About the book
The text has been developed for a course delivered to senior students of St Ignatius College Acedela 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.

Telescope & Milky Way

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

A Star is Born

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 Hennie, 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

Terry Kelly SJ
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Contents

Table of Contents v
Foreword xi

Chapter 1  The Importance of Science and Religion

1. The problem 1
   1.1 Perceptions of the cosmos 1
   1.2 The impact of changed perceptions of the cosmos on religion 1
2. The place of religion in the world today 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
3. Scientific revolutions 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
4. Other influences on the relationship between science and religion 8
5. The present situation 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

Chapter 2  The Methods of Science: Its Achievements and Limitations

1. The scientific method: a recent arrival 13
2. The extent of scientific influence 13
   2.1 Everyday 14
   2.2 The invisible and the beyond 15
   2.3 The past and the future 15
3. The scientific method 15
   3.1 Steps in arriving at a scientific model 15
4. Does the scientific method deliver truth? 17
   4.1 Measurements 17
   4.2 Laws 17
   4.3 Theory 18
   4.4 Examples of developments within theories 19
5. The development of instruments: a key to progress 21
6. The role of mathematics in the progress of science 22
7. The explosion of science and technology 24
8. Science as one of the roads to truth 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
9. Extension: The philosophy of science 28
   9.1 Does the scientific method lead to truth? 28
      9.1.1 Science never reaches the truth about nature 29
      9.1.2 Science is descriptive 30
      9.1.3 Models bring us closer to reality 30
   9.2 Emergence or reductionism? 30
      9.2.1 Reductionism and the alleged triumph of science 31
      9.2.2 Emergence 31
## Table of Contents

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

### Chapter 5  The Development of Cosmology: The Discovery of a Vast and Dynamic Universe

1. Riddle of the nebula  80  
   1.1 Two theories about the nebulae  81  
   1.2 Hubble found evidence to resolve the question of the nebulae  81  
2. The expanding universe  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  
3. Microwave background radiation: the compelling evidence  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  
4. Extension: Chaos  91  
   4.1 Billiard table thought experiment to illustrate chaos  91  
   4.2 Chaos in small systems  91  
   4.3 Chaos in systems of innumerable particles  91  
   4.4 Uncertainty deriving from chaos  91

### Chapter 6  The Big Bang: Another Revolution in the Skies

1. The big bang  95  
   1.1 The theory of an expanding universe leads back to a beginning  95  
   1.2 The explosion which began the universe  96  
2. After the bang  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  
3. Reflections  100  
   3.1 Scientific: The big bang theory presents problems  100  
   3.2 Philosophical  101  
4. Extension 1: Inflation: a solution to the big bang problems  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  
5. Extension 2: The role played by dark matter in cosmic evolution  105  
   5.1 Dark matter in spiral galaxies  105  
   5.2 The role of dark matter in shaping the cosmos  106

### Chapter 7  The Book of Genesis: Modern Scholarship

1. The meaning of myth  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  
2. Examples of pagan myths  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  
3. Biblical myths  114
3.1 The relationship between biblical and non-biblical myths
3.2 The Bible’s first creation story: Genesis 1.1–2.4
3.3 The Bible’s second creation story: Genesis 2.5–3.24
3.4 The two Genesis creation stories compared
3.5 A third creation story: Psalms and the Book of Job
3.6 Why are there three different creation stories?
3.7 A summary of what the biblical creation stories tell us
3.8 The philosophical view of creation

4. The bible as the word of God
4.1 How was Genesis 1–11 written?
4.2 How are these chapters the word of God?
4.3 What the Bible teaches

Chapter 8 The Stars: Instruments of Creation
1. Two gigantic leaps forward
   1.1 The skies appear static
   1.2 The cycle of life and death in the skies
   1.3 Creationism is not the answer
2. The stars
   2.1 How did the stars form?
   2.2 A balancing act between implosion and explosion
3. Formation of the elements
   3.1 A large star: a stellar cooker
   3.2 The syntheses of the remaining elements
   3.3 The death of a large star: supernova
   3.4 The formation of solar systems
   3.5 Life-giving carbon
4. The death of the sun
5. The end of a superstar: a black hole
6. Extension: The neutrino coincidence

Chapter 9 The Anthropic Universe: Science at its Limits
1. The universe
   1.1 General possibilities for a universe
   1.2 Evolution of the universe
   1.3 The anthropic question
2. The arrow of time
   2.1 The pessimistic arrow of time
   2.2 Optimistic arrow of time
3. The fine-tuning of the laws of nature
   3.1 Some examples of the fine-tuning needed for life to emerge
   3.2 Is the fine-tuning a chance occurrence?
4. The anthropic principle
   4.1 The strong anthropic principle
   4.2 The weak anthropic principle
5. The multiverse solution to the fine-tuning
   5.1 Different styles of multiverse speculation
   5.2 Some reflections on the multiverse
6. The design solution
7. Other approaches to fine-tuning
   7.1 A fluke
   7.2 A given
   7.3 A necessity
8. Extension 1: Reasons for and against the multiverse theory
   8.1 Reasons against the multiverse theory
   8.2 Reasons for the multiverse theory
9. Extension 2: String theory
   9.1 Michio Kaku
   9.2 Arguments in favour of string theory
   9.3 Arguments against string theory
10. Extension 3: ‘Intelligent design’
Chapter 10  The Resurrection: The Redemption of Creation

1. The foundational belief 167
   1.1 The quest for the historical Jesus 167
   1.2 Christological controversies 168
   1.3 Resurrection interpretations 168

2. He is risen! 168

3. The Resurrection of Jesus 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

4. Alternative explanations for the transformation of the apostles 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

5. The meaning 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

Conclusion: The Fruitful Conversation between Science and Religion

1. Is science our salvation? 183
2. The many fruits of science 184
3. Serious problems remain for a large proportion of the human population 185
4. Reason in a world of science 185
5. A danger emanating from the success of scientific reasoning 185
6. How to view the relationship between science and religion 187
   6.1 The conflict model 187
   6.2 Contact, conversation and confirmation 187
   6.3 A parallel approach 188
7. Concluding comment 188

Glossary 191
Foreword

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’.\(^1\) 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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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.