

Science and Christian Faith

To learn more about this topic, which many people (maybe you?) think is fascinating and important, see the [homepage for ESL Cafe](http://mywebspace.wisc.edu/crusbult/web/eslcafe/index.htm#science) (mywebspace.wisc.edu/crusbult/web/eslcafe/index.htm#science) which includes a link to this page, written by [Craig Rusbult, Ph.D.](#)

Worldviews

As individuals and in groups, we have a [worldview](#) — **our view of the world, used for living in the world** — that includes our views of nature and science, humans and God. My personal worldview, and your personal worldview, influence our answers for a wide range of questions: What are humans, why we are here, and what is our purpose in life? and our goals for life? Time is very valuable (it's "the stuff life is made of") so how should we use our time? Do we think reality includes only matter/energy, or is there more? What can we know (and how) and with how much certainty? Can we know if God exists? If God exists, what characteristics does God have, and **what relationship does God have with the universe, and what actions does God do in our world?**

God's Actions — Natural and Miraculous

Christians believe that **God works in two related ways** — usually **natural-appearing**, and occasionally **miraculous-appearing** — because this is what the Bible teaches, and (for many of us) because of our personal experiences.

We believe that "natural" does not mean "without God" because **God designed and created natural process**; and natural does not mean "without control" because **God can supernaturally guide natural process** to produce a desired natural-appearing result instead of another natural-appearing result.

We believe that God does miracles, so (if science claims that miracles do not occur) does this produce a conflict between faith and science? No, because **science does not claim that miracles are impossible**; the goal of science is to understand natural process (the way God usually works) and scientific research requires a world that is usually-natural (not an "Alice in Wonderland" world with frequent surprises) but it doesn't have to be always-natural.

These principles (re: natural process and miracles) are explained in [The Myth of Warfare between Science and Religion](#) which also looks at misunderstandings (involving the complexities of Galileo, and non-belief in a Flat Earth) about the history of relationships between science and religion. { This page also explains the difference between *science* and *scientism*. }

Evidence for the Existence & Actions of God?

Science is based on observable evidence. Do we have strong evidence for the existence & actions of God? If not, we should ask [Why isn't God more obvious?](#) and my answer is: **"God seems to prefer a balance of evidence**, with reasons to believe and disbelieve, so a person's heart and will can make decisions freely (without being coerced by overwhelming evidence) and so we can develop a 'living by faith' character with a trust in God serving as the foundation for all thoughts and actions of daily living."

And more from this "Why...?" page: Even though proof is impossible, **observable evidence (scientific, historical, personal, and interpersonal)** can affect our estimates for the plausibility of various worldviews, and (as rational beings created by God) we should try to logically analyze evidence (from observations & scripture) in our attempts to find truth. If there is not enough evidence for certainty, is deciding to "not decide" justifiable? Yes, I think a moderate (not postmodern) **intellectual agnosticism** is logically rational, but... a **commitment agnosticism** seems personally unwise. Proof is impossible, so **each of us must "live by faith" in whatever worldview we have decided to construct and accept.** {also: Ideas from C.S. Lewis, and Life as Educational Drama }

For example, evidence seems insufficient for this science question: When we ask "why does our world have natural characteristics that allow it to be at least partially self-assembling", scientists agree that a non-designed universe seems extremely improbable. But a non-designed multiverse (containing an immense number of universes, with at least one universe [ours] evolving life) seems plausible (so those who really want to not believe in God have a rational reason to not believe) but so do a multiverse divinely designed by God, or a universe divinely designed by God. [Anthropic Principle and a Fine-Tuning of Nature: Multiverse and/or Intelligent Design](#)

The 6 Days of Genesis 1

In one interpretation of Genesis 1, the six days describe a 144-hour creation that occurred 6,000 years ago. In my opinion, young-earth advocates should be admired for their desire to determine what the Bible teaches, and believe it. But I think their interpretation is not logically justified and is overly rigid. Instead, I think the six days form a **logical framework** for describing actual historical events, but the logical arranging of events is *topical* instead of *chronological*. Genesis 1:2 describes the earth as "formless and empty," so there are *two problems*. The *two solutions* are to produce form, and to fill. The first 3 days produce **form** (by separations, in time or space, that produce day and night, sky and sea, and land with plants) and the second 3 days **fill** these forms (with sun for day and moon for night, birds for sky and fish for sea, and land animals that eat plants):

	separate to produce form		create to fill each form
1	separating day and night	4	sun for day , moon for night
2	separating sky and sea	5	sky animals, sea animals
3	separating land and sea, land plants are created	6	land animals and humans, plants are used for food

The "form and fill" structure describes two related aspects of creation in Days 1 and 4 (for light), 2 and 5 (for sea and sky), 3 and 6 (for land), in a logical framework for the history of creation. I think the framework is clearly in the text, and this interpretation — which is neutral regarding age of the earth — correctly defines the intended meaning of the six days; if we look only at the text, the days could be logical *and* chronological, but nonchronological days produce a better match between what we see in the Bible and in nature. { [The Framework in Genesis 1](#) [Young-Earth Theology](#) [Young-Earth Science](#) }

Natural Evolution(s)

What can a Christian believe about evolution? I think "anything" is the correct answer, because humility seems justified when we examine everything we know about science and theology, as explained in my [FAQ about Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design](#). Some devoted Bible-believing Christians think God did miracles in the Salvation History of humans (as recorded in the Bible) but not in the Formative History of nature, while others (including me) think that God used two modes of action, usually natural-appearing (divinely guided sometimes) and occasionally miraculous-appearing, during both Formative History & Salvation History.

When we study evolution (E) during the history of nature, and ask "is the universe is 100% self-assembling by natural process?", my own views are: **astronomical E** (yes) to form stars, galaxies, solar systems, and heavy elements; **geological E** (yes) to form the geological formations we observe on earth; **chemical E** (no) to form the first carbon-based life; and **biological E** should be split into **small-scale E** (yes) by micro-E within a species or minor macro-E between similar species, **fossil E** (yes) over billions of years in the geological record of earth, full **common descent** (yes) with all species related by ancestry, and **100% natural large-scale E** (probably not, but I'm less confident about this than my "no" about chemical E) to produce all of the biocomplexity and biodiversity we observe.

What about Intelligent Design? Three types of Divine Design (design of the universe, guiding of natural process, and miraculous-appearing design-directed action) are discussed in Sections 6A-6B and 7A-7D of my FAQ.

Human Evolution and Human Salvation

Can we harmonize what's in the Bible (especially Genesis 2-4) with the evidence-and-logic of science? I think "yes" and some possibilities are examined in my links-page about [Human Evolution: Science \(genetics....\) and the Bible \(Genesis, Adam & Eve....\)](#). I think our ancestors included apes and hominids, but God guided the process (and perhaps also did miracles) to create humans with the characteristics (physical, mental, emotional, social, moral, spiritual) that He wanted us to have, and we became fully human when God decided we would become human, because He made Adam & Eve fully human when he established a personal relationship and a "spiritual connection" with them in Genesis 2, and gave them stewardship responsibilities, holding them accountable (in a covenant relationship) for obeying His commands and obeying their consciences that were now guided by His spirit.

Then what happened? God offered the gift of full life (with relationship, quality, and immortality) to the first humans, but Adam rejected it by his sinful disobedience when he chose to make moral decisions independent from God, instead of trusting and obeying God. This "fall into sin" broke Adam's part of a conditional if-then covenant with God, and God said "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever. (Genesis 3:22)" When the supernatural support provided by God (symbolized by the "tree of life") was removed by God, Adam and Eve began to perish, with natural processes temporarily allowing life while gradually leading to their death.

We have earned this divine judgement of death, because we are sinners. We need a savior, and God is merciful, so the gift of life was won back for us by our savior. Jesus Christ accepted the penalty of death that each of us earns (by our sinful disobedience) and in doing this He (by living in sinless obedience to the Father) earned the right to make His own Eternal Life available, as a gift of grace, for all humans who will accept: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)" Everyone who accepts this gift will live forever, in a second life (after our first life on earth, and biological death) with God in heaven.

How did Jesus "live in sinless obedience to the Father"? We cannot do this because we are weak and self centered, un-humble and rebellious. By contrast, Jesus could live without sin because He has always been part of the tri-une God (often called the Trinity) who is one God existing in three persons — Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit — and when Jesus became a human (so he could become our savior) He was both God and human. Therefore, he was able to live without sin. Peter Rust describes this: "In Jesus Christ, God 'emptied himself' and 'became flesh' in human weakness; this is God's method of salvation. But [since he was God] Jesus remained in perfect communion with the Father and in subjection to him, so the Father could guide him [through the Holy Spirit] continuously."