Christian Faith in a Scientific Culture

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Christian Faith in a Scientific Culture

• Being a Christian in a ‘Secular’ vocation
• The Two-Book Model: The Word and Work of God
  • Concordism: Rightly Dividing the Word
  • Univocality: Rightly Understanding the Work
• How did we get here? Where are we?
HOW DID I GET HERE?

► Self-study of math and physics in HS
► Physics major at Wheaton College
  ► Junior Year Abroad at the Sorbonne
► PhD in condensed-matter physics at U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
  ► Graduate fellowship from IBM
► IBM Thomas J Watson Research Center
  ► IBM Research VP of Systems, Technology, & Science
► American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) Executive Director
► Now retired
What Is the ASA?

► A network of Christians in the sciences founded in 1941

► Nearly 2,000 scientists who share:
  - Adherence to basic Christian creeds
  - Commitment to integrity in science

► Advocates dialog rather than a particular viewpoint

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PERSPECTIVES on Science and Christian Faith

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC AFFILIATION

In This Issue...

Bible Code, Revisited

Antony Flew’s Question and Its Answer: How to Perceive God?

Morality, Not Mortality: The Inception of Death in the Book of Romans

Updating Human Origins

Renewing Evangelical Engagement on Climate Change

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom."
Psalm 111:10

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What Is the ASA Statement of Faith?

► We affirm the divine inspiration, trustworthiness and authority of the Bible in matters of faith and conduct.

► We confess the triune God affirmed in the Nicene and the Apostles’ Creeds which we accept as brief, faithful statements of Christian doctrine based upon Scripture.

► We affirm that in creating and preserving the universe God has endowed it with contingent order and intelligibility, the basis of scientific investigation.

► We recognize our responsibility, as stewards of God’s creation, to use science and technology for the good of humanity and the whole world.
JOIN ASA

► Student Membership
  ► FREE—electronic edition of PSCF
  ► Premier—$20/yr for printed edition
► Follower—Free
  ► Electronic archive issues of PSCF only
  ► Emailings and meeting notices
► Member
  ► $85/yr—discounts may be available
BEING A CHRISTIAN IN AN INDUSTRIAL LABORATORY

► A scientist who is a Christian…
  ► Perceives the hand of God in nature
  ► Uses science as a steward of creation
  ► Sees ethics as obedience to God
  ► Knows that science is not the only form of knowledge

► A Christian who is a scientist…
  ► Values the study of the natural world
  ► Appreciates the harmony of science and faith
REATIONS TO CHRISTIANS IN SCIENCE

► Secular scientific community
  ▶ Generally tolerant and accepting but with exceptions
  ▶ Distrust due to media portrayal of science by Christians
  ▶ Place integrity in science as highest priority

► Christian non-scientific community
  ▶ Wary of scientists having the aim of disproving God
  ▶ Eager to use science as an apologetic for Christianity
  ▶ Desire role models of scientists who are Christians

► Secular non-scientific community
  ▶ Often consider science and faith to be contradictory
ROOTS OF HARMONY

GOD’S CREATION

NATURE

SCIENCE

NO CONFLICT

CONFLICTS?

LOGOS

GOD’S SON

HOLY SCRIPTURES

THEOLOGY

ASA: A Fellowship of Christians in Science
WHERE IS THEOLOGY WITHOUT NATURE?

LOGOS

GOD’S SON
HOLY SCRIPTURES

THEOLOGY
WHERE IS SCIENCE WITHOUT GOD’S WORD?

LOGOS

?  

NATURE

SCIENCE
NATURAL THEOLOGY

LOGOS

GOD’S CREATION

NATURE

THEOLOGY
LITERARY HIGHER CRITICISM

LOGOS

? GOD’S SON

HOLY SCRIPTURES

SCIENCE
ROOTS OF HARMONY

GOD’S CREATION
NATURE

SCIENCE

LOGOS

NO CONFLICT

CONFLICTS?

GOD’S SON
HOLY SCRIPTURES

THEOLOGY

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THE TWO-BOOK MODEL

The Word and Work of God

Two Primary Interpretive Perspectives

- **Concordism:**
  - Rightly Dividing the Word of God
  - Comparing biblical with scientific explanations

- **Univocity:**
  - Rightly Understanding the Work of God
  - Comparing theistic with scientific explanations
CONCORDISM

To what extent and how is modern science reflected in the biblical text?

• ‘Hard’ concordism
  • Complete synergy
• ‘Soft’ concordism
  • Selected passages have synergy
• Accomodationism
  • No synergy—only phenomenological ideas
UNIVOCITY

How do scientific explanations relate to theistic explanations?

• Mutually exclusive?
  • If there is a scientific explanation, then there is no theistic one.
  • If there is no scientific explanation, then there must be a theist one.
  • If there was a miracle, then there cannot be a scientific explanation.

• Complementary?
Evangelicals, Creation, and Scripture: Legacies from a Long History

Mark A. Noll


Mark Noll in September 2011 issue of Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith
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