# On Science, Part 3 [1]

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This is my third article in my series on science [2]. In the previous article [1] I looked at problems with contemporary science. While some might think such a harsh treatment meant that I am anti-science, the opposite is actually true. I am a trained scientist and I believe that science has opened up an amazing world to us. The fruits of science are apparent, and we need to pay attention to that.

## Science is Biblically Mandated

Let me immediately set the tone by stating that I believe science is biblically mandated:

> God said, "Let's make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in his own image. In God's image He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them. God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
>
> Genesis 1:26–28

> The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. ... The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field, and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. Whatever the man called every living creature became its name.
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> Genesis 2:15, 18–19

It may seem like a stretch to some to infer science from the above passages from the book of Genesis. However, what we have here, quite simply, is man being given *collaborative stewardship* over God's creation. (Indeed, more than stewardship, man is given dominion over what has been physically created.) Science, I contend, falls under that broad mandate. Science is the study of God's good creation, and what we learn from that allows us to be better stewards of the world which He has entrusted to us. This is true even for "contentious" fields of science. For example, genetically modified crops can been seen as simple another step in the domestication process of those crops1. Even Craig Venter, who is trying to create "synthetic life" [3], can only do so by using the building blocks which were already provided by God; no-one can truly "play God"2.

Indeed, it should be noted that many Christians have contributed to science throughout the ages, such as Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton, Leonhard Euler, Georges Lemaître, Francis Collins, and many more.

## You Cannot Disregard Science Because You Disagree with the Conclusions

In the remainder of this article, I am going to use the term "reject science" as shorthand to mean "reject a major branch of science" and not necessarily science as a whole. However, I maintain that this will implicitly be the case, as the scientific method remains the same across the different branches of science. Therefore, if you are willing to accept some science, you really need to accept all science.

The reader may recall from my first article in this series [2] that science does not begin with a conclusion, but rather a set of facts, then critically evaluates them until a conclusion can be reached. There is something noble in this approach, as it does combat preconceptions and (theoretically) hubris. If one does feel an aversion to a set of conclusions, one needs to ask where it comes from, and whether there truly is merit in having them. Rather than simply being dismissive, one needs to evaluate the science and one's own feelings. Taking this approach could very well lead to personal growth and better understanding of all that is at play.

## If You Reject the Big Bang, You Need to Throw Away Your Smartphone

You cannot nitpick science. We all benefit from the advances which science has given us. Our physical infrastructure, such as roads and buildings, are only possible through the certainty provided by mathematics, geology, etc. When you open up a tap, the water which comes out of it comes from a water treatment facility, which is only effective because we know how to sanitise the water correctly thanks to chemistry and biology. The electronics that you use every day were rooted in the very basic studies of electricity—scientifically—more than a hundred years ago. In fact, Global Positioning System (GPS) can only be effective by making precise calculations which are possible through understanding the world in terms of the theory of general relativity. In other words, the same thing that you implicitly relied upon the last time that you used your GPS, can be used to predict the motion of the stars, the origin of the universe and its eventual heat death.

If your conscience compels you to reject science, then please at least be consistent about doing so. This could very well mean that you need to adopt a primitive lifestyle that is certainly not going to be comfortable...

## You Either Need to Accept the Majority Scientific Consensus, or You Need to Do the Legwork

Despite the flaws that exist in the scientific community today, we need to believe that enough of the experts and leaders in the respective scientific fields are sincere and intellectually honest. They believe what they believe because that is what most of the evidence says, and the evidence in support of rival theories are not yet conclusive enough. These people *do* do the legwork: they read the dull papers by their peers and do the (often unglamorous) experiments. They discuss different theories with other scientists and, if they are intellectually honest, they entertain and evaluate them. And so if they reach a conclusion and advise in a certain way, the non-scientists and those of us not in that field need to respect that[3]. That is not to say that in 50 years' time that field of study would not have been turned on its head, but we cannot live in anticipation of something like that and need to act based on the data and theories that we have now.

If you are deeply dissatisfied with a scientific theory, before you start influencing people from that dissatisfaction, you need to make your own contribution. You need to start studying *broadly*, even theories contra to the one that prefer. And this needs to be more than a few searches on the Internet: it needs to be for the dry, technical scientific papers4 produced by reputable scholars. It needs to be the study of (typically very expensive) textbooks: first the introductory ones, then the intermediary ones and then the advanced ones, touching on the details of the most cutting edge research. You need to interact with experts in the field, even if only at your local university. In other words, if you are unhappy with the *status quo* of a particular scientific field, you need to have good reasons for it. It is amazing how compelling science becomes the moment your begin to understand the basics, and the mystery is dispelled and you can trace the steps from the beginning to the conclusion.

## Conclusion

In this article I broadly discussed why one—especially the Christian—cannot and should not reject science. Despite its many problems, we continue to grow and develop our understanding of the world through it. To remain intellectually honest, we need to accept what science tells us. Bearing in mind that science continues to develop and our understanding of the world will be refined through it, if the worldview [4] which you hold is correct, then you do not need to be afraid of science.

Whether one embraces or struggles with science, having an appreciation for it is deeply enriching and edifying: as we marvel at the intricate world which God has created, we stand in awe and cannot but help give praise to the Creator!

> The heavens declare the glory of God.
> The expanse shows His handiwork.
> Day after day they pour out speech,
> and night after night they display knowledge.
> There is no speech nor language,
> where their voice is not heard.
> Their voice has gone out through all the earth,
> their words to the end of the world.
>
> Psalm 19:1–4a

- 1. Of course, GMOs *can* be ethically misused. I shall not go into this topic in this article. Rather, the statement which I made assumes the application of genetic modifications in an ethical way. What I mean to say is that GMOs are not *inherently* evil or immoral.
- 2. As Carl Sagan once said, "to make an apple pie from scratch, one first needs to create the universe".
- 3. Of course, we do need to exercise discretion and discernment where we can and not blindly accept anything that we are told. For example, as Stephen Hawking is a world famous cosmologist, I should respect the science that he does, but his he says things like "philosophy is dead [5]", he is speaking as a (bad) philosopher and not a cosmologist.
- 4. These are often behind a paywall, but that is a whole other gripe of mine that would require its own forum.

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- Terminology & Concepts [6]

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