

# Science and Faith in the Real World

Thomas Robinson, November 7, 2010

## Psalm 19:1-14

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.  
<sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they display knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
<sup>4</sup> Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,  
<sup>5</sup> which is like a bridegroom  
coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.  
<sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.  
<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.  
<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.  
<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The ordinances of the LORD are sure,  
and all of them are righteous.  
<sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
They are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup> By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.  
<sup>12</sup> But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.  
<sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.  
Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.  
<sup>14</sup> May these words of my mouth  
and this meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

## Psalm 8:1, 3-4, 9

<sup>1</sup> LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.  
<sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
<sup>4</sup> what are mere mortals that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?  
<sup>9</sup> LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

## Philippians 4:8

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

## Romans 1:19-20

<sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.  
<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.

## Living in the World of Science and Faith

We are surrounded with the amazing advances of our science and technology: a telephone is a more powerful computer than those that guided the moon landing in 1969. In so many fields we enjoy a stream of new discoveries: medicine, genetics, microbiology, chemistry, geology, physics, cosmology, archeology, paleontology, various fields of biology, etc. etc.

We also live in a world of Biblical faith, the story of Jesus, that reveals the deepest meaning and purpose of human life, its freedom and brokenness, its hope and destiny. All that was firmly in place before modern discoveries. We need to be both modern and ancient.

The Scriptures were given to us long before the beginnings of modern science, which grew up based on the Christian view of a world created by a wise and consistent God. We should not expect Scriptures to speak in scientific terms. In describing creation, God uses an ordinary person's view of the world to teach us true relationships. If God gave the full facts of creation, even the physics of our time could not understand his description.

## Loving God's World Through the Lens of Discovery

The scriptures reveal God to us through words that point to events of human history. But the scriptures point also to a second book of revelation: the creation itself reveals God.

The world is magnificent to the naked eye, but new instruments since the telescopes of Galileo reveal new marvels on every level of discovery. Seeing the very distant, very small, measuring time, speed, radiation, electricity, etc. From subatomic particles to quasars. God's creation contains vast information about itself and its history. It is hard to read but it tells the truth of the vast age of the creation, its orderly but counter-intuitive ways of working (relativity and quantum mechanics). It is non-verbal, but embodies God's work.

Every discovery of the natural world reveals God's invention and choices in creation. Christians need to be active in the great enterprise of scientific research, understanding our world.

## Naturalism – Methodological and Philosophical

But there are groups of Christians and scientists who revel in the idea of a war between science and faith. The 19<sup>th</sup> cent. warfare model is actively promoted by extremes.

Christian faith does not need to have science prove the existence of God. Science can't do it.

Belief that God created the world and pervades creation does not mean that we know at all how He does it as a scientific explanation. We don't know how our own thoughts work.

God's work is completely invisible / inaccessible to us unless he chooses to make it a sign.

Scientific inquiry seeks understanding through explanations that are natural and within reach.

This is methodological naturalism. It is completely appropriate for Christians to use.

For some, however, naturalism becomes philosophical or ontological. Because science deals with the natural/material world, nothing but the material exists. There is no intelligence in the universe as a whole. All is chance, without purpose. Mind is illusion. God is delusion.

Many greatly desire a universe without responsibility, purpose. The conflict is very real.

## God, Creator of a Multiverse (?)

Now, some propose that our universe is one of a vast number of universes ( $10^{500}$ ). Maybe so.

It's a gigantic speculation, but changes nothing about God. God is not a creature to be explained within ours or any universe, but the self-existent creator who reveals himself in love.