

# The Reflective Reciprocal Support Model for Integration of Science and Christianity

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**Abstract:** This work proposes a Reflective Reciprocal Support Model as a way to integrate science and Christian knowledge. The model provides an algorithm that can be applied adjudicate possible conflicts. A distinctive feature of this model is that it treats and Christianity as valid sources of knowledge without compromising either of them. This type of model is important in a world that often requires us to make a choice between science and religion. This approach also provides a holistic world view model of science and religion. As such, it provides a way to integrate science and religion which negates the need for a choice between them.

In a recent TV interview, Seth MacFarlane (creator of the widely popular and influential TV show “The Family Guy” and outspoken atheist) promoted the idea that scientific knowledge is opposed to religious faith and that it is either one or the other.<sup>1</sup> He believes that one must choose between believing the reality of science or the superstitions of religion. Contrast this with the fact there is a large percentage of individuals in the U.S. population who still regard themselves as religious.<sup>2</sup> Is McFarlane right? Are science and religion at odds with each other so that we must make a choice? Or is it possible to have a holistic world view that integrates scientific and religious knowledge? My goal is to answer these important questions by providing a model that allows the Christian believer to have a cohesive world view and is a guide for areas of possible conflict between science and Christianity. I will start with a brief description of some alternative approaches to integration and show how they fall short. I will then describe and argue for an approach to integration called the reflective reciprocal support (RRS) model. Since this model is intended for use

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckLU88ybGzk>

<sup>2</sup> “Nones” on the Rise: One in Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation, The Pew Forum On Religion & Public Life, October 9, 2012. (showed that up to 76% of the U.S. population regards themselves as religious).

by Christians, part of my argumentation for this model will include scriptural support and theology. This model is then applied to several practical examples. As will be shown, the RRS model provides a structure for integrating orthodox Christianity and scientific theories.

### **Contrasting Views and Their Shortcomings**

There are several ways that science and religion can be seen to interact. As already mentioned, there is the widely held conflict model. It is also called the warfare model since it views science and religion as caught in a historic battle. While it is true that there are some areas of possible conflict between science and religion (which will be addressed by the RRS model), the conflict model has been soundly refuted.<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Principe, Professor of History of Science at The Johns Hopkins University, put it best when he said, “Let me be clear: The idea that scientific and religious camps have historically been separated and antagonistic is rejected by all modern historians of science.”<sup>4</sup> Also, studies have shown that a large percentage of scientists in the United States still accept that God actively communicates with humanity.<sup>5</sup> Because a significant percentage of scientists are theists and because of the work of others who have refuted the conflict model, it is rejected. Another common approach for integrating science and religion is the non-overlapping magisterium (NOMA) model.<sup>6</sup> It teaches that science and religion cannot be in conflict since they speak to completely unrelated realms of knowledge. However, NOMA cannot be the correct approach since science and religion make claims in clear propositional language about the same subject matter such as the origin of the universe and the origin of man.<sup>7</sup> A promising alternative is the Qualified

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<sup>3</sup> Ian Hutchinson, *Monopolizing Knowledge* (Belmont, MA: Fias Publishing, 2011): 207-216. Also see: Stephen J. Gould, *Rocks of Ages* (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999): 100-124.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence M. Principe, *Science and Religion* (Chantilly, VA: The Great Course, 2006), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Eugenie C. Scott, “Do Scientists Really Reject God?: New Poll Contradicts Earlier Ones,” *Reports of the National Center for Science Education*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1997, p 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> Gould, *Rocks of Ages*, 49-89.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Random House, 2010).

Agreement (QA) model promoted by Stephen Meyer.<sup>8</sup> The QA model is a return to the understanding of the founders of early science such as Kepler and Newton who accepted “that the testimony of nature (i.e., science) actually supports important tenets of a theistic or Christian worldview.”<sup>9</sup> This approach teaches that science provides epistemological support (but not proof) for theism as described by Christianity. It also teaches that when science is properly understood, it is consistent with Christian belief. While I whole heartedly agree with this approach, the QA model does not go far enough. The reason is threefold. First, it does not provide a rich enough explanation of the relationship between science and Christianity. It rightly teaches that science can and does provide reasons to accept the God of Christianity based upon inference to the best explanation.<sup>10</sup> However, it does not describe how science and Christianity actually interact. Second, it does not provide a method to handle scientific theories that do not provide support for theism. Third, it does not provide a method for adjudicating scientific theories that appear to be in conflict with theism. The reflective reciprocal support (RRS) model extends the QA model and solves these three shortcomings.

### **A Few Preliminary Ideas**

There are a few preliminary concepts assumed by the RRS model that should be discussed. The first is that the creator God of Christianity is a factual feature of reality. In other words, the RRS model assumes that God exists and has certain features (such as his holiness, incorruptibility, omniscience, and other attributes) that are part of Christian theology. Related to this is that God in his wisdom created the universe in a logical way such that the human mind can comprehend it. I will not argue for this point here, but simply state it as being part of the Christian tradition. That God

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen C. Meyer, “Qualified Agreement” in *Science and Christianity: Four Views*, ed. Richard Carlson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 127-174.

<sup>9</sup> Meyers, *Qualified Agreement*, 130.

<sup>10</sup> Meyers, *Qualified Agreement*, 167-174.

has created a universe capable of comprehension by the human mind and that the human mind has the capacity to encapsulate true theories about nature are foundational concepts for the RRS model.

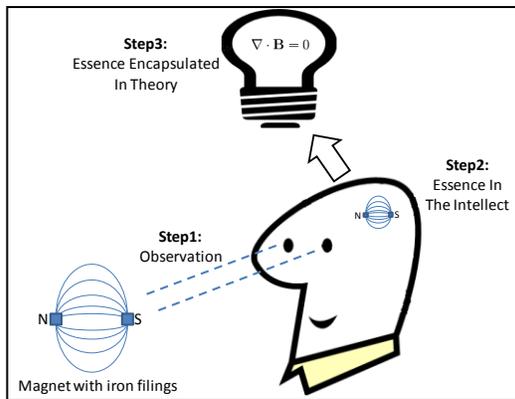


Figure 1. An example from magnetic field theory of how the essence of an observed phenomenon is encapsulated within a scientific theory.

I would also like to introduce the idea that the RRS model places all scientific theories into three different types, each with its own interaction with religion. The first type is our Best Scientific Theories. They are possible because human persons are able to create scientific theories that are true or approximately true descriptions of observed reality.<sup>11</sup> This

process of creating true theories is shown in Figure 1. It illustrates how a scientist creates the “no magnetic monopole” theory by capturing the essence of all magnetic fields and encapsulating it into a theory. On the RRS model, the theory is true since the essence of the observed phenomenon is captured by the theory. Our Best Scientific Theories are taken in a scientific realism sense. The second type of scientific theory is just a useful tool for predicting observation, but is not true. One reason this type of theory is not true is that it fails to capture the essence of the natural phenomenon. Another reason, as we will see, is that this type of theory does not possess the RRS feature. The third type of theory is neither true nor useful for prediction and is therefore false. I realize that labeling theories as false is a strong statement and I will argue for why this is the correct understanding. The RRS model uses the idea that all scientific theories can be placed into three different buckets which have a different interaction with God.

### The RRS Model Described

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Weston, “Approximate Truth and Scientific Realism,” *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (1992), pp53-74.

I will now give an overview of the RRS model and show how the three types of theories interact with God. The RRS model gets its name from the first type of theory which is Our Best Scientific Theories (OBST), shown in Figure 2(a). It illustrates that OBST have a RRS relationship to God. The relationship is reciprocal in the sense that God supplies what is necessary for the theories to exist and the theories reciprocate by supporting the idea that God exists. OBST

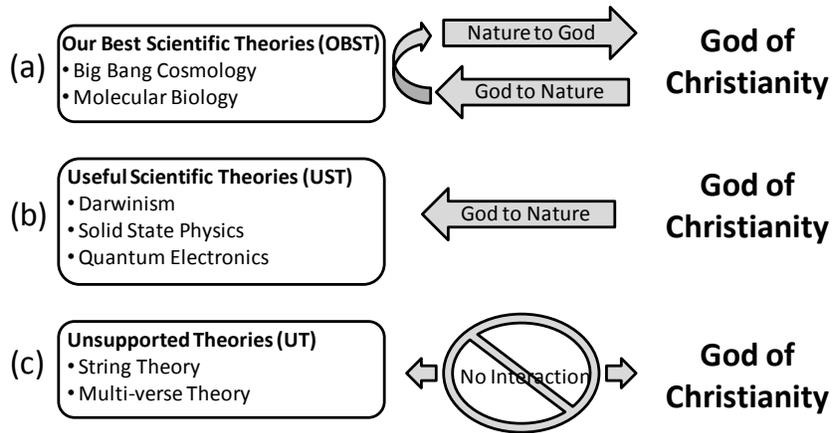


Figure 2. The Reflective Reciprocal Support model.

may also reciprocate by providing theology with additional tools to understand God’s revelation to humans. However, the reciprocity is one way in the sense that it is our best theories reciprocate back to God, but He does not reciprocate back. Instead, God is the initiator of the relationship. It is reflective in the sense that our best theories, by their nature, reflect back to God. In fact, a necessary condition for a theory to belong in this first group is that it possesses this RRS relationship to God. To be sure, some entities, and laws may be valid in a scientific sense and yet not possess the reciprocating feature (these will be considered next). It is also helpful to observe that OBST belong in the scientific realism camp since they capture the essence of observation so that the theoretical entities posited by the theories actually exist.

The second type, Useful Scientific Theories (UST), are tools for calculating and modeling empirical results, but they don’t possess the RRS relationship to God. Rather, UST obtain their usefulness from God since He made the universe in a way that it can be perceived by humans, but UST do not captured the real essence of the observations (as in Figure 1). As shown in Figure 2(b) UST have a one way relationship from God. These theories only have explanatory and predictive

utility.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, UST are best viewed as providing only utilitarian function and in an anti-realist fashion.

The third type of theory, Unsupported Theories (UT), is false and therefore has no relationship with God. A UT may appear to have a relationship to God such as Ptolemaic cosmology placed the Earth in the center of the universe and appeared to support a particular interpretation of scripture. However, this type of relationship between UT and God is only accidental.<sup>13</sup> The reason that these types of theories are labeled as unsupported is that they do not enjoy the benefit of confirmation by empirical results. I place string theory in this group for reasons I will supply (for now, the summary of the reason is that strings and their effects have not been observed and it may be impossible to do so). UT are either false in reality (ontologically) or are considered false because they lack (epistemological) justification for accepting them (or both). Someone may rightly object that if these types of theories are false and possibly not really science at all, then they should not be included in the RRS model. While this objection is reasonable, it misses the point of creating an integrated world view. In other words, UT are included since an important part of the scientific community includes them in the category of scientific theories and so a truly integrated approach to science and Christian knowledge should include them. A useful model of how science and religion interacts should include, as much as possible, all types of the theories generated by the scientific community even if some are false or likely false.

With this summary of the RRS model, I will now provide an argument for why this model should be accepted by orthodox Christians.

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<sup>12</sup> Jarrett Leplin, "A Theory's Predictive Success can Warrant Belief in the Unobservable Entities it Postulates," in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Science*, ed. Christopher Hitchcock (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004): 118.

<sup>13</sup> Russell Lockyear (private correspondence).

Theory Type	Examples	Epistemological Status	Interaction With God
Our Best Scientific Theories (OBST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Bang Cosmology</li> <li>• Molecular Biology</li> </ul>	Realism: True or approximately true	Mutual Support
Useful Scientific Theories (UST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantum Physics</li> <li>• Darwinism</li> </ul>	Utilitarian: Useful tool for predicting, but not true	One Way Support: God to Nature
Unsupported Theories (UT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• String Theory</li> <li>• Multi-Verse Theory</li> </ul>	False: Provides no useful predictions and is not true	No Interaction

Table 1. Scientific theories can be placed into three types each with a different epistemological status and interaction with the God of Christianity.

## God and UT

Table 1 summarizes how the three types of scientific theories relate to God. I will start with a defense of the relationship between God and UT and work my way up the table. The argument for why UT do not have a relationship to God is:

- 1) God is Holy and Incorruptible.
- 2) God's Holiness and incorruptibility restrict him from relationship with something false.
- 3) Unsupported scientific theories are false.
- 4) Therefore, God has no relationship with unsupported scientific theories.

Premise 1) is a fundamental Christian doctrine and so no time will be spent providing reasons to accept it but the reader is directed to Isaiah 6:3 and Rev 4:8 where God is said to be "Holy, holy, holy." Premise 2) is also relatively uncontroversial and should be accepted because of the definition of holiness and incorruptible. I will therefore focus on providing reasons to accept premise 3).

Unsupported theories are false or at least considered false because they lack two important features that make a theory true. First, they do not make predictions or provide insights that can be verified. Second, they lack empirical confirmation of those predictions or insightful explanations. To understand this a bit better it will be helpful to understand how most scientists view the relationship between theories and confirming test data. During his famous lecture series at Cornell University, Nobel Prize winning physicist Richard Feynman described the process of developing a new theory when he said, "First, we guess it [a new theory]. Then we compute the consequences of the guess ...

and then we compare those computation results to nature – or, we say compare to experiment ... If it disagrees with experiment, it is wrong.”<sup>14</sup> Feynman went on to say that it does not matter how beautiful a theory is or how famous the person is who came up with it. If the theory does not agree with the test data, then the theory is wrong. UTs are wrong since they do not enjoy the benefit of confirmation by empirical results.

What about my contention that these unconfirmed theories are false? When a scientific theory is labeled wrong, that means the theory is inaccurate with respect to its agreement with reality, with test data. But being wrong does not necessarily make something false. So the question remains, why are wrong theories also false? The reason is that scientific theories do not *only* make a claim to be accurate, theories also strive to make claims about being true. This is even the case for theories that have no empirically verified predictions. For example, Hawking and Mlodinow claim that Newton’s theory of gravity was not only accurate, but that it is true (of course under the right conditions). They contrast Newton’s theory with the Biblical account in Joshua 10 of the sun standing still which they imply is false.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, this is the case for parallel universe theory and the related m-theory promoted by Hawking and Mlodinow. They accept these theories as being true even though these theories are not support by empirical results. UT cannot contain any true description of nature because they cannot even get past first requirement of making accurate predictions of reality that can be empirically confirmed. For these reasons, UT are wrong *and* false. Therefore it is reasonable to accept the conclusion 4) that God has no relationship with UT.

It may be objected that some or even all observations are theory laden or somehow dependent upon social structures so that it is unfair to require scientific theories to agree with test data. For instance, Karl Popper accepted that, “here too the procedure of testing turns out to be

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<sup>14</sup> Richard P. Feynman, *The Character of Physical Law*, Messenger Lectures at Cornell University (November 19, 1964). This is an excellent lecture and the video can be found online.

<sup>15</sup> Hawking and Mlodinow, *Grand Design*, 87.

deductive. With the help of other statements, previously accepted ...”<sup>16</sup> For Popper, testing itself required all sorts of prior help. I tend to agree with this view, in a limited sense. Thomas Kuhn promoted the idea that our interpretation of scientific data has many dependencies not the least of which is the social structure of the scientific community.<sup>17</sup> Kuhn has a point, though I think he falls short for reasons not important for this work. However, even if I grant the full intent of Popper and Kuhn, that does nothing to eliminate the need for test data. This is because the ability of a theory to predict, even using derived predictions, and the confirmation of those predictions, is central to science. Kuhn and Popper were not rejecting the need for confirming empirical results. Rather they were observing that the empirical results don’t exist by themselves. Therefore, this objection does not reduce the need for a theory to make predictions and have confirming empirical results.

Because of the arguments given, it is reasonable to accept the category of UT and that they have no relationship or interaction with God. Therefore, the Christian does not need to provide a justification for rejecting those theories and does not need to reconcile possible conflicts between Christianity and UT. Now, let us turn our attention to the interaction between God and UST.

### **God and UST**

In contrast to UT, UST makes useful predictions that are verified by measurement. For instance, Einstein’s Theory of General Relativity was a UT until confirming measurements, such as those by Arthur Eddington.<sup>18</sup> As mentioned earlier, UST have a one way relationship from God. On this understanding, God provides the means by which UST can exist and the human mind can understand them. However, UST fall short of capturing the actual essence of the physical phenomena they describe and they posit entities which are taken to be fictional and only of

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<sup>16</sup> Karl Popper, *The Logic Of Scientific Discovery, reprint* (New York: Routledge, 2002): 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>18</sup> John Earman and Clark Glymour, “Relativity and Eclipses: The British Eclipse Expeditions of 1919 and Their Predecessors,” in *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1980), pp. 49-85

functional utility. Therefore, UST are also understood only in an anti-realism sense with respect to the entities they posit and the theories are utilitarian only.

Rather than providing a syllogism for accepting the category of UST and its relationship to God, I will provide a reason to accept the central idea behind UST, namely that the God of Christianity provides humans with the worldview required to make nature comprehensible. The argument for this idea is a sort of inductive argument based on observations of how science was able to develop in Christianized western culture but failed to do so in other cultures. This is the view held by several historians of science.<sup>19</sup> They observe that science was actually possible in the west because of the worldview provided by Christianity. The historian of science Reijer Hooykass outlines a few worldview ideas that were key enablers to the explosion of science:<sup>20</sup>

1. God declared the creation “good”. This idea is in contrast with those who reject the material world as inherently evil. This idea of the earth being evil dates back as early as Plato who said “our earth is everywhere corrupted and corroded.”<sup>21</sup> Since the world was declared to be good by the God of Christianity, it is worthy of study.
2. The world is not itself a god. This is in contrast to common pantheism. Instead, nature is the work of a creator to be admired and studied. This view allowed Christian scientists to investigate the world without fear of violating a deity.
3. Humans have been given a degree of responsibility and authority over nature. This view gave western scientists not only the authority but also the responsibility to investigate nature as good stewards of it.
4. Human rationality is in the image of God. This view gave Christian scientists reason to believe they were capable of understanding creation. It gave them motivation to consider creation as consisting of logical order from God and that the order could be apprehended.
5. God is seen as an eternal lawgiver. Western scientists, as a result of this view, had reason to think that the creator established foundational laws that govern the operation of the universe.

According to Hooykaas, these theological concepts defined the way Western scientists approached their work of discovering reality in nature. The ideas are in stark contrast to the worldview of the other great cultures. And he claims it is because these ideas are ingrained in the consciousness of

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<sup>19</sup> Reijer Hooykass, *Religion and The Rise of Modern Science*, reprint (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2000); James Hannam, *The Genesis of Science* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2011); Ian Hutchinson, *Monopolizing Knowledge*, 216-221.

<sup>20</sup> Reijer Hooykass, *Religion and The Rise of Modern Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972): 7-13.

<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, electronic version (The Electronic Classics Series) 2013.

western society that science progressed as it did. This historical evidence provides us with a reason to accept that the God of Christianity provides nature and humans with what is required to develop scientific theories.

## **God and OBST**

From one perspective, the relationship between OBST and God is based upon a scholastic understanding of nature and revelation. It is based on the idea that God has revealed himself in the book of revelation and the book of nature. As Ian G Barbour correctly points out that the scholastic theologians taught us that “the natural truths are open to all people by the unaided powers of human reason; the revealed truths are disclosed by God ... Since all truth is from God, the two basic sources will be consistent with each other.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, the scholastic approach teaches the book of nature and the book of revelation are consistent with each other.<sup>23</sup> The RRS approach takes this a bit further and insists that for a scientific theory to qualify as OBST, it must not only be consistent with scriptural truth, it must point men toward God. In the same way that God’s revelation in scripture actively points men toward God, when nature is properly understood and its essence is encapsulated in scientific theory, then those theories must also point men toward God. The argument for the relationship between God and OBST is:

- 1) God has given us a revelation of himself in nature.
- 2) The true essence of a natural phenomenon is God’s natural revelation to man.
- 3) OBST encapsulate the essence of the natural phenomenon it describes.
- 4) All revelation from God must point humans toward Him.
- 5) Therefore, God’s revelation in nature as encapsulated in OBST must point humans toward God.

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<sup>22</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science* (San Francisco: Harpers: 1990): 7.

<sup>23</sup> It should also be noted that this is basically the same as the Qualified Agreement model discussed earlier.

To keep within the page limits, I will not provide reasons to accept 4) except to say that a fundamental concept in Christianity is that God desires humans to know Him. God revealed himself in Christ and provided Holy Scripture for this purpose.

One may object to Premise 1) on the basis that God's revelation is in Holy Scripture alone and not in the natural world around us. However, this objection is unfounded because the Bible itself teaches us that God revealed himself in nature. For instance, Romans 1:18-20 is a strong statement in this regard. It says, "What may be known about God is plain to them, because God made it plain to them ... from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."<sup>24</sup> In other words, God has revealed Himself in nature so that men are without an excuse for not knowing Him. Also in Psalms 19: 1-2 it says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge."<sup>25</sup> In addition, there are several scriptures that speak of nature itself singing the praises of God.<sup>26</sup> These scriptures are good reason for the Christian to accept that God has revealed himself in nature.

The concept of Premise 2) was initially discussed on page 3. One reason for accepting the truth of it is that it is consistent with the traditional Christian worldview. The traditional Christian worldview as expressed by the Scholastics is firmly planted in a realist perspective with essences perceived by the intellect when it comes to observations of the natural world. This view of the traditional Christian perspective is shared by Barbour, "The rational powers of the intellect were believed to be capable of grasping the true essence of the world."<sup>27</sup> This description was illustrated in Figure 1. A much deeper set of reasons for accepting Premise 2) can and should be developed but that is well beyond the scope of this short report. For now, the reason for accepting premise 2) is

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<sup>24</sup> New International Version

<sup>25</sup> New International Version

<sup>26</sup> See for instance Psalms 148:3-6, Isaiah 55:12.

<sup>27</sup> Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 7.

that the traditional Christian view is that humans have the capacity to grasp the essence of the natural world.

The possibly contentious step is premise 3). However, given the arguments already presented, this step should be easy for the Christian to accept. As we have shown, Scripture teaches that God has revealed himself in nature, and the growth of science in Christianized western culture gives us reason to believe that God empowers humans to grasp his creation, and, possibly more important, the idea that our minds can grasp the essence of a thing is part of the Christian tradition as developed by the scholastic theologians. For these reasons premise 3) should be accepted.

### The RRS Adjudication Process

The process flow diagram for how the RRS model adjudicates possible conflicts between

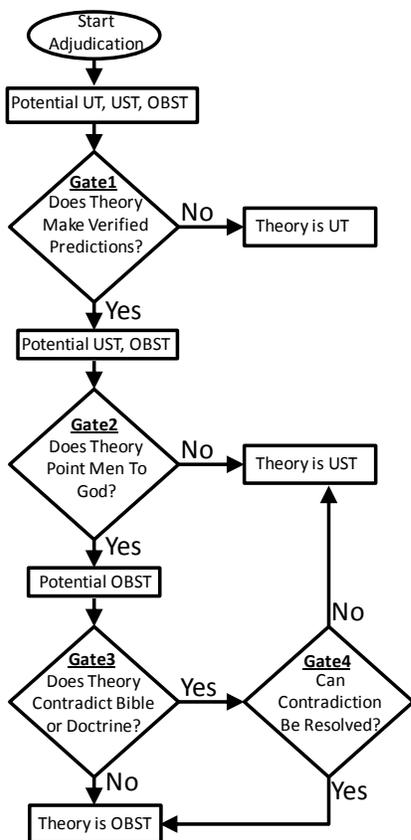


Figure 3. Flow diagram for application of the RRS model.

science and religion is shown in Figure 3. It provides a way to evaluate scientific claims. Adjudication is basically the process of assigning the theory to the correct category of UT, UST, or OBST. The tests for UT and UST are straight forward to, but OBST has a bit of complication. The process contains four tests or gates that a theory passes through on its way to categorization. Another way to think of the adjudication process is a type of sifting and sorting with fewer and fewer theories making it to the final test.

At the start of the process all theories are potentially UT, UST, or OBST. Gate1 tests is if a theory has any verified predictions. If the theory does not, then it is false and is categorized as UT. This type of theory has no

interaction with the God of Christianity. The Christian integrates these theories by setting them

aside and taking a wait and see attitude toward them. That is, the Christian waits to see if the theory graduates to UST by making confirmed predictions. If it passes this first test, then the theory is potentially UST or OBST.

Gate2 separates out the UST from potentially OBST. It asks if the theory supports theism. This is more than a passive requirement of not contradicting theism. Instead, for a theory to pass this gate, the theory must support theism.

Gate3 asks if the theory contradicts claims in the Bible or Christian doctrine. It may be possible for a theory to support theism and yet have some contradiction to scripture. If there is not contradiction, then the theory is OBST. If there is a contradiction, then Gate4 asks if the contradiction can be resolved. If the contradiction is with scripture, then resolution may be a modification of an interpretation of the theory. Alternatively, resolution may come by modification of an interpretation of scripture. For instance, some think that evolution contradicts the Bible. However, evolution can still be accepted as consistent with scripture as long as it is interpreted as not entailing the blind watchmaker thesis.<sup>28</sup> In this case, a modification of the interpretation of Genesis may be required. However, if the blind watchmaker path is taken with evolution, then natural selection is a purely unguided process which rules out God and may be in irresolvable contradiction to scripture (at least for many Christians).<sup>29</sup>

There is some potential danger here with modifying our interpretations of scripture. Although we should use our intellect and available information for interpretation of scripture, we cannot impose an interpretation onto scripture that is not intended by the original authors. I think that the warning from Kurt Wise is appropriate here, “Extra-biblical data such as reason, experience, or physical world data can certainly be used to aid in interpreting the Bible. But the rule should be

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, paperback edition (London, England: Penguin Books, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> Phillip E. Johnson, *First Things*, January, 1993. Accessed from [http://www.arn.org/docs/johnson/cre\\_bw98.htm](http://www.arn.org/docs/johnson/cre_bw98.htm)

that extra-biblical data should never be used to reinterpret the Bible.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, care should be exercised at Gate4 to ensure that we do not impose on scripture an external interpretation. That said, a full integration of science and Christianity may, at times, require serious evaluation of our interpretations of scripture in light of scientific discoveries.

### **Application of RRS**

Now we will illustrate how simple it is to apply the RRS adjudication process if one has the right scientific knowledge to answer the questions at each of the gates. The first case we will consider is the multiverse or parallel universe theory. Hawking and Mlodinow make the case that “ours is not the only universe. Instead, M-theory predicts that a great many universes were created out of nothing.”<sup>31</sup> How can the Christian integrate multiverse theory with Christianity since it contradicts that God created the universe? The multiverse theory is a UT since it does not make verified predictions. In this case, the Christian’s response to Hawking and Mlodinow is: ‘you boys have an interesting idea, but it has not impacted on my knowledge of God. Come back when you have some test data.’

Now, let’s consider big bang cosmology. It passes Gate1 with ease since it makes predictions such as an expanding universe and non-uniform distribution of the background microwave radiation. It also passes Gate2 since big bang cosmology can point men to God by application of it to the Kalam cosmological argument.<sup>32</sup> This means that it is a potential OBST. Next, it must pass Gate3. Does the theory contradict our orthodox understanding of scripture or Christian doctrine? It seems to me that since the most common understanding of the big bang cosmology is that the universe began at some finite point in the past, this is consistent with most readings of Genesis and the doctrine of creation. Therefore, big bang cosmology belongs in the OBST group.

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<sup>30</sup> Kurt Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2002 ): 22.

<sup>31</sup> Hawking and Mlodinow, *Grand Design*, 8.

<sup>32</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1984): 77-125.

## Conclusions

The RRS approach to integrating science and religion is a type of eclectic approach.<sup>33</sup> As has been shown, it uses realism, anti-realism, and instrumentalism on a case by case basis as through the RRS Adjudication Processes. This eclectic approach allows the Christian to maintain solidly orthodox Christian theology without burying his head in the sand when it comes to science. Just the opposite, it allows for a robust integration of the two.

One drawback to the RRS model approach to adjudication is that it requires the Christian to know something about science. For instance, Gate1 requires the Christian to know that a particular theory does or does not enjoy confirming empirical test results. This is a significant requirement and only gets worse for Gate2 when the Christian must determine if a theory points men to or away from God. This is well beyond the scientific education of most Christians. Therefore, application of this process requires the involvement of the whole body of Christ. Those members who understand these matters should be available to educate and guide those who are asking how they can integrate Christianity and science.

A benefit to integration of science and religion is that it allows us to live holistic lives that are not fractured between knowledge of God and these other sources of knowledge. For instance, this can help with integrating work life with knowledge of God and avoid the trap of compartmentalization of the sacred from the secular.<sup>34</sup> Because of these reasons, it seems to me that Seth MacFarlane and others in our society are wrong about having to make a choice between science or knowledge of God. Instead, we can enjoy a robust integration of them.

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<sup>33</sup> JP Moreland, *Christianity and The Nature of Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989): 67-99.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion about why integration matters, see J.P. Moreland and Francis J. Beckwith, "Series Preface" in *Christian Worldview Integration Series* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011).

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