



# REASON AND RELIGION IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE

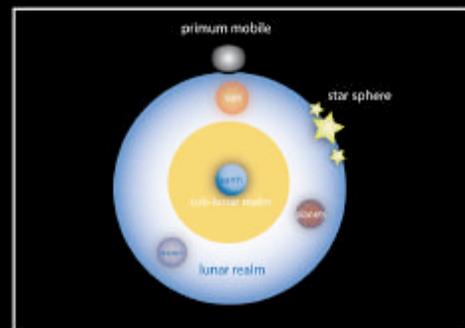
A Workbook for Senior High School Students

## About the book

The text has been developed for a course delivered to senior students of St Ignatius College Adelaide in Australia. It attempts to acquaint students with the methodology of science and seeks to facilitate an appreciation of some of the findings of modern cosmology. It shows these findings not to be in conflict with the message of Christianity. Rather, these findings illuminate the religious doctrine of creation and purpose.

Topics include: importance of science and religion, achievements and limitations of the methods of science, the method of religion, birth of the modern cosmology, modern scholarship of the Book of Genesis, the stars as instruments of creation, the anthropic universe and the resurrection.

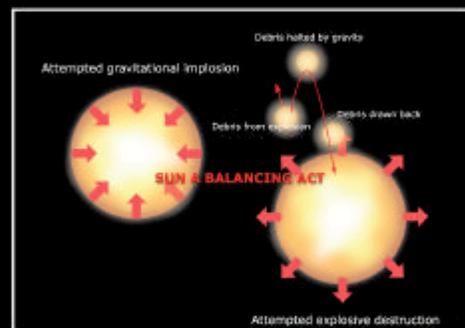
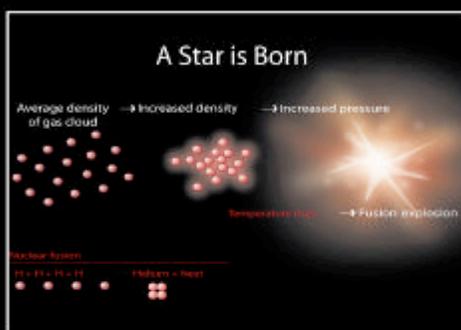
The book includes a CD with over 200 power point presentations divided into chapters corresponding to chapters in the book which can be used by teachers and students.



This is an impressive introduction to key issues linking science and theology. **William R Steeger SJ, Vatican Observatory University of Arizona, Tucson, USA.**

A timely book that provides a wonderful new resource for teachers and students. It addresses questions of crucial and fundamental importance for the intellectually honest and questioning young believer. An eminently knowledgeable work on the relationship between science and religion in this rapidly changing technological and scientific age.

**Rosemary A Hennig, Head of Religious Education, St Ignatius College, Adelaide.**



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*Reason and Religion*

*in an*

*Age of Science*

*Terry Kelly SJ*



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*A Workbook for Senior Students*

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# Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	v
<b>Foreword</b>	xi
<b>Chapter 1 The Importance of Science and Religion</b>	
<b>1. The problem</b>	1
1.1 Perceptions of the cosmos	1
1.2 The impact of changed perceptions of the cosmos on religion	1
<b>2. The place of religion in the world today</b>	2
2.1 The decline of Christianity in the Western world	2
2.2 A survey of Catholics	3
2.3 A young person's reflection	3
2.4 The ongoing worldwide importance of religion	5
<b>3. Scientific revolutions</b>	6
3.1 The first scientific revolution: when science undermined religion	6
3.2 The second scientific revolution: science finds itself with problems	7
3.3 The revolutionary findings of science	7
<b>4. Other influences on the relationship between science and religion</b>	8
<b>5. The present situation</b>	9
5.1 Science has raised questions perhaps unanswerable by science	9
5.2 The limits of science have been revealed	10
5.3 Is religion believable?	10
5.4 Science and religion: a partnership	10
<b>Chapter 2 The Methods of Science: Its Achievements and Limitations</b>	
<b>1. The scientific method: a recent arrival</b>	
<b>2. The extent of scientific influence</b>	13
2.1 Everyday	13
2.2 The invisible and the beyond	14
2.3 The past and the future	15
<b>3. The scientific method</b>	15
3.1 Steps in arriving at a scientific model	15
<b>4. Does the scientific method deliver truth?</b>	17
4.1 Measurements	17
4.2 Laws	17
4.3 Theory	18
4.4 Examples of developments within theories	19
<b>5. The development of instruments: a key to progress</b>	21
<b>6. The role of mathematics in the progress of science</b>	22
<b>7. The explosion of science and technology</b>	24
<b>8. Science as one of the roads to truth</b>	25
8.1 Other roads to reality	25
8.2 What science can do and what science cannot do	26
8.3 Science does not justify itself	27
8.4 Science leads ultimately to counter-intuitive models	27
<b>9. Extension: The philosophy of science</b>	28
9.1 Does the scientific method lead to truth?	28
9.1.1 <i>Science never reaches the truth about nature</i>	29
9.1.2 <i>Science is descriptive</i>	30
9.1.3 <i>Models bring us closer to reality</i>	30
9.2 Emergence or reductionism?	30
9.2.1 <i>Reductionism and the alleged triumph of science</i>	31
9.2.2 <i>Emergence</i>	31

## Chapter 3 The Method of Religion: Reflection and Inspiration

<b>1. Definition</b>	35
<b>2. Religion is a human response</b>	36
2.1 Religion is a response to a variety of human experiences	36
2.2 Varieties of response	37
2.2.1 <i>Religious</i>	37
2.2.2 <i>Non-religious</i>	37
<b>3. Evolution of religion</b>	37
3.1 Animism: spirit world of present day hunter-gatherers	38
3.1.1 <i>Chinese folk medicine</i>	39
3.1.2 <i>Australian Indigenous culture</i>	39
3.2 The emergence of more distant gods	40
3.3 The beginning of Greek philosophy: a move from gods towards nature	41
3.4 The emergence of monotheism	41
3.4.1 <i>The West: Judaism, Christianity, Islam</i>	41
3.4.2 <i>East: Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism</i>	42
3.5 Revelation	44
<b>4. Evidence for religion</b>	44
4.1 Universality of religion	45
4.2 Writing	45
4.3 Mystical experience	45
4.4 Making sense of reality	47
4.5 Other sources of evidence	47
<b>5. Difficulties for religion in the West</b>	48
5.1 Reasons for difficulties	48
5.2 Difficulties lead to dismissive attitudes	49
<b>6. Christ and salvation</b>	50
6.1 The world seeks saviours	50
6.2 Jesus: a challenge for his time	51
6.3 Jesus: a challenge for our times	52
6.4 A new creation	53
6.5 Jesus, the face of God	54
<b>7. The Trinity</b>	54
7.1 God is not the only mystery	54
7.2 Reality as relationship	55
7.3 The threeness of the one God.	55
7.4 God as truly personal	56

## Chapter 4 Revolution in the Heavens: The Birth of Modern Cosmology

<b>1. Ancient models</b>	59
1.1 The biblical model	59
1.2 Aristotle's universe	61
1.3 Ptolemy's epicycles	62
<b>2. Copernicus and the sun as centre</b>	63
2.1 Arguments against having the sun as centre	64
2.2 The <i>Commentariolus</i>	64
2.3 <i>De revolutionibus orbium coelestium</i>	65
2.4 Tycho Brahe's alternative model	65
2.5 Kepler's correction to the Copernican system	65
2.6 Newton provides the convincing argument for the Copernican system	67
<b>3. Galileo's discoveries</b>	67
3.1 What the telescope revealed	67
3.1.1 <i>The moon</i>	67
3.1.2 <i>Jupiter's moons</i>	68
3.1.3 <i>Sunspots</i>	69
3.1.4 <i>The Milky Way</i>	69
3.1.5 <i>Phases of Venus</i>	70
3.2 Summary of Galileo's discoveries	70
3.3 The consequences of Galileo's observations	70
<b>4. Galileo: hero or heretic?</b>	71

4.1 Galileo's position: a paradigm change with theological implications	71
4.2 Galileo supports the Copernican model	71
4.3 Galileo encounters opposition	72
4.4 A preliminary judgment from Rome	72
4.5 'The Dialogue' and its consequences	73
<b>Chapter 5 The Development of Cosmology: The Discovery of a Vast and Dynamic Universe</b>	
<b>1. Riddle of the nebulae</b>	80
1.1 Two theories about the nebulae	81
1.2 Hubble found evidence to resolve the question of the nebulae	81
<b>2. The expanding universe</b>	82
2.1 The red-shift	82
2.2 The argument from the force of gravity	83
2.3 Einstein's solution to the implosion	84
2.4 Hoyle's 'steady state' resists the expanding universe	86
<b>3. Microwave background radiation: the compelling evidence</b>	88
3.1 The discovery of the cosmic microwave background radiation (CMB)	88
3.2 The origin of the background radiation	88
3.3 Features of the CMB	88
<b>4. Extension: Chaos</b>	91
4.1 Billiard table thought experiment to illustrate chaos	91
4.2 Chaos in small system	91
4.3 Chaos in systems of innumerable particles	91
4.4 Uncertainty deriving from chaos	91
<b>Chapter 6 The Big Bang: Another Revolution in the Skies</b>	
<b>1. The big bang</b>	95
1.1. The theory of an expanding universe leads back to a beginning	95
1.2 The explosion which began the universe	96
<b>2. After the bang</b>	96
2.1 The first three minutes	96
2.2 From three minutes to about 380,000 years after the big bang	98
2.3 380,000 years after the big bang: a creative step, the formation of atoms	98
2.4. Structure begins to form	99
<b>3. Reflections</b>	100
3.1 Scientific: The big bang theory presents problems	100
3.2 Philosophical	101
<b>4. Extension 1: Inflation: a solution to the big bang problems</b>	103
4.1 The meaning of inflation	103
4.2 Big bang problems addressed by inflation	104
4.3 The limitations of the inflation theory	104
<b>5. Extension 2: The role played by dark matter in cosmic evolution</b>	105
5.1 Dark matter in spiral galaxies	105
5.2 The role of dark matter in shaping the cosmos	106
<b>Chapter 7 The Book of Genesis: Modern Scholarship</b>	
<b>1. The meaning of myth</b>	109
1.1 Cosmic myths	110
1.2 The prevalence of non-biblical myths and their polytheistic background	110
1.3 The unique character of biblical myths	111
1.4 Differences between biblical and pagan myths: a summary	111
<b>2. Examples of pagan myths</b>	111
2.1 Creation	111
2.2 The battles of the gods	112
2.3 Manipulating and capricious gods	112
2.4 The use of ritual and power to attain favour	113
2.5 The origin of death	113
2.6 The origin of evil	113
<b>3. Biblical myths</b>	114

3.1 The relationship between biblical and non-biblical myths	114
3.2 The Bible's first creation story: Genesis 1.1–2.4	114
3.3 The Bible's second creation story: Genesis 2.5–3.24	115
3.4 The two Genesis creation stories compared	115
3.5 A third creation story: Psalms and the Book of Job	116
3.6 Why are there three different creation stories?	117
3.7 A summary of what the biblical creation stories tell us	118
3.8 The philosophical view of creation	118
<b>4. The bible as the word of God</b>	119
4.1 How was Genesis 1–11 written?	119
4.2 How are these chapters the word of God?	120
4.3 What the Bible teaches	120
<b>Chapter 8 The Stars: Instruments of Creation</b>	
<b>1. Two gigantic leaps forward</b>	123
1.1 The skies appear static	123
1.2 The cycle of life and death in the skies	123
1.3 Creationism is not the answer	124
<b>2. The stars</b>	124
2.1 How did the stars form?	125
2.2 A balancing act between implosion and explosion	126
<b>3. Formation of the elements</b>	127
3.1 A large star: a stellar cooker	128
3.2 The syntheses of the remaining elements	130
3.3 The death of a large star: supernova	131
3.4 The formation of solar systems	132
3.5 Life-giving carbon	133
<b>4. The death of the sun</b>	134
<b>5. The end of a superstar: a black hole</b>	137
<b>6. Extension: The neutrino coincidence</b>	138
<b>Chapter 9 The Anthropic Universe: Science at its Limits</b>	
<b>1. The universe</b>	143
1.1 General possibilities for a universe	144
1.2 Evolution of the universe	144
1.3 The anthropic question	145
<b>2. The arrow of time</b>	145
2.1 The pessimistic arrow of time	146
2.2 Optimistic arrow of time	147
<b>3. The fine-tuning of the laws of nature</b>	149
3.1 Some examples of the fine-tuning needed for life to emerge	149
3.2 Is the fine-tuning a chance occurrence?	151
<b>4. The anthropic principle</b>	152
4.1 The strong anthropic principle	152
4.2 The weak anthropic principle	152
<b>5. The multiverse solution to the fine-tuning</b>	153
5.1 Different styles of multiverse speculation	154
5.2 Some reflections on the multiverse	154
<b>6. The design solution</b>	155
<b>7. Other approaches to fine-tuning</b>	158
7.1 A fluke	158
7.2 A given	158
7.3 A necessity	159
<b>8. Extension 1: Reasons for and against the multiverse theory</b>	159
8.1 Reasons against the multiverse theory	159
8.2 Reasons for the multiverse theory	160
<b>9. Extension 2: String theory</b>	161
9.1 Michio Kaku	161
9.2 Arguments in favour of string theory	162
9.3 Arguments against string theory	163
<b>10. Extension 3: 'Intelligent design'</b>	163

## **Chapter 10 The Resurrection: The Redemption of Creation**

<b>1. The foundational belief</b>	167
1.1 The quest for the historical Jesus	167
1.2 Christological controversies	168
1.3 Resurrection interpretations	168
<b>2. He is risen!</b>	168
<b>3. The Resurrection of Jesus</b>	169
3.1 The belief	170
3.2 The evidence for the belief	170
3.3 Inconsistencies in the evidence	172
3.4 The inconsistencies can be seen to increase credibility	173
3.5 The transformation of the apostles	173
3.6 The birth of Christianity	174
<b>4. Alternative explanations for the transformation of the apostles</b>	175
4.1 The apostles deliberately made up stories in order to feel better	176
4.2 The swoon theory: Jesus was not dead	176
4.3 The story as an imitation of earlier dying and rising gods	178
4.4 The story as symbol in the minds of the apostles	178
4.5 The apostles were hallucinating	178
<b>5. The meaning</b>	179
5.1 Jesus is the living Lord	179
5.2 Resurrection is the answer to life	180
5.3 Resurrection is not earthly utopia	180
5.4 The risen one: the spirit he released transforms us	180
5.5 The promise of personal resurrection	181
5.6 The final revelation of God and God's purpose	181
<b>Conclusion: The Fruitful Conversation between Science and Religion</b>	
<b>1. Is science our salvation?</b>	183
<b>2. The many fruits of science</b>	184
<b>3. Serious problems remain for a large proportion of the human population</b>	185
<b>4. Reason in a world of science</b>	185
<b>5. A danger emanating from the success of scientific reasoning</b>	185
<b>6. How to view the relationship between science and religion</b>	187
6.1 The conflict model	187
6.2 Contact, conversation and confirmation	187
6.3 A parallel approach	188
<b>7. Concluding comment</b>	188
<b>Glossary</b>	191

# Foreword

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This text has three intertwined lines of enquiry. Firstly, it attempts to acquaint students with the methodology of science and some of its achievements. In particular it seeks to facilitate an appreciation of some of the extraordinary findings of modern cosmology. Secondly, it reflects on the origins and universality of religion and specifically focuses on the new message of Christianity. Thirdly, it brings both science and religion into a dialogue. In doing this it attempts to show that religious and philosophical reflections on the findings of science point to concerns whose answers cannot be gained by the scientific method. There are critical issues in life, and indeed within the universe as we know it, where science itself has to acknowledge its inability to proceed. As Stephen Hawking said, 'Why is there anything at all? When we have answered this question we will know the mind of God.'

While this text looks to questions raised by cosmology and physics, similar lines of enquiry could equally engage the other sciences of evolution and ecology and the growing sciences of Human consciousness and genetics.

The text has been developed for a course delivered to Year 12 students as a part of their Religious Education studies at a Jesuit college in Adelaide. I have been teaching variations of this course, along with senior physics and philosophy, for over thirty years. It brings together my deep commitments and enthusiasms: for Christianity, for the sciences of physics and cosmology, and for philosophy. It hopes to address some of the questions in students' hearts and minds as they grapple with their particular life situations on our planet.

The universe has evolved. It has passed through many, more simple stages before arriving at today's complexity. Each new stage appears to have contained something new, something that was not in the preceding stage. Could stars have been predicted from the featureless world of hydrogen and helium? Could dinosaurs have been predicted from fish? Could animal evolution have predicted the amazingly fast development of the human brain? Looking backwards, could intelligent awareness have been predicted at all? At each stage there has been an emergence of new forms and new laws, not reducible to the properties of the constituents of the preceding stage, though dependent on their functioning. The apostle Paul wrote that 'all creation is groaning in one gigantic act of giving birth'.<sup>1</sup> Marvellous matter reveals new secrets at each stage of its progress.

Many students have only little knowledge of the nature and development of the universe, but realise it differs markedly from the simple creation stories of the Bible. They hear and read reports about an alleged conflict between religious beliefs and scientific discoveries, without knowing how much work has been done over the last century in understanding and interpreting the Bible as a unique text. There is a temptation to allow their ultimate assertions to be consonant with scientific scenarios and to dismiss religious knowledge as a thing of the past. However many scientists and theologians see no contradiction between their concerns and are happy to see the relationship between science and religion as a fruitful dialogue. We need multiple perspectives when dealing with the mysteries of life.

It is important for all of us, and especially young adults, to appreciate the new thoughts and interpretations which are widely known in theological circles. It is important to remember that many aspects of our lives demand constant reviewing and reflection. We have a lifetime of learning.

Because of science's tremendous achievements, some assume that knowledge attained through the scientific method is the only true source of knowledge. This text is an attempt

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1. Paul, *Letter to the Romans*, 8:22.

to show that religion plays a significant role in our thinking. It hopes to enlighten students in their knowledge of the cosmos and to link this knowledge with an intelligent appreciation of what the Bible, at its deepest level, is actually saying.