

## MODELING A LIFE OF FAITH: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON<sup>1</sup>

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This study suggests a model of the life of faith by identifying the harmony between faith and reason. Thus, it is possible to look at science without losing our faith in special revelation. It discusses two dimensions of faith as they are rooted in Scripture. Based on biblical presuppositions, the study indicates that the scientific process may be approached through the interpretation of scientific data that could be in harmony with the Scriptures or in closer harmony to lend itself to data interpretation. It respects the scientific process and recognizes the truth as set out in the Scriptures.

*Key Words:* faith, trust, faith and reason, general revelation, special revelation, science, theology

### 1. Introduction

For Christians wanting to explore the concept of faith, Scripture is the basic foundation for this topic. There are many points of discussion and questions regarding the reality of the world and the universe that we certainly have only approximate answers and sometimes just hypothetical answers to. So when theologians and scientists come to discuss the origin of the universe, the history of the earth, the origin of life and its meaning, we encounter answers found in the Scriptures that show solutions that cannot be demonstrated by proof but through faith in the biblical record. For instance, Gen 1 and 2 could be accepted as the origin of the universe and human life following evidence in nature but above all by faith in the biblical record.<sup>2</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> The study was presented at the Creationism, Faith and Science Conference at Kunming, China, on August 16, 2007. Participants at the Conference included science teacher and ministers who came from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea in order to discuss relevant issues regarding faith and reason, God and nature, biological issues and design arguments.
- <sup>2</sup> The resurrection of Jesus is another example of that faith, so essential for Christianity. According to Marshall, "... the whole case for Christianity rests on the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Without it Christianity would have been stillborn, for a living faith cannot outlive a dead Saviour." Cf. David N. Marshall, "The Risen Jesus," in *The Essential Jesus: The Man, His Message, His Mission* (ed. Bryan W. Ball and William G. Johnsson; Nampa: Pacific Press, 2002), 168.

This debate between science and theology has continued for many centuries.

The present study, focusing on living a life of faith despite having unanswered questions, examines how to live a life of faith without demonstration and seeks to address the eternal debate between faith and reason. Many people think that we should have answers for every question that arises. This is a wonderful ideal for questions about what the Scriptures teach, and we should all try to have an answer for those who ask about statements of faith. However, in science, and even in theological and biblical studies, there are many questions we cannot answer, and it is better to acknowledge that there are no definite answers rather than trying to bluff someone by giving them unreliable answers. Yet, this situation makes some feel uncomfortable. How can they be reassured that it is quite reasonable to accept human limitations and consciously make a decision based on faith rather than on demonstration? In some cases, the physical evidence may even appear to contradict Christian beliefs. Is it all right to suspend a final judgment, but still take a faith position? What principles should guide us in this effort?

The purpose of this study is to explore, from a biblical perspective, the modeling of a life of faith in the face of unanswered questions and suggests a workable model for those who are looking for truth. The first section studies briefly the meaning of faith. It focuses on the foundation of that faith which is rooted in the revelation of God—the Scriptures. This study will lead us to understand the two dimensions of faith before we explore the basic methodological process of the scientific method. At the end, I will suggest that indeed it is possible to study nature following the biblical presuppositions found in the Scriptures.

## 2. The Meaning of Faith

The first component of this model begins with the understanding of faith as it is found in the Scriptures. Abraham provides a very good example of what it means to live a life of faith without proof. He was called to be a great nation and to be a blessing to people on earth (Gen 12:1–3). As the years went by, the promise to become a great nation remained unfulfilled. The Lord appeared to him again to provide him the assurance of His promise. According to the text, the Lord came to him in the evening, so “He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if in-

deed you can count them." Then he said to him, "so shall your offspring be" (Gen 15:5).<sup>3</sup>

Cosmology has certainly captivated the thinking of people for centuries. The idea of counting suggests also the use of reason and the amazing quantity of the stars and galaxies in the universe. There are approximations for the number of stars in the universe, but the point is not only in the number but also in the promise, i.e., "so shall your offspring be."

This counting exercise certainly had reasoning implications. In order to count Abraham used his rational thinking to reach the point at which he could not count any more and for inference he finally realized what the Lord was trying to give him the assurance of his promise; that is, great multitudes of descendents that he would not be able to count. In this historical event, it is possible to grasp the cognitive dimension of faith. His trust in God's promise to make his descendents a great nation was sorely tested by the barrenness of his wife Sarah, but he nevertheless believed.<sup>4</sup>

The biblical record mentions later that "Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6). In this dialogue another dimension of faith was presented—an existential trust in a personal Lord who came to speak to him to assure him that his promises will be fulfilled. Therefore, in this story it is possible to grasp the essential dimensions of faith—trusting in a personal God and believing in his promises, existential and cognitive dimensions of faith. As we address this issue, let us keep in mind that faith is not only an intellectual proposition of truth but also trusting in a living God who fulfills his promises.

Similarly, the concept of faith is greatly enriched by the prophet Isaiah. During the invasion of Aram and Israel against Judah, the prophet declared to king Ahaz "if you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all" (Isa 7:9). As Dulles suggests "faith gives security not simply because God rewards those who believe, nor because it gives psychological assurance, but because it grounds one's existence in its true source."<sup>5</sup>

In the book of Psalms faith is defined primarily through the ingredient of trust. It is an appeal to trust in the Lord. "Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands" (Ps 78:7) in contrast with their forefathers who were unfaithful to the covenant;

<sup>3</sup> According to Avery Dulles, "the great prototype of faith in the Old Testament is Abraham, who heard and faithfully executed all God's biddings." Cf. Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

“for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance” (Ps 78:22). Faith is expressed in trust and obedience, the trust that Israel lacked.

In the Synoptic gospels, Jesus mentioned faith in connection with healing. When the sick woman touched Jesus' clothing, she was healed and the Lord said: “daughter, your faith has healed you” (Mark 5:34). He also commended the Centurion when He declared: “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith” (Matt 8:10). He believed that indeed his servant was healed (Matt 8:13). The same expression of faith is also found by the blind beggar who received his sight (Luke 18:42).

Several texts in the books of Hebrews have become classic loci for subsequent theological discussion. Heb 11:1 proposes the following definition: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” In the context this sentence means that faith is both an assurance that the goods promised by God will be possessed in the future and a conviction that this assurance is reliably grounded in the saving action of Jesus Christ.

Thus, the purpose of faith is to bring humanity closer to God. The entire chapter of Hebrews 11 is about the importance of faith. Faith has always been a means of bringing man into right relationship with God. The introductory verses of Hebrews 11 define faith in connection with origins of the universe, earth and life (Heb 11:1-3). An analysis of these texts suggests that “there is union of faith and reason. Faith is a means to go beyond what we see with our eyes, and accept what we do not see but have been given evidence to its existence.”<sup>6</sup>

In both the Old and New Testament the concept of faith is complex. It includes such elements as personal trust, assent to divinely revealed truth, fidelity, and obedience. Living a life of faith shows us that faith is not only knowledge but also includes a dimension of trust. It is a gift from God (Eph 2:8), being Christ the “author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2).

## 2.1. Nature of Faith

As it is presented thus far faith has two dimensions, the cognitive and the existential. This means that reason plays a role in the response to God's revelation given through propositional truths. There is no conflict between faith and the body of beliefs and the living personal reality of trust in God. For trust is not merely an emotional and mystical experience; it has an intellectual element. Certain things are believed about the God in whom trust is placed, about his nature, word, and works, about his relationship to man as Creator, Lord, Judge, and Savior.<sup>7</sup> As C. John Collins suggests, when bibli-

<sup>6</sup> Allen E. Hillegas, *Faith and Science* (Victoria, Canada: Trafford, 2006), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Faith,” *ISBE* 2:270.

cal writers use the word "faith," they usually are speaking in one of two ways. The first sense of "Christian faith" is trust toward God because you are persuaded that he is trustworthy. The second sense is "the faith," that is, the set of truths that Christians believe.<sup>8</sup> Let us explore in more detail these two dimensions of faith, i.e., cognitive and existential.

## 2.2. The Cognitive Dimension

In the example of Abraham, the promise mentioned by the Lord reaffirms the cognitive dimension of faith, "so shall your offspring be" (Gen 15:5). Faith is a response to God as he acts and manifests himself in the world and human consciousness. The dimension of trust, obedience, and intellectual assent are here harmoniously integrated into an expression of full personal adhesion. Faith is seen as a welcoming response to God's self-offer, trustful reliance on his saving help, obedient submission to his sovereign lordship, and assent of his revealing word. In other words, faith in its first aspect, as assent, depends on God as the witness.

As generally recognized, the cognitive dimension is presented in Scripture as a set of truths that Christians believe. For instance, the apostle Paul acknowledges that he has "kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7), meaning propositional truths. The faith is also instructed to Timothy "if you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truth of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed" (1 Tim 4:7).

## 2.3. Existential Dimension

Abraham not only believed the promise, but he also had an encounter with the Lord. The second dimension of faith as trust goes out to God as fully reliable and faithful to his promises. It has confidence in God as the all-powerful and merciful Savior.<sup>9</sup> In his concluding remarks Dulles points out that faith "in the theological sense of the term is to be given to God who reveals. Such faith has three main aspects: assent, trust and obedience or commitment to action.... The primary material object of faith is God himself, our Lord and Savior."<sup>10</sup>

Explaining these two dimensions of faith Millard J. Erickson concludes, "God reveals Himself, but He does so, at least in part, through communication information (or propositions) about Himself, telling us who He is. Our

<sup>8</sup> C. John Collins, *Science and Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

view of revelation leads us to stress the twofold nature of faith: giving credence to affirmations and trusting in God."<sup>11</sup>

A life of faith cannot exist in a vacuum. It comes through teaching and being exposed to the Word of the Lord. "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). Paul inserted v. 17 to sum up and emphasize what he stated in verses 14–15. Faith comes from hearing the message of the gospel, and this message is nothing other than the word about Christ.

Therefore, faith has an additional connotation as saving faith based in the objective revelation of God. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "But for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scripture, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:14–15). In the following I will explore the foundation of such faith.

### 3. God's Revelation: Foundation of Faith

God reveals himself both through nature and the Scriptures. Theological studies have denominated the first means of revelation as general revelation, particularly when it revolves around nature, the human existence, and history. The second is known as special revelation and points to God's communication of information through propositional truths. "Because God's self revelation issues out of His work as Creator and Redeemer, both kinds of revelation find their objective source in one God. Thus, science (general revelation) and theology (particular revelation) should agree."<sup>12</sup>

#### 3.1. General Revelation

Psalms 19 shows us that God indeed reveals himself through nature. The first section of the Psalm (vv. 1–6) focuses on creation. The sun was an object of worship in the ancient Near East. Here the sun is not a god. Rather, along with the heavens, firmament, and day and night, the sun is a created object that testifies to the sovereignty of its creator. The testimony is characterized first as "glory," a word that often appears in contexts that explicitly affirms God's reign (Ps 24:7–10). Without actually speaking, the universe itself instructs humanity about God's rule. No corner of the cosmos is unreached. The "words" of day and night reach "to the end of the world," and

<sup>11</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 953.

<sup>12</sup> Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2003), 192.

the course of the sun reaches to “the end of heavens” (v. 6). Following this description of the Psalm, it is possible to grasp general revelation as “universal, accessible to all human beings everywhere, by which God is known as Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of the entire universe.”<sup>13</sup>

### 3.2. Special Revelation

The second part of Ps 19 focuses on praising the Lord in the Torah. The passage is carefully constructed, specifying six aspects of the *Torah*.<sup>14</sup> In every sense and dimension, the Lord’s Torah is good: it is perfect, sure, upright, pure, radiant, and true. And each of these six characteristics of the Torah is illustrated by reference to its role with respect to human beings.

The psalmist moves in a climatic fashion from macrocosm to microcosm, from the universe and its glory to the individual in humility before God. But the climax lies in the microcosm, not in the heavenly roar of praise. For the heavens declare the glory of God, but the law declares the will of God for mankind, the creature. And though the vast firmament so high above us declares God’s praise, it is the Torah of God alone that reveals to mankind that humanity has a place in the universal scheme of things. It is not a place which gives ground for human boasting or declaration of human might over the cosmos: when the psalmist’s praise of God’s revelation in the Torah dawns upon him personally, it issues immediately in a prayer for forgiveness and acceptance.

The goal of this special revelation is the internalization of God’s word in the heart of man so as to transform his way of life. The expression of internalization is delighted in God’s revelation (Cf. Pss 1:2; 119:70, 77, 113, 163, 165, and 174).

This extraordinary thought has radical implications for a scientifically oriented, secular culture. Psalm 19 is not against science, but it does offer a view of the universe as something more than an object to be studied and controlled. To be sure, nature is not divine, but it is incomprehensible apart from God. In some sense, nature “knows” God (v. 2), and thus it can proclaim God’s sovereignty.

The juxtaposition of creation and Torah, then, is theologically significant. Not surprisingly, the same juxtaposition characterizes the Pentateuch,

<sup>13</sup> Peter M. van Bemmelen, “Revelation and Inspiration,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (ed. Raoul Dederen; Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 26.

<sup>14</sup> *Torah* is generally understood as law, testimony, precepts, commandments, fear, and judgments. Cf. J. Jocz, “Torah,” *ZPEB* 5: 779–80; S. Westerholm, “Torah,” *ISBE* 4:877–79.

where the story of creation (the book of Genesis) precedes the history of redemption from bondage and revelation at Sinai (the book of Exodus).

Thus, in this special revelation God reveals himself through his word and through a process of communication of information (1 Sam 3:21). In this context, revelation refers to the supernatural "process through which the content of Scripture emerged in the mind of prophets and apostles."<sup>15</sup>

Whereas general revelation is universal, accessible to all human beings everywhere, a special revelation is addressed to specific human beings and is not immediately accessible to all. Whereas through general revelation God is known as Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of the universe, in special revelation He reveals Himself in a personal way to redeem humanity from sin and reconcile the world to Himself.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, special revelation shows the fundamental principle of God's communication of information through a supernatural phenomenon of revelation. God reveals himself and he reveals truths about himself. As Gulley summarizes "scriptural revelation is cognitive—it speaks to humans in propositions. By definition the Word of God is a word from God, a message composed of many words, sentences, and hence propositions."<sup>17</sup>

It is in the Scriptures that the scientist might find the foundation and the right presuppositions to interpret nature, human existence, and history. This attempt demands faith in God and in His revelation. Human beings are limited by sin. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). Therefore, scientists and theologians might approach the study of nature, human existence and history well aware that there are human limitations in their enterprise.

## 4. The Role of Reason

### 4.1. Human Limitations

Another important dimension, in modeling a life of faith without proof, is the issue of reason. In the process of getting theological and scientific knowledge the use of reason is essential for study and interpretation of data, but reason is characterized by the impact of sin in humanity. According to Paul "the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that

<sup>15</sup> Fernando Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (ed. George W. Reid; Biblical Research Institute Studies 1; Silver Spring: BRI, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 50.

<sup>16</sup> van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," 30.

<sup>17</sup> Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 272.



comes from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). A renewed reason is required for a person to properly understand the will of God (Rom 12:2). As Vern S. Poythress suggests "finiteness and sinfulness operate both in the interpretation of the Bible and in the interpretation of the world that scientists study."<sup>18</sup> And focusing on science he adds, "The same is true in the work of science. Interpretation of the world, and exploration in scientific theory development, never comes to an end. Scientific theories are in principle subject to revision. And sometimes people's desires drive them to find explanations that harmonize with their desire and with a worldview that reinforces those desires."<sup>19</sup>

Addressing the issue of evil, van Bemmelen asserts that the phenomenon of nature, however, give us an ambivalent picture of good and evil. Further, as a consequence of evil, nature at times becomes the instrument of divine judgment.<sup>20</sup> In other words, in order to understand nature and human existence (Ps 8:3), it will be necessary to interpret them under the presuppositions and study of special revelation. As Edward Zinke properly suggests, "the Bible provides the foundation and structure for our understanding of the natural world, rather than the other way around."<sup>21</sup>

Because of sin, it is essential to look for special revelation in order to get an approximation for an interpretation of nature. Therefore, studying nature using the scientific method, scientists might interpret nature through the lens of biblical presuppositions that show the origin of the universe, origin of life and earth history.

## 4.2. Scientific Method

According to Brand and James, basically, the scientific method is a simple, two step process: (1) collection of data, and (2) interpretation of data. In using this process, scientists formulate hypotheses, conduct experiments to test these hypotheses, and then interpret the results of the experiments. The step of interpretation—developing ideas and applying them to make sense of the data—is the most rewarding and creative aspect of research.<sup>22</sup> Different people operate in different ways within the basic framework of cycling

<sup>18</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God Center Approach* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," 27.

<sup>21</sup> E. Edward Zinke, "Faith—Science Issues: An Epistemological Perspective," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15.1 (2004): 64.

<sup>22</sup> Leonard Brand and David C. James, *Beginnings: Are Science and Scriptures Partners in the Search for Origins?* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2006), 13–14.

repeatedly through the collection and interpretation of data in the process of discovery.<sup>23</sup> Understanding the limits of the scientific method can help us decide which questions we expect it to answer reliably.<sup>24</sup> In an effort to give answers to reality, concrete facts, and data collected, the scientific method has been characterized by the use of hypotheses, laws and theory.

#### *4.2.1. Hypothesis*

According to Fernando Canale, "hypotheses are assumptions about reality that we construct in order to explain it; therefore, we may consider them interpretive schemes. Scientists develop hypotheses by drawing implicitly or explicitly, from interpretative guidance of macro-(philosophical), meso-(disciplinary matrix), and micro- (disciplinary context) concrete hermeneutical presuppositions."<sup>25</sup> "Once formulated, the scientific hypotheses play a hermeneutical role in guiding the researcher in his or her task of testing approaches and techniques that will corroborate or falsify a particular hypothesis."<sup>26</sup>

#### *4.2.2. Law*

"A scientific law is a confirmed hypothesis that is supposed to depict an objective pattern."<sup>27</sup> "According to the macro-hermeneutical presuppositions presently operating in scientific methodology, only concrete, changing, diverse, spatiotemporal entities are recognized as objects and referents of scientific knowledge. Therefore, it is important to consider that in inventing universal hypotheses, human reason selects only a few traces of a diverse and complex reality."<sup>28</sup>

Further, "in the conception and formulation of laws, scientists follow a hypothetic—deductive procedure. In other words, they progressively invent, imagine, and construct new hypothetical generalizations until, through a process of trial and error, they arrive at universal law. Only confirmed universal hypotheses can become laws."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Fernando Canale, *Creation, Evolution and Theology* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Litho Tech, 2005), 31.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

### 4.2.3. Theory

"Theories are hypotheses about broader complex portions of reality whose explanation requires the putting together of existing laws and theories."<sup>30</sup> "Scientists arrive at theories by constructing explanations and putting things together. To say that theories are "constructions" means that they do not literally portray a real thing, event or process. They are not snapshots or summaries of things; rather, they are sketchy and symbolic reconstructions of real systems. Theories are creations beyond reality which are necessary to explain reality."<sup>31</sup> "They are original creations that proceed by interpreting, rather than describing or summarizing observed realities. Therefore, theory construction does not proceed in a vacuum but within a preexistent matrix."<sup>32</sup>

"It is important to notice that theory construction is a speculative enterprise that searches for understanding, coherence, and explanation at the level of ideas, rather than at the level of concrete facts. This applies particularly to far-reaching theories like evolution.... Thus, scientific theories, just as scientific laws, exist at a high level of generalization that is far removed from the realities and processes they attempt to explain".<sup>33</sup>

An analysis of scientific method as a general research model reveals some important characteristics that should be considered when approaching the science-theology relation and the question of origins: (1) Science does not produce absolute truth; (2) Science is not dogmatic; (3) Science is interpretation; (4) Science as interpretation requires scientific a priories; (5) Science cannot produce absolutely certain proofs, but only tentative results.<sup>34</sup>

As Canale properly asserts, "yet even at its highest level of certainty scientific methodology is always an interpretation dependent on hermeneutical *a priories* that prevent it from discovering absolute, inerrant truth from empirically generated data. Scientific methodology applied to recurrent natural processes produces tentative explanations of reality, which should not be accepted dogmatically, but be critically examined, modified, rejected, and/or replaced."<sup>35</sup> This has also been observed by Brand who states that

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 38-40.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

"science is always a fascinating continuing search, but it does not reach absolute truth."<sup>36</sup>

In synthesis, a science is a discipline in which one study features of the world around us, and tries to describe its observations systematically and critically.<sup>37</sup> In this process scientists might look at biblical presuppositions in their journey for an interpretation and approximation of facts. "Science alone is not enough to answer all the important questions.... The meaning of human existence, the reality of God, the possibility of an afterlife, and many other spiritual questions lie outside of the reach of the scientific method."<sup>38</sup>

## 5. Relationship between Faith and Reason

Another very important dimension in modeling a life of faith in searching for truth is the relationship between faith and reason. It was the apostle Peter who emphasized in his universal epistle to use reason as response regarding Christian doctrine. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). As John T. Baldwin suggests hermeneutics involves a rational process that utilizes the reasoning powers of human intellect, thereby assigning a central role to human reason in the interpretation of Scripture.<sup>39</sup>

According to Gulley, faith is an essential presupposition in dealing with the ultimate answers.<sup>40</sup> The relationship between faith and reason is important to an adequate theological method.<sup>41</sup> He suggests that indeed Systematic Theology "requires the use of reason with one important element, a reason guided by God and in the service of His revelation."<sup>42</sup>

In the study of the relationship between faith and reason, C. John Collins summaries it in this way: "One conclusion is that faith and reason are not at odds with each other. Faith is in fact rational behavior: given

<sup>36</sup> Leonard R. Brand, "A Biblical Perspective on the Philosophy of Science," *Reflections: A BRI Newsletter* 18 (April 2007): 3.

<sup>37</sup> Collins, *Science and Faith*, 34.

<sup>38</sup> Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 228.

<sup>39</sup> John T. Baldwin, "Faith, Reason, and the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (ed. George W. Reid; Biblical Research Institute Studies 1; Silver Spring: BRI of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 15.

<sup>40</sup> Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 170-71.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

whom God is, and the reasons He's given for trusting Him, it's unreasonable not to trust Him."<sup>43</sup>

In other words, theology must begin with God and all that he is to determine how we think about him. The fact of God's existence should guide human reason in its quest to understand truth. Reason is not controlled by the inherent confined immanence cut off from the "thing as it is in itself" as with Kant. Rather, in theological thinking reason must be open to God's cognitive self-revelation in Scripture. Whereas reason is often the authority in philosophy, it must be subservient to God's propositional, cognitive, and aesthetic self-revelation in theology.<sup>44</sup> In synthesis, "without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb 11:6).

## 6. Principles that Reaffirm Faith

In case of apparent discrepancies between the Bible and science, we must therefore be ready to reexamine both our thinking about Scripture and our thinking about science. We must not assume too quickly that the error lies in one particular direction. In the modern world, we find people who are always ready to assume that science is right and the Bible is wrong. Or, contrariwise, others assume that the Bible is always right and modern science is always wrong.<sup>45</sup>

In one sense, the word of God governing creation and providence is more fundamental, in that it comes prior to the special words in the Bible and forms the indispensable environment in which the Bible makes sense.<sup>46</sup>

As van Bemmelen suggests:

When we study the Bible, a realization of its divine origin and authority as well as of its human character is of crucial importance. If we a priori reject the possibility of supernatural revelation, the Bible will be seen as a purely human product, and our interpretation will be biased from the outset. If, on the other hand, we lose sight of its human shape, we are in danger of interpreting its statements in an uncritical, dogmatic manner. In view of their divine-human character, our study of the Scriptures should be conducted in a spirit of humility as well as honest inquiry, with earnest prayers that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, may guide us "into all the truth" (John 16:13).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> John Collins, *Science and Faith*, 38.

<sup>44</sup> Gullley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 374.

<sup>45</sup> Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God Center Approach*, 43.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>47</sup> Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," 45.

Bemmelen suggests two important, practical applications in this effort: first, "we should study Scripture with the deep conviction of faith that they are as the living voice of God speaking to us personally; and second, that the foremost purpose of the Bible is to strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin and as Lord of our life."<sup>48</sup>

Thus, when Christians are confronted with unanswered questions and findings that are difficult to harmonize, how is it possible to harmonize religion and science? Brand suggests a methodological model for the relationship between science and religion that is in harmony with biblical presuppositions. He calls this model, "interaction, with God having priority in our thinking."<sup>49</sup>

This model encourages active interaction between science and religion in topics where they may overlap claims, because both are accepted as sources of cognitive knowledge about the universe. Feedback between them encourages deeper thinking in both areas and provides an antidote to carelessness on both sides. Both religion and science can make factual suggestions to each other, which can be the basis for careful thought and hypotheses testing. This model respects the scientific process, but also recognizes truth in Scripture.<sup>50</sup>

In this process science and religion challenge each other in areas where they are in conflict, motivating more careful thought and research in both areas and avoiding superficial explanations.<sup>51</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, faith has two essential dimensions: cognitive and existential. The faith which has two vital dimensions has its foundation in the special revelation as it is encountered in the Scriptures. As God reveals himself in Scriptures, he also reveals himself in nature. Modeling a life of faith means that when a scientist studies nature, there is a human limitation due to sin; therefore, special revelation provides the basic presuppositions to study nature and produce harmony between science and theology.

According to this study, it is possible to suggest a relationship between science and theology. However, there is a distinction between theology based on biblical presuppositions and science. In the former knowledge is found through revelation and comes from God; in science there is a continued exploration after truths and its scope does not grasp for absolute truth.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Brand, "Reflections, 5

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Following this model a person can live a life of faith without proof, that is, there are spiritual realities that cannot be demonstrated using our actual, natural and scientific laws. As an honest person, I need to admit that there are certain questions I won't be able to answer. As science continues searching for answers and solutions, the horizon for additional perspectives and dimensions of truth are still possible without necessitating the surrender of faith.

In his journey to believe in the existence of God, Francis S. Collins, a theistic scientist, testifies,

...it also became clear to me that science, despite its unquestioned powers in unraveling the mysteries of the natural world, would get me no further in resolving the question of God. If God exists, then He must be outside the natural world, and therefore the tools of science are not right ones to learn about Him. Instead I was beginning to understand from looking into my own heart, the evidence of God's existence would have to come from other directions, and the ultimate decision would be based on faith, not proof.<sup>52</sup>

And he gives this interesting remark, "while the question of the origin of life is a fascinating one, and the inability of modern science to develop a statistically probable mechanism is intriguing, this is not the place for a thoughtful person to wager his faith."<sup>53</sup> In his concluding remarks, he finally suggests "Science is not the only way of knowing. The spiritual worldview provides another way of finding truth."<sup>54</sup>

In the Old Testament, faith is a resilient belief in the one true God and an unshakable obedience to his will. The models of biblical faith are not those who are supported by organized religion but those who choose to trust in God at the most unpopular times. Part of the virtue of true faith is the ability to believe in God when he remains unseen. The Israelites betrayed their complete lack of faith when they complained after God repeatedly shows himself and displays miracles during the Exodus from Egypt.

Noah, Abraham, and Elijah represent the three main heroes of faith in the Old Testament. Each demonstrates his faith in God by performing seemingly irrational tasks after God has been absent from humankind for an extended period of time. God had not spoken to humanity for many generations when Noah obediently builds a large, strange boat in preparation for a monumental flood. Abraham similarly dismisses the idols and gods of his region in favor of a belief that an unseen and unnamed deity will provide a promised land for his descendants. Centuries later, the

<sup>52</sup> Francis Collins, *The Language of God*, 30.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

prophet Elijah attempts to rejuvenate faith in God after Israel has worshipped idols for decades. Like Noah and Abraham, Elijah develops a faith based on his ability to communicate directly with God.

Following the apostle Paul's reaffirmation of faith, he admonishes us: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor 2:4-5). Therefore I would like to suggest, according to this model, that it is possible to live a life of faith without a proof.