

Now, with some help from Moritz, I would like to answer one of Dawkins's more provocative claims.

Dawkins says:

“Science is a discipline of investigation and constructive doubt, questing with logic, evidence and reason to draw conclusions. Faith, by stark contrast, demands a positive suspension of critical faculties.”

I want to say two things in reply.

- (1) I flatly deny his claim that “faith, by contrast with science, demands a positive suspension of critical faculties.”
- (2) I make this counter-assertion: the truth is more nearly the opposite of what Dawkins has claimed. It isn't faith that demands a positive suspension of critical faculties. What seems to demand a positive suspension of critical faculties is Dawkins's favorite myth of science-religion warfare.

Dawkins claims that “faith demands a positive suspension of critical faculties.”

I ask you: in coming to this class, have you left your critical faculties in a state of suspension? I doubt it. I suspect that by now all your critical faculties are on high alert!

For my part: far from requesting that you suspend your critical faculties, I have introduced a theme of the “reasonableness of faith and faithfulness of reason.”

We have begun to speak in rather specific terms about reasonableness in faith. Last week, I said reason begins with inquisitiveness—our readiness to ask questions. I also said it drives towards coherence and comprehension. The comprehensive idea is the one that explains the most material. Coherence requires that all the pieces fit together.

Let’s think a little more on this. We could say that coherence and comprehension are two “criteria” for reasonableness. They apply in faith, and I think they should apply in every worldview. I would call them “universals”—norms of reasoning that should apply everywhere and always as tests of truth. As we go along, I will add other methods and criteria of reason, about which one could say the same thing. These universal norms of reasoning fully apply in both theology and science.

Be advised: I am not saying that the methods and criteria for theology and science are the same. I am saying that, in this respect, they are overlapping.

Theology and science also overlap in sharing certain values. I would like to call these values the “virtues” of reasonableness. I am not going to claim these as universals, necessarily. But they are certainly part of what has been cultivated and passed on through the western scholarly tradition at places like Oxford, where Richard Dawkins teaches, and Amherst, where Dan Brown and I both happen to have gone to college. I also learned them at Little Rock Central High. For me, these virtues were strongly re-enforced throughout my ten years (count ’em) of advanced training in theology.

What are the virtues of reasonableness? Here are a few:

- Curiosity
- Honesty
- Fair-mindedness
- Accountability

Curiosity: “Start asking questions, and never stop.”

Honesty: “Never misrepresent an opponent’s position.”

Fair-mindedness: “Never attack the person, but only his idea.”

Accountability: “Consider yourself answerable to other experts, even when your audience hasn’t read these other experts’ books.

Again, be advised: something I am not putting on this list is “impartiality.” That is because I don’t believe impartiality either possible, or desirable, in reasoning. I remain strongly partial to the central doctrines of the Christian faith, which to my eye are good and beautiful as well as true. And being partial to those doctrines only re-enforces the value in being curious, accountable, honest and fair-minded. All these values are of God.

Dawkins is wrong. Faith does not demand suspension of critical faculties. In its quest for understanding, faith is fully invested in logic, evidence and reason. It insists on coherence and strives for comprehension. And it strengthens the virtues of curiosity, honesty, fair-mindedness, and accountability.

If all this were not so, I believe I could have taken my doctorate in four years, instead of ten.

Now, in reasonable discourse, it is fair to turn an opponent’s question around. So let us ask: How reasonable, in these respects, is Richard Dawkins?

I have heard Dawkins speak in Little Rock. A spectacle it was; fair-minded he was not. This was at the peak of the public controversy about the theory of “Intelligent Design.” Dawkins did something in his speech, a crowd pleaser, that was truly deceptive.

He made at least one comment that encouraged his audience to identify Intelligent Design theory with Young Earth Creationism. (Young earth creationism insists that that world is only a few

thousand years old, because the Bible says so.) I think he did it to re-enforce his crowd's assumption that Intelligent Design theorists must be stupidly anti-scientific. Now hear me: there are both scientific and theological problems with Intelligent Design theory. But the fact is that William Dembski, its leading proponent, has written that his understanding of Intelligent Design is compatible with Big Bang cosmology, the 4.5 billion year old earth, common descent (including humans) from simple organisms, and evolution by natural selection (though not as a total explanation for the complexity of organic life). I have read several of Dembski's books, and say with no hesitation that they are more philosophically rigorous, better theologically informed, and more fair to opponents than Dawkins's book, *The God Delusion*. (In fairness, Dawkins's books on scientific subjects are thoughtful, interesting and well written.)

The Moritz article also challenges Dawkins with respect to the criterion of coherence.

In his movie, Dawkins says that science proceeds by setting up hypotheses, ideas or models and then attempts to disprove them. However, in the movie, that's not what Dawkins does. Instead, when Dawkins argues that faith involves the suspension of critical faculties, how does he prove his point? By interviewing "Pastor Ted Haggard."

Pastor Ted Haggard! This is a man with no formal theological education.

There is a vast, rich theological literature on the role of critical faculties in faith. As a scientist, consistent with his own statement, eh should test his point against that literature. For example,

Dawkins is an Oxford don. Wouldn't it have been reasonable of him to test his own position by considering a well known sermon on his subject by a famous Oxford churchman? The churchman is Cardinal John Henry Newman, who on January 13, 1839, delivered a sermon titled "The Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason."¹⁶

There Newman describes faith as a *sui generis* exercise of reason, exceptional in that it is informed by goodness and hope in the reasoner. In Newman, you will find my idea that there is an appropriate partiality in reasoning. He suggests that our attraction to God as one who is both beautiful and good lends what he calls an "antecedent probability" to certain other claims about the world—including, for example, claims about the miracles of Jesus. These antecedent conditions, he says, should change our reckoning of what is probably true.

Now that position is one that that Dawkins might well wish to challenge. Many Christians have challenged it as well. There are questions here for a reasonable person to sink his teeth into.

But, instead of Cardinal Newman, Dawkins takes on Pastor Ted.

That is not what one does when one is being reasonable. That is what one does when re-enforcing a spurious, but strategic, myth.

¹⁶ John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons: Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843*, third edition of 1872 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 202–21.

There is not much to say about Maher and Brown.

Maheer—I doubt he knows what the virtues and standards of reasoning even are. Enough said.¹⁷

Brown, the Amherst man: his novels promote sensational theories about the New Testament, about the Roman Catholic Church, and now about the history of religion and science. These theories are barren of serious scholarly support.

I compare that to the accountability expected of our parish rector, who was required to pass examinations on the best scholarship in history and Biblical studies before she would be allowed to preach or teach in church.

Here again, we find faith reasoning to a much higher standard of accountability than we find in promoters of the myth of science religion warfare.

¹⁷ According to Moritz, for his movie Maheer repeatedly conducted interviews under false pretenses, an unfair practice a reasonable person would consider beneath contempt.

Conclusion and Preview

By way of conclusion, I want to introduce you to a thinker who I will be discussing next week: another physicist-theologian named Stephen Barr.

In his book *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*, Barr suggests that there is, and has been for a long time, a “warfare” going on. It is not, however, between “religion and science” but rather between two worldviews. Barr writes:

“The fact of the matter is that there is a bitter intellectual battle going on, and it is about real issues. However, the conflict is not about religion and science, it is between religion and materialism. Materialism is a philosophical opinion that is closely connected with science. It grew up alongside science, and many people have a hard time distinguishing it from science. But it is not science. It is merely a philosophical opinion. And not all scientists share it by any means. . . . Nevertheless, there are many, including very many scientists, who think that materialism is the scientific philosophy. The basic tenet of so-called ‘scientific materialism’ is that nothing exists except matter, and that everything in the world must therefore be the result of the strict mathematical laws of physics and blind chance.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Stephen M. Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 1.

I agree with Barr. The distortions of theology and history that we meet in speakers like Dawkins, Brown and Maher, which are the life-blood of the science-religion “warfare” myth, obscure this true conflict that is going on between two competing worldviews.

By clearing away the distortions and mythology, we position ourselves to see religion and science in their true connections.

Next week, we will see that some of these possible connections can be very interesting indeed. The title is: “Is the Universe Designed for Life? The Anthropic Coincidences and What They Mean.

I hope to see you then.

