



# Are Christianity and Science at Odds?

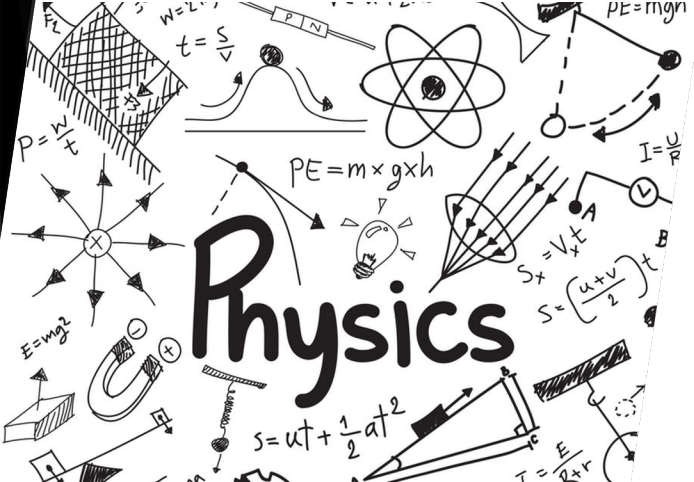
Truth In Love Apologetics Conference

October 10, 2020



# My passions, and their relevance to this talk...

- ▶ Family
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Physics



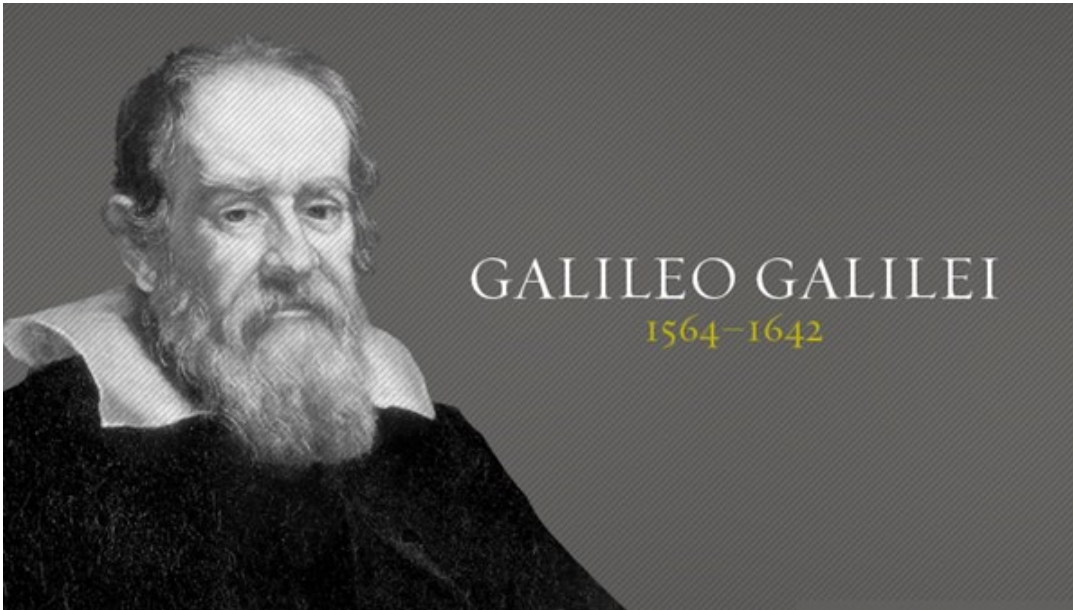
# A 2015 Pew Research Poll

- ▶ 59% of Americans say generally, science and religion are “often in conflict”.
- ▶ 38% say science and religion are “mostly compatible”.
- ▶ 76% of the “religiously unaffiliated” - (agnostics, atheists, deists, etc) say they are “often in conflict”.
- ▶ 50% of Americans who attend religious services at least weekly say they are “often in conflict”.
- ▶ 2010 book *Science vs. Religion*, by Elaine Ecklund, a sociologist, found a large discrepancy between what the general public believes about the faith lives of eminent scientists and reality- nearly 50% of them profess religious beliefs!



# Where did the idea that faith and science are incompatible come from?

- ▶ Galileo's conflict with the (Catholic) church?



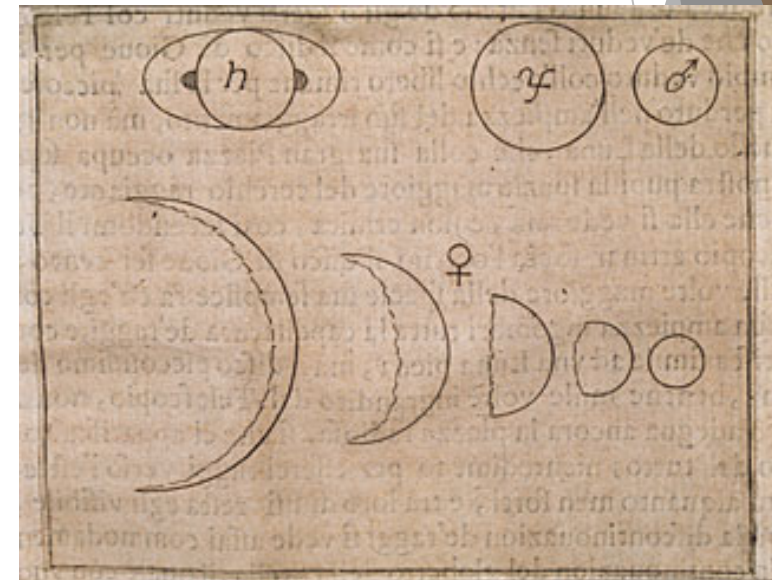


# A closer look at the story of Galileo...

- ▶ The conflict was over earth's place in the universe.
- ▶ The church (and most scientists!) had taught that the earth was unmoving and at the center.
- ▶ Galileo's observations: evidence for a new model with the sun at the center

*Observations Jovianae*  
1610

20. Jan. 1610	☉ **	
30. Jan.	** ☉ *	
2. Feb.	☉ ** *	
3. Jan.	☉ * *	
3. Ho. 5.	* ☉ *	
4. Jan.	* ☉ **	
6. Jan.	** ☉ *	
8. Jan. H. 13.	* * * ☉	



# A closer look at the story of Galileo...

- ▶ Catholic Church leadership opposed Galileo's view, and in 1616, formally pronounced Heliocentrism as a heresy, based on their interpretation of scriptures such as:

Psalm 93:1 - The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, *that it cannot be moved*.

- ▶ Isn't this a clear-cut case, then, of the conflict between "science and religion"?

# A closer look at the story of Galileo...

- ▶ How would Galileo, himself, characterize this conflict?

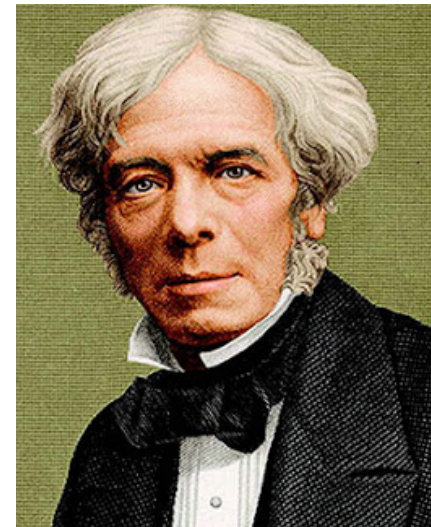
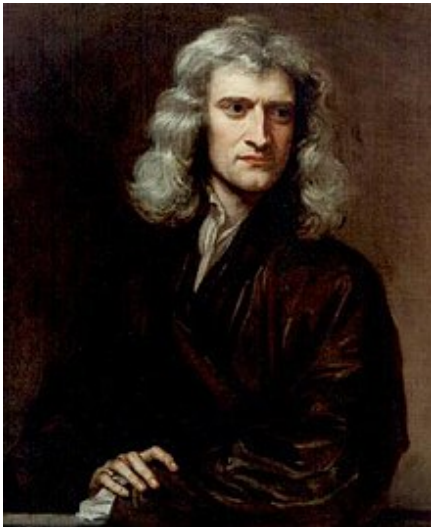
“The Holy Scriptures can never lie or err. And its declarations are absolutely and inviolably true. I should have added only that, though Scripture cannot err, nevertheless some of its interpreters and expositors can sometimes err in various ways. One of these would be very serious and very frequent, namely, to want to limit oneself always to the literal meaning of the words”.

-Galileo Galelei

- ▶ So what's the real conflict? "Science vs. Christianity" or "Figurative vs. Literal interpretation"?

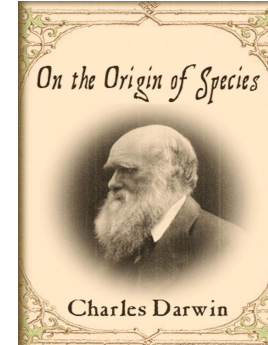
# What about other early famous scientists?

- ▶ Isaac Newton - Laws of motion and Law of Gravitation
- ▶ Johannes Kepler - Planetary motion
- ▶ Blaise Pascal - Fluid Pressure - Pascal's principle
- ▶ Michael Faraday - Electromagnetic Induction



# Where did the idea that faith and science are incompatible come from?

- Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species*?  
Not according to Darwin, himself!



“I see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of anyone... There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.” - Charles Darwin in *On The Origin of Species*



**Where did the idea that faith and science are incompatible come from?**

From Darwin's private memoirs, intended for his family; not published until after his death.



**“Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist.”**

~ CHARLES DARWIN

# So, where *did* the idea that faith and science are incompatible come from?

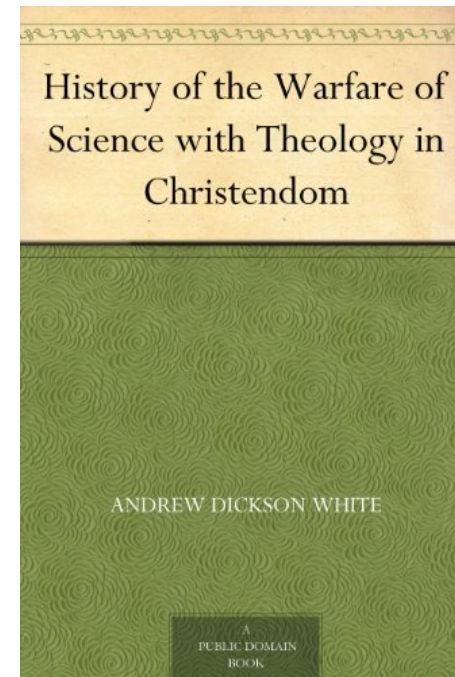
1896 book – by Andrew Dickson White

*A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*

“No work has done more than White's to instill in the public mind a sense of the adversarial relationship between science and religion.”

-David Lindberg, historian of science

(This, in spite of the fact, that much of the book has since been discredited.)



# How do Christianity and Science view some of the most important questions that humans have asked and the most important discoveries that we have made?

- ▶ Has the universe always been here? Or was there a beginning to the universe?



- ▶ Why/how is there life?



# Has the universe always been here? Or was there a beginning to the universe?

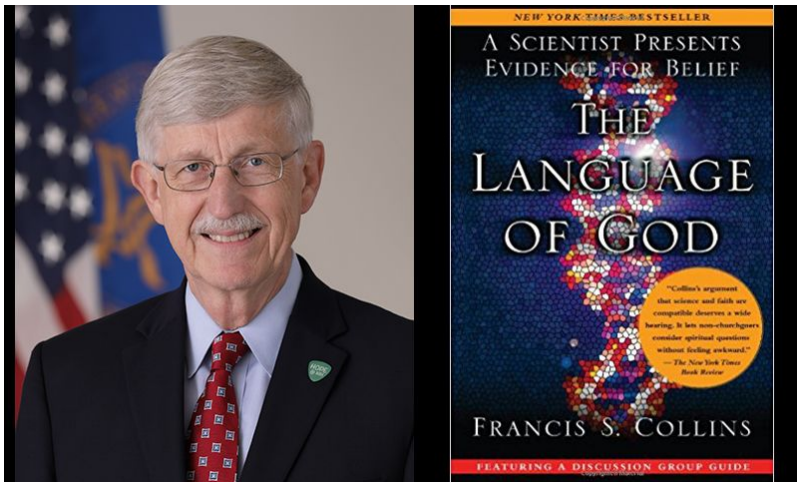
## The Science Perspective:

- ▶ David Hume (1711-1776) argued that if the universe is “the eternal basic element”, then we do not need a Creator, for the universe has “existed for all eternity”.
- ▶ Early 1900’s - most scientists assumed we lived in a universe with no beginning or end.
- ▶ 1929 - Edwin Hubble’s discovery that galaxies are moving away from us and each other.

# Has the universe always been here? Or was there a beginning to the universe?

## The Science Perspective:

“If everything in the universe is flying apart, reversing the arrow of time would predict that at some point all of these galaxies were together in one incredibly massive entity. Hubble’s observations started a deluge of experimental measurements that over the last 70 years have lead to the conclusion by the vast majority of physicists and cosmologists that the universe began at a single moment...”



-Francis Collins

(Current director of NIH and  
former head of The Genome  
Project)



# Early response of scientists to the idea that the universe had a beginning

- ▶ “The notion of a beginning is repugnant to me.... I simply do not *believe* it...*it leaves me cold* .”  
- Arthur Eddington, astrophysicist
- ▶ “To deny the infinite duration of time would be to betray the very foundations of science.”  
- Walter Nernst, chemist/physicist

# Why such resistance to a beginning?

- ▶ A beginning implied a creation event, and a creation implied a Creator!
- ▶ “Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world... It was a curiously theological event to come out of science”.
  - Robert Jastrow, founding director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies



[Robert Jastrow Interview](#)

# Has the universe always been here? Or was there a beginning to the universe?

## The Christian/Biblical Perspective:

- ▶ “In the *beginning*, God created the heavens and the earth”

-Genesis 1:1

- ▶ “In the *beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

-John 1:1, 14

- ▶ “Of old hast thou (the Lord) laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands... But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.”

-Psalms 102:25, 27

# Has the universe always been here? Or was there a beginning to the universe?

Are the two perspectives “at odds”?

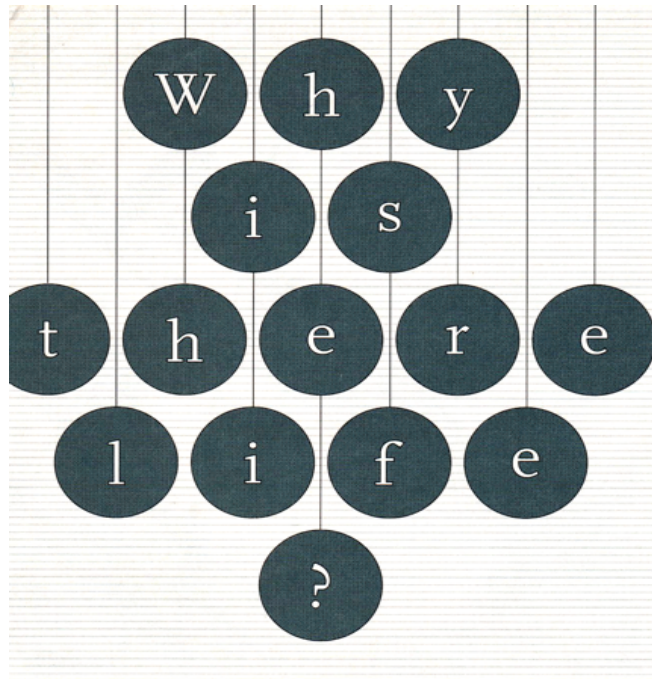
- ▶ In their essence, NO!
- ▶ “The creation of the universe is supported by all the observable data astronomy has produced so far. As a result, the people who reject the data can arguably be described as having a ‘religious belief’... I invite you to examine the snapshot provided by half a century’s worth of astrophysical data and see what the pieces of the universe actually look like... The best data we have are exactly what I would have predicted had I had nothing to go on but the 5 books of Moses, the Psalms, the Bible as a whole.”

-Arno Penzias (Nobel-prize winning physicist)



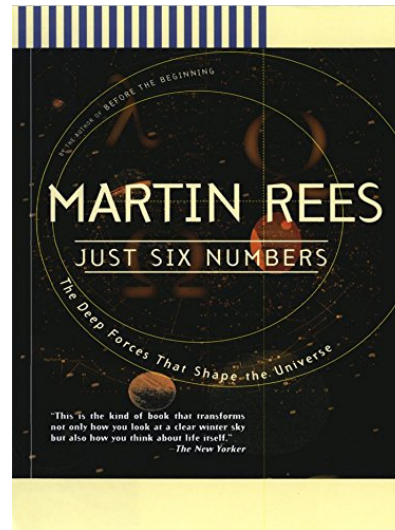
# Why/How is there life?

## The Science Perspective:



BECAUSE, SAYS BRITAIN'S ASTRONOMER ROYAL,  
YOU HAPPEN TO BE IN THE RIGHT UNIVERSE  
BY BRAD LEMLEY    PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLIVE FROST

THE UNIVERSE IS UNLIKELY. VERY UNLIKELY. DEEPLY,  
shockingly unlikely. ¶ "It's quite fantastic," says Mar-  
tin Rees, Britain's Astronomer Royal, waving a hand





# Why/How is there life?

Just two of the numbers:

- ▶ 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (or  $10^{36}$ )

The ratio of the electrical force between two protons in a nucleus to the gravitational force between them.

- ▶ 0.007 or 0.7%

The percentage of mass that is “lost” or converted to energy in the fusion reaction that powers stars, including our sun.

# Why/How is there life?

The Science Perspective: The fine-tuning of the universe

- ▶ “These six numbers constitute a recipe for the universe. If any one of the numbers were different even to the tiniest degree, there would be no stars, no complex elements, *no life*.”

*-Martin Rees*

- ▶ The odds of these numbers being exactly what they need to be in order for the universe to be interesting and for us to exist??

....Similar to the possibility of a “Boeing 747 aircraft being completely assembled as a result of a tornado striking a junkyard”.

*-Hugh Ross*



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# Why/How is there life?

## 2 Possible explanations for the fine-tuning of the universe

- ▶ Evidence for a Creator that had us in mind?

“The numbers’ uncanny precision has driven some scientists, humbled, into the arms of the theologians. ‘The exquisite order displayed by our scientific understanding of the physical world calls for the divine,’ contends Vera Kistiakowsky, a physicist at MIT.” - Discover magazine

- ▶ Our universe is just one in the Multiverse?

Perhaps an infinite number of universes, each with their own randomly created constants and laws of nature...we just happen to be in the one lucky universe??!!

# Objections to the Multiverse from Physicists

- ▶ What *causes* the different universes?

“The multiverse theory is increasingly popular, but it doesn’t so much explain the laws of physics as dodge the whole issue. There has to be a physical mechanism to make all those universes and bestow bylaws on them.”

- Paul Davies, Physicist, *New York Times*, Nov 24, 2007

- ▶ Observable and testable science? No!

“..How ironic that, having renounced belief in God because God is not material or observable by sense or instrument, the atheist may be driven to postulate not one but an infinitude of unobservable (universes) in the material world itself.”

-Steven Barr, physicist at University of Delaware

# Why/How is there life?

Has evolution explained how life began?

In the words of ardent atheist, Richard Dawkins:

<https://youtu.be/GlZtEjtlirc?t=168>



# Why/How is there life?

## The Christian/Biblical Perspective:

- ▶ “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it *to be inhabited*. I am the LORD; and there is none else.”

- Isaiah 45:18

- ▶ “And God said, Let us make man *in our image*. ”

- Gen 1:26

- ▶ “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*, and man became a living soul.”

- Gen 2:7

# How/Why is there life?

Are the two perspectives “at odds”?

- ▶ In their essence, NO!
- ▶ The scientific evidence is not fundamentally at odds with faith/Christianity, but different people’s interpretations and conclusions from the evidence can be and are, at times, at odds.
- ▶ It is NOT irrational or unreasonable at all to conclude that the God of our Christian faith is the Author of the laws of physics and the designer and sustainer of this incredible, finely-tuned Universe!

For by him (Christ) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

-Colossians 1:16-17, ESV

# Concluding thoughts...

- ▶ Science is NOT the enemy of faith.

I don't have to reject science in order to be a Christian!

Science can and often is used by humans (enabled by God) to alleviate human suffering, including our current search for a vaccine for Covid-19.

- ▶ Faith is NOT the enemy of scientific progress.

I don't have to relegate my faith to the back burner in order to engage our culture on the scientific issues of the day.

Faith and Christian teachings supply a much-needed moral compass to some of the "big" scientific topics of the day: cloning, in vitro fertilization, artificial intelligence, etc.