

Editorial

Introduction to the *Religions* Special Issue, “Exploring Science from a Biblical Perspective”

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Christianity and science have a long and deep relationship which, in recent decades, has generated stimulating dialogue among scientists, theologians, philosophers, and historians. The focus of this Special Issue is to highlight one aspect of this discussion: the influence of biblical perspectives on science, both historically and in contemporary culture. It is intended to complement an earlier Special Issue of *Religions* which I was privileged to edit, “[Christianity and Science: Fresh Perspectives](#)” published in 2020–2021.

How does a biblical perspective influence science? For starters, it proposes God as the answer to the question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” From a biblical perspective, matter and the universe are not eternal, but were created *ex nihilo* (from nothing) “in the beginning” (Genesis 1:1, John 1:3, Hebrews 11:3). The temporality of the universe created by an eternal, spiritual God clashed with ancient Near Eastern and Greek thought positing that matter is eternal, since in polytheistic worldviews, matter is a manifestation of the gods. When the eternity of matter concept was re-introduced in the West through the teachings of Aristotle around 1100 AD, this eternal/temporal matter debate became the greatest tension point between early science and theology, continuing well into the 20th Century. In fact, a survey taken in 1959, just prior to the discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation, found that less than one-third of U.S. scientists thought the universe had a beginning ([Brush 1992](#)). Robert Jastrow’s classic *God and the Astronomers* ([Jastrow 2000](#)) documents the strong resistance that the Big Bang theory received from secular scientists in its early days, largely because of its theological implications.¹

The notion that our universe has not always been here is better established today, but it is not without its detractors. Those wanting an accessible and extensive discussion of this topic should consult John C. Lennox’s *Cosmic Chemistry* ([Lennox 2021a](#)) and *God and Stephen Hawking* ([Lennox 2021b](#)). To bring this discussion up to date, in this Special Issue, the astrophysicist Hugh Ross presents the most current evidence that our universe had a beginning ([Ross 2023](#)). It appears that this biblical perspective on the nature of matter and the universe has a strong warrant.

Another biblical perspective one can bring to a scientific question involves the origin of life: can life start merely from the interaction of chemicals, or does life require some type of causal agent as an influence to get it going? In his article, Hugh Ross argues that if the universe required an agent to form, it is not unreasonable to expect that an agent was also required for the origin of life ([Ross 2023](#)).

Does a biblical perspective in science only look for cases where God needs to act miraculously? By no means, and the next two articles in this Special Issue address this point historically. In addition to presenting God as the Creator of the universe and of life, the scriptures note in many places that God has established patterns and laws so that the world follows a predictable course (Genese 8:22, Jeremiah 33:20–21).² Edward Davis shows how this biblical expectation of regular patterns led Robert Boyle to develop some of the foundational ideas of chemistry ([Davis 2023](#)), and Michael Keas traces this expectation in the thinking of early scientists like Johannes Kepler, who solved the riddle of planetary orbits ([Keas 2023](#)).³ Note the two-fold nature of a biblical perspective: we expect ordinary,



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repeatable events to follow fixed laws, because God established these natural patterns, yet for *origin-* or *miracle-related* questions, we should be open to God working in a creative (non-patterned) manner. In fact, Keas shows that the leading 19th-century scientist-philosopher William Whewell helped to pioneer the new professional term “scientist” to refer to those who study nature with an openness to both kinds of explanation—miraculous design and non-miraculous design. Thus, exploring science from a biblical perspective affirms *both* the search for mechanical explanations—a key goal of science that leads to technological advances—and an openness to detecting direct divine creative actions. It is my hope that the necessity of this balanced approach to studying nature is better recognized as a result of this Special Issue.

The remaining articles in this Special Issue focus on contemporary discussions of how best to explore science from a biblical perspective. Kenneth Keathley discusses the range of ways that science and faith can interact and notes that many of the challenges in relating them are fundamentally ethical in nature (Keathley 2023). Since much of the science–scripture overlap centers on the early chapters in the Book of Genesis, Joseph Miller looks at the similarities and differences between Genesis 1–11 and ancient Near Eastern creation myths (Miller 2022), while Ted Cabal discusses the strengths and weaknesses of various attempts to find parallels between scientific discoveries and scripture (Cabal 2023). Garrett DeWeese responds to challenges that a biblical perspective in ecology is hostile to the environment (DeWeese 2023), and Casey Luskin provides a helpful review of the various models for human origins that are being discussed today in evangelical Christian circles (Luskin 2023). Stephen Dilley et al. further discuss how standard evolutionary theory may or may not be reconciled with design/creation approaches (Dilley et al. 2023).

To complete this Special Issue, two articles examine cases where it is argued that science clashes with a biblical perspective. Titus Kennedy surveys the archaeological artifacts recovered from ancient Jericho and finds that they are compatible with the biblical conquest narratives; thus, a breezy dismissal of their historicity may not be warranted (Kennedy 2023). Stephen Dilley offers an in-depth analysis of Stephen J. Gould’s famous “Panda’s Thumb” argument and notes that it, like many arguments commonly made for macro-evolution, hinges on *theological* premises that misrepresent a biblical perspective (Dilley 2023). While macro-evolution may be true, to argue that it must be true for theological reasons (such as “God would not do it that way”) is simply an invalid approach.

I hope that the readers of this Special Issue will enjoy these articles as much as I have. I found it intriguing that a biblical perspective encourages the scientific search for mechanical, natural explanations for regular, repeating events, yet recognizes that God, as Creator, is not limited to using only natural processes. Thus, science, to the extent that it seeks to discover truth, should be open to both explanations. I also found that so-called “biblical perspectives” can vary from “Straw God” misrepresentations of a traditional Christian position (often by using words from the text in a woodenly literal manner) to situations where Christians themselves argue for a position that is not in fact biblical (misunderstanding “dominion” ecology). However, by continuing to study what historically has been seen as the “two books” of God’s revelation, His Works and His Word, my hope is that we will all get a better handle on truth.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ For example, see (Maddox 1989).
- ² For an introduction to this point, see (Bloom 2015).
- ³ I hoped that Rodney Stark would contribute an article on this point for this special issue, but he passed away before being able to do so. I refer readers to his excellent chapter, (Stark 2003).

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