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Lydia Marcus
Dordt College

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A Participant's Guide to

Are There Philosophical Conflicts Between Science & Religion?

*A Study of Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion,
& Naturalism*

Lydia Marcus

Summer 2017

Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa

How to Use This Material?

This study of evolutionary psychology using Alvin Plantinga's *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, & Naturalism* consists of 4 modules. Each module contains two sections. The first section presents a set of Reading and Reflection questions that are to be completed before each meeting and are meant to help the participant wrestle with the concepts introduced in that week's chapters. The second section consists of two (or more) Discussion questions, which will be written by the participants and the leader as they read. Both sets of questions are meant to foster discussion, but your group should by no means limit itself to the questions contained in these sections.

This study is intended for **informal, small group** discussion, such as that of a Bible study or small group. The themes presented in each submodule may be unpacked on its own, but it is the hope of the authors that the entire study may be useful to the interested reader (leader and participant alike). The study is also aimed toward **high school students, college students, and post-college adults** with an interest in how science and the Christian faith interact.

As you read, it is our hope that you will come across (and come up with) questions which challenge you, both in understanding your personal faith and in understanding science. In these questions, you will have the opportunity to grow through asking and answering these questions: Why has the church historically believed in *this* answer or *that* answer? How might you be challenged to defend your answer?

Who Wrote *Where the Conflict Really Lies*?

Alvin Plantinga is an analytical philosopher (hence the fairly analytically philosophical writing in *Where the Conflict Really Lies*) who is most known for his work in epistemology, metaphysics, Christian apologetics, and the philosophy of religion. Plantinga attended Calvin College and Harvard University as an undergraduate, and received his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1958. He is an emeritus philosophy professor at the University of Notre Dame. In 2017 Plantinga was given the Templeton Prize, an annual award from the Templeton Foundation that recognizes individuals who have made “exceptional contributions to affirming life’s spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works.”

Where the Conflict Really Lies is a philosophical book, but it is accessible to people with no background in philosophy. Plantinga has conveniently put the more intensely analytical philosophy parts of his book in smaller font, so readers may choose to skip over those parts if they would like. That said, this book is probably not for people who are not open to philosophical conversations.

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“Defeaters?”

1. What do you think of methodological naturalism? Is it valid to refrain from “invoking supernatural causation” in the name of proper science? Can you not invoke supernatural causation while avoiding a worldview of naturalism (in which all phenomena have a natural explanation)?

Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Reflection questions, please write two of your own questions about the readings for today.

1.

2.

alternative perspective on irreducible complexity. Clearly, the video creator has a bias. Do his critiques of irreducible complexity make sense?

“Deep Concord: Christian Theism and the Deep Roots of Science”

1. On page 266, Plantinga says “Modern Western empirical science originated and flourished in the bosom of Christian theism and originated nowhere else.” What do you think of this statement? Do you think it is accurate?
2. What are the implications of this statement for non-Christian scientists?

Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Reflection questions, please write two of your own questions about the readings for today.

1.

2.

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Bibliography

Plantinga, A. (2011). *Where the Conflict Really Lies*. New York: Oxford University Press.