

## ATRIUM TOUR

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE

**Bacon saw the foundations of science in the Bible at a time when the Bible was available only in ancient languages and read by few.**

In the Medieval period, roughly 400 AD to 1500 AD, the teachings of the Bible were mingled with the teachings of the ancient Greek pagan “classical” philosophers. Classical thought consists primarily of the teachings of Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC).

The ancient western Greco-Roman view of the material world was that the material world was chaotic and unpredictable. The ancient Greeks didn't do experimentation on nature which they saw as chaos. Plato and Aristotle largely rejected experiments on nature (scientific experimentation) as a means of gaining knowledge. The ancient Greeks did mathematics and architecture but almost no pure, experimental science. Their worldview would not allow for the scientific method. The educated Christians of western Europe saw both the Bible and nature through the teachings of Plato and Aristotle.

In medieval times all of science was primarily seen through the lens of Aristotle. Roger Bacon challenged this thinking. In his writings he began to strip away the reasoning of the ancient Greek philosophers. In doing so, he endured much opposition from church leaders. Some criticized his experiments and falsely accused him of dabbling in dark arts. Bacon did experimentation that came up with different conclusions from those taught in the writings of Aristotle. Bacon challenged Aristotle and got in trouble for it.

Bacon began a movement away from Plato and Aristotle that would take centuries to fully unfold. Roger Bacon is considered to be a true scientific pioneer. The key to his success is that he viewed the physical world from a purely Christian biblical perspective.

Three sources of knowledge in the Christian worldview are the Holy Scriptures, the natural world and the conscience. The Christian view of nature is that nature is not an illusion, nor is it random or chaotic. Furthermore, observations of nature can be inductively applied. The God of the Bible created nature; therefore, nature is subject to God's consistent physical laws. The Bible shows God as a moral lawgiver who is rational and consistent. God gives both moral laws and laws of physics. The fact that nature is orderly means that mathematics can be applied to nature in a rational way.

Roger Bacon used experimental science to study nature. In previous generations such knowledge gained from experiments was considered useless because the natural world was considered chaotic. The Christian worldview regards God as rational and orderly and therefore nature is assumed to be consistent and orderly. This in turn leads to the fundamental axiom of modern science - the regularity principle. The regularity principle is the Christian view that the universe is consistent or “regular” and therefore what is found true in one part of the universe is true in all of it.

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**Roger Bacon believed that a deep understanding of both the natural world and theology were essential, and that true knowledge, particularly in the sciences, could enhance and support religious understanding. He advocated for the use of experience and observation in scientific inquiry as a means to better understand both the natural world and the scriptures. He also believed that a strong foundation in mathematics was crucial for understanding both the natural sciences and theology.**

- **Bacon saw science not as separate from religion, but as a tool to better understand God's creation and to deepen religious understanding.**
- He emphasized the role of experimentation and observation in acquiring knowledge, a departure from the more theoretical approaches of his time.
- Bacon believed that a strong foundation in mathematics was essential for understanding both the natural sciences and theology.
- Bacon called for a reform of the educational system, particularly the liberal arts, to incorporate a greater emphasis on mathematics and natural sciences.
- He believed that a better understanding of the literal sense of the scriptures, gained through scientific inquiry, could lead to a deeper understanding of their spiritual sense.
- Bacon also envisioned that scientific knowledge could be used to alleviate human suffering and to ensure the supremacy of Christians in warfare.
- **In essence, Bacon's perspective was that the study of the natural world and the study of theology were not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary and mutually supportive paths to truth.**

Bacon repeatedly asked the readers of his works not to confuse his physics with divination, his chemistry with alchemy, and his astronomy with astrology. He willingly submitted all his writings to the judgment of the Church. He showed a reverence for the Pope and the highest veneration towards the Fathers of the Church - even when not approving their opinion. Bacon was a faithful scholar of open character who frankly uttered what he thought and was not afraid to blame whatsoever and whomsoever he believed to deserve censure.

Long after Roger Bacon passed away, the Bible became more available to the people of Europe. During the Protestant Reformation the Bible was translated into the languages of the people. In 1538, a command was given by Lord Thomas Cromwell (under Henry VIII) to have the Bible read in English in all the churches. Bible knowledge exploded across England. The Bible soon became accessible to people across all of Europe.

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The biblical worldview spread far and wide. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Robert Boyle (1627-1691) and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) made the fundamental breakthroughs that birthed modern science.

Robert Boyle is considered to be the founder of modern chemistry. Medieval alchemy gave way to modern inductive chemistry under Boyle. Boyle was a devout believer in Christ. He left provisions in his will to fund a series of lectures titled: "Defending the Faith."

Newton's laws of motion revolutionized physics. Newton was also a brilliant mathematician who discovered calculus. Newton was a believer who wrote more on theology than he did on science.

Roger Bacon was the herald of modern science. Bacon's science is inseparable from his religion. His views on natural force and the value of mathematics are intertwined with his interest in alchemy and astrology. These, in turn, are part of a larger commitment to the revealed truths of Christianity. Bacon's scientific ideas were deeply intertwined with his religious beliefs. The most impressive features of Bacon's science both grow out of, and return to, his faith.

***“Holy Scripture especially is an inexhaustible fountain of truth from which all human philosophers, even the heathen, drew their knowledge; therefore no science, whether profane or sacred, can be true if contrary to Holy Writ”***