

SCIENCE AND FAITH

WHY STUDY SCIENCE?

Science is a God-honoring and worthwhile endeavor that many Christians throughout history have dedicated their lives to.¹ For the Christian, science is an opportunity to explore the beauty, power, and wonder of God's creation. It leads to infinite opportunities to use our God-given gifts to glorify Him through His Creation, and to manifest our love for God and our neighbor in tangible, material, and incarnational ways.

At Santa Fe Christian Schools, science is a core subject. Therefore, all students will receive several years of science instruction throughout their education at SFC.

The ultimate aim for studying science at SFC is to cultivate in students a love and worship of God. As French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur once wrote: "The more I study nature, the more I stand amazed at the work of the Creator." (See also Ps. 111:2)

Additionally, students who learn to study science from a Christian worldview will be better prepared to serve in their vocations to the glory of God, and will be less vulnerable to the doctrines of this world that will lead them astray.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

- Science has increasing value and relevance to the broader culture to which all members of the SFC community belong.
- This broader culture frequently asserts theological, philosophical, and moral propositions that are opposed to the basic tenets of the Christian faith to which SFC subscribes. These propositions are said to be founded on scientific inquiry and principles.
- The basic tenets of the Christian faith are ultimately derived from a proper reading of the Scriptures. This is done within the context of a shared Christian heritage that spans thousands of years, and is guided by the doctrine of the infallibility of the Scriptures and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
- When understood properly, science does not contradict with the basic tenets of the Christian Faith, but rather ministers to them, and even celebrates them.²
- The purpose of this position paper is manifold: to assert the basic tenets of the Christian faith as they pertain to God and His creation, to delineate the benefits and scope of science, to give guiding principles for how conversations on faith and

MISSION

To partner with Christian parents within a Bible-based community, in order to disciple students to embrace biblical truth, strive for academic excellence, and model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches, and communities for Christ.

CONVICTIONS

Statement of Faith and Declaration of Ethical and Moral Integrity

VALUES

"The Santa Fe Way Prayer Journal"

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Living Truth in Christ

APOLOGIAS

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

INSTRUCTION

APOLOGIAS

science should be conducted at SFC, to aid teachers in their preparation of curriculum, to communicate to parents how faith and science is integrated into the classroom, and to aid other Christian schools in articulating a position on faith and science.³

WHO IS GOD?

- God is a triune God. This is best formulated as one God in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). See, for example, Matt 3:16-17, Matt 28:19, 2 Cor. 13:14, 1 Pet 1:1-2.⁴
- God is the only true, living, and eternal God (Deut 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4,6; Jer 10:10).
- God is the one true Creator of all things (Gen 1:1; Rev 4:11; Col 1:16).
- While the created universe has a clear beginning (Gen. 1:1), God has always existed and His existence predates the creation (Ps 90:2).
- God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Ex 34:6-7)
- God forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin, but by no means clears the guilty (Ex 34:6-7)
- God's ways are wise, holy, and perfect (Rom 16:27; Ps 77:13; Ps 18:30)
- God is perfectly righteous and just in his judgments (Deut 32:4; Ps 19:9)
- God is immutable and unchanging (Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17)
- God works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph 1:11).

WHAT IS CREATION?

- The creative work of God involves all three persons of the Trinity (Jn 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Gen 1:2, 26; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30).
- All things were created by God; there is nothing which was not made by Him (Jn 1:3).
- God created everything out of nothing ("ex nihilo") by His speaking it into existence (Gen 1; Heb 11:3).
- God created all things to display his glory, power, wisdom, and goodness (Isa 6:3; Rom 1:20; Jer 10:12; Ps 104:24; Ps 33:5-6). However, God did not create out of obligation or necessity, but did it by his own free will (Rev 4:11).
- Everything that God created was very good (Gen 1:31; 1 Tim 4:4).
- God continues to actively sustain and uphold His creation (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3).

- God has inaugurated (2 Cor 5:17) and will one day consummate a new heavens and new earth (Rev 21-22).
- This new creation was brought about by the incarnation of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, through his life, death, and resurrection (Jn 1:1-18; Eze 36:26; Isa 65:17; 2 Cor 5:17).

WHAT IS HUMANITY?

- Humanity was made in the image of God, male and female, to reflect His glory (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; Isa 43:6-7; Matt 19:4; Jas 3:9).
- The Bible affirms a historical Adam and Eve.
 - Jesus quotes and affirms Gen 1:27 and 2:24 in Matt 19:4-5 and Mk 10:6-8.
 - In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' genealogy is traced through Adam (3:38).
 - In the Book of Acts, all of humanity is said to have their ancestry and origins in Adam (17:26).
 - In the Epistles of Paul, Adam's creation and fall are referenced as historical events (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:12-58).⁵
- Humanity, being made in the image of God, was created with the following faculties:
 - The ability to reason, communicate, make moral judgments, and be relational.
 - The ability to perceive the natural world and make meaningful conclusions about God from the creation (Rom 1; Act 17:16-34).
 - The ability to perceive the natural world and make meaningful conclusions about how to live wise and prudent lives (Prov).
 - The ability to love (1 Jn 4:19).
- Humanity, being made in the image of God, was also commissioned to care for and rule over the creation, and to bring about human flourishing (Gen 1:26-31). Theologians have often referred to this as the "Cultural Mandate."
- While there have been significant technological advancements in the realm of artificial intelligence, these advancements can not replace humanity's responsibility to care for and rule over the creation, nor should these artificial intelligences be ascribed dignity, worth, identity, or moral agency akin to humanhood.
- While humanity is uniquely made in the image of God, that image has become tainted, corrupted, and distorted by sin (Ecc 7:29; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:23).
- The result is that humanity suppresses the truths that can be plainly known about God from His creation and turns to worship the creation rather than the Creator (Rom 1). This is commonly referred to as idolatry.
- Jesus is the second Adam (1 Cor 15:45-49; Rom 5:14) and the first fruits of the new creation (1 Cor 15:20).

- In Jesus, there is a new humanity (Eph. 2:15) which is being conformed into His image (Rom 8:29).

WHAT IS SCIENCE?

- The Cultural Mandate is the Biblical foundation for the emergence of such enterprises as science, art, technology, business, agriculture, and industry.
- Science, therefore, is a function of humanity's commission to care for and rule over the creation, as well as bring about human flourishing (Genesis 1:26-31).
- While there are many definitions for the term "science," a simple definition that is compatible with the Christian worldview is: "the study of the material world." Or, framed in more Biblical categories: "the study of God's creation."
- Science, therefore, can be conceptualized as a tool, given to humanity by God, in order to bring about human flourishing and the care of God's creation.
- In the modern era, science has brought about many technological advancements and has alleviated much suffering through developments such as modern medicine, more productive agricultural practices, and water purification techniques.
- However, in a fallen world, science has also been used in ways that have not brought about human flourishing or the care of God's creation. Pollution, destruction of the environment, weapons of mass destruction, and the deliberately engineered addictiveness of technological devices are but a few examples.
- In a fallen world, there have also been many Christians who have denied the benefits of science and have not prioritized the Cultural Mandate as it pertains to Biblical commands such as environmental stewardship.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF SCIENCE?

- The scope of science is the study of the material world and that which is testable and repeatable.
- Humanity's finitude and fallen nature contributes to the difficulty of interpreting the material world correctly.
- Scripture certainly teaches that much can be learned about God and the spiritual realm by the study of the material world. For example, all of humanity can discern from the created order that there is a God, that He created all things, and that we are all morally accountable to Him and will be judged by Him (Rom 1). Theologians refer to this as "general" or "natural" revelation, because all people have equal access to these truths.
- However, God has ordained that the truth of His Son and His saving work be revealed to us by means of the Scriptures and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Rom 10:14-15).⁶

Theologians refer to salvific knowledge of God as "special" revelation.

WHAT IS SCIENTISM?

- Scientism is the belief that there are only material causes in the world.
- Methodologically, scientism rejects any spiritual or non-material cause *a priori*.
- It therefore rejects essential truths of the Christian faith, such as the existence of God, the immaterial soul, miracles, and many other things.
- Scientism is generally optimistic that what can be known about the material world, will ultimately be known. It also generally ascribes to naturalistic determinism.
- Scientism is a growing and dangerous doctrine in the broader culture that mirrors many religious movements.
- Scientism operates under many names including Philosophical Naturalism, Philosophical Materialism, and New Atheism.
- Scientism has many failings:
 - Scientism does not have the ability to make moral imperatives. It can describe what is, but it cannot determine what ought to be. However, Christian morality is grounded in the nature and character of God.
 - Scientism does not have the ability to justify human rights. There is simply no way of deriving human dignity and worth from the natural world, without also presupposing God. However, human rights in the Christian worldview are grounded in the doctrine of the *imago Dei* ("image of God").
 - Scientism does not have the ability to prove the reliability of reason. If reason is the product of evolution, it is therefore impossible to know whether it is reliable or trustworthy. However, reason in the Christian worldview is grounded in the doctrine of the *imago Dei* ("image of God").⁷
- Philosophers of science, both Christian and non-Christian alike, have also brought attention to the many imperfections of the modern scientific endeavor. These imperfections include: the politics of scientific funding, the collusion of certain scientists to increase the citations of their scientific work, the manipulation of data using tricks like "p-hacking," the irreproducibility of many scientific studies, the abundance of many contradictory studies, and the emergence of pseudoscience to name a few.

HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH FAITH & SCIENCE?

- It is of utmost importance that we approach conversations on faith and science with a submission to our Lord Jesus Christ, and His revelation to us found in the Scriptures and the relevant doctrines which they teach (e.g., the historicity of Adam).
- We should also approach conversations on faith and science with humility. While many Scientism advocates teach that what can be known about the material universe will ultimately be known, the Christian worldview has Biblical grounds to show more restraint. The Scriptures themselves tell us that there are certain things that may remain a secret belonging to God alone (Deut 29:29; Job 38:1-7).
- Further, there is no uniform consensus about how faith and science should be synthesized amongst professing, Bible-believing Christians. Some of the church's greatest theologians and philosophers throughout history have had differing views.⁸ This should humble us as we approach these conversations.
- In addition, these conversations are inherently complex and include many fields of study (astronomy, physics, biology, chemistry, geology, anthropology, paleontology, theology, and ancient near Eastern history) and include many topics (the age of the universe, the age of the earth, the origin of life, the relatedness of life, the origin of humanity, and the age of human culture).
- We should also approach conversations on faith and science with graciousness, understanding that faithful Christians will often arrive at differing convictions. Provided that we do not deny or undermine any essential teachings of the Scriptures, there should be liberty of belief. As the adage goes: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."
- When representing other views, we should articulate each position fairly in terms that those who ascribe to it would willingly assent.
- When presenting information to SFC students, we must design our curriculum in an age-appropriate manner.

NOTES

¹Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Blaise Pascal, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, Carl Linnaeus, Louis Pasteur, James Joule, George Washington Carver, Michael Polyani, Katherine Johnson, Francis Collins, George Kinoti, Robert Selvendran, John Fleming, Werner Heisenberg, and Gladys West are but a few.

²Some of the basic tenets of the Christian faith can be found under the headings "Who is God?," "What is Creation?," and "What is Humanity?"

³ See the appendix for examples of age-appropriate science and faith integration.

⁴For a further explanation, see the Athanasian Creed.

⁵ For additional arguments, see "Collins, C. John. *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?: Who They Were and Why You Should Care*. Crossway, 2013."

⁶As Galileo Galilei aptly put it, "God is known by nature in his works, and by doctrine in his revealed word."

⁷For additional arguments, see "Keller, Timothy. Penguin Books, 2018."

⁸For example: Origen, Augustine, William Lange Craig, John Lennox, NT Wright, Bruce Walke and many others hold to the figurative or allegorical view of creation, while the majority of the Reformers, Luther, Calvin, R.C. Sproul, John Piper, and many others hold to a literal view of creation. Within each broader category is much diversity and many nuanced positions.