



Beyond Science: A Look at the Biblical Christian View of the Supernatural

Ikechukwu Michael Oluikpe 

School of Religion and Theology, Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Jamaica

ABSTRACT

Science has greatly improved the quality of contemporary life compared with past centuries. Consequently, science has gained prominence as an authentic authority and a reliable source of truth, more respected than religion in general and biblical faith in particular. Naturalistic science, the most dominant kind of science, is rooted in the rationalism of the Enlightenment and excludes belief in the supernatural. However, the limits of this science become evident when confronted with the reality of supernatural phenomena in daily life. This article seeks to briefly examine the worldviews of naturalistic science and biblical Christianity in relation to the supernatural and present the significance of biblical Christianity for interpreting all of life's reality.

Introduction

Science has brought a lot of advancement and benefit to present-day life (Dickson, 2000; Goldstein, 2017a; Roth, 1999): “Daily we wait for the next scientific breakthrough, wondering what else science will discover that might enhance our lives.” (Roth, 1999, p. 277). Science has been so successful and has received so much respect that many believe it to be the only source of truth able to explain all reality (Dickson, 2000): “In the secular world, science is by default considered the true source of knowledge” (Ekkens, 2013, introductory paragraph). In addition, science is believed to present an objective view of reality (Goldstein, 2017a). This belief is usually the case when the authority of science is compared with that of the Bible, the canonical authority for Christian faith. These two sources of authority are commonly viewed as contrary to each other and in conflict (Goldstein, 2017a). While science is seen as the objective source of truth, the Bible is regarded as a book for spiritual insight (Ekkens, 2013), not comparable to science.

Whereas *science* can broadly be defined as a systematic process that attempts to explain natural phenomena in terms of its physical mechanisms of cause and effect (Ekkens, 2013), it can be divided into types based on differing worldviews and philosophies, especially in relation to biblical Christian faith. The most dominant type of science can be termed *naturalistic science* and is purely based on the operations of natural laws that are empirically tested and observable. This science excludes God or the supernatural and considers evolution as the origin of life (Roth, 1995). Any other kind of science that recognizes the existence and sovereignty of a Creator God is usually considered to be superstitious, not standard, and not accepted by most contemporary scientists. However, studies show that science can be biased based on the differing interpretations of scientific data drawn from the worldview of the scientists performing the study (Roth, 1995). Because science, especially naturalistic science, consists of concepts, theories, and assumptions that are constantly being examined and has conclusions that are subject to human bias and change with time (Goldstein 2017a), can this dominant type of science be trusted to be the source of all truth and reality? Although it appears to have all the answers, is there more to natural phenomena than the naturalistic science worldview alone can explain?

This article attempts to present some answers to these questions from a biblical Christian point of view. It contains discussions that look into the Bible's view of the supernatural, an aspect of reality that naturalistic science rejects. It also presents a history of modern naturalistic science that currently influences the worldview and perceptions of many people in contemporary education and life. The significance of accepting the worldview of the supernatural will also be presented and as well as some of the possibilities of understanding life and some of its key phenomena in reality that are truly "beyond science."

A general overview of the BIBLE and the supernatural

The Bible is believed by Christians to be the inspired Word of God. Consequently, it is held as the divine standard for all beliefs, teachings, and conduct of all humankind. From a non-Christian perspective, the question can be asked, "Are there logical reasons for this esteemed view about the Bible?" A few key of these reasons include the following:

- Historical records and archeological findings have authenticated the historicity of many Bible characters and events. In addition, the writings of the biblical canon have been miraculously preserved throughout the

- centuries of history until the present day despite attempts to completely destroy them (Rice, 1997, 30).
- The Bible's worldview still makes sense in describing accurately the human situation and the proposed solutions in its teachings. This statement must be understood when the Christian claim is evaluated in light of all the alternative truth claims available. The Christian accepts the biblical worldview "not simply because it is in the Bible but because, when tested, it makes better sense out of life than other systems of philosophy make" (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, Jr., 2004, 163).
 - The Bible has influenced and continues to influence human lives for the better all over the world. Countless stories exist of how the Bible has served as a source of encouragement, hope, and positive transformation in the lives of many (Rice, 1997, 30). Consequently, the Bible continues to remain one of the world's best sellers.

Although these reasons do not conclusively prove that God is ultimately responsible for the Bible, they can be seen as marks of the extraordinary nature of this book. In addition, although the belief in the Bible as the Word of God has been criticized and attempts made to discredit it over the years, its claims remain open to the study of all who are sincerely open-minded and willing to understand it on its own terms.

As stated previously, the Bible is regarded as the ultimate authority of Christian faith and practice. Additionally, by the claims of its divine nature, it is a book that does not deny the existence of the supernatural. In its records, the Bible presents the presence and activity of extraordinary super-human beings that are mostly invisible but affect the natural and human world in real, tangible ways that defy the laws of nature and human logic and explanation. These supernatural beings are often times referred to as *spirit* to describe their essential nature versus that of the visible human being. This statement must be understood in light of the varied meanings of *spirit* in the Bible, such as "breath," "wind" (Exod 10:13; 14: 21; Ezek 37: 7–10; John 3:8), a person's vital powers and internal strength (Gen 45: 25–27; Judg 15: 18–19; Prov 18:14; Ps 34:18), and a person's "feelings" or "attitude" (1 Kgs 21: 4–5; Ezra 1:5; Eccl 7:8; Luke 1:47; John 11:33; Elwell, 1997).

The Bible speaks of God as a *Spirit* (John 4:24) and as the *Supreme Being Who is the Omnipotent Creator* of all life in the universe (Gen 1:1; John 1:1–3). In light of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the term *God* refers to the relational unit of *Three Persons or Beings*, functionally described as "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19), Who are co-existent, co-eternal, and co-equal. By implication, these Three Beings as "God"

exist and work in the universe as “Spirit” and can therefore be described as *supernatural*.

Apart from God as the ultimate “spirit” being, the Bible makes mention of angels as another group of supernatural beings that exist in the universe. In Scripture, angels are primarily referred to in relation to praising and serving God in heaven (Ps 148:2; Rev 5: 11, 12) or as messengers carrying out errands of divine mission on earth (1 Kgs 19: 1–8; Isa 37:36; Dan 6: 22; Matt 1: 20; 2:13; 28: 1–7; Luke 2: 8–15), sometimes in human form (Gen 18: 1–33; 19: 1–38; Heb 13: 2) (Dizon and Dizon, 2015). They are described as “ministering spirits” (Heb 1:14) and have powers that surpass human strength (Ps 103:20) (Dizon and Dizon, 2015).

Although angels are typically associated with God and good, the Bible points out that there are also angelic beings that oppose God and all that is His. The biblical record speaks of the origin of the cosmic war between good and evil which began in heaven and affected all angelic beings. A special angel by the name Lucifer aspired to take over God’s throne and rule the universe like God (Ezek 28:11–15; Isa 14:12–14). In his rebellion against God, Lucifer persuaded angels to join him. This persuasion resulted in two camps, leading to war in heaven (Dizon & Dizon, 2015). The apocalyptic narrative indicates the two sides of the cosmic conflict and its result. Michael, the commander of God’s angels defeated and threw Satan, the devil (formerly Lucifer), and his angels out of heaven (Rev 12:7–9). This biblical worldview therefore affirms the reality of the war between good and evil with angels on both sides (Matt 25:31, 41). Because angels are invisible and superhuman, the Bible also implies that this war has supernatural players that impact human life and reality in many ways.

The Bible identifies Satan as the mastermind of all evil on earth. Satan is described with a variety of titles in the biblical record. Some of them include: “the Devil” (Acts 10:38; 13:10; Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim 3:6–7; 2 Tim 2:26; Heb 2:14; Jas 3:15; 4:7; 1 John 3:8–10; Rev 12:9; 20:2); “the great dragon” (Rev 12:9; 20:2); “the tempter” (1 Thess 3:5); “the serpent” (2 Cor 11:3; Rev 12:9; 20:2); “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4); “the prince/ruler of this world” (John 12: 31; 14:30; 16:11); “the enemy” (1 Tim 5:14); and “the evil one” (2 Thess 3:3; Eph 6:10) (Boyd, 1999, p. 270, p. 181). Satan is the commander-in-chief of the host of evil angels that were cast out of heaven with him (Rev 12:7–9). These evil angels, also known as *demons*, are the supernatural agents through which Satan works to carry out his evil schemes in the natural and human world (1 Cor 10:20,21; 1 Tim 4:1; Jas 2:19; Rev 9:20; 16:14; 18:2). These evil powers are also referred to in terms such as “principalities and powers,” “authorities,” “dominions,” (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10,15), and “spiritual

forces of darkness and wickedness in heavenly places” (Eph 6:12) (Boyd, 1999, p. 270–271; Twelftree, 2007, p. 99)

Demons (or demonic powers) are also mentioned several times, especially in the New Testament. They are seen as evil or unclean spiritual beings with the power to harm life or allure people to heresy or immorality. With Satan as their ruler, they can form groups and cooperate against a person and possess a person (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:2). For example, the Gospel of Mark contains the effects of these evil powers on the natural and human world. Demons can cause a person to convulse and cry out (Mark 1:26), to have superhuman strength to injure themselves and others (Mark 5:3–5), throw people down, cause foaming at the mouth, grind their teeth (9:18), and provoke people to destroy themselves (9:22), and demons can enter animals as well (5:11–13). (Twelftree, 2007, pp. 91–96)

As evidence of the battle between good and evil, the Gospel of Mark among others presents Jesus in conflict with demons during His human life and ministry on earth. Jesus rebukes demons (Mark 1:25; 3:12; 9:25), muzzles them (Mark 1:25–26), and commands them never to enter a person again. In confronting demons, Jesus is empowered by the Holy Spirit and is doing battle against Satan (Mark 3: 22–30) (Twelftree, 2007:96).

In summary, the Bible presents the worldview that the natural and human worlds are affected by the reality of the invisible supernatural beings that exist and work in the universe. It implies that explaining the truth of life in purely naturalistic terms will not suffice. However, the history of Christianity shows that this supernatural view was overly emphasized during the Medieval period leading to the dominance of superstitious beliefs and practices that downplayed the consistency of the laws of nature which God had laid down for the orderly existence of all life. This superstitious view of life—which encouraged “blind faith” and seemed to ignore the use of human reason—was completely rejected in favor of the rational and empirical dimensions of science that were observable and testable. This total exclusion of the supernatural worldview grew into prominence during the Enlightenment era.

The rise of rationalism and naturalistic science: excluding the supernatural

In pre-modern times, the Greeks had developed science, which for them was the search for a systematic understanding of the universal structures of the world. A science that was more abstract and rational than concrete and empirical (Walsh & Middleton, 1984) was championed particularly by the Greek philosopher Plato (429–347 BC). He believed that the mind—*reason*—is the divine part in humans that was the means through which we

“plug into” “the permanent stable laws and forms divinely implanted in the universe” (Walsh & Middleton, 1984, p. 120).

In the Christian Era, the ideas of Plato gradually became dominant in biblical interpretation through the influences of Philo and later Clement of Alexandria (Klein et al., 2004, 26, 37–40). This Neo-Platonism was also integrated into the influential Christian theology of Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430). This integration led to “the increasing spiritualization of Greek dualism” (Walsh & Middleton, 1984, p. 120) in Christianity during the Middle Ages and the inhibition and neglect of independent enquiry and empirical scientific development (Mitchell, 1999). As noted by one researcher, “Its effect was the subordination of scientific observation to ancient authority” (Mitchell, 1999, p. 34).

Through the teachings of Albertus Magnus and his prominent student, Thomas Aquinas (AD 1227–1274), the basis for empirical science began to take root. They reintroduced the views of Aristotle (384–322 BC) into academia and science. As opposed to Plato who saw science as abstract, Aristotle emphasized the observation of nature as a path to scientific truth (Mitchell, 1999). This emphasis began to move science from the purely abstract to the empirical.

The writings of Thomas Aquinas introduced a more rational way of thinking, heralding an ideological change that favored the development of empirical science. This paradigm of thinking paved the way for the Renaissance—the Age of Enlightenment and Rationalism. The Enlightenment period began a movement that emphasized human reason and rejected religion, intentionally pushing aside the supernatural (Santrac, 2014). It was also a time in history characterized by scientific advances. The rise of empirical science introduced modernity through the scientific revolution of the 17th century. The basis of these scientific discoveries was believed to be brought about by rationalism, “which was responsible for making reason the basic tool of scientific investigation of nature and human striving for truth” (Santrac, 2014, p. 9). Gradually the medieval worldview which interpreted natural phenomena as manifestations of spiritual realities, gave way to the purely naturalistic world view that excluded the supernatural (Mitchell, 1999). The literature notes, “As time passed, the formulation and verification of scientific hypothesis gradually reduced the role of the supernatural agencies. Explanations were strictly in this-worldly terms” (Mitchell, 1999, p. 36). Science became more and more mechanistic leaving exceptions to the natural order and other-worldly phenomena to religion (Hiebert, 1982, p. 43). This emphasis on a mechanical view of causation in nature tended to diminish the role of the supernatural (Mitchell, 1999). This diminishment led to the separation between science and religion and weakened the link between religious truth and scientific discovery (Mitchell, 1999).

Through the Enlightenment, the modern worldview that upheld autonomous reason as the solution to all humanity's problems (Dickson, 2000), became prominent, leading to contemporary secularism especially dominant in the Western world (Dybdahl, 2008; Mitchell, 1999). It is noteworthy that this world view of naturalistic science has affected the thinking and living of many contemporary Christians (Dybdahl, 2008; Hiebert, 1982), and still poses a challenge to many Christians in secular educational institutions in the 21st century (Dickson, 2000).

Science and the supernatural

Examining worldviews

People interpret the reality of life and its phenomena in different ways. This difference is especially because of the lens of a person's worldview through which life is perceived, understood, and interpreted (Brand, 2010/2011; Rasi, 2011). A *worldview* can be defined as "a set of assumptions that influences how people interpret the world and how they answer the most important questions of life such as where did we come from, how should we live and where are we going." (Brand, 2010/2011, p. 18). The answers given to these questions related to life's origin, purpose, meaning, and destiny invariably become the foundation of our values and affect the individual's choices and behavior (Rasi, 2011, p. 17). Essentially, a worldview is how a person finds and gives meaning to the reality of life.

This article essentially compares two major worldviews: one that rejects the supernatural on the basis of science (naturalism) and one that accepts and recognizes the reality of the supernatural (supernaturalism). The second worldview recognizes three dimensions: (1) the world of God and Satan (as the highest level); the world of humans and nature (as the lowest level); and the world of supernatural intermediaries of angels and demons (between the highest and lowest levels). While the lowest level involves the natural, the first two levels thrive with supernatural beings that greatly impact life on the lowest level. The first worldview of naturalism, however, focuses only on two dimensions: the highest and the lowest levels. In this worldview, the highest level is left to religion and its leaders and the middle level is completely excluded. As a result of this "excluded middle" (Hiebert, 1982; Dizon & Dizon 2015, p. 152), supernatural phenomena are not taken seriously. It is important to point out that the Western worldview of the North Atlantic regions is naturalistic while the worldview of non-Western regions is supernaturalistic (Kraft quoted in Dizon & Dizon, 2015, p. 154).

The Western modern scientific worldview, which began in the Enlightenment of the 17th century, has spread far beyond the shores of Europe and North America through the process of globalization and

continues to influence the lives and thinking of many today, Christians inclusive (Doss, 2015). This worldview divides reality into the natural and the supernatural. The natural realm includes humans, plants, animals, and inanimate objects that are seen and can be empirically observed and tested. Because the natural is open to science, it is considered “really real” (Doss, 2015, p. 111). However, because the supernatural cannot be seen or tested by naturalistic science, it is considered “unreal.”

Some Christians who live by the Western scientific worldview reject the authority of the Bible as the inspired word of God and see it as a mere human document with all its accounts of the supernatural (e.g., angels, demons, visions, healing and miracles) as a matter of personal opinion and superstition (Doss, 2015).

As earlier observed, scientists are not exempt from having worldviews that affect their interpretation of life’s reality. Many scientists are influenced by the naturalistic worldview. But can the secular naturalistic worldview sufficiently and meaningfully explain all of life’s reality?

The existence of spirit beings, which are especially prominent in non-Western cultures, constantly challenges and confounds the worldview of naturalistic science (Boyd, 1999; Hiebert, 1982). These spirit beings are believed to cause results such as: (1) the appearance of a person who was medically or clinically confirmed dead to family members and friends (apparitions or ghosts); (2) surgically operating, hurting, and causing pain to a person or killing a person from a distance without physically touching them; (3) movements and sounds in a house or a geographical region where no one lives; (4) causing rain where the weather is meteorologically clear by chanting words out loud; or (5) the ability to perceive things and events that are beyond the human senses (clairvoyance) (Hucks II, 2012, p. 19; Marshall, 1991). In addition, persons possessed and controlled by these spirits manifest the following features: extraordinary strength, foaming in the mouth, changed voice, unusual knowledge, knowing and speaking unknown or unlearned languages, clairvoyance, telepathy, and predictions (Hucks II, 2012, p. 19; Dizon and Dizon (2015), p. 156). The manifestations of such supernatural phenomena defy any mechanistic explanations that the Western mind can give (Hiebert, 1982). However, in the worldview of these non-Western cultures, these spirit beings are responsible for the good and evil manifested in the universe (Boyd, 1999; Hiebert, 1982).

In non-Western cultures, people are concerned about misfortunes and tragedies that nullify future plans for personal and communal wellbeing and prosperity in present life. Although many in the West see these as “accidents,” “luck,” “coincidence,” and “unforeseeable events,” these other cultures seek for answers from otherworldly sources—ancestors, demons, witches, local gods, magic, or astrology. Unsatisfied with impotent

empirical solutions, they want to know the cause of sudden deaths in the family, of failure in business, and of rapidly deteriorating health, for example:

What does one do when the doctors have done all they can and a child grows sicker or... why did my child die at the prime of life?... Because the Western world no longer provides explanations for [these] questions... it is not surprising that many Western missionaries have no answers within their Christian world view. Since they are not content with the answers of Western Christianity, tribal Christian converts “return to the diviner who gave them definite answers” for these problems that loom large in their everyday life (Hiebert, 1982, pp. 44–45).

As stated in this quote, these cultures have experienced sicknesses for which modern medical science may examine and test to diagnose but find no explanation or cure (Hiebert, 1982). From the secular naturalistic worldview, the demonization of a person, for example, is explained away as mental or psychiatric illness (Dybdahl, 2008; Hiebert, 1982). Science is unable to answer or solve these problems because scientists are “trained to deal with the empirical worldview in naturalistic terms” (Hiebert, 1982, p. 43). Unfortunately, when Christians with a naturalistic scientific worldview meet situations in which they encounter the supernatural, their worldview is ineffective to deal with the experience (Doss, 2015)

Consequently, the rejection of the supernatural worldview results in a Christian theology and life that ignores the otherworldly phenomena of non-Western cultures (Dizon & Dizon, 2015, p. 152) and is powerless to address the real human needs of the people of these backgrounds. While the modern naturalistic tendency is to relegate demons and evil spirits to the realm of superstition, this “flies in the face of Biblical evidence and real life experiences of many” (Hucks II, 2012, p. 19). The fact that many people from the Western worldview of naturalistic science deny the reality of the supernatural does not mean that this realm is unreal. This reality is simply beyond the scope of naturalistic science.

As one researcher notes,

To understand how human beings acquire and evaluate knowledge and how to determine what is true involves consideration of the relationships between data, interpretations, assumptions and worldviews. All of these contribute to the scholarly search for truth and none can be safely ignored” (Brand, 2010/2011, p. 23).

In examining worldviews in the search for truth and a meaningful interpretation of life’s reality, there is a need for all scientists and Christians alike to be open-minded in seeking to understand, compare, and evaluate the coherence, significance, and relevance of the metanarrative of the supernatural worldview, especially from a biblical perspective (Brand, 2010/2011). This approach is important because everyone can have their perceptions and perspectives of life narrowed by their worldviews, including

naturalistic scientists and Christians alike (Brand, 2010/2011, p. 20). A careful thoughtful consideration of the supernatural worldview from a biblical perspective is sure to present a number of possibilities for a meaningful interpretation of life's reality—possibilities that are beyond the confines of naturalistic science.

The significance of the biblical CHRISTIAN worldview

The worldview of naturalistic science, which is predominant in the West, denies the existence of the supernatural. However, evidence suggests that supernatural manifestations (both good and evil) are consistent with the Biblical worldview and prominent in the life experiences of many from the non-Western world. In other words, the Western worldview of naturalistic science is unable to fully explain all of life's reality. An acceptance of the biblical worldview of supernatural phenomena helps open the mind to new perspectives that make life's reality more meaningful. This section will explore the significance of accepting the biblical Christian worldview of the supernatural in contrast to understanding all of life's reality from a purely naturalistic scientific point of view.

The pioneers of modern science: exploring the works and wonders of the supernatural

It is interesting to note that a great number of the pioneers of modern science were strong believers in the supernatural Creator God of the Bible. The likes of Francis Bacon (mathematics); Robert Boyle (chemistry); Michael Faraday (electricity); Blaise Pascal (mathematics); Carl von Linné, William Paley, and John Ray (biologists); Johannes Kepler (astronomy); Gregor Mendel (genetics); Louise Pasteur (bacteriology); and Isaac Newton (physics) showed that science could be studied and understood from the perspective of the supernatural (Ferrell, 2001/2006; Goldstein, 2017a; Rasi, 2011; Roth, 1999). They saw their scientific work as discovering and helping to explain the principles of creation that God had already established in nature (Goldstein, 2017a; Rasi, 2011; Roth, 1999). They believed the supernatural God as the basis for the natural. This approach shows that belief in the biblical worldview of the supernatural does not hinder good science. It is ironic that many of the successors of these pioneers disagree with this fact.

Limits of naturalistic science: answering the “Why?”

A careful reflection shows that there is more to life than can be explained by chemical, mathematical, and biological terms and processes. Questions

like “Why do we laugh?”; “How do you describe the concepts of peace and joy found in the human experience?”; or “Why do we love?” cannot be answered from a purely naturalistic scientific point of view. One perspective is:

Scientists search the brain, trying to figure out why we laugh and how to determine whether or not something’s funny... Chemical processes clearly take place in the brain when we’re laughing, but instinctively we know that laughter is more than just a chemical reaction” (Boonstra, 2007, pp. 121–122).

Indeed, naturalistic science does well in explaining the “What?” and the “How?” of natural phenomena but not the “Why?”—the ultimate cause (Roth, 1999). In this sense, the scientific method has limitations (Dickson, 2000), especially in regard to morality and ethics (Dickson, 2000; Roth, 1999). Consequently, the worldview of naturalistic science is incomplete because it does not and cannot on its own give a holistic explanation of reality (Dybdahl, 2008; Roth, 1999).

The problem of evil: revelation beyond reason

Charles Darwin is believed to have wondered why a good God would allow such creatures as parasites and predators to be part of His creation (Roth, 1999). From a purely naturalistic point of view, there is no evident answer for this inclusion. However, the biblical worldview provides a basis for explaining the mixed messages of good and evil manifested in nature (Gibson, 2012; Roth, 1999), which makes nature an incomplete revelation of God (Hanna, 2000). The Bible also gives a background to the “Why?” (ultimate cause) of evil happenings in what can be called the “warfare worldview” (Boyd, 1997).

As mentioned previously, the Bible plainly states that supernatural beings are on both sides of a cosmic war between good and evil. The biblical theistic worldview, as opposed to other worldviews (atheistic, deistic, magical, and mystical) (Dybdahl, 2008), asserts that there is a supernatural good and powerful God who created a universe filled with beings (both spirit and human) with free will. Unfortunately some of these beings misused this freedom of choice and have continually acted in opposition to God’s good purpose for His creation. Gregory Boyd states it clearly:

The cosmos is, by divine choice, more of a democracy than it is a monarchy. The warfare worldview thus presupposes the reality of relatively autonomous free creatures, human and angelic, who can and do act genuinely on their own, and who can and do sometimes go against God’s will. It thus presupposes the reality of radical contingency and of genuine risk. It further presupposes that this risk has sometimes gone bad, even on a cosmic scale, and that this has turned the earth into a veritable war zone (Boyd, 1997, p. 58).

According to the Bible, suffering and evil is:

the result of wrong choices, not by God but by His creatures who have free will. Because of freedom of choice, we have to cope with both good and evil... True freedom of choice requires that evil be permitted... When God gives His creatures freedom to choose, He is not responsible for the consequences of wrong decisions any more than we should blame the builder of a house if an occupant decides to burn it down (Roth, 1999, p. 314).

This free will is the basis for the existence of suffering and evil and the origin of the cosmic conflict between good and evil. From the biblical worldview, this conflict becomes the big picture through which all of reality may be interpreted.

The cosmic conflict worldview provides a background to evil happenings as exemplified in the story of Job (Job 1 and 2) (Gibson, 2012). Nature and life on earth are damaged because powerful evil supernatural beings have misused their choices against God and inflict disaster and destruction on the natural world (Gibson, 2012). This view explains that evil is the result of the curse of rebellion against God and the actions of evil supernatural powers (Roth, 1999). This view is beyond what human reason alone can perceive.

In addition, the Western worldview has tried to provide a rational, intellectual solution to the problem of evil. In most cases, it defines evil in abstract terms. However, in fact, the reality of evil defies the abstract explanations of mere human reason. In the light of the cruel and gruesome sufferings and deaths committed by human beings during World War II, Boyd again states:

Radical evil ... cannot be captured in abstract definitions... The essence of evil transcends words, for words are always one step removed from concrete reality. Evil cannot be adequately grasped in a detached, neutral, abstract way. It cannot be known through faceless, nameless statistics or abstract theorems. All approaches to the problem of evil that do not go beyond these will be in danger of offering cheap and trite solutions. Radical evil can be known only when incarnated and experienced concretely (Boyd, 1999, p. 34).

In contrast, an acceptance of the worldview of the supernatural makes the significance for the existence and reality of evil plausible (Boyd, 1999, pp. 20–22).

A consideration of these points implies that naturalistic science and the autonomy of human reason by itself have limitations and are unable to explain the reality of the supernatural (Dickson, 2000). Christian theology asserts that, beyond the general revelation of nature, there is a need for special revelation through God's Word (the Bible) and the Holy Spirit (Santrac, 2014). This divine revelation is necessary in order for human reason to grasp life's phenomena that are beyond science (Dickson, 2000; Hanna, 2000).

Miracles: beyond empirical science

An acceptance of the supernatural opens one up to the miraculous, which cannot be explained by naturalistic means. The supernatural worldview believes that there is an infinite, all-knowing, and all-powerful God Who created the world, sustains it, and is “free to intervene in his created order, should he so desire.” (Corduan, 2004). In this worldview, nature is the servant of her Creator, implying that God does not annul or work contrary to the laws of nature, which He established, but He continually works through them as His instruments (White, 1894, p. 194). This view is contrary to the view of naturalistic science that the “laws of nature” are fixed and cannot be interfered with, even by God (White, 1894, p. 194). Rather than viewing miracles as God’s violation of natural laws, an acceptance of the divine supernatural worldview will lead to viewing miracles as processes created by God “that are natural in their operation but supernatural in their origin” (Araujo, 2017, p. 135).

By extension, this point also applies to every supernatural being who is a free moral agent. As already mentioned, these supernatural beings are capable of causing the extraordinary to take place, either positively or negatively. In that case, the behind-the-scenes activity of both God and every other supernatural being under Him make the reality of miracles possible in the realm of science. Miracles would then be the result of the use of knowledge, principles, and powers unseen and unknown by the ordinary human. If these points are logical, the miracles in the Bible can therefore be accepted as valid even from a scientific perspective. They can be understood as happenings that are beyond science.

Postmodernism: embracing the supernatural

It is interesting to note that the great upsurge of interest in spiritualism and spirituality in contemporary times is an indication of the rejection of the modern naturalistic worldview by contemporary postmodern society (Boyd, 1999). One characteristic of this postmodern generation is the increasing awareness of the supernatural. Topics of Satan, angels, demons, the occult, psychics, séances, and supernatural interventions can easily be found in the content of books, music, movies, and meetings. In addition, the phenomena of the New Age and other forms of Eastern spiritualities are predominantly and simultaneously growing along with that of the Pentecostal Charismatic movement, which emphasizes the powerful work of the Holy Spirit versus that of the demonic activity (Hucks II, 2012). This approach underlines the contemporary fascination of postmoderns with the supernatural. Interestingly, this view creates a great opportunity for

Christians to present the Gospel story in the context of the supernatural cosmic conflict between good and evil.

Regarding postmodern awareness of these issues, “Christian theology—whether articulated in books, articles, seminary classes, Christian colleges or preaching and teaching in the local church—ought to capitalize on the postmodern fascination with narrative by speaking of God’s own story in all its richness, complexity and drama.” (Groothius, 2000, p. 136). Presenting the Gospel through the meta-narrative of God’s cosmic story played out in human history is a fitting means to convey biblical objective truth to advocates of postmodern relativism (Groothius, 2000, p. 138). Accepting this truth leads to the acceptance of the supernatural worldview with all its implications.

In summary, accepting the biblical supernatural worldview provides a more meaningful understanding of natural phenomena that cannot be explained by a purely naturalistic scientific perspective. This acceptance makes possible the following: (1) it does not prevent the practice of good science, as evidenced by the pioneers of modern science who were strong believers in God and the Bible; (2) it provides the explanation of “Why?” certain things happen in nature, especially from the biblical cosmic conflict background; (3) it explains the problem of evil and its manifestation in daily natural phenomena; (4) it affirms that miracles are not a violation of natural law but can be considered natural processes originated by supernatural causes; and (5) it appeals to the postmodern minds of contemporary youth and their fascination with the supernatural.

From an educational perspective, this article affirms the stance that the complete, consistent, and coherent teaching of the biblical supernatural worldview by Christian educators especially in Christian educational institutions will better prepare students for the challenging realities of contemporary life and mission than the teaching of a purely naturalistic scientific worldview. As mentioned, educated Christian professionals who are not fully knowledgeable of the biblical Christian supernatural worldview and have not completely accepted it are ill prepared to face the nature-defying realities that confront them especially from the non-Western world. Students who are truly rooted and grounded in the biblical Christian supernatural worldview are able to have a meaningful understanding of life’s reality and a confidence needed to handle natural phenomena that naturalistic science cannot understand or explain. An acceptance of this worldview actually shows that there is no disagreement between faith and science in seeking to understand reality. A Christian educational curriculum that emphasizes the importance of the biblical worldview especially from a scientific perspective demonstrates that “living in a scientific age does not entail the abandonment of religious beliefs about reality. In actuality, interpreting the world as a reality created by God, open to divine action, can

offer a better explanation of reality” than that of naturalistic science (Araujo, p. 138).

Conclusion

The scientific approach has brought marvelous positive changes that have made contemporary life convenient and pleasant. However, the knowledge of naturalistic science is powerless against the amazing wonders of supernatural reality as affirmed by the Bible, the daily experiences of non-Western cultures, and the contemporary rise of interest in spirituality and spiritualism in the Western world. Although the secular naturalistic Western worldview excludes the supernatural, its reality cannot be denied in the world around. Hence, this scientific worldview cannot adequately explain all reality and is not the source of all truth. However, the biblical Christian theist worldview, especially with its cosmic conflict background, sufficiently explains the “Why?” of the natural phenomena that goes beyond the limits of naturalistic science. For example:

Though we exist in a material world, Scripture reveals to us a reality much greater and deeper than the materials electromagnetic waves impinging upon our eyes can show us. Answered prayers, miracles, providence, the intervention of angels, fulfilled prophecies—all burst through the narrow parameters of materialism and point to realms of existence beyond subatomic particles and quantum fields (Goldstein, 2017b).

From the biblical Christian point of view, the worldview of naturalistic science cannot fully and meaningfully explain all of life’s realities. It all indeed goes beyond Science.

Notes on contributor

Ikechukwu Michael Oluikpe is an associate professor of New Testament Studies, Biblical and Applied Theology. The writer is a young, married, Nigerian, Adventist scholar with a Doctor of Philosophy in Religion, emphasis in Biblical Studies and specialty in New Testament Studies. He is currently an associate professor in the above institution. He has a passion for writing research in the area of biblical Christian faith.

ORCID

Ikechukwu Michael Oluikpe  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4806-3759>

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