

Leader-Telegram "Matters of Faith" clergy column - 576 words  
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February 12-14 is the fifth annual Evolution Weekend. Sponsored by the Clergy Letter Project, it is a time during which houses of worship of many religions around the world attempt to elevate the level of discussion concerning the compatibility of religion and science. That discussion is not always as elevated as it should be, with too much dogma lobbying and too little listening across the (imagined) divide. Some science-only folk insist that science conclusively proves that no god or gods could or do exist, and that religion is a psychiatric delusion, a world danger, or worse. Some in the religious world insist just as unwaveringly that any science contradicting their particular interpretation of their holy scripture must be wrong, a devilish delusion, a conspiracy of intellectuals, or God testing their faith. The former seek to deny public expression of faith and dismiss the reality of the positive life-changing effect of religion. The latter dispraise the veracity of science's findings in their religious institutions and sometimes in public through political policy. None seem able to see beyond their ideological occlusions to find a way to trust the truths of the others. And thus, no real dialogue occurs.

Unfortunately, though these groups are relatively small, they dominate the airwaves. Arguments by prooftexting are more entertaining or quicker to report on than substantive and nuanced discussion. The arguers get far more time in the social dialogue, leaving out the voices of we who believe the argument itself is unnecessary. We do not make for quick and easy soundbites, so our voices are lost in the din, and hence the need for events like Evolution Weekend and columns like this to raise awareness that many of us faithfully stand in the confluence of both.

The fear is that in the throes of all this arguing, only one worldview can be correct. Consequently, too many people are being abandoned to the existential anxiety of feeling they must choose between trusting their religious experience or trusting their scientific experience. This is a false choice, and I think it is one born from a special kind of arrogance. Not just the scientific arrogance that claims primacy of its world view, or the religious arrogance that claims the same. It is the deeper arrogance of claiming that one's *questions* are the only valid ones. Knowledge comes from exploration. Exploration is driven by asking questions, and so the one who controls the questions controls the answers and therefore controls the debate. As a people, we should be about open dialogue, not question controlling, and do so with the humble admittance that our worldviews are always incomplete because we are not an omniscient species. We have so much to gain, and nothing to lose, by opening ourselves to the possibilities of all questions.

Science and faith (and other epistemologies) interrogate the universe with different agendas, all of which are necessary to behold a holistic picture of creation. If we question only in part, we will see only in part. Science is God's gift to allow us to explore the physical world, from quantum probability to the evolutionary processes of life. Religion is God's gift to allow us to explore who we are and what our role is in the big picture. They are complementary paths to truth. Only together may the grandeur and mystery of the whole picture of God, our relation to God as creator and incarnate love, and our place in creation, be answered.