A Proposed Model for Defining Common Ground between Science and Religion

Christopher J. Bobkowski, Biology Teacher, Larkin High School

Abstract

The discord between science and religion began to escalate in Europe and North America in the late 18th century when geological discoveries seemed to indicate that the Earth was much older than suggested by the Bible. When Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution by natural selection and his beliefs the descent of man, many advocates of conservative religious viewpoints found his ideas in direct conflict with the Creation account according to the Book of Genesis. This controversy continues today as a culture war in the mass media, and what is being presented is not merely a contrasting set of intellectual beliefs, but rather a clash of competing worldviews, the larger interpretative blueprints through which ultimate meaning is made out of the details of life and the world.

Traditionally speaking, members of the scientific community have held themselves and their pursuits to a strictly naturalistic worldview. Conversely, members of the religious community of thought have embraced a more supernatural framework. This paper will seek to explore both the Scientific and religious worldviews and establish an integrated Reality Matrix Model useful in both revealing and utilizing the common ground that does exist between scientific knowledge and religious thought.

Is There Hope for Common Ground?

From the very beginnings of written history, mankind has pondered the mysterious nature of his own origins. In the Book of Psalms, King David poetically questions, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalms 8:3-4, NIV 1995) By contrast, the renowned 19th century naturalist and preeminent evolutionist Charles Darwin renders a different view, “Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future. But … with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system - with all these exalted powers - Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.” (Darwin 2004, 563) The opposing nature of statements such as these have characterized the intellectual battlefront between religious and scientific thought to claim the ultimate explanation of man’s place in the universe. So when author Ralph Waldo Emerson so simply states, “Man is a piece of the

universe made alive," a clear question emerges: Is man merely random material of the universe, or does he indeed possess a spiritual destiny?

On the cover the November 13th, 2006 issue of TIME Magazine, the sophisticated double helix of the DNA molecule appears to cleverly unwind into the simple shape of a Catholic rosary. (Van Biema 2006, 48) Beneath this image lies the caption, "God vs. Science." Once again, the popular model of scientific understanding and a history of religious Christian thought seem to have provided us with two polarized explanations to the question of mankind's ultimate origin: either humans are advanced animals evolved by chance with no ultimate purpose and destiny, or humans are created in the image of God and purposed to live in eternal fellowship through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. So which explanation leads to the ultimate truth? Can either explanation be proven? More difficultly, is there even hope for common ground between science and religion?

Defining a Worldview

Perhaps the question of whether science and religion can ever establish a common ground may be answered in the choice of 'lens' by which the world is viewed. Taken from the German word w*eltanschauung*, meaning 'a look into the world,' a person tends to catalogue their particular beliefs about the most significant ideas of life such as God, the universe, knowledge, values, history, and society into a big picture called a worldview. "A worldview, then, is a semiotic system of narrative signs that creates the definitive symbolic universe which is responsible in the main for the shape of a variety of life-determining, human practices." (Naugle 2002, 329-330) Because people's behavior is shaped by their most basic and ultimate beliefs, their chosen worldview forms a powerful set of presuppositions that creates the core values that will guide their decisions and actions.

Some of the most powerful questions we may ask during the course of life are those that "deal with our past, present, and future: Where did I come from? What is my purpose in life? What will happen to me when I die?" (Brush 2005, 13) Answers to these types of questions draw heavily upon the perspectives of a worldview for direction. Author Ronald Nash adds that a worldview is "a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality." (Nash 1988, 24) So a worldview forms the mental framework to organize what one considers to be real, true, good, or beautiful.

When it comes to the development of a worldview, there seems to be no neutral territory. There is no shortage of competition for ideologies to conform into any particular bend of thinking. In his latest book, *The Kingdom Triangle,* philosopher J.P. Moreland observes and deduces that in our modern culture, there is "a three-way worldview struggle" between postmodernism, scientific naturalism, and Christianity. Just as the post-modern philosophy has ushered in a diluting form of cultural relativism with regard to one's view of reality, truth, and reason about meaning and self, a growing scientific naturalism seems to imply that everything that exists is either composed of matter or develops from matter when it reaches a reasonable state of complexity (Moreland 2007, 22-23). Conversely, belief in the reality of God, the faithfulness and reliability of the Bible, and the deity and humanity of Christ remain central to the adherence of a Christian biblical worldview (Moreland 2007, 33).

In 1982, Anthropologist Dr. Paul G. Hiebert of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School developed a worldview concept he called the flaw of the excluded middle (Hiebert 1982, 35-47). He used it as a tool to train field missionaries, giving legitimacy to demonic and spiritual explanations of phenomena previously overlooked by Western theology, anthropology, and

missiology. He contended that the Western world views reality in one of three domains, specifically in two separate tiers (Figure 1). The upper tier is the unseen of the transempirical world, occupied by God and various spirits. This is the mystic realm of religion. The lower tier is the seen of the empirical world, experienced through the five physical senses. This is the measurable realm of science. Between the two tiers is the unseen of this world, the real world of angelic and demonic forces active on Earth. Hiebert calls this blind spot in the Western worldview the flaw of the excluded middle. Bryant Myers comments on the implications of Heibert's two-tiered world by saying, "the most important feature of this Enlightenment worldview is that the spiritual and real worlds do not touch." (Myers Citation) Many non-Westerners recognize this middle world of unseen powers, magical forces, and spirits, as a very present reality of everyday human life. For example, a person's illness is attributed to demon possession). Conversely, it's often easy for educated Westerners to dismiss Eastern worldviews as inferior because of their own perceived, technological superiority.

Delineating A Scientific Worldview

Pop music star Madonna was quite astute when she observed that, "We are living in a material world." Science is a way of knowing just how matter and energy interact in this material world. The central purpose of Science is scientific inquiry, the development of explanations. The chief enterprise of science is to test hypothetical explanations of natural phenomena against the natural world. (National Science Education Standards 1996, 23) When explanations are not supported by evidence, they are rejected. If sufficient evidence for an explanation exists, it only gains provisional acceptance. This means that it still may be modified or even rejected at a later time if new information becomes evident. When evidence of

phenomena cannot be directly observed, such as in the study of astronomy, particle physics, or evolutionary biology, indirect observation methods become the normal mode of inquiry.

Scientific explanations combine what is already known with existing evidence gathered from many other valid experiments and observations. While a scientific explanation may offer keen insight into a physical phenomenon, scientific theories are what form the core of today's scientific knowledge. Scientific theories are strongly supported explanations based on a large body of data, gathered over long periods of time. For example, in biology, two of the most highly regarded theories are the cell theory and the theory of evolution. Both theories are based on extensive observations and investigations, have numerous supporting evidences, and allow biologists to make accurate, testable predictions.

Although strong evidence for some explanations may indicate a movement in the right direction, scientists do not and cannot claim to "prove" a theory. One can rarely be sure all possible variables that might explain why a test result was positive have been taken into consideration. Sometimes it requires a series of repeated and varied tests of an explanation to provide a reliable understanding of how nature is at work in a particular phenomenon. Additionally, a fair test of the hypothesis may be required to exclude any variable that might give an advantage to the hypothesis. In such cases, it may become possible to disprove the contribution of certain variables. Thus, disproof of a hypothesis and failure to confirm a result are also important ways in which some explanations are eliminated and understanding of the natural world is enhanced.

However, in science, one thing seems certain. Whether God created or not cannot be determined by science. There is a simple reason why this claim of creationism cannot be evaluated: any act of an all-powerful God fits with any and all scientific explanations of the

natural world. Thus, the methods of science cannot be used to measure or distinctively identify the results of God's supernatural activity in this world as different from the results of other natural processes. Therefore, science is "powerless to test the ultimate claim of creationism, and must remain agnostic about whether God did or did not create the material world." (Scott 2004, 20)

Designating a Religious Worldview

How exactly does one define religion in today's post-modern society?[1] Religion, in the broadest sense of the word, refers to a set of ideas and practices concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of nonmaterial reality in the universe. Essentially, religion deals with matters of faith, a prescribed set of principles or beliefs. The primary function of religion is to teach the moral principles that govern mankind's relationship to a form of a deity and to one another. Religious activities may center around instructions provided through a sacred text, devotional and ritual observances to its deity or deities, and the adherence to a moral code of conduct for governing human affairs. The main basis for knowledge in religious thought is through revelation from a deity, either orally transmitted from previous generations and recorded in a sacred text, or revealed to individuals through prayer.

In a world of more than 6 billion people today, approximately 75% of humanity adheres to one of the five major religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Chinese traditional religion and Buddhism. Christianity is the largest world religion with approximately 2.1 billion followers. Yet almost 1.1 billion people do not adhere to a particular religious tradition, but rather follow

[1] ***Post-modern***. *Dictionary.com.* Online Etymology Dictionary. *Douglas Harper, Historian.* *http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/post-modern (accessed: June, 2007). Post-modern. 1949. Postmodernism defined by Terry Eagleton as "the contemporary movement of thought which rejects…the possibility of objective knowledge" and is therefore "skeptical of truth, unity, and progress.*

one or several irreligious approaches such as atheism, rationalism, agnosticism or secular humanism.(Adherents.com 2007)

In a recent survey by the Barna Research Group, they discovered that only 4% of American adults have a biblical worldview. The Barna Group defines a Christian biblical worldview as based upon eight foundational beliefs (The Barna Group of Ventura, California 2003).

1. Absolute moral truths do exist.
2. These absolute moral truths are defined in the Bible.
3. The Bible is accurate in all its teachings.
4. Jesus Christ was sinless throughout his life and ministry.
5. God is the all-powerful Creator of the universe and continues to rule it today.
6. Salvation is a gift from God that cannot be earned through good deeds.
7. Satan is a real, living entity.
8. Christians have an obligation to share the Gospel with the unsaved.

Perhaps the most compelling finding of Barna's study was that only 9% of born-again Christians report having a biblical worldview. In other words, only 9% of those who have accepted Jesus as their personal Savior have committed their life to fully following Him.

A biblical worldview perceives the reality of life through the grid of Scripture, not at the level of culture or experience. Separation between the spiritual and real world do not reflect biblical reality. Scripture clearly teaches that supernatural spiritual forces are at work in the world. The spiritual and physical worlds are inseparable parts of one another. Therefore, life is in the natural world, but lived as a spiritual experience. The excluded middle suggested by Heibert is only excluded in the secular mind, not necessarily in reality.

Thousands of public schools around the country do not allow the biblical Creation perspective to be taught in their classrooms. In a survey by the Barna Group, a conservative Protestant marketing research firm providing data about the state of religion in America, about six out of every ten adults (59%) favor the teaching of Creationism, while less than four out of ten (38%) do not want it added to the public school curriculum (The Barna Group of Ventura, California 2004).

While the term Creationism has a broad meaning that a supernatural force was involved in creating the universe essentially as we know it today, to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, a single God who reveals himself through sacred Scripture is acknowledged as the Creator of all things. These monotheistic traditions of the Middle East are often referred to as the Abrahamic faiths because they each consider themselves spiritual descendents of the great patriarch Abraham. Abraham believed when the Lord made a covenant with him to make his offspring as numerous as the stars, Abraham's belief was credited to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6, NIV 1995) Just as Abraham was justified by his faith alone and not works, and so are all of his descendents. He is the 'father of all who believe' and come to faith in Jesus Christ. (Romans 4:11-12, NIV 1995)

The Apostle Paul writes in the fourth chapter, verse five of his Epistle to the Romans, "however, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness." (NIV 1995) Willow Creek Community Church Senior Pastor Bill Hybels describes this central truth as the "differentiating dynamic" between Christianity and all other faith systems of the world (Hybels 2007). Christianity decisively removes any measure of personal performance as a means of being set right with God or achieving eternal salvation. Christianity is a faith of reason based on historical, legal, and scientific evidence,

presuppositional and philosophical arguments, prophetic fulfillments, extensive biblical records, and moral logic.

Professor Paul E. Little spent much of his career assessing the credentials of Jesus own claim, "What about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I say I am God's son? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (John 10:36-38, NIV 1995). He finds the historical Jesus to have lived a morally perfect life, as fully human yet fully divine, able to command natural forces, cure disease, be resurrected from the grave in bodily form, ascend to heaven, and presently indwell believers as Spirit (Little 2000, 42-45). Before one can completely diminish or abjectly dismiss a biblical worldview, there are three fundamental life questions that each person must honestly and authentically answer:

Does God really exist?

Is the Bible the inerrant, authoritative Word of God?

Is Jesus Christ who He said He Is?

Discovering an Integrated Worldview

In an effort to visualize a more holistic picture of the field of common ground that exists between science and religion, a Reality Matrix Model consisting of a simple array of columns and rows configured into a four-quadrant matrix can be used to represent each significant domain of interest (See Figure 2). The top row of quadrants represents the physical methods of both Science and Religion. The bottom row of quadrants represents the metaphysical meanings found in both Philosophy and Theology. The left column of quadrants represents the Naturalistic worldview, while the right column of quadrants represents the Supernatural worldview.

Together, each quadrant of this Reality Matrix Model encompasses diverse components of activities and thoughts that represent a more integrated, holistic worldview of the universe in which we live.

The Naturalistic worldview of the left column represents the view that all phenomena are the result of naturally occurring processes. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, science emerged as a methodology of knowing about the natural world. A considerable increase in knowledge about the natural order was gained through the systematic approach of science. Methodological naturalism grew out of the direct study of nature, and thus attributed its effects to only natural causality. Methodological naturalism holds the belief that empirical assumptions will only achieve natural results at best, whether supernatural results exist or not. Many scientists manage to successfully reconcile their faith with an operational agnosticism of their work in the Science lab (Mark Perakh 2002). An agnostic or a-theist insists that you neither prove nor disprove the existence of God. Subsequently, metaphysical naturalism is a form of philosophical naturalism that empirically assumes that the natural world is in fact the totality of all that exists. Metaphysical naturalism denies both the supernatural realm and any possibility of the existence of God. Avowed atheist Richard Dawkins magnifies this belief in his most recent book, *The God Delusion.* (Dawkins 2006)

The Supernatural worldview of the right column is the view that at least some phenomena are due to supernatural processes. This applies to any entity, force, or power that operates beyond explanation by the laws of the natural world. An example of a supernatural occurrence would be a religious miracle. Methodological supernaturalism is the epistemological assertion that there is a supernatural explanation for phenomena deemed as supernatural processes. Cell biologist and author Kenneth Miller illustrates such a deistic ideology in this, “To some, the

murderous reality of human nature is proof that God is absent or dead. The same reasoning would find God missing from unpredictable fits and turns of an evolutionary tree. But the truth is deeper. In each case, a Deity determined to establish a world that was truly independent of His whims, a world in which intelligent creatures would face authentic choices between good and evil, would have to fashion a distinct, material reality and then let His creation run. Neither the self-sufficiency of nature nor the reality of evil in the world mean God is absent. To a religious person, both signify something quite different – the strength of God's love and the reality of our freedom as His creatures." (Miller 1999, 269) By contrast, metaphysical supernaturalism is an empirically defined assumption that at least some processes are supernatural in their nature of occurrence. For example, faith by which humans are justified and saved in Christian theology trusts in God and in His promises as made through Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.[2] Consequently, a person can operate as a methodological naturalist while choosing to be either a metaphysical naturalist or a supernaturalist, for example, a person can do the activities of science while adhering to either an atheistic or theistic view. A methodological naturalist can even perform religious practices as a methodological supernaturalist, but still a true metaphysical naturalist would simply reject all supernaturalism in any of its forms.

The Physical methods of the top row operate within the world of the five senses serving to provide a descriptive explanation for what occurs and how it actually does so. The physical world can be explored through the sensations of hearing, sight, taste, touch, and smell. These auditory, visual, and kinesthetic experiences occur in the four dimensions of length, width, height, and the passage of time. Activities characteristic of this sensate journey are the practices of observation, measurement, task performance, interpreting, personal experience, and repeating

[2] **Faith. Dictionary.com** *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/philosophy (accessed: June, 2007).

certain steps. Such activities can be specifically aimed toward either Scientific or Religious purposes.

The Metaphysical meanings of the bottom row operate within the realms of knowledge and understanding beyond the senses and dimensions, and serve to provide explanation as to why something occurs. Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that seeks to examine the nature of essential reality, which includes the relationship between mind and matter, substance and attribute, fact and value.[3] The meanings and assumptions of philosophy and Christian Theology can be empirically explored to determine the nature of being.

Quadrant 1 represents the operations of Scientific practices. Use of the scientific method is an extremely cautious means of building a supportable, evidenced understanding of how this world works. This provides an objective process for critical thinking and real-world problem solving. Once scientists observe and identify a problem, they can use the skill of modeling to form a hypothesis and make testable predictions. Testing the hypothesis under experimental and controlled conditions will yield a result. The data is analyzed and interpreted in light of the stated hypothesis. A reasonable conclusion reflecting the behavior of the variables is communicated. Thus, the scientific method seeks to explain nature in a methodological and reproducible fashion.

Quadrant 2 represents the range of Religious practices. Examples of practices in religion may include rites, rituals, ceremonies, traditions, and adherence to a moral code. Rites are personal actions such reading Scriptures, prayer, meditation, worship, receiving sacraments, or taking pilgrimages. Rituals are acts of symbolic importance such as a rite of passage. Ceremonies are sets of sacred observances used for events like birth, marriage, death and burial.

[3] **Metaphysics**. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/metaphysics (accessed: June, 2007).

Traditions are elements of culture that are handed down through stories and customs. Moral codes are ascribed behaviors for right or wrong conduct, knowledge of what is good and what is evil.

Quadrant 3 represents the perceptions of Philosophy. Philosophy is the investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values based on reasoning rather than methodology.[4] For example, the philosophy of science seeks to comprehend the nature and scope of scientific knowledge as well as its ethical significance. Such empirical explanations can be generated through the disciplines of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, or logic. Metaphysics focuses on the first causes and principles of things, seeking to ultimately identify the nature of what is. Ontological investigations question the meaning of existence. Epistemology deals with the questions of what knowledge is and what degrees of knowledge are possible. Ethics are the philosophical pursuits of ought in terms of actions and morals. Logic is the reasoning of mathematical and linguistic meanings (Blackburn 1994, 246-247; Quinton, 1995, 569-572). But just as the areas of these intellectual pursuits expand, so will the philosophical questions that they generate.

Quadrant 4 represents the perceptions of Theology. While it is widely understood to mean the literal study of God, Theology is the study of divinity as a rational inquiry into religious questions such as the nature of God, sin, and salvation.[5] The theologian may use analytical reasoning or argument to understand, critique, defend, or promote his or her own religious tradition. (Migliore 2004, 1-2) Some believe the central task of Christian theology is to clearly and comprehensively interpret Christian doctrine. Or perhaps, theology is to be applied

[4] **Philosophy**. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/philosophy (accessed: June, 2007).
[5] **Theology.** Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/philosophy (accessed: June, 2007).

so as to reach out to the culture at large. But a compelling faith invites contemplation into its own object. At its core, Christian theology arises from the freedom and the opportunity for communion with God to discover the unfolding fullness of His truth revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, true theism emanates from a belief in a personal God who created the universe, and remains intimately involved by actively sustaining it.

Deploying the Reality Matrix

What do the operations of science and religion look like within the Reality Matrix Model? Within the model, every worldview can find coordinates within one of the four domains of interest in a comprehensive sense of reality. The Reality Matrix Model allows each person to experience and challenge its framework as either ideas of prevailing concepts or as applications of personal experience. Putting ideas, conceptual models, and tools of practice to the test within the model can allow for more integrated and expanded perspectives of a person's worldview.

J.P. Moreland proposes four possible, mutualistic models of integration for the interaction of the Christian faith with science. (Moreland 1993, 46) In the first model, theology provides the context of a worldview that maintains such similar assumptions of science as: the knowability of the existence and orderly nature of the world, and the reliability of our senses and intellect in discovering truth. In the second model, theology can add detail and texture to the general principles of a scientific model, or vice versa. Additionally, theology and science can aid one another in the application of principles to the model. For example, theology can teach to not let the sun go down on your anger, while psychology can offer information about the nature or causes of anger. In the third model, theology and science can either act as two distinct, non-overlapping areas of reality as in the case of natural and supernatural events, or they can act as involving two non-interacting, complementary descriptions of the same reality, each be partially

correct but incomplete. To illustrate the first scenario, consider the natural, everyday activity of the Red Sea while God is speaking to Moses. In the second scenario, a strong east wind blows causing the Red Sea to part because God used the wind to drive the sea back as He held back the walls of water on the right and left sides permitting the Israelites to pass (Exodus 14, NIV 1995). In the final model, theology and science can be in simultaneous conflict, concord, or both in various ways, both directly interacting as they approach the same phenomenon. For instance, science has never been able to satisfactorily establish a model for the origins of natural, chemical evolution. Subsequently, the Creation narrative provides an understanding of the early complexity of life by the fiat miracle of God. Perhaps numerous successive attempts of science to model naturalistic origins may even serve to increase the attractiveness of the biblical explanation for some scientists.

This fourth model of integration "allows for theological beliefs to enter into the very practice of science." (Moreland 1993, 46) In this sense, a theist can offer biblical insights as potential, testable hypotheses while operating in the practice of science, for example, perhaps suggesting that mitochondrial DNA studies be used as a test for the historic presence of Eve. Additionally, Moreland cites that theological beliefs can enter into the practice of science by providing the background beliefs used to evaluate a scientific hypothesis, guiding research to make predictions that can be tested, or using the creative acts of God as explanatory to things that are scientifically discoverable. However, anytime God is evoked as a definite cause leads to the end of scientific inquiry. Regardless of what evidence is presented, there a measure of faith required, either in the tests of science or by the hand of God.

Ultimately, science is only at its best when it is used to describe the nature of phenomena rather than determine it. Many have a tendency to attribute far too much power and latitude to

the capabilities of science. Dr. Nigel Brush applies some perspective in the form of an appropriate metaphor for science in the search for truth, "A Christian can be a scientist if he or she understands the limitations of scientific knowledge and the current transitory nature of scientific truth. One way to look at science is simply as a tool. Like all tools, science can be used for great good or great evil. As a hammer can be used to build a house or to crack a skull, science can be used to make medicines or poisons, to create alloys for construction, or bombs for destruction. Most of the time, however, science is neither good nor bad – it is neutral, just another tool that humans use for various purposes." (Brush 2005, 254 –255)

The scientific method claims its heritage in biblical roots. Scientists, philosophers, and theologians have often remarked than whenever the Bible describes a sequence of events, it begins with a stated frame of reference, describes the conditions before and after the event, and provides a summary at the conclusion of the process. The Scottish theologian Thomas F. Torrance has investigated into how Christian theology and the Bible may have played a crucial role in the development of the Scientific method and key advances in Western Science. (Torrance 1996, 151-176) Torrance indicates that Reformed theology was instrumental in revolutionizing a systematic change in the intellectual thought processes of Science, related more so to the methods of questioning than the current advances in technology.

The science of biblical criticism methods has been used validate the historic authenticity of Scripture manuscripts. Biblical criticism has been traditionally divided into textual criticism, or lower criticism, and higher criticism. Lower criticism seeks to distinguish text from other variant versions of ancient copies and preserve the original form (Tanselle 1989). Ancient manuscripts occasionally contained errors or slight changes made by scribes, who copied the manuscripts by hand. In the work of higher criticism, critics would focus on identifying the

authorship, date and place of origin for each book of the Bible. In the twentieth-century, a number of higher criticism like form, narrative, linguistic, and rhetorical criticisms were developed to probe deeper into such questions (Soulen 1981).

Hugh Ross and the Reasons to Believe (RTB) Ministries have established a scientifically testable Creation model. They have outlined a model that "strives to uphold both scientific and biblical integrity as it attempts to reconcile the goals of the scientific community. This model is testable, falsifiable, and predictive. In presenting its model, RTB and its scholar team hope not only that creation/evolution conflicts will de-escalate but also that all sides will recognize that significant progress toward resolution can be achieved." (Ross 2006, 52)

Moving From Contention to Common Ground

The quest for common ground is more about searching for similarities than for denominating differences. Contention between the scientific and religious communities will continue only as long as members of each side permit it. Dogma disrupts dialogue and interrupts inquiry. Considerate dialogue is a prerequisite for building and maintaining relationships between members of the each respective community. Personal relationships will create the foundation for rich professional interactions on a variety of topics within science and religion. However, popular media will always cater to the extremes of the scientific and religious tensions in an effort to create controversy, simple to renew and feed the ongoing machine of media. In spite of all media and cultural influences, each person has the intellectual opportunity and moral responsibility to develop an accurate and effective worldview. Ultimately, a person's worldview shapes what they believe is real, what is important, what is right, and what it wrong.

The proposed Reality Matrix Model of this paper respectfully depolarizes scientific and religious meanings and practices while successfully integrating both the naturalistic and

supernatural worldviews. It effectively overcomes Heibert's flaw of the excluded middle and provides a more comprehensive, conceptual framework for all prospective worldviews to find common ground, allowing for mutual respect and meaningful dialogue to occur. All dialogue is then free to proceed on the merits of contribution and not competition. The powerful endowments and limitations of science will only serve to complement the capacity of richness in the religious expressions of the human spirit. Beyond contention lie the frontiers of true, common imagination, intuition, and innovation. In spite of any and all evidences presented, at the end of the day, there must always be room for faith. Not a blind faith, nor a faith that is contrary to logic, but rather a faith that is based on reason. In light of all that has been said here, faith is the genuine common ground from which neither science nor religion can depart.

Reference List

Adherents.com. 2007. *Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents.* http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html.
Blackburn, Simon. 1994. *"Philosophy."In The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 246-247. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Brush, Nigel. 2005. *The Limitations of Scientific Truth: Why Science Can't Answer Life's Ultimate Questions.* Grand Rapids : Kregel, Inc.
Darwin, Charles. 2004. *Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. New York : Barnes & Noble Books.
Holy Bible, New International Version. 1995. Grand Rapids : Zondervan.
Heibert, Paul. 1982. *Flaw of the Excluded Middle.* Missiology 10 : 1 : 35-47.
Hybels, Bill. 2007. *Heroic Servanthood, Part 1.* Weekend Message presented at Willow Creek Community Church, June 3, in South Barrington, Illinois.
Little, Paul E. 2000. *Know Why You Believe.* Downers Grove, Illinois : InterVarsity Press.
Mark Perakh. 2002. *Incompatible Magisteria*. http://www.talkreason.org/articles/magisteria.cfm.
Migliore, Daniel L. 2004. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
Miller, Kenneth R. 1999. *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*. New York : Harper Perennial.
Moreland, J. P. 1993. *Is Science a Help or Threat to Faith?* Christian Research Journal : 46.
Moreland, J.P. 2007. *Kingdom Triangle*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan.
Myers, Bryant. 1991. *The Excluded Middle*. MARC Newsletter.
Nash, Ronald H. 1988. *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith.* Grand Rapids : Zondervan.

National Science Education Standards. 1996. National Academy Press : Washington D.C.
Naugle, David K. 2002. *Worldview: The History of a Concept*. Grand Rapids : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
Quinton, Anthony. ed. Ted Honderich.1995. *"Philosophy." The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* 569-572. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
Ross, Hugh. 2006. *Creation As Science: A Testable Model Approach To End The Creation/Evolution Wars*. Colorado Springs, CO : NAVPRESS.
Scott, Eugenie C. 2004. *Evolution vs. Creationism: An Introduction*. Berkeley : University of California Press.
Soulen, Richard N. 1981. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism, 2nd ed.* Atlanta, Ga. : John Knox.
Tanselle, Thomas G. 1989. *A Rationale of Textual Criticism.* Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press.
The Barna Group of Ventura, California. *A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person's Life.* December 1, 2003. http://www.barna.org.
The Barna Group of Ventura, California. *How "Christianized" Do Americans Want Their Country To Be?* July 26, 2004. http://www.barna.org.
Torrance, Thomas F. 1996. Ultimate and Penultimate Beliefs in Science. *In Facts of Faith & Science*, edited by Jitse M. van der Meer. Vol. 1 of *Historiography and Modes of Interaction*, 151-176, New York: University Press of America.
Van Biema, David. 2006. God vs. Science. TIME, November 13.

Published by the Forum on Public Policy

Figure 1. A Western Two-Tiered View of Reality.

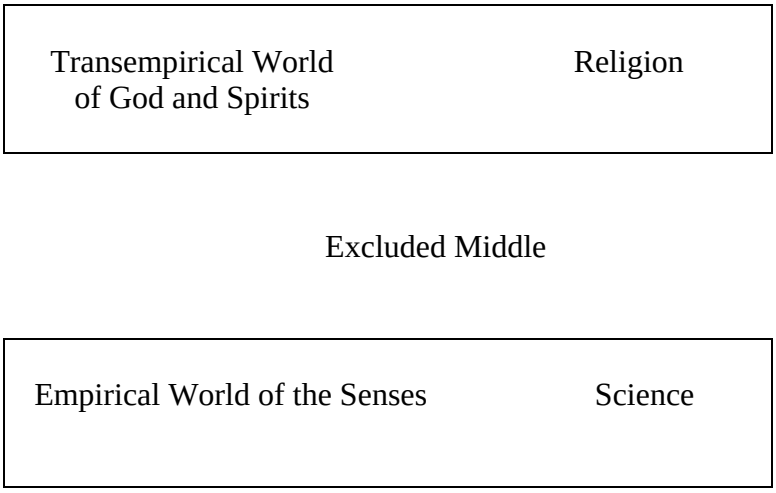

Figure 2. The Reality Matrix Model.

Worldview	**Naturalistic**	**Supernatural**
Physical	1. Science	2. Religion
Metaphysical	3. Philosophy	4. Theology