

THE CHURCH OF ST THERESE SUMMER SERIES: FAITH AND SCIENCE

- June 21, 2021



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FAITH AND SCIENCE

- Outline
 - ▶ Intro
 - ▶ Hypothesis: "Religion and science are at odds with each other"
 - ▶ Some Definitions
 - ▶ What are the positions?
 - ▶ Does it matter?
 - ▶ Closing
 - ▶ Credits

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INTRODUCTION

- So why are you here?

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INTRODUCTION

- Very large topic so we need to narrow the scope
 - “Ars longa, vita brevis” (art is long and life is short) – Hippocrates.
- Many angles to come at this (historical, theological, philosophical, technological...)
- Tackle it by examining the statement “religion and science are at odds with each other”

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“RELIGION AND SCIENCE ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER”

- What do you think?
- What does the public at large think?
- What does the church teach?
- Where does the truth lie?

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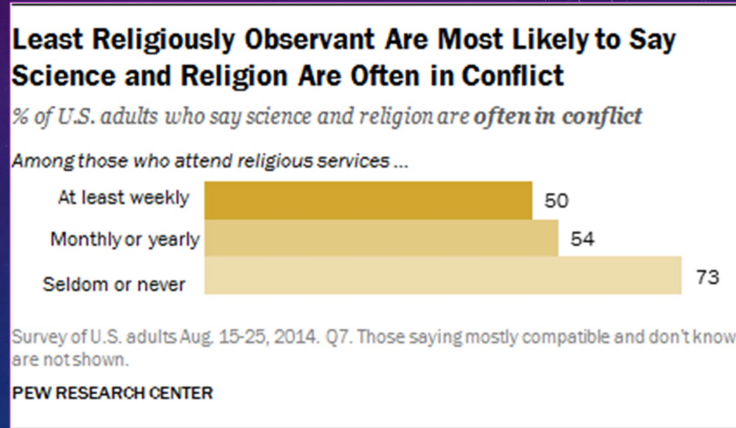
“RELIGION AND SCIENCE ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER”

- What do you think/why?
 - Agree that “religion and science are at odds with each other”
 - Disagree
 - Partially agree
 - Not sure

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“RELIGION AND SCIENCE ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER”

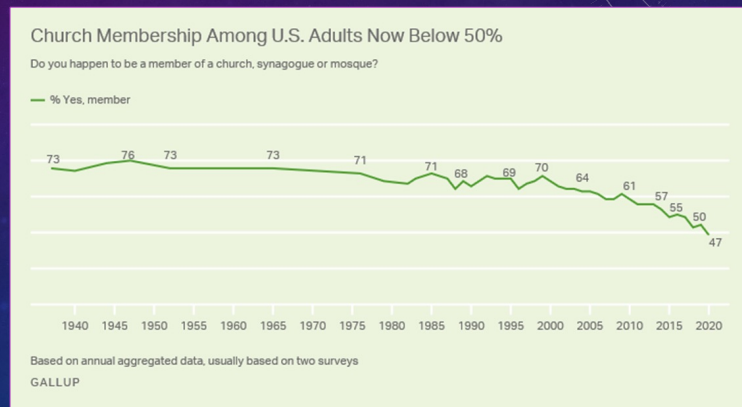
- What do others think?
 - Survey US Adults (Pew, 2014)
 - Q: “science and religion are often in conflict”
 - A: Depends on affiliation level as measured by religious service attendance



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“RELIGION AND SCIENCE ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER”

- What is the trend?
 - Survey US Adults (Gallup, 2021)



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SOME DEFINITIONS

- ▶ What is “Truth”?
- ▶ What is “Faith”?
- ▶ What is “Science”?

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SOME DEFINITIONS – “TRUTH”

- **Conformity of mind and reality.** Three kinds of conformity give rise to three kinds of truth.
 - **Logical Truth:** the mind is conformed or in agreement with things outside the mind,
 - assenting to what is
 - denying what is not.
 - Its opposite is error.
 - **Metaphysical or Ontological truth:** things conform with the mind.
 - primary conformity, when something corresponds to the idea of its maker
 - secondary conformity when something is intelligible and therefore true to anyone who knows it.
 - **Moral Truth:** what is said conforms with what is on one's mind.
 - This is truthfulness and its opposite is falsehood.

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SOME DEFINITIONS – “FAITH”

- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)
- “Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole **truth** that God has revealed. As personal adherence to God and assent to his **truth**, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature.¹⁷ CCC150
- “In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace: ‘Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine **truth** by command of the will moved by God through grace.’”²⁷ CCC155

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SOME DEFINITIONS – “FAITH”

- The crown jewel of the CCC wrt to faith and science
- “Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can **truth** ever contradict **truth**.”³⁷ “Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are.” CCC159

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SOME DEFINITIONS – “SCIENCE”

- Search for **truth** based on observation of the natural world.
- Science as a collective institution aims to produce more and more accurate **natural** explanations of how the **natural world** works, what its components are, and how the world got to be the way it is now.
- “Natural” things behave in predictable ways — though we may not yet fully understand them — which have observable outcomes. This predictability means that we can test hypotheses about natural entities by making observations.
- Ghosts and angels, for example, are **supernatural** entities without a basis in the physical universe and so are not subject to the laws of that universe. Hence, ghosts and angels are outside the purview of science, and we cannot study their existence (or lack thereof) with the tools of science.
- No scientific idea is ever once-and-for-all “proved.” Why not? Well, science is constantly seeking new evidence, which could reveal problems with our current understandings. Ideas that we fully accept today may be rejected or modified in light of new evidence discovered tomorrow.
 - Earth is at center of universe
 - Earth is flat
 - Life on other planets
 - Eternal universe – Einstein

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SOME DEFINITIONS – “SCIENCE” (CONT)

- Science cannot explain “why there is anything”. Purpose (teleology) lies outside of science.
 - Why is there anything?
 - Why do I exist?
 - Why does science work? (“The unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in the natural sciences” Eugene Wigner)
 - Why do we believe in God?
- What to do with the knowledge generated. ...people can agree on a common set of facts relating to a societal challenge but disagree on appropriate policy responses.

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POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE ARE AT ODDS”

- ▶ Yes – agree that religion and science are at odds
- ▶ “Kind of” – partially agree that religion and science are at odds
- ▶ No – disagree that religion and science are at odds

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THE POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE AT ODDS”

- Yes – Religion and Science are at odds
 - Atheism
 - Scientism
 - Marxism

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THE POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE AT ODDS”

- Yes – Atheism, Scientism, Marxism, Materialism, “other isms”
 - Reject religion/Faith/God
 - Inability to reconcile suffering with a loving God
 - Belief that religion has done more harm than good
 - Persistent Naturalism
 - Refusal to be responsible to a moral authority outside of oneself.
 - Rejecting scripture because it is not scientifically accurate
 - In absence of God
 - “Man always seeks God. The normal state of men and women is to some extent to be connected with a higher power even when that higher power and the human mind is distorted and turned into something secular. Errors of Stalinism and all other “isms” seek some false god even if God is taken away. This turns to idol worship but still the inner instinct of seeking God is there” Alexander Men – 1990
 - “You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” St. Augustine – 398



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THE POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE AT ODDS”

- “Kind of” – Religion and Science are at odds
 - Young Earth Creationism (YEC)
 - Old Earth Creationism
 - Intelligent Design
 - Deism

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THE POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE AT ODDS”

- “Kind of” – Creationism, Intelligent Design
 - Primary belief in religion/Faith/God
 - Believe the universe and the various forms of life were created by God out of nothing (ex nihilo)
 - Believe that the story told in Genesis of God’s six-day creation of all things is literally correct and that the Earth is only a few thousand years old
 - Deny that a lower or simpler species can evolve into a higher or more-complex species.
 - In instances where beliefs conflict with well established scientific principles
 - Complicated rationalizations needed to explain observed facts like fossils.
 - God the magician, God the Charlatan, God the mechanic



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THE POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE AT ODDS”

- No – Catholic Church
 - “The Bible [Sacred Scripture] and science are **not** irreconcilable because they are doing two different things”¹
 - Sacred scripture gives revealed **truths** of salvation
 - Natural science uses empirical-mathematical method to come to a description of the physical universe (**natural world**)
 - St. John Paul II – Fides Et Ratio
 - “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves”

¹ – Fr. Robert Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D. “From Nothing to Cosmos: God and Science, pg 111.

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THE POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE AT ODDS”

- No – Catholic Church (cont.)
 - God reveals truths of salvation through categories that the biblical author and his audience can understand.
 - Scientific accuracy is not essential to revealing truths of salvation e.g. Genesis. Indeed, it can run contrary to this because the categories and methods of scientific explanation would have been completely beyond the audience to whom God was revealing himself (Israel in 600 to 500 BC)
 - What was God’s intention in revealing himself to the biblical author?
 - To convey sacred truths (truths essential for salvation) correct four major errors in the creation myths of the day (e.g. the Gilgamesh Epic)
 - One God versus many gods.
 - God creates all natural objects versus divinity ascribed to natural objects (e.g. the sun god).
 - Human beings made in the image and likeness of God versus human being as “play things” for the gods’ capricious activities.
 - The material world is essentially good versus the material world is frequently evil.

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THE POSITIONS ON “RELIGION AND SCIENCE AT ODDS”

- No – Catholic Church (cont.)
 - History of scientific contributions of Church
 - Jesuits founded first universities
 - St. Albert the Great (1193-1280) Patron saint of the sciences
 - Robert Grosseteste (1170-1253) bishop of Lincoln, mathematician, philosopher
 - Roger Bacon (1214-1294) Franciscan friar, experimentalist, light and optics
 - Father George Lemaitre – Father of the Big Bang Theory
 - Vatican Observatory
 - Fr. Robert Spitzer – Magis Center

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DOES IT MATTER?

- Is it important that I understand the link between Faith and Science?
- Yes!
 - Essential to a well-formed conscience
 - Address a primary issue of disaffiliation
 - Well formed for civic policy making on critical issues
 - Genetic engineering
 - IVF
 - Artificial intelligence
 - Cloning
 - Search for extraterrestrial life



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FAITH AND SCIENCE CLOSING

- Current status – In general a poor understanding of Catholic Church position
- Trending toward more people unaware of Churches position
- Catholic Church is steward of the truths – need to share with all.
- We are now in an apostolic age – need to recondition our evangelical muscles
- Opportunity for raising awareness with ArchSPM synod – implementation
 - Adult Ed
 - Youth formation

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FAITH AND SCIENCE CLOSING – G.K. CHESTERTON

- “People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic. The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse... She swerved to the left and right, so exactly as to avoid enormous obstacles. She left on one hand the huge bulk of Arianism, buttressed by all the worldly powers to make Christianity too worldly. The next instant she was swerving to avoid orientalism, which would have made it too unworldly. “

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FAITH AND SCIENCE CLOSING – G.K. CHESTERTON

- “The orthodox Church never took the tame course or accepted the conventions; the orthodox Church was never respectable. It would have been easier to have accepted the Earthly power of the Ariens. It would have been easy, in the Calvinistic seventeenth century, to fall into the bottomless pit of predestination. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one’s own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is to be a snob. To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom – that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.” **G.K. Chesterton**



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CREDITS

- Faith and Science Research by:
 - Dan the Man

