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There is no reason for conflict between faith and science

Pat Perriello | Jun. 27, 2014 NCR Today

Without going back to the days of Galileo, I believe in modern times, Catholics have had far less difficulty with the biblical creation stories and science than fundamentalist Christians. Even before the beginnings of modern Catholic biblical criticism under Pope Pius XII and his 1943 encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu [1]*, most Catholics were comfortable with some form of harmonizing problematic passages. One example would be the notion that a day in Genesis might have spanned 1,000 years or more at the time of creation.

The article by Steve Jones at Salon [2] reflects some of the latest science. The science suggests we are getting closer to that initial Big Bang and, as it were, to the beginning.

How worried should we be that scientists seem to feel they can tell us what things were like in the beginning and what happened? I really don't see any reason why there should be a conflict between faith and science over this or any other issue. The notion that Genesis can be seen as a historical account of creation requires the suspension of an awful lot of what we know about the world today. Must we really believe that the Earth is covered by a dome (firmament) and God opens windows to let the rain through on occasion? As poetry or as praise for the wonders and great works of God, Genesis has much to offer. As history or science, it offers us the knowledge of people who lived some 2,000 years or so before Christ.

We are told that the famous Big Bang occurred 13.77 billion years ago, but Jones also admits that what sparked off the bang remains a mystery. He further comments that the answer "God did" is not an answer, but an excuse. I say that science should continue its exploration as far and as long as it can. Whatever scientists find, mystery will still remain, and God will still be the answer for believers.

Faith, of course, is a gift, and if one doesn't believe, no amount of argumentation will convince a nonbeliever. I can only say what makes sense to me and know that even though it does not represent proof, it is not an unreasonable position.

Generally, I do not look to science or Genesis for belief in God. While atheists and agnostics look at the world and see no reason to posit God, for me, it just makes more sense to believe in God than not to.

All the people who have lived well or poorly over the centuries either existed for a reason or not. I find it easier to believe that everyone's life had a purpose instead of that we are all just accidents of time and place.

Without God, nothing makes sense to me. While laws may prevent people from acting on their worst instincts and enable some level of civilization to exist, morality has no meaning. Why not subscribe to the philosophy of doing what one wants as long as you can get away with it? Without God, I see no reason not to buy in to such a philosophy.

I simply find it impossible to believe in a world where there is not a caring and loving God. The bizarre idea that God actually cares about me is overwhelming. That notion also means that God cares just as much about everyone else. Every life has meaning, and every individual is endowed with worth, value and dignity. This

belief creates an environment of universal personhood that requires respect, tolerance and understanding for all, regardless of what they may or may not believe.

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