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A Dance of Disciplines: Evaluating Science and Religion

In Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, after the Flame Deluge engulfs the Earth and a group known as the Simpletons has almost successfully succeeded in destroying all remnants of knowledge on Earth, the Catholic monks of the Order of Saint Leibowitz have managed to collect and store the remaining bits of knowledge the world has left. In this novel, the religious act as retainers of knowledge and of a history of a past and unreachable world. This is one of the many things the Bible (and inherently religion as well) does in real life. It acts as a preserver of history amongst other things. However, some discount the Bible, asserting that science holds more merit. Many believe that the Bible is archaic, no longer of importance to people of modern times and that we should leave the Bible behind and focus our attention on science journals. Science texts and the Bible are not divergent, rather, they are similar, partly because of their significance to human lives and partly because of the different ways they allow us to view the world.

Throughout history, the Bible and science journal, as representatives of their respective disciplines, have always seemed to be different from one another. A famous example of this is Galileo Galilei, a great scientific thinker in his time, who was punished for his belief that the Sun was the center of the universe and that the Earth revolved around it (Dixon 1). He was immediately punished for these "heretical" beliefs that were in "contradiction of the Bible" (Dixon 2). From this example, it seems that the Bible, maybe even religion as a whole, has been

in an inevitable conflict with science. The reason for this divergence between the Bible and science comes from the fact that people assign a certain level of importance to each. People usually believe that science holds more importance because they believe it can provide more concrete and tangible proof of its claims, whereas the Bible and religion function on a type of intangible realm. However, thoughts such as these simplify both disciplines.

In his book *Science & Theology: An Introduction*, John Polkinghorne explains that this conflict between science and theology arises because “either discipline threatens to take over the legitimate concerns of the other” (20). He provides scientism and biblical literalism as being examples of this. Both of these in some way try to bend the other to their presumed superiority. Another example of this conflict can be seen by looking critically at the audience of scientific journals and the Bible. Anyone can read the Bible. The Bible is often used for inspirational quotes, a way to gain insight into a situation, a source to provide meaning to whatever the reader approaches the text with, etc. However, science journals aren’t as approachable. There is usually professional terminology and a level of complexity that requires formal education, most likely some form of higher education. This exclusiveness in parts allows the supposed opposition between science and religion to persist. Though some may see science and theology in conflict, by acknowledging their importance and the fact that they both provide different but equally important tools with which we can view and interpret the world, this perceived conflict between the two disciplines may start to be resolved.

Science journals and the Bible respectively represent science and Christianity, and act as a way in which their disciplines communicate with the world. Science journals and the Bible both provide information that may have different applications, but that are similar in the fact that they give us tools to use in the world. Articles in science journals intend to provide information

on issues scientists are trying to prove or disprove, or they look at information that has already been proven and evaluate it. The science journal *Neurobiology of Disease*, for example, spreads information about scientific discoveries and work being done in science. They've recently released an article on a protein that drives Parkinson's (Gordon and Richard). Information such as this can help the authors or other scientists in their aim to find a remedy to the Parkinson's disease. This is one of many examples of the information that science spreads. Its value to humanity is clearly evident.

On the other side, the Bible is of the same importance and magnitude as various science journals. The Bible is a history book, containing stories of an ancient time that have been disseminated throughout different regions and eras. These are stories that can help people shape the present and the future. The Old Testament contains historical books that are about cities and places that existed, and it describes the people of those times and the trials and tribulations they went through. Many people who read the Bible read these stories in order to help give them a perspective on their situation they may not have had before. Many people use the Bible in this way. They read the Bible for situations or instances that may give them insight into their own situations, and these insights could affect people's futures because they could help people make important, even life-changing, decisions.

Science journals and the Bible may have different qualities they bring to mankind, but they both have tools that work to help people understand and interact with the world around them. The Bible and Science journals, in terms of their respective disciplines, have shaped our interaction with the world, and in many instances they do this in conjunction with each other. For example, scientific innovations and the spread of those innovations through various communication routes have allowed humans to live in places that aren't near a source of water.

At the same time, people often cluster in groups that allow them to be close to people of similar religious affiliations and/or close to places of worship. They have worked in tandem to shape basic structures of human society. Another example of how both science and religion work together to shape the world is that they both preserve and spread knowledge. The mediums of communication of both disciplines (science journals and the Bible) help facilitate this spread of knowledge. They both have played a role in allowing information to keep moving into the future. For example, in a more ancient time, it was mainly religious people, namely monks, who painstakingly copied books by hand so that there could be duplicates. Through their labors, they have preserved a part of human history that would have otherwise been unreachable to humans in modern times. Science built on these labors and created the printing press. After that, humans could make copies of books with ease and spread them to a wider audience, and among those books was the Bible. Science and religion often build on each other in ways such as this. They both shape each other while simultaneously shaping human perceptions of the world. Humans can refer to the information preserved by both disciplines through the Bible and science journals, which is why they are both equally and significantly important to mankind.

Without the Bible and science journals, humans would lose an unimaginable amount of information about the world. Their worldview would also be narrowed because they would have lost two perspectives that allow them to continuously experience and re-experience their everyday lives. The combination of tools provided by both the Bible and science journals helps people navigate the world and the universe. It would be erroneous for someone to believe that either the Bible or science journals are no longer of use. The differences between the two work together to shape our world, which is why their importance is of an incomprehensible magnitude.

Works Cited

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