

# Ethics of Science Informing Theology

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**June 30, 2021**

# Objective

**To explore the consequences of trying to use scientific results to influence doctrinal interpretations of scripture-based theologies.**

# Definitions

- Science (from the Latin word scientia, meaning "knowledge") is a **systematic** enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe.
- Theology is the **systematic** study of the nature of the divine and, more broadly, of religious belief.
- Faith, derived from Latin fides and Old French feid, is **confidence or trust** in a person, thing, or concept.
- Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and **practices**, morals, beliefs, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations, that relates humanity to supernatural, transcendental, and spiritual elements.

# Human Endeavors Leading to Technology and Religious Practices

## Path to Technology

### Paths to Religion



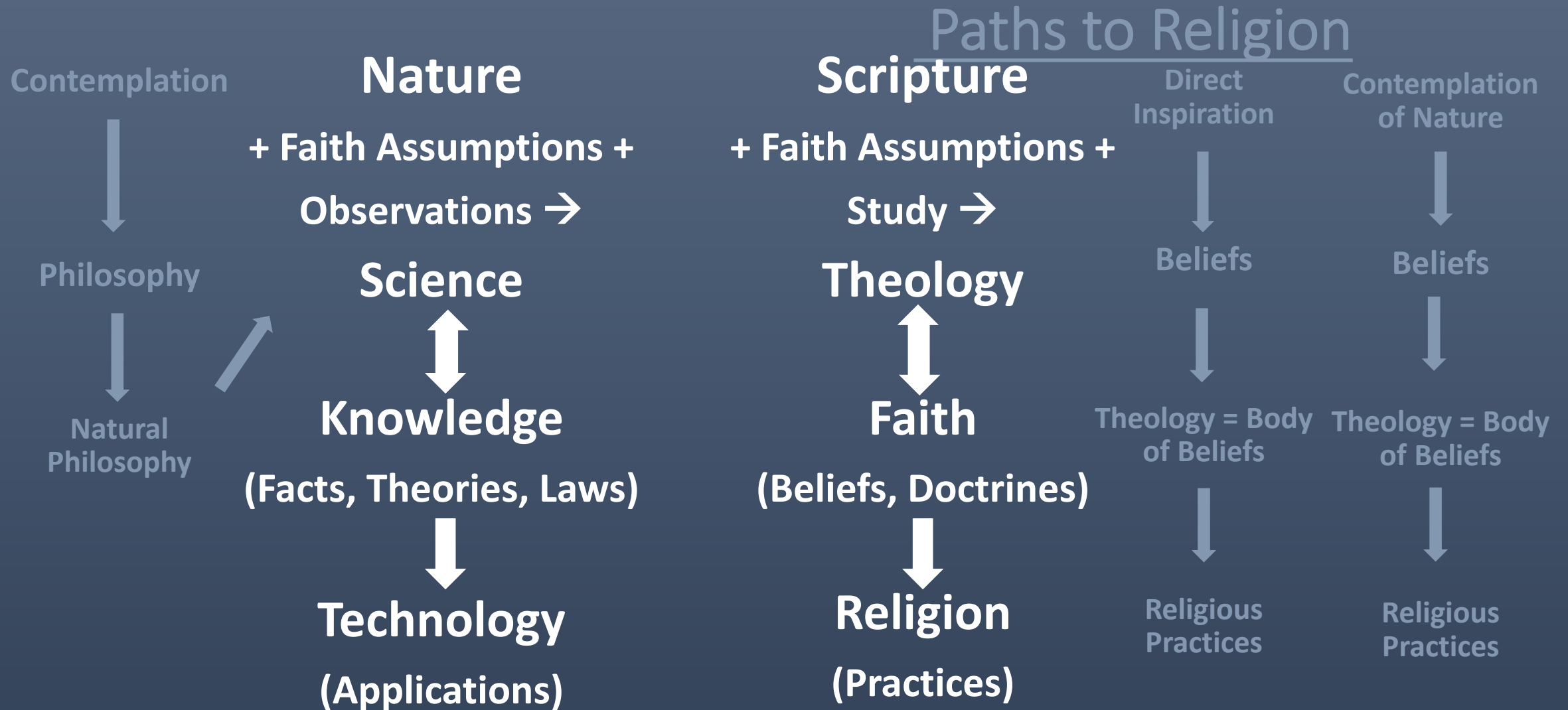
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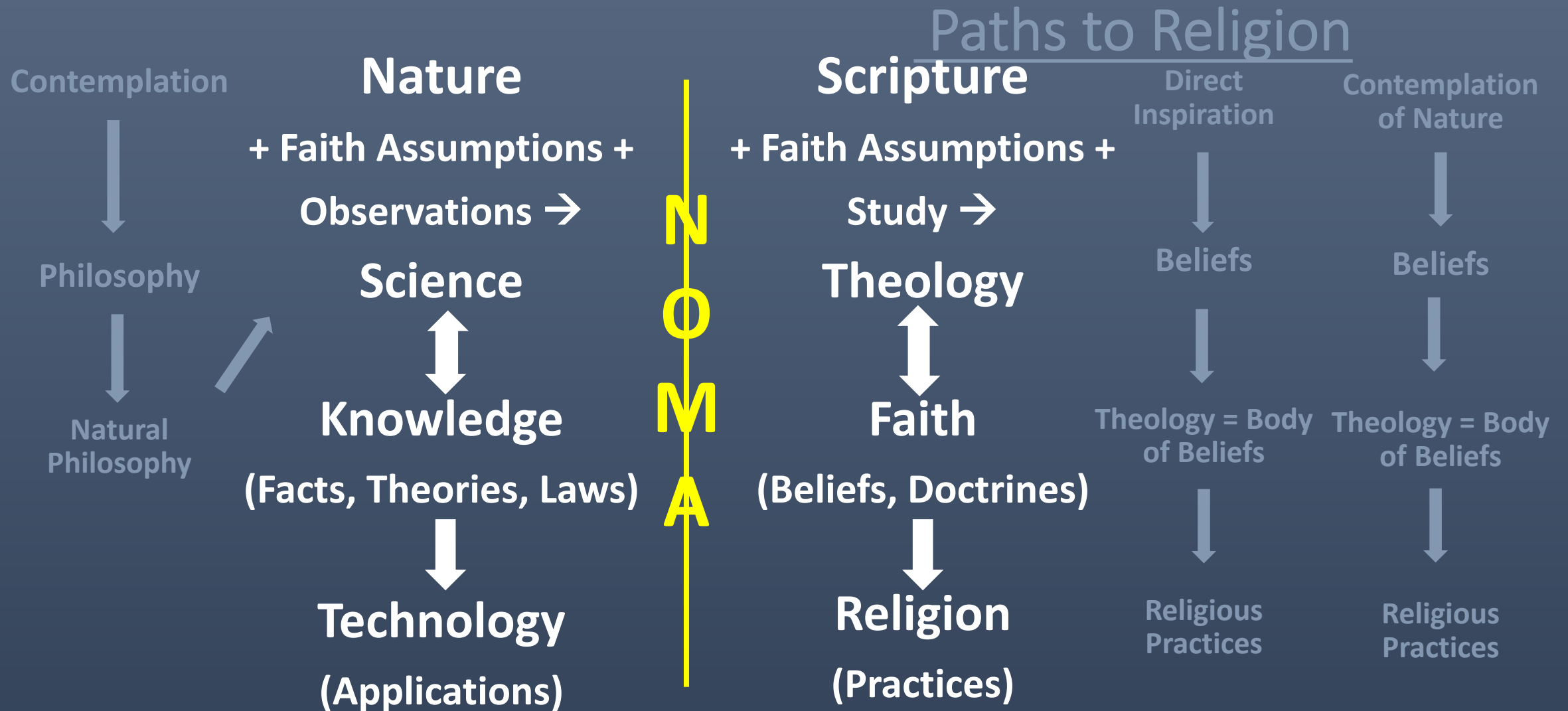
# Science and Scripture-Based Theologies as Similar Human Endeavors

	<b>Bases</b>	<b>Processes</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Natural Science</b>	Faith Assumptions, including Scope (natural only), Reproducibility (in time and space), and Methodology (induction, etc.)	Observation, Measurement, Experimentation, Correlation, Modeling, etc.	Scientific Knowledge: Data bases, Causes of effects, Theories, Laws, Predictions, etc.	Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Astronomy, Mathematics, Paleontology
<b>Scripture-Based Theology</b>	Faith Assumptions, including the Authority of certain Scriptures	Manuscript selection; Translation, Study, Comparisons, Modeling, etc.	Religious Beliefs, Practices, Teachings, Creeds, etc.	Judaism, Islam, Christianity: Protestant, Catholic, LDS Oriental Religions



How Might Science and Scripture-Based Religion Influence Each Other?

# Human Endeavors Leading to Technology and Religious Practices



# How Might Science and Scripture-Based Religion Influence Each Other?

- 1. **Non-Overlapping Magisteria (NOMA\*)**: They shouldn't!
  - Justifications
    - 1. Simple
    - 2. Avoids conflict
    - 3. Science and religion are different in content and purpose.
  - Outcomes of failure of reconciliation to produce compatibility:
    - One or the other is assigned the status of a myth
    - One or the other is totally rejected as reality

\* Stephen J. Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria," *Natural History* 106 (March 1997) and Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life (2002)



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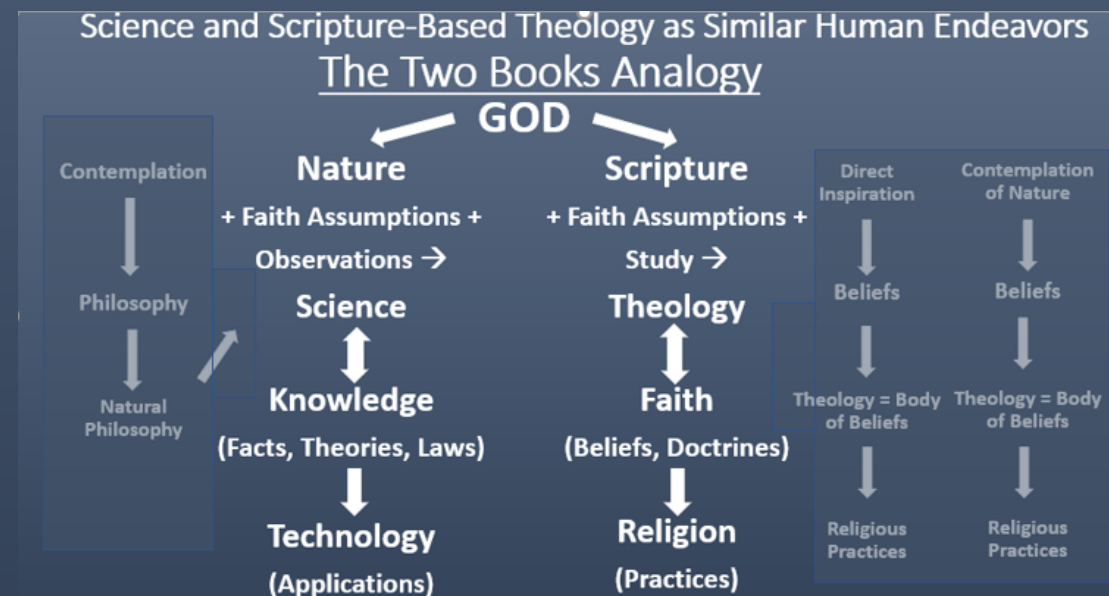
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- 2. **Two Books Theology\***: They should!

- The Book of Nature
- The Book of Scripture
- Same Source → Compatibility

\*See “Book of Nature” in Wikipedia



# Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Founder of the Scientific Inductive Method

“There are two books laid before us to study, to prevent our falling into error; the first, the volume of Scriptures, which reveal the will of God; then the volume of the creatures, which express His power.”

“It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth man’s mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion. For while the mind of men looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go on no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.”



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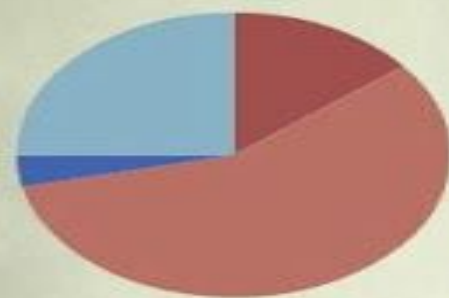
# SCIENCE & RELIGION

## CONFLICTING OR COMPATIBLE?



### PERCEPTION

DO YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT: THE TEACHINGS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION OFTEN ULTIMATELY CONFLICT WITH ONE ANOTHER?



● STRONGLY AGREE  
● AGREE  
● STRONGLY DISAGREE  
● DISAGREE

**70%** OF YOUNG ADULTS AGES 18-23 AGREED

### REALITY

ONLY 11% OF AMERICANS BELONG TO A RELIGION THAT DENIES THE FINDINGS OF MODERN SCIENCE



A MAJORITY OF SCIENTISTS BELIEVE IN GOD OR A HIGHER POWER



52% BELIEVE    7% AREN'T SURE    41% DON'T BELIEVE

Sources: National Study of Youth and Religion, The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, and The MIT Survey on Science, Religion and Origins: the Belief Gap

**"SCIENCE AND FAITH MUST BE FRIENDS, FOR THE SAME GOD IS ACTIVE IN BOTH."**

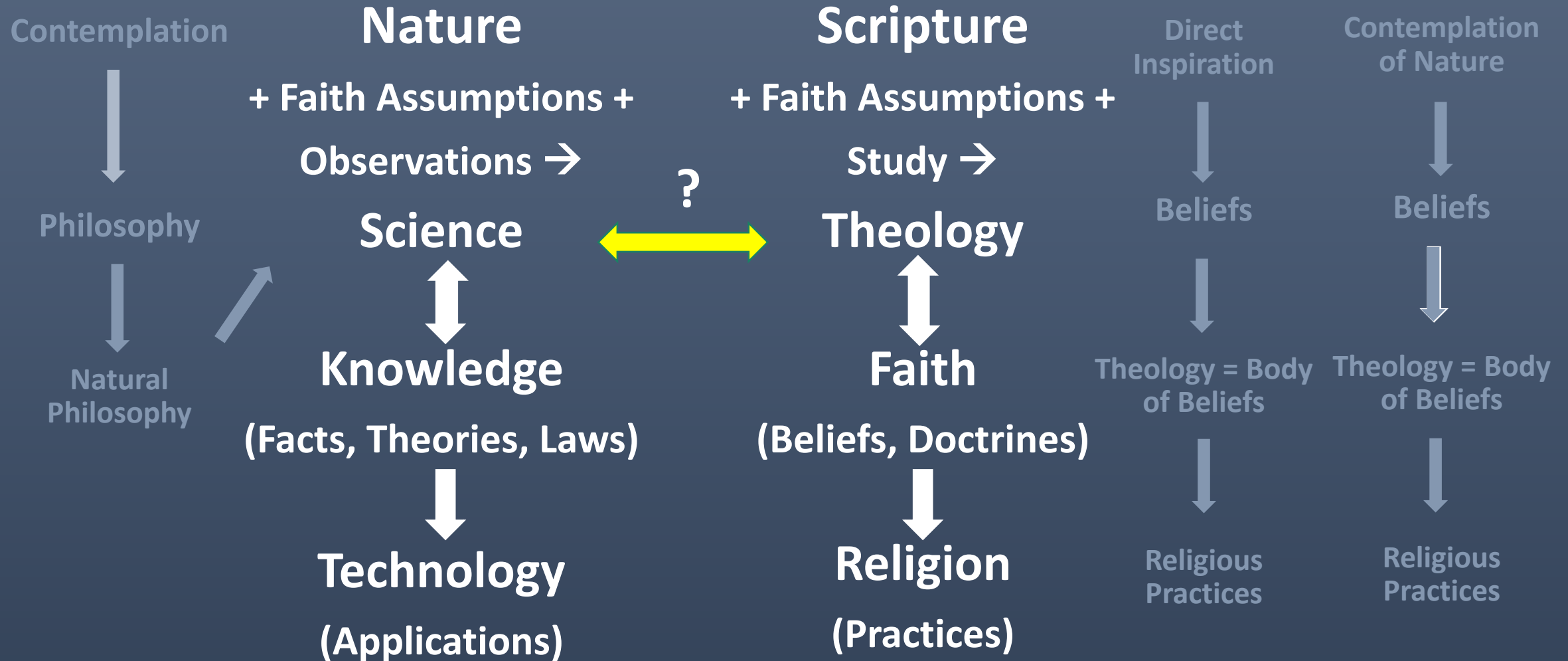


Albert Einstein, "Science and Religion" (1954)



# Science and Scripture-Based Theology as Similar Human Endeavors

## Interactions?



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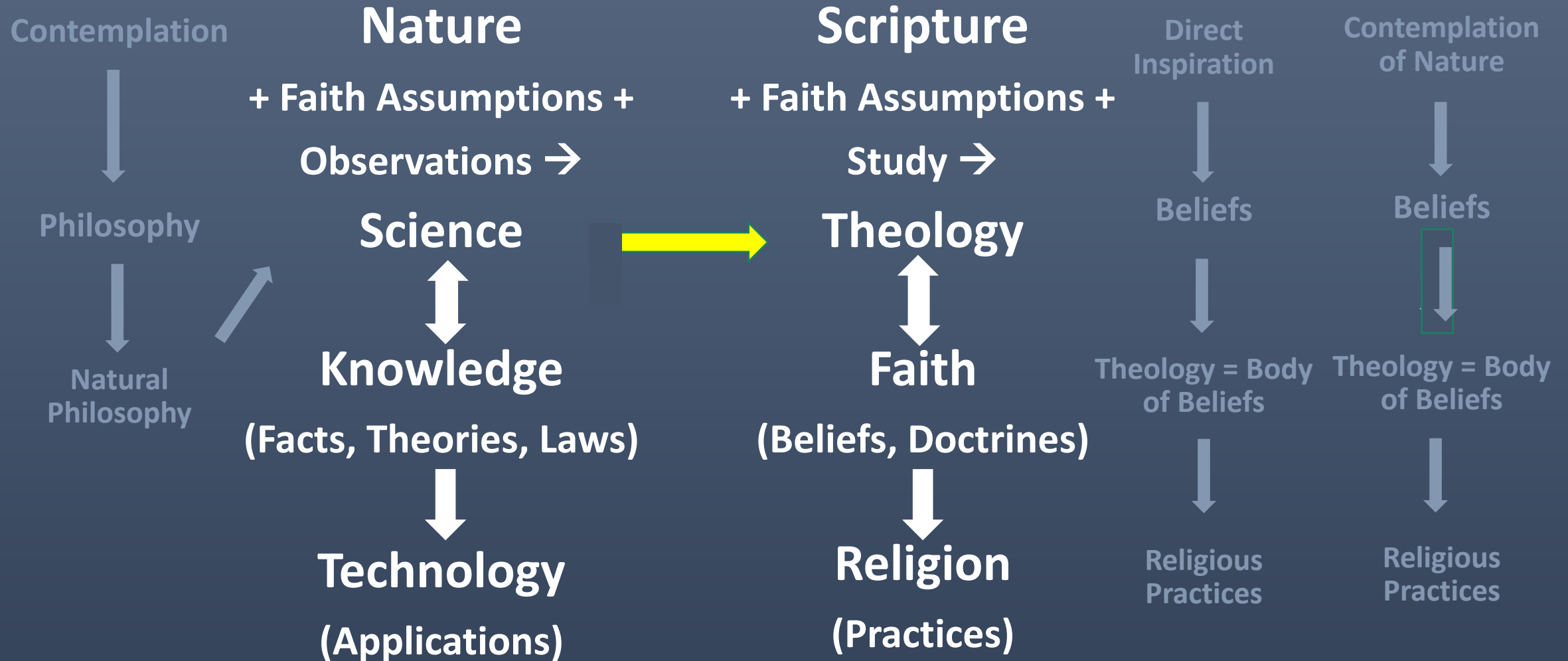
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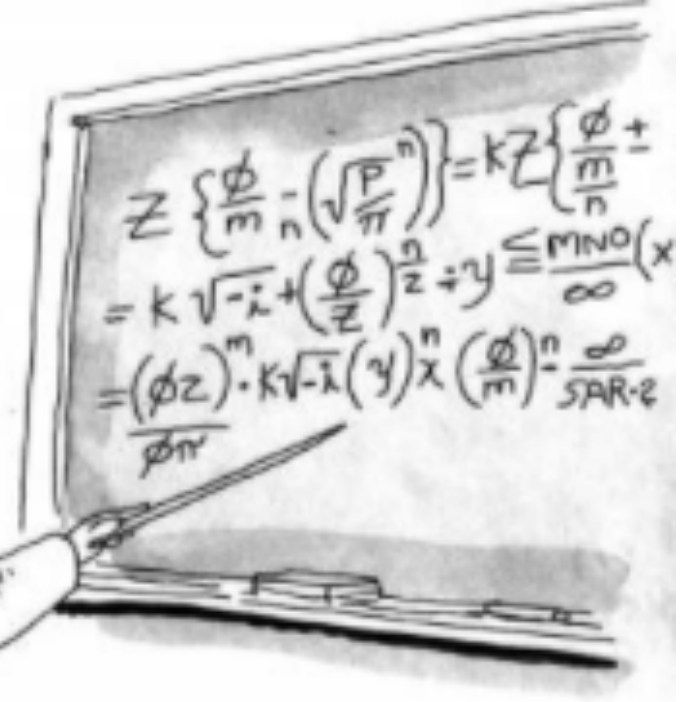
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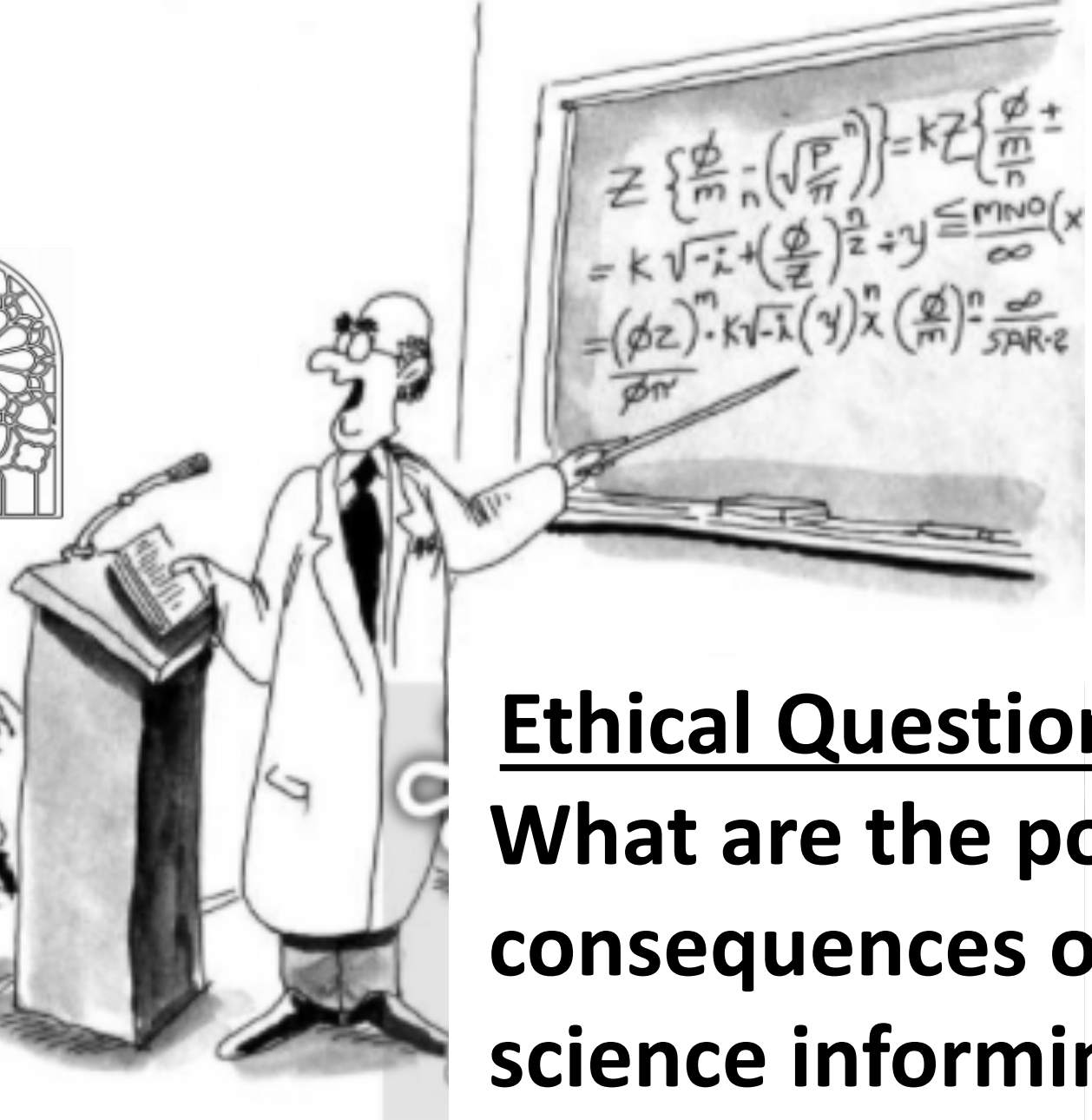
# Science and Scripture-Based Theology as Similar Human Endeavors

## Interactions





**Is there a place  
in church for  
science?**



**Ethical Question:**  
**What are the possible consequences of science informing theology?**

# Definitions

- **Ethics** (or moral philosophy) is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior.
- **Adherence to rules for:**
  - Doing no harm
  - Doing good
  - **Examples: Medical Hippocratic Oath**  
**Hippocratic Oaths for Scientists (16 per AAAS)**
- **NOT merely:**
  - Opposing what offends, disgusts, or emotionally upsets us.
  - ~ “sin” and “evil” are also sometimes so vaguely defined.

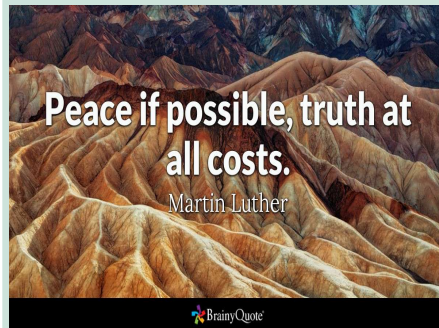
# Science Informing Theology

## Motivations Spectrum

**Truth at all costs**

**Opinion with grace**

**Peace at all costs**



-- Martin Luther

“...always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the (science) that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.  
-- Apostle Peter (paraphrase)

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”  
-- Apostle Paul



-- English Proverb



# How Sharing (Science) Can Be Caring (Ethical)

**1. New knowledge can be faith building.**

2. Doubt can be faith building.

3. Truth can be freeing.

4. Wrong theologies can be destructive to faith.

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4. Wrong theologies can be destructive to faith.



**“You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”**



**Nothing in all the world is more  
dangerous than sincere ignorance  
and conscientious stupidity.**

Martin Luther King, Jr.

# How Sharing (Science) Can Be Caring (Ethical)

1. New knowledge can be faith building.
2. Doubt can be faith building.
3. Truth can be freeing.
4. **Wrong theologies can be destructive to faith.**

# Reception Spectrum

## “Knowing thy neighbor”

“If you don’t shut up, you’re out of here!”	“I don’t want to hear it!”	“That bothers me, but I’ll consider it.”	“That makes good sense.”
(Animosity)	(Status Quo Bias) 	(Respect)	(Appreciation)



OUR SCIENCE IS NOT MY RELIGION





# Reception Spectrum

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# Examples

# Flat and Square Earth Theology

Basis: “Four corners of the earth.”  
(Isaiah 11:12; Revelation 7:1; 20:8)



# Approaching a “Flat Earther” Motivations Spectrum

<b>Truth at all costs</b>		<b>Opinion with grace</b>		<b>Peace at all costs</b>
<b>How could you be so stupid to ignore the obvious evidence that the Earth is (at least nearly) spherical!</b>		<b>Here’s why I believe that the Earth is nearly spherical. I hope you agree. Here’s how it could benefit you to change your mind.</b>		<b>I don’t care what you believe about the shape of the Earth. Let’s be friends.</b>

# “Flat Earther” Reception Spectrum

“If you don’t shut up, you’re out of here!”	“I don’t want to hear it!”	“That bothers me, but I’ll consider it.”	“That makes good sense.”
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# Advice from the Apostle Paul (Romans 14 and 15)

**To:**

**Jewish converts to Jesus Christ**

**(Doctrinal and Practice Traditionalists)**

**Formerly pagan converts to Christ**

**(Freedoms, but also Responsibilities, in New Faith)**

# Advice from the Apostle Paul (Romans 14 and 15)

- 1. Accept the one who is weak in faith (rejects new data), but not for the purpose of passing judgment (condemning him).**
- 2. Who are you to judge (condemn) the servant of another?**
- 3. Why do you judge your brother with contempt?**
- 4. Not...put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.**
- 5. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction...**
- 6. Now we who are strong (have more recent data) ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not to just please ourselves.**
- 7. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good.**



# Advice from the Apostle Paul (Romans 14 and 15)

1. Accept the one who is weak in faith (rejects new data), but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions (condemning him).
2. **Who are you to judge (condemn) the servant of another? (Be kind!)**
3. Why do you judge your brother with contempt?
4. Not...put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.
5. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction...
6. Now we who are strong (have more recent data) ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not to just please ourselves.
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2. Who are you to judge (condemn) the servant of another?
3. **Why do you judge your brother with contempt? (Be humble!)**
4. Not...put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.
5. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction...
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2. Who are you to judge (condemn) the servant of another?
3. Why do you judge your brother with contempt?
4. **Not...put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way (Be careful)**
5. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction...
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4. Not...put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.
5. **The faith which you have, have as your own conviction... (Sometimes be quiet!)**
6. Now we who are strong (have more recent data) ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not to just please ourselves.
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5. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction...
6. **Now we who are strong (have more complete data) ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not to just please ourselves. (Be sacrificial!)**
7. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good.

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5. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction...
6. Now we who are strong (have more recent data) ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not to just please ourselves.
7. **Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good (Be ethical!).**

How would you summarize this talk?

Scientific truth is \_\_\_\_\_,

but \_\_\_\_\_ is being  
ethical.

Other comments and questions?

You may use the Comment option on the Zoom screen.