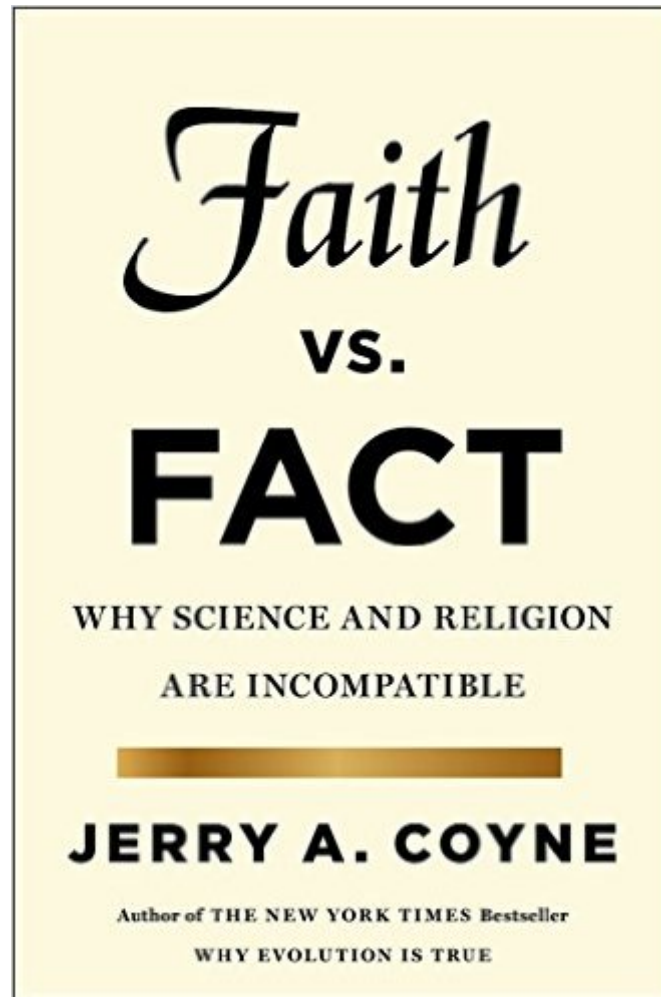


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Faith Versus Fact: Why Science And Religion Are Incompatible



Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling author explains why any attempt to make religion compatible with science is doomed to fail. In his provocative new book, evolutionary biologist Jerry A. Coyne lays out in clear, dispassionate detail why the toolkit of science, based on reason and empirical study, is reliable, while that of religion—including faith, dogma, and revelation—leads to incorrect, untestable, or conflicting conclusions. Coyne is responding to a national climate in which over half of Americans don't believe in evolution (and congressmen deny global warming), and warns that religious prejudices and strictures in politics, education, medicine, and social policy are on the rise. Extending the bestselling works of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens, he demolishes the claims of religion to provide verifiable truth by subjecting those claims to the same tests we use to establish truth in science. Coyne irrefutably demonstrates the grave harm to individuals and to our planet in mistaking faith for fact in making the most important decisions about the world we live in.

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Customer Reviews

Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion Are Incompatible by Jerry A. Coyne "Faith Versus Fact" is an excellent book that presents the persuasive argument that while faith and science compete to describe reality; science is the best tool to find out what is true about our universe. Evolutionary geneticist Jerry A. Coyne follows up his masterpiece of Why Evolution Is True, with an outstanding book of its own that clearly separates science from religion. This persuasive 336-page book includes the following five chapters: 1. The Problem, 2. What's Incompatible?, 3. Why

Accommodationism Fails, 4. Faith Strikes Back, and 5. Why Does It Matter? Positives: 1. Professor Coyne is a persuasive writer. Well-written and well-reasoned book. Engaging and accessible. 2. A great topic; why science and religion are incompatible. 3. Great use of logic, history, reason and facts to persuade the audience at an accessible level. 4. A quote fest, "The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it by Neil deGrasse Tyson". 5. Clearly states his main thesis. "Understanding reality, in the sense of being able to use what we know to predict what we don't, is best achieved using the tools of science, and is never achieved using the methods of faith." "My claim is this: science and religion are incompatible because they have different methods for getting knowledge about reality, have different ways of assessing the reliability of that knowledge, and, in the end, arrive at conflicting conclusions about the universe." 6. Makes a very strong case that there are very clear differences between science and religion. "Science and religion, then, are competitors in the business of finding out what is true about our universe."

It's already happening. Coyne's Faith vs Fact is being panned as biased, curmudgeonly, and ignorant. It is none of these. Neither is it an atheist book. It is a book about knowing - epistemology - and how we can confidently and reliably know what is real. Coyne argues that reason and the scientific method are the only methods we have to investigate, understand, and describe the world around us. These tools are based on observation, repeatability, and refinement. Faith offers something different. Faith-based reality is built on ancient texts, clerical and personal ideas, and feelings. Coyne points out the importance of how the two worldviews tackle errors. In science, we re-evaluate. We check against new knowledge. We ask for expert insight. We change our minds. Piltdown Man might be the greatest hoax ever foisted on science but we admit to being fooled. The textbooks have been changed. Not so with faith. Faith begins with answers and looks for evidence. When the evidence doesn't fit it is changed. Maybe a 'day' means a billion years? Maybe radioactive decay constants aren't constants after all? Coyne writes at length about what he calls accommodationism or an agreeable nod between the two worlds. This is the philosophical home for most people. Terminal cancer kills unless god intervenes. A few fish would never feed a crowd unless Jesus blesses them. Coyne argues that faith has nothing to offer fact. Must it be all or nothing? Coyne says yes. Are there 'better' or more informed religions? Coyne says no - they are all dueling fantasies. Certainly there are learned and urbane theists but their contribution to science is the same as the blood-letting shaman. Coyne doesn't dismiss faith out of hand. He invites theists of all ilk to present their case.

This book was recommended to me by a Chilean philosopher who told me about his underlined and full of personal notes copy. He told me that in almost every page there was something valuable that deserved to be maintained and reread. Such enthusiasm woke up my curiosity and I decided to read the book. In fact, to say it in just three words: he was right. But what was the difference that "Faith vs. Fact" made with other books of the same or similar subject? The difference is that here Jerry Coyne convinces you that there really is a conflict between faith and facts. "This book... is about the different ways that science and religion regards faith, ways that make them incompatible for discovering what's true about our universe." So the word is incompatibility (see chapter two), but not an array that permits a fluid and pacific coexistence, just the opposite: "Religion is but a single brand of superstition, but [at the same time] it is the most widespread and harmful form of superstition." Coyne made his case beautifully and insightfully. "My claim," says, "is this: science and religion are incompatible because they have different methods for getting knowledge about reality, have different ways of assessing the reliability of that knowledge, and, in the end, arrive at conflicting conclusions about the universe." So, "[k]nowledge' acquired by religion is at odds not only with scientific knowledge, but also with knowledge professed by other religions." In five chapters, we walk through the cross fire of a real conflict. In terms of what books like this usually approach, the difference here is the concentration with which Coyne composes and delivers his analysis.

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