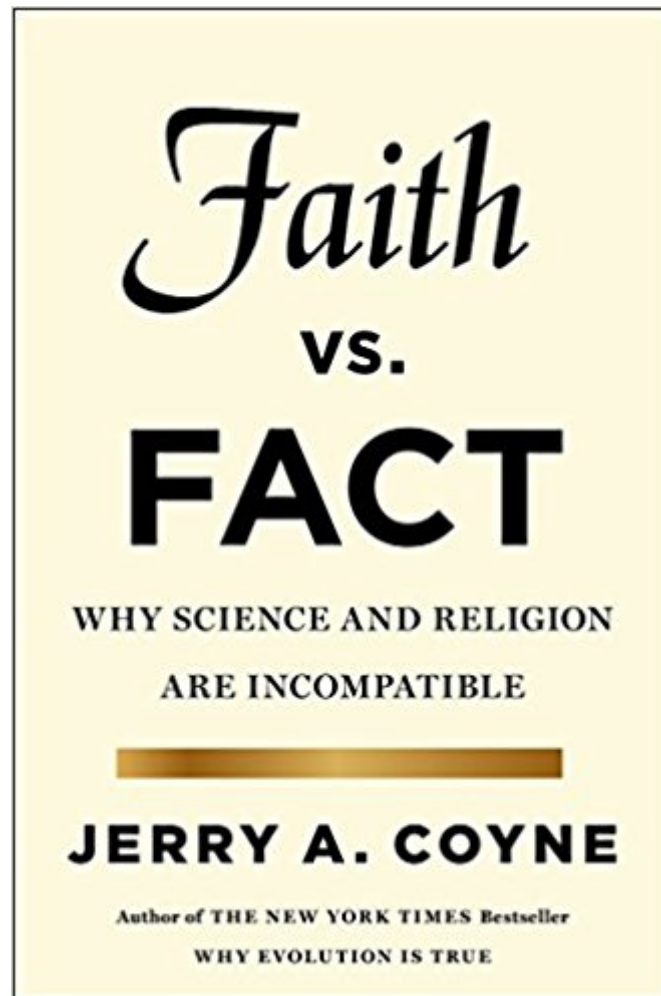




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# Faith Versus Fact: Why Science And Religion Are Incompatible



## Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling author explains why any attempt to make religion compatible with science is doomed to fail. What we read in the news today is full of subjectivity, half-truths, and blatant falsehoods; and thus it is more necessary now than ever to safeguard the truth with facts. In his provocative new book, evolutionary biologist Jerry A. Coyne aims to do exactly that in the arena of religion. In clear, dispassionate detail he explains 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Timely and important. Jerry Coyne expertly exposes the incoherence of the increasingly popular belief that you can have it both ways: that God (or something God-ish, God-like, or God-oid) sort-of exists; that miracles kind-of happen; and that the truthiness of dogma is

somewhat-a-little-bit-more-or-less-who

—,cs-to-say-it-isn't like the truths of science and reason.

•Steven Pinker, Johnstone Family Professor of Psychology, Harvard University; author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature* “[N]one make the case for the final divorce of religion and science, with permanent restraining orders against harassment and stalking of science by religion, better than Coyne.

•Ray Olson, Booklist (starred review) “An important book that deserves an open-minded readership.

•Kirkus Reviews “Many people are confused about science—about what it is, how it is practiced, and why it is the most powerful method for understanding ourselves and the universe that our species has ever devised. In *Faith vs. Fact*, Coyne has written a wonderful primer on what it means to think scientifically, showing that the honest doubts of science are better—and more noble—than the false certainties of religion. This is a profound and lovely book. It should be required reading at every college on earth.

•Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith*, *The Moral Landscape*, and *Waking Up* “The distinguished geneticist Jerry Coyne trains his formidable intellectual firepower on religious faith, and it’s hard to see how any reasonable person can resist the conclusions of his superbly argued book. Though religion will live on in the minds of the unlettered, in educated circles faith is entering its death throes. Symptomatic of its terminal desperation are the apophatic pretensions of esoteric theologians, for whose empty obscurantism Coyne reserves his most devastating sallies. Read this book and recommend it to two friends.

•Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion* “A Praise for *Why Evolution is True* “Outstandingly good . . . Coyne’s knowledge of evolutionary biology is prodigious, his deployment of it as masterful as his touch is light.

•Richard Dawkins, *The Times Literary Supplement* “Coyne is as graceful a stylist and as clear a scientific explainer as Darwin himself (no mean feat) . . . one of the best single-volume introductions to evolutionary theory ever.

•Wired “The joy Coyne takes in his work is evident on every page, whether he’s offering a bone-by-bone analysis of how dinosaurs evolved into birds or describing how docile Japanese honeybees have come up with their particularly incendiary defense against marauding giant hornets.

•San Francisco Chronicle “[Coyne] makes an unassailable case.

•New York Times “In nine crisp chapters . . . the respected evolutionary biologist lays out an airtight case that Earth is unspeakably old and that new species evolve from previous ones.

•Boston Globe “Coyne’s book is the best general explication of evolution that I know of and deserves its success as a best seller.

•R.C. Lewontin, New York Review of Books •“I recommend that Mr. Coyne’s insightful and withering assessment of evolutionary studies of human psychology and behavior be taped to the bathroom mirrors of all those (perhaps especially journalists) inclined to be swept into excited announcements of What Evolution Shows About Us.”

•Philip Kitcher, The Wall Street Journal •“With logic and clarity, Coyne presents the vast trove of scientific evidence that supports Darwin’s theory.”

•Cleveland Plain Dealer •“It’s always a pleasure to tell people about a wonderful book, especially when the subject of the book is of universal and critical importance. Evolutionary geneticist Jerry A. Coyne has given us such a book. . . . A book that may change the way you look at things if you dare.”

•The Huffington Post •“In this 200th anniversary year of Darwin’s birth, Why Evolution is True ranks among the best new titles flooding bookstores.”

•Christian Science Monitor •“Why Evolution is True is the book I was hoping would be written someday: an engaging and accessible account of one of the most important ideas ever conceived by mankind. The book is a stunning achievement, written by one of the world’s leading evolutionary biologists. Coyne has produced a classic whether you are an expert or novice in science, a friend or foe of evolutionary biology, reading Why Evolution is True is bound to be an enlightening experience.”

•Neil Shubin, author of Your Inner Fish •“Jerry Coyne has long been one of the world’s most skillful defenders of evolutionary science in the face of religious obscurantism. In Why Evolution is True, he has produced an indispensable book: the single, accessible volume that makes the case for evolution. But Coyne has delivered much more than the latest volley in our “culture war

Jerry A. Coyne is professor emeritus at the University of Chicago in the Department of Ecology and Evolution, where he specialized in evolutionary genetics. His New York Times bestseller, Why Evolution Is True, was one of Newsweek’s “50 Books for Our Times” in 2010.

Most detailed explanations I have ever seen in a book like this. Excellent! Almost too much information since I’ve been an atheist for 55 years, but I could not stop reading it.

Item as described. Fast shipping. Thanks

The crux of Jerry A. Coyne’s thesis is stated on p. 229: “If religious faith is generally harmful, as I

think it is, then any religion whose beliefs rest on faith or that extol faith contributes to that harm."In order to arrive at this conclusion, Coyne first has to define all of the terms he will use throughout the book: faith, belief, fact, religion, science, God... it seems to go on ad nauseum and could certainly be described tedious at times. However, his conclusions follow with such necessity that the reader is left to ponder why any reasonable person wouldn't have already arrived at them. And the reason is probably that they never sat down and thought about it. The one tid-bit (and it's a large one) that I personally hadn't know previously was about the Templeton Foundation and its role in incentivizing certain scientific studies. There are well-reasoned arguments for almost every rejoinder a religionist could come up with. And in general, Coyne's approach reads as much less biased than some of the so-called New Atheists. After all, he argues, scientists have great incentive to try to discover evidence of the existence of God, of Noah's Arc, the tomb of Jesus, the resurrection, the afterlife, etc. as it would be one of the greatest if not THE greatest scientific discovery of all time. And yet, they haven't. My only objection is

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 compose and deliver his analysis. He never loses the perspective and the purpose of his work, so you won't find redundancies or digressions. At least not more than is necessary to round an idea. The examples

are illustrative and the subsequent discussion adds the perspective that the reader expects, this is, something original and well founded. Thus, this book isn't just one more. "Faith vs. Fact," is a necessary reading for anyone interested in clarifications and differentiations. This is a really hard task, and to make it well is meritorious. As an example, George Gilder's *Knowledge and Power: The Information Theory of Capitalism and How it is Revolutionizing our World* proposes us the idea of a materialistic fallacy, a kind of byproduct of scientism. Well, "Knowledge and Power" is about economy, but Gilder, a defender of Intelligent Design, take advantage of the topic and manages to mix science with scientism and materialism in a single array of inconsistent and tautological claims, only destined to be always incomplete and limited. Jerry Coyne let you know why Gilder is wrong, and anyone who like him disproves science because of his faith. Highly recommended.

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, *Faith Versus Fact* is "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. *Faith Versus Fact* is "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." *Faith Versus Fact* is "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. *Faith Versus Fact* is "Science and religion, then, are competitors in the business of finding out what is true about our universe. In this goal religion has failed miserably, for its tools for discerning

are useless. These areas are incompatible in precisely the same way, and in the same sense, that rationality is incompatible with irrationality.

7. The three reasons why the issue of science versus religion has been revived.

8. The conflict between religion and evolution didn't really get going until religious fundamentalism arose in early-twentieth-century America.

9. An expose of the Templeton foundation.

10. Clarity and lucidity of thought throughout the book.

11. "These are empirical claims, and although some may be hard to test, they must, like all claims about reality, be defended with a combination of evidence and reason. If we find no credible evidence, no good reasons to believe, then those claims should be disregarded, just as most of us ignore claims about ESP, astrology, and alien abduction."

12. A good explanation of what constitutes science.

13. "What is known" may sometimes change, so science isn't really a fixed body of knowledge. What remains is what I really see as "science," which is simply a method for understanding how the universe (matter, our bodies and behavior, the cosmos, and so on) actually works. Science is a set of tools, refined over hundreds of years, for getting answers about nature."

14. "Scientific truth is never absolute, but provisional."

15. Provocative.

16. "There is simply no way that any faith can prove beyond question that its claims are true while those of other faiths are false."

17. The problems with religion.

18. "Religion begins with beliefs based not on observation, but on revelation, authority (often that of scripture), and dogma."

19. "Take the Resurrection of Jesus, for which the only supporting evidence is the contradictory accounts of the Gospels."

20. Clearly explains why accommodationism fails and does a great job of dissecting the problems with non-overlapping magisterial (NOMA) that popularized Gould.

21. "In the end, NOMA is simply an unsatisfying quarrel about labels that, unless you profess a watery deism, cannot reconcile science and religion."

22. Miracles in perspective.

23. "Miracles were really the result of fraud, ignorance, or misrepresentation."

24. Destroys myths with expertise.

25. "But science has completely falsified the idea of a historical Adam and Eve, and on two grounds. First, our species wasn't poofed into being by a sudden act of creation. We know beyond reasonable doubt that we evolved from a common ancestor with modern chimps, an ancestor living around six million years ago. Modern human traits—which include our brain and genetically determined behaviors—evolved gradually."

Mormonism takes a direct hit. *But as with the existence of Adam and Eve, both genetics and archaeology have shown that the Middle Eastern origin of Native Americans is a fiction.* • Game over. 17. Morality as it relates to evolution. *Finally, and perhaps most important, evolution means that human morality, rather than being imbued in us by God, somehow arose via natural processes: biological evolution involving natural selection on behavior, and cultural evolution involving our ability to calculate, foresee, and prefer the results of different behaviors.* • *We have an enhanced morality but it is the product of culture, not biology.* • 18. Looks at popular arguments in defense of *God* only to reject them with ease. *Rather than assuming that the world was created for humans, the more reasonable hypothesis is that humans evolved to adapt to the world they confronted.* • 19. The faith in reason tactic. *My response to the* • *no justification* • *claim is that the superiority of science at finding objective truth comes not from philosophy but from experience. Science gives predictions that work. Everything we know about biology, the cosmos, physics, and chemistry has come through science* • *not revelation, the arts, or any other* • *way of knowing.* • *The harm of ill-founded dogma.* • *The harm, as I* • *ve said repeatedly, comes not from the existence of religion itself, but from its reliance on and glorification of faith* • *belief, or, if you will, trust* • *confidence* • *without supporting evidence.* • 21. Notes and references included. Negatives: 1. Why Evolution Is True was such a great book it's hard to live up to those lofty expectations. 2. Philosophy and theology is not Coyne's forte but he provides enough to make his case. 3. Lack of charts and visuals to complement the narrative. 4. I would have liked to have seen a bit more on the legal side. Examples of religion doing harm and a summary of cases where science and religion intersect besides the obligatory mention of the 1925 Scopes *Monkey Trial*. In summary, a book worthy of five stars. Sure it's not the masterpiece that I Why Evolution Is True but it's a book that needed to be written and is another great contribution to society. Religion fails to accurately describe the universe as it really is and in fact has impeded progress. Coyne makes the persuasive case that science is the best method to find the truths about his world and you will not get any disagreement for yours truly. An excellent book, I highly recommend it! Further suggestions: *Why Evolution Is True* • by the same author, *Undeniable* • by Bill Nye,



"God and the Multiverse" by Victor J. Stenger,  
 "Science and Religion" by Daniel C. Dennett, "Why  
 People Believe Weird Things" by Michael Shermer, "Atheism for  
 Dummies" by Dale McGowan, "The Soul Fallacy" by  
 Julien Musolino, "Why Are You Atheists So Angry?: 99 Things That Piss Off the  
 Godless" by Greta Christina, "A Manual for Creating  
 Atheists" by Peter Boghossian, "God Is Not Great" by  
 Christopher Hitchens, "The God Virus" by Darrel Ray,  
 "Moral Combat" by Sikivu Hutchinson,  
 "Infidel" by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "Nonbeliever  
 Nation" by David Niose, "Freethinkers" by Susan  
 Jacoby, "Nailed" by David Fitzgerald, and  
 "Think" by Guy P. Harrison.

Very nice, well written book. Didn't tell me much I didn't already know, but I like lending it to my unenlightened friends and acquaintances.

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