

## Chapter 19: Science is Something God Created Humans to Do

1. Science operates on assumptions that actually reflect a Biblical worldview
2. Science ultimately displays the glory of God and benefits the lives of men
3. Science requires careful exercise of the scientific method, recognizing the limitations of science (not all can be known) and the limitations of men (no-one can know everything)

“Science is the collection of observations, explanations, and models produced through an organized study of nature for the purpose of enabling people to exercise good and wise dominion over God’s world for the glory of God and the good of mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

## 20: Fallen Science

### 20.1 Science Is Fallen

We considered various ways in which the fall is evident in the world of science: the frustration of scientific failure and dead ends, the energy wasted on post-fall problems, the fallen attitudes of men toward science and the fallenness of scientists all ought to make users of science cautious and humble in their scientific pronouncements.

### 20.2 Scientism: Science Exalted

In the previous section, one point that we made about science in a fallen world was that science is often exalted in the minds of many to be more and do more than it possibly can do. This exaltation is called “scientism.”

## I. Scientism defined

- A. Scientism has attained religious status in the minds of many
1. An observation made by Christians, of course
  2. But also made by non-Christians in a book called *Scientism: The New Orthodoxy*

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<sup>1</sup> Terrance Egolf and Rachel Santopietro, *Earth Science*, 4th ed. (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2012), 11, quoted in Mark L. Ward, *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2016), 300.

“It is a tenet of scientism that only certifiably scientific knowledge counts as real knowledge. All else is mere opinion or nonsense.”<sup>2</sup>

### B. Scientism's mythology

1. Parallel to the story of scientific naturalism (notion that “matter is all that exists”)
2. “Once upon a spacetime, BANG! This particular cycle of existence began.”<sup>3</sup>
3. Millions and millions of years passed, producing at least one and probably many planets orbiting in the temperate zone of their stars
4. On this planet (and possibly others) life was able to form, which followed a many millions of years' path of gradual change culminating in life as we know it on this planet
5. As the only truly sentient beings on our planet, we have the ability and responsibility to take charge of our environment
6. Science is the only reliable way we have for understanding ourselves and our world – no other authorities are the equal of science.
7. In the distant future, our universe will run down and its energy dissipate, but then it might just begin all over again

### C. A “creed” for scientism:

“I believe that matter is all there is, undirected evolution got us here, and only religious bigotry and time stand in science's way as it speeds up the process of human development.”<sup>4</sup>

### D. The indoctrination of people in our culture with scientism

1. If you proclaim in public, “Jesus died for our sins and rose again three days later” inevitably someone will demand that you prove it with verifiable data

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<sup>2</sup> Richard N. Williams, *Scientism: The New Orthodoxy* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic), 6

<sup>3</sup> Ward, *Biblical Worldview*, 306.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

2. If you insist that homosexuality (or cohabiting or drug use) is sinful, someone will demand that you show “demonstrable proof” (i.e. scientific proof) that shows bad effects of said sin
3. Organized empirical study (the scientific method) is useful and can show bad effects of certain behaviours, but it isn’t ultimate truth
4. Only God knows all things and only God has ultimate authority – if we agree to let science be the final arbiter of truth, we have lost the Bible as the authority over our lives

Well-known nineteenth-century orator and agnostic Robert Ingersoll actually wrote a “creed of science”:<sup>5</sup>

Superstition is not religion. Belief without evidence is not religion. Faith without facts is not religion. What is religion? To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits—to love the truth, to be sincere, to utter honest words, to love liberty, to wage relentless war against slavery in all its forms, to love wife and child and friend, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful; in art, in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be familiar with the mighty thoughts that genius has expressed, the noble deeds of all the world, to cultivate courage and cheerfulness, to make others happy, to fill life with the splendor of generous acts, the warmth of loving words, to discard error, to destroy prejudice, to receive new truths with gladness, to cultivate hope, to see the calm beyond the storm, the dawn beyond the night, to do the best that can be done and then to be resigned—this is the religion of reason, the creed of science.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Ingersoll, *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll: Lectures* (New York: Dresden Publishing, 1915), 290–91.

## II. Worshiping the Creation rather than the Creator

### A. Stephen Pinker: values from science

1. Atheist, Harvard theology professor
2. Chair of *American Heritage Dictionary* usage panel

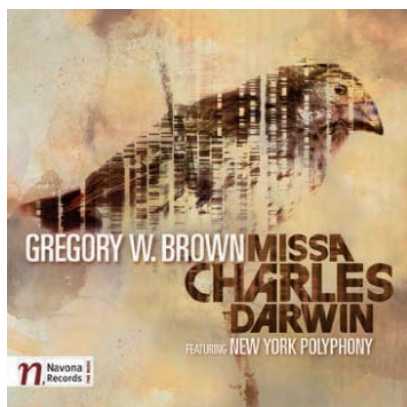
“the worldview that guides the moral and spiritual values of an educated person today is the worldview given to us by science.”<sup>7</sup>

### B. God created a universe with natural laws (order)

1. This makes science possible
2. “It’s idolatrous to believe in these laws and yet not believe in the Lawgiver they come from.”<sup>8</sup>

### C. Man has long been given to the idolatry of Creation over the worship of the Creator (Rm 1.18-23)

1. Most of the time it was the sun, or the moon, or a river, or an animal (or many of these at the same time)
2. Now it is the cosmos as a whole



A “missa” is a mass, a musical form. Scientism now has its own mass, the *Missa Charles Darwin* (missa is Latin for “mass”). The piece was written by composer Gregory W. Brown for the very capable men’s group New York Polyphony. “Unlike traditional Mass settings, however, the sacred texts have been replaced with excerpts from *On the Origin of Species*, *The Descent of Man*, and Darwin’s extant correspondence.”<sup>9</sup> Brown said the texts “represent a modern

<sup>7</sup> Steven Pinker, “Science Is Not Your Enemy,” *New Republic* (website), August 6, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Ward, *Biblical Worldview*, 307–8.

<sup>9</sup> “Missa Charles Darwin,” Gregory W. Brown (website), <http://www.gregorywbrown.com/missa-charles-darwin/>.

secular approach to explaining how we've come to be as a species."<sup>1011</sup>

### III. The faith foundation of scientism

#### A. Contrasting scientism and naturalism

1. Scientism: "focuses on how you know anything and says *it's through the scientific method.*"<sup>12</sup>
2. Naturalism: "focuses on the nature of the universe and teaches that there is no supernatural."<sup>13</sup>

"No gods allowed."

#### B. But... both scientism and naturalism depend on one inexplicable miracle

1. The big bang is that one allowable miracle – a *singularity* – an unrepeatable, unexplainable event
2. Terrence McKenna: "the dominant and virtually unchallenged myth of our origin is either that God created us in seven days along with all the rest of creation or that the universe was born out of nothingness in a single moment for no reason. These are the two choices on the menu."<sup>14</sup>
3. The big bang origin of the universe must be accepted by faith — by this measure, scientific naturalism passes from pure science to religion, the religion of scientism, held by *faith*.

### IV. Scientific naturalism and the two story view

#### A. Christians sometimes are influenced by naturalism and develop a two-story view of truth

1. The truth of nature (naturalism)
2. Spiritual truth (the Bible)

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<sup>10</sup> Gregory W. Brown quoted in Jan McCoy Ebbets, "We Sing the Theory of Evolution," *Insight*, April 15, 2011, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ward, *Biblical Worldview*, 308.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Terence McKenna Pokes Fun at the 'Big Bang' Theory" (video), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWv02kYyvo4>.

One of the authors of this textbook was on a flight to deliver a paper on presuppositions and worldview at an academic conference. He wound up sitting next to a bubbly high school science teacher who had a double-major degree in science from Duke University. She had enrolled in Duke as a young-earth creationist but left professing to believe in evolution as well as the Bible. As they discussed the possibility of squaring the Bible with evolutionary theory, the author asked, “What role does the Fall of man play in your scientific work?”

“None,” she replied.

“Why not?”

“Because you can’t prove it.”

The author replied, “Who determines what counts as proof?”

Tension shot up between seats 9A and 9B. The science teacher felt the challenge of that question. She blushed a little—and changed the subject.<sup>15</sup>

3. Christians who allow for the philosophy of naturalism are making something other than God the final arbiter of truth: this is idolatry

B. Non-Christians sometimes realize science can’t answer all questions

1. Terrance McKenna: “we are blinding ourselves to the intentionality present in our world.”<sup>16</sup>
2. Thomas Nagel: “has also famously searched for what he calls a ‘mind,’ which he thinks may be responsible for creation.”<sup>17</sup>
3. God intends for men to look at the creation and seek the Creator (Acts 17.27)

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<sup>15</sup> Ward, *Biblical Worldview*, 309–10.

<sup>16</sup> “Terence McKenna Pokes Fun at the ‘Big Bang’ Theory” (video), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWv02kYyvo4>.

<sup>17</sup> Ward, *Biblical Worldview*, 310.

4. Scientism, in its effort to explain the unexplainable (the origin of all things) is stumbling over the truth that the universe “is not a closed system of merely physical causes.”<sup>18</sup>

**Conclusion:**

In the end, we have to admit that only God can give us the answers to human origins and reveal the purpose for human existence. The ultimate truth about the universe is found in the Bible alone.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

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