God and Science

by Herb Silverman

Some God believers say they don't believe in science even though they frequently use science when they engage in the use of technology or rely on antibiotics, for instance.

I cannot say that I "believe" in science because science is based on evidence, not belief. Scientists try to disprove their own theories or the theories of others before they submit their findings to peer-reviewed journals. Eventually there is a consensus among scientists, which might change with new scientific evidence. There are no peer reviews for gods because there are no gods to do the reviewing, and no actual "theories" of gods to review.

Many theists believe that science does more harm than good. They see conflicts with forms of science that disavow "God's role" in the world, and the value and "sacredness" of humanity, including our special human nature. Religion also differs from science in coming to conclusions based on faith, not evidence.

Is science or religion a better tool to understand the world? Science and religion disagree about the origin of the Earth and humans. Unfortunately, to the extent that some religious people view science as invalid, irrelevant, or morally suspect, they will be less interested in learning science, both formally and informally. You don't have to be an atheist to support science, but it helps.

While science has had success after success understanding the universe, the "method" of using faith has led to no proofs of the divine. How many gods are there? What are their natures and moral creeds? Is there an afterlife? Why is there moral and physical evil? For theists there is no one answer to any of these questions. All is a mystery.

Religion relies on dogma, scripture, and authority that requires faith as expressed in Hebrews 11. Faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." In science, faith without evidence is a vice, while in religion it's a virtue.

If you are a believer who doesn't want to seem anti-science, what can you do? You must argue that your faith is compatible with science. Let's look at how God believers try to accept some science and relate it to their religious beliefs. Here are the main beliefs about God, with a smattering of science:

God has existed forever — for no apparent reason. I'm not sure what "forever" even means. God eventually got bored doing nothing forever, so he created matter. He touched off a Big Bang that started our universe approximately 13.8 billion years ago. God then did nothing for over 9 billion years.

Next, he created Earth 4.5 billion years ago. After doing nothing again for another half billion years, God started the process of evolution, which some God believers are willing to accept as long as they can find a way to avoid its conflicting with their god beliefs.

The fossil record places the earliest animal life on Earth about 600 million years ago. Similarities among all present-day organisms imply a common ancestor from which all known species, living and extinct, have diverged. Apparently, God disliked just about all species he created because more than 99 percent of the species that ever lived (over five billion) are now extinct. More than 10 million animal species now live on Earth. Two different religious points of view say that either God created all species or he just allowed nature to take its course through (non-human) evolution.

Dinosaurs are a diverse group of reptiles that first appeared about 240 million years ago and went extinct about 65 million years ago. God apparently wanted to get rid of the dinosaurs he had created because many believe God brought an asteroid to collide with Earth, and the intense heat and subsequent lack of adequate food killed the dinosaurs. Fortunately for mammals, they were able to live in burrows or aquatic environments that shielded them from the heat and provided some food.

Once the heat was no longer a serious threat, mammals emerged in safety and made the most of remaining food resources. I guess God once preferred dinosaurs to humans because dinosaurs were around for at least 230 million years, while so far modern humans have been around for less than 100,000 years.

God seemed to do nothing for another 94,000 years. About 6,000 years ago, the God of Genesis showed that he loves mankind more than any other creatures because he created mankind in his own image — whatever that means. Then God gave humans dominion over all other species. However, nobody has seen this God, who prefers to remain hidden.

God then meddled wildly in the affairs of humans in a small part of the Earth for about 1,500 years. He gave one tribal society some strange rules to live by, and helped them defeat their (and God's) enemies in many battles.

God later returned to Earth in human form to preach for 33 years. This God is also his own son (Jesus), as well as being the Holy Ghost (also called the Holy Spirit). God, or his

son, died a bloody death, which is the reason he came to Earth to begin with. His blood served as atonement for the flaws in humans (whom God created with many flaws).

Why were humans so bad? Well, God made a first couple who were told not to eat a certain fruit. God never gave this couple knowledge of good and evil. So, this naïve couple was tempted by a talking snake to taste the forbidden fruit, which they did. That tasting, known as the "original sin," somehow put a stain on all subsequent humans, which could only be removed by eating the body and drinking the blood of the dead Jesus. Some Christians today continue to do this. Who knew how much blood God's son had in him? And I won't even get into the cannibalism of eating Jesus's body.

God then ceased all manifestation and direct contact with humans for the next 2,000 years, leaving people with only a book to figure it all out.

This arbitrary, cobbled-together collection of metaphorical and contradictory revelations are the rules that tell humans how to live and achieve eternal bliss with God after they die. Meanwhile, many humans continue to die when they fight each other over different interpretations of this ambiguous and contradictory "holy" book.

Wow! Science or religion. Tough choice?

Herb Silverman is a regular contributor to the quarterly publication *The Freethought Society News*. The editors thank Silverman for all of his excellent submissions.

His past submissions can be found at the following Freethought Society web-site page:

https://www.ftsociety.org/herb-silverman-articles/

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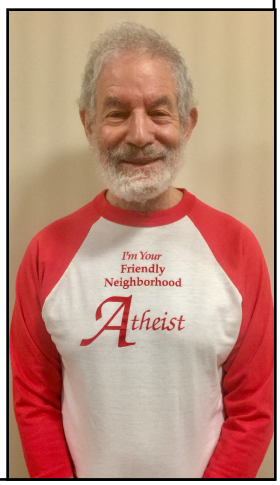

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