

# How Christianity Revolutionized (and still Revolutionizes) Science

by Dr. Jay L. Wile, Ph.D.

## Qualifications

- University Professor From 1990 - 1995
- Helped Develop Indiana's Only Residential High School for Gifted and Talented Students
- NSF-Sponsored Scientist with More Than \$200,000 In Research Grants
- Became Interested in Homeschooling Because of Excellent University Students Who Were Homeschooled
- Currently writes junior high school and high school science courses for homeschooled students

## There Are Those Who Say That Science and Christianity are Incompatible

“It follows that science is incompatible with religion. Why is this? It is because once you attribute any particular event to a supernatural agent, a proposition that cannot be disproven by observation or experiment, then science becomes both irrelevant and impossible.”

- Dr. John Ellis in *How Science Works*

“Science and religion are incompatible in the same sense that the serious pursuit of knowledge about reality is incompatible with [nonsense].... Religion makes smart people do stupid things, and scientists do not like stupid.”

- Dr. PZ Myers at the 2010 Global Atheist Convention

## There Are Others Who Strongly Disagree

Carolus Linnaeus is the father of biological taxonomy. While he was alive, the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau sent him this message: “Tell him I know no greater man on earth.” He described his science this way:

“I saw the infinite, all-knowing and all-powerful God from behind...I followed His footsteps over nature's fields and saw everywhere an eternal wisdom and power, an inscrutable perfection.”

## Who is Right?

In 1938, Dr. Joseph Needham asked a famous question: “Why was China overtaken by the west in science and technology, even though ancient China was advanced compared to ancient Europe?”

His detailed study of China's scientific history led to a 24-volume series called *Science and Civilisation in China*." It was named one of the 100 Best Nonfiction books of the 20th century by the Modern Library Board.

He Gave Three Answers to His Question

The first two dealt with Chinese law and bureaucracy. This is his third reason:

"...the autochthonous idea of a supreme being, though certainly present from the earliest times, soon lost the qualities of personality and creativity. The development of the concept of precisely formulated abstract laws capable, because of the rationality of the Author of Nature, of being deciphered and re-stated, did not therefore occur."

### **The Scientific Method Came from:**

Robert Grossteste (Bishop of Lincoln) and Roger Bacon (Franciscan friar )

### **Bacon Specifically Said Faith Was Integral to Science**

"For the grace of faith illuminates greatly, as also do divine inspirations, not only in things spiritual, but in things corporeal and in the sciences of philosophy..."

He wrote that the Christian faith inspires better ideas than those that come from other sources and that a person who is seeking God's truth will be better able to test those ideas.

### **This Fact Is Understood by Those Who Actually Study the History of Science**

"In one of those strange permutations of which history yields occasional rare examples, it is the Christian world which finally gave birth in a clear, articulate fashion to the experimental method of science itself."

-Dr. Loren Eiseley

Benjamin Franklin Professor of Anthropology and the History of Science at the University of Pennsylvania

## Many Scientific Breakthroughs Occur Because of Scientists' Christian Faith

**Nicolaus Copernicus** put the sun at the center of the universe specifically because the geocentric model was too messy, and he said that this went against the nature of God, who is the “the Best and Most Orderly Workman”

**Sir Isaac Newton** went against the scientific consensus of his day by believing that the same laws which operate on earth operate in the heaven. Why? Dr. Morris Kline says:

“The thought that all the phenomena of motion should follow from one set of principles might seem grandiose and inordinate, but it occurred very naturally to the religious mathematicians of the 17th century. God had designed the universe, and it was to be expected that all phenomena of nature would follow one master plan. One mind designing a universe would almost surely have employed one set of basic principles to govern related phenomena.”

**Newton** himself wrote:

“This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being. This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all.”

Up until the mid 1800s, it was very common for God to be praised in the scientific literature.

Please note that this is in his scientific publication, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*.

**Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz** developed binary logic and the binary number system (which is the basis of modern computers) to be able to more effectively communicate Christianity to the pagans.

In a letter to Duke Rudolph of Brunswick, he wrote, “After all, one of the high points of the Christian faith, which agrees least with the philosophers and is not easy to impart to pagans, is the creation ex nihilo through God’s almighty power. Now one can say that nothing in the world can better present and demonstrate this power than the origin of numbers, as is represented here through the simple and unadorned presentation of One and Zero or nothing.”

## **This Still Happens Today**

Dr. James Tour is the world's most important synthetic organic chemist.

He and his research team have actually built molecules that act like cars!

They hope to use them to “deliver” other molecules to particular places, like tumors in someone's body.

“As a scientist, when posed with scientific mysteries that have presented themselves in my research, I have so often bowed my heart and prayed, ‘Lord, make your light shine on this darkness. When no others can see, please Lord, let me see.’ On many occasions, when graduate students have brought their puzzling laboratory results and laid them on my desk, I have been as baffled as they. So remembering [Psalm 112:4], which I had long before committed to memory, I pray for light, and God answers. Surely, meditating on God's word can cause light to arise in darkness even for the challenges that confront our secular careers.”

## **Understanding What's Under Us**

John Baumgardner is a creationist researcher who has used the Genesis Flood as inspiration to develop a model called Catastrophic Plate Tectonics.

In 1980, he used his model to predict that there are cold masses of rock deep in the mantle, which were produced by fast subduction roughly 4,500 years ago.

That prediction was confirmed in 1994

Using seismic tomography, researchers showed cold material (blue) that replaced hotter material (red) in the lower mantle.

This is a mystery in the context of old-earth plate tectonics.

## **Christian Researchers Correct the Conclusions of the Long Term Evolution Experiment**

On February 24, 1988, Dr. Richard Lenski's Lab started the Long Term Evolution Experiment (LTEE).

They have been following 12 identical populations of bacteria as they varied the conditions.

They have passed 68,000 generations, and have seen nothing genetically novel appear.

They Originally Thought They Had Something

After 31,500 generations, one population of bacteria were able to digest a chemical they couldn't originally digest under the experimental conditions (citrate).

The bacteria had the ability to eat this chemical in the absence of oxygen but not the presence of oxygen, which was a part of the experiment.

Lenski himself said, "...one of the lineages makes its living by doing something brand-new, something that its ancestor could not do. That sounds a lot like the origin of species to me. What do you think?"

### **Evolutionists Were Content With That Interpretation**

Scientists working from a Christian perspective (like Dr. Scott Minnich) were not, so they decided to test a key part of the story.

They decided to see whether or not this was a random result.

They found it was not. They could reproduce the result 46 times, in as little as 12 generations.

This showed it couldn't be an evolutionary event, instead, it was a pre-programmed response.

The Authors State in Their Peer-Reviewed Paper

**"We conclude that the rarity of the LTEE mutant was an artifact of the experimental conditions and not a unique evolutionary event. No new genetic information (novel gene function) evolved."**

This was the first conclusive demonstration that genomes are programmed to mutate when organisms are stressed.

This process, called adaptive mutation, had been speculated about for some time. We now know that it is a real, programmed response to changing environments.

## **Only One Theory of Planetary Magnetic Fields Has Made Accurate Predictions**

The one that uses young-earth creationist assumptions.

It was formulated in 1984, and it correctly reproduced the known data.

It explained why Mercury has a magnetic field, which is a mystery in the standard model.

It also explained why the moon once had a magnetic field but doesn't now, which is another mystery in the standard model.

In 1984, it was used to predict the magnetic fields of both Uranus and Neptune, which had not been measured.

Several years later, the Voyager crafts confirmed the prediction, while the old-earth model was off by a factor of 10,000 for Uranus.

In 1984, it was used to predict that Mars once had a magnetic field, despite the fact that it doesn't now.

Analysis of a Martian meteorite in 2001 confirmed the prediction.

### **Since Then, It Made Another Confirmed Prediction**

Mercury was visited by Mariner in 1975, and its magnetic field was measured.

NASA sent MESSENGER there, and it settled into orbit in 2011.

In 2004, the young-earth model was used to predict that the magnetic field should be 4-6% weaker than in 1975. The old-earth model predicted no measurable difference.

The young-earth prediction was mostly verified (it decreased by about 7-8%).

### **One Very Important Point**

Doing science from a Christian point of view doesn't mean you are going to be right.

Even starting with the correct assumptions, you can still misinterpret the data.

It's also possible for Christians to misinterpret Scripture, which can negatively affect their science.