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TIME on God vs. Science

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“Can religion stand up to the progress of science?” That is the question posed by *TIME* magazine in its current cover article, “[God vs. Science](#).” The article, written by David Van Biema, looks at the expanding fronts which pit scientific claims against Christian truth claims.

As the article sets the question:

Can religion stand up to the progress of science? This debate long predates Darwin, but the antireligion position is being promoted with increasing insistence by scientists angered by intelligent design and excited, perhaps intoxicated, by their disciplines’ increasing ability to map, quantify and change the nature of human experience. Brain imaging illustrates—in color!—the physical seat of the will and the passions, challenging the religious concept of a soul independent of glands and gristle. Brain chemists track imbalances that could account for the ecstatic states of visionary saints or, some suggest, of Jesus. Like Freudianism before it, the field of evolutionary psychology generates theories of altruism and even of religion that do not include God. Something called the multiverse hypothesis in cosmology speculates that ours may be but one in a cascade of universes, suddenly bettering the odds that life could have cropped up here accidentally, without divine intervention. (If the probabilities were 1 in a billion, and you’ve got 300 billion universes, why not?)

For some time, this battle was said to have been declared by the theologians. Now, the situation is quite different. As Mr. Van Biema explains, “The market seems flooded with books by scientists describing a caged death match between science and God—with science winning, or at least chipping away at faith’s underlying verities.”

The list of these book-writing, theism-opposing scientists is long and growing — including Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and a host of others. A new author to be added to that list is Marc Hauser of Harvard University, who argues in *Moral Minds* that our notions of right and wrong are products of evolution, not theistic belief.

From the article:

Dawkins and his army have a swarm of articulate theological opponents, of course. But the most ardent of these don’t really care very much about science, and an argument in which one party stands immovable on Scripture and the other immobile on the periodic table doesn’t get anyone very far. Most Americans occupy the middle ground: we want it all. We want to cheer on science’s strides and still humble ourselves on the Sabbath. We want access to both MRIs and miracles. We want debates about issues like stem cells without conceding that the positions are so intrinsically inimical as to make discussion fruitless. And to balance formidable standard bearers like Dawkins, we seek those who possess religious conviction but also scientific achievements to credibly argue the widespread hope that science and God are in harmony—that, indeed, science is of God.

The article also presents a dialogue of sorts between Dawkins and Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Research Project. Collins takes Dawkins to task for his scientific reductionism, while Dawkins presses his case against belief in God.

In the end, neither man gives ground in the brief exchange. The big lesson from all this is the importance of worldview commitments. The theist and the atheist (scientific or otherwise) are both basing their thoughts on a framework of ideas and presuppositions. These worldviews, correctly understood, lead to the ideas and convictions that govern talk about belief or disbelief in God. A significant change of mind on this great question will require a significant change in the fundamental worldview. That is why these debates are so intractable — and so enduring.

