

A Christian View of Science
MVOPC Adult Sunday School Class, 2022
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Lesson 1: Introduction

I. Goals

- (1) To be better equipped to enjoy and understand the glory of God revealed in His creation and the scientific endeavor. (→ God)
- (2) To develop an understanding of science in terms of a Biblical, Christian worldview. (→ selves)
- (3) To have an answer to the following statement: "I could never be a Christian because Christianity is not scientific." (→ world)

II. Motivation

II Cor. 10:4-5

- a) Pulling down strongholds and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. This is the destructive, or negative, aspect of our task: to show that the unbeliever's worldview is incompatible with the scientific enterprise.
- b) Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This is the constructive, or positive, aspect of our task: to construct a consistent Biblical, Christian view of science.

III. Method

Our method will be *to examine the foundations of science itself.*

"For far too long, debates in the field of science and Christian faith have been dominated by Darwinism and the age of the earth. These are details. What absolutely must be settled first is of much more fundamental significance: science itself, as an intellectual discipline. In this class, we intend to examine the foundations of science from a Biblical perspective. We will find that contrary to popular assumption, science is far from an intellectually neutral endeavor interested in "just the facts". In the first half of the class, we intend to construct a theoretical case for a specifically Christian view of science. In the second half of the class, we will turn our attention to the practical impact of these issues in history, including science in ancient cultures, the rise of science in parallel with the Protestant Reformation in Europe, and the development of modern science up to our own times. Throughout the class we will employ specific examples and concrete case studies to illustrate the ideas we will discuss. The Lord commands each one of us, in I Peter 3:15, to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you". One of the most common challenges we are likely to encounter as Christians is some variation on the following: "I could never be a Christian, because Christianity isn't scientific." All Christians, regardless of our personal level of involvement with the scientific

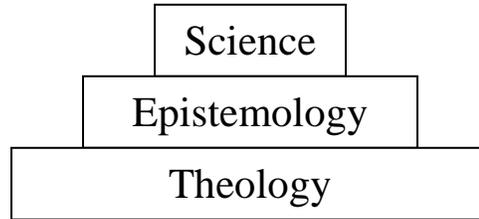
enterprise, should be prepared to answer this objection, and one goal of this class will be to provide a variety of possible responses.”

IV. Thesis

It is impossible to make sense of science except on the basis of the Christian, theistic worldview.

Evidence: See Reformation/Scientific Revolution Chart

V. Structure of the Task



VI. Definition

Science – The systematic and rigorous investigation of the phenomena of physical reality by means of empirical investigations and logical theoretical descriptions for the purpose of discovering and understanding the laws that govern the physical universe.

“To think God’s thoughts after him” – Kepler

VII. Structure of the Class

	+/Christian	-/Non-Christian
Theory	Week 1: Biblical Framework	Week 4: The Crisis of Science and non-Christian Philosophy
History	Week 3: The Birth of Science and the Protestant Reformation	Week 2: The Failure of Science in Ancient Cultures

VIII. Case Study: The Divine Attributes of Law (Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, Crossway: 2006)

IX. Biblical Passages Relevant to Science

Psalm 111:2 – As God’s children, we study creation because we take pleasure in the great works of God. This also means that as Christians we must recognize God’s hand in every area of investigation, including areas that we do not personally enjoy. We must never disparage or ignore a discipline we may not like (for instance, many people do not enjoy mathematics and would like to ignore it altogether), because all of these things are great works of our God.

Gen. 1:1 – God created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). This is a concept unique to Judeo-Christian religion, and gives rise to the important Creator/creature distinction, covered in an earlier class.

Gen. 1:2 – God originally created the world without form and void. The creation was chaos.

Gen. 1:3-5 – God imposes order on the original chaos. He creates light, land, etc., and also the laws that regulate and govern their existence. This is important to the scientific endeavor, because it answers the question of whether there is real order underlying physical reality or whether the order that emerges from the scientific endeavor is merely the subjective or arbitrary ordering by people, with no corresponding order underlying the phenomena.

Gen. 1:26-29 – Man is created qualitatively different from the rest of creation; he is given authority over creation and a task to do with respect to it. This is related to the image of God, discussed in a previous class. The implication is that in science we may not approach humans as simply a most sophisticated kind of animal.

Gen. 2:19-20 – Adam imposes order on creation. In the original creation, God imposes order on creation, and in this passage God’s image, Adam, imposes additional order on God’s creation: he names the animals. This is an act of authoritative dominion taking, because to name something is to definitively interpret it, which implies authority over it. This text, together with Gen. 1:3-5, also implies that the task of science is twofold: on the one hand, discovering the underlying order established by God in the creation, and on the other hand, ordering creation according to meaningful and rational principles. Both of these activities are dominion-taking activities.

Gen. 3:17-19 – Sin is the occasion for a curse on the creation. There is a change in Adam’s relation to creation. There is almost certainly a change in the creation itself, although we have no way of guessing what aspects specifically changed, since it is not revealed, and obviously cannot be investigated. But we do know that not everything about creation and our relation to it is the way it was originally intended to be.

Gen. 8:21-22; Mal. 3:6 – God’s faithfulness is the foundation of regularity in creation (laws).

Job 38:1-7 – God was free to create the creation in the way he wanted. There is real contingency in creation: we cannot figure out how it is made by just sitting down and thinking about it. We have to go out and look for ourselves. It could have been a different way. Additionally, there are limits to human knowledge, because we are not the Creator.

Joshua 10:12ff – The writer is amazed in this text, not because the sun stood still, but because God listened to the voice of a man. This shows us the difference between a heavenly and an earthly perspective of what happened. From an unbelieving scientific point of view, this account is utterly

impossible. From the Biblical point of view, the miracle is not that God can make the sun stand still, but that God listened to the voice of a man!

Ps. 19:1-4 – All of creation glorifies God; no one escapes the testimony of what He has made.

Ps. 135:6 – God is not limited by His own laws of creation.

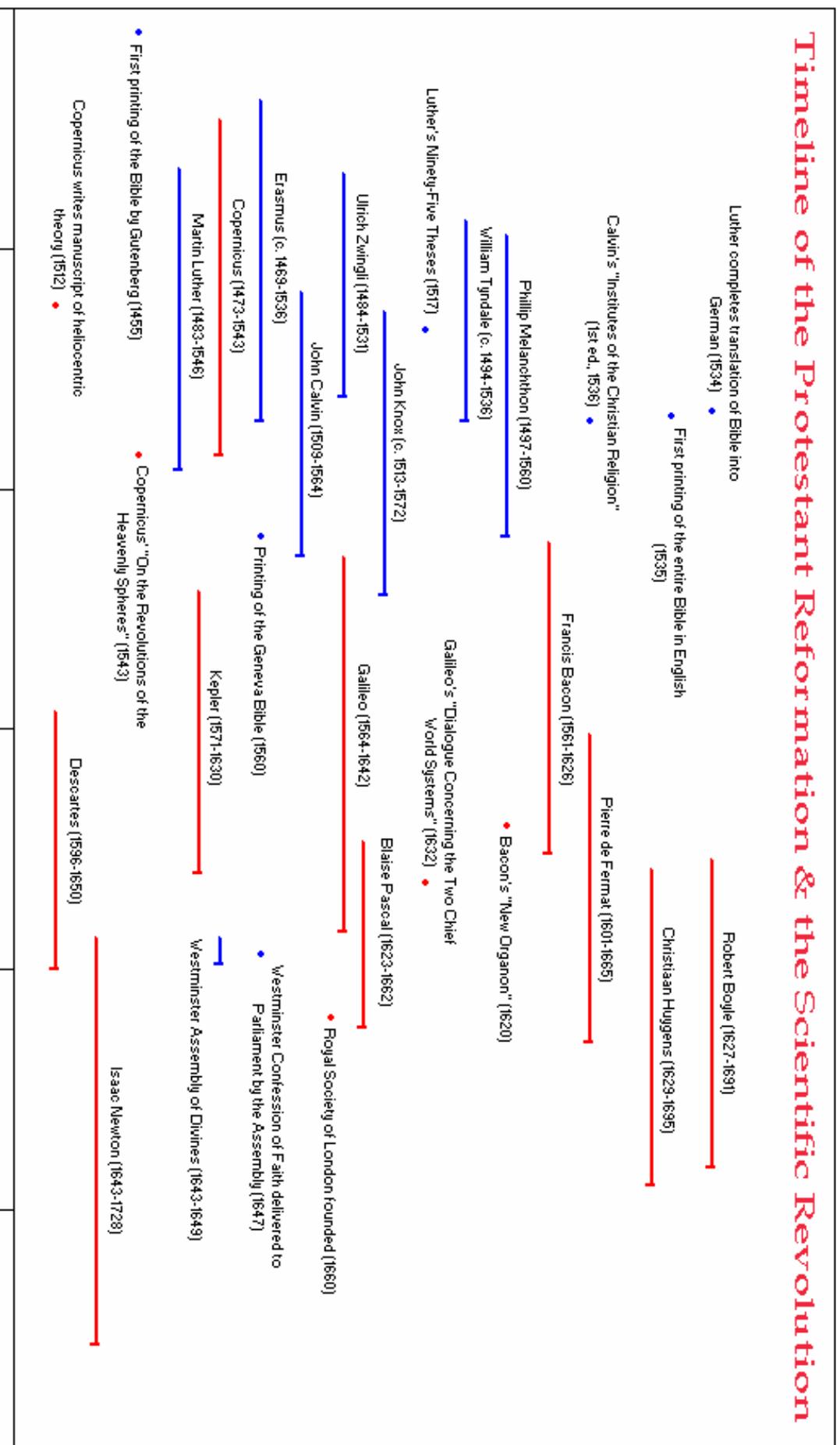
Ps. 33:11; Isa. 14:24; Isa. 46:9-10 – Everything that happens is governed by God's plan.

Ps. 104:14, 20 – God governs the regularly occurring phenomena. This means that a “God of the gaps” concept, where we invoke God only in the places where we don't have a causal explanation, is an illegitimate option. God is in back of our causal explanations as well.

Matt. 10:29-31 – Both the apparently random events (sparrows falling) and apparently unimportant facts (number of hairs) are exhaustively governed by God's plan and providence.

Heb. 1:3 – Creation owes its continuation to God, and the work of Christ is always closely linked to His authority over creation, from the creation itself, to His work of redemption.

Timeline of the Protestant Reformation & the Scientific Revolution



1450 1500 1550 1600 1650 1700 1750