

Editorial: No battle between science and religion

March 20, 2015

Most American evangelicals don't believe science and religion are at war.

Among evangelicals who participated in a nationwide survey, almost 70 percent said they "do not view religion and science as being in conflict," reported Elaine Howard Ecklund, director of the [Religion and Public Life Program](#) at Rice University.



Editor Marv Knox spoke to 200 scientists, pastors and related professionals during a conference sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science's [Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion](#). Religion News Service [covered](#) her speech.

Ecklund's research reveals a strong majority of U.S. Christians who avowedly believe the Bible don't think it contradicts scientific discoveries.

Among evangelicals:

- 48 percent think science and religion are complementary.
- 21 percent see science and religion as independent from each other.
- 30 percent believe science and religion conflict.

An even larger group than the combined complementary/independent subsets—84 percent—believe “modern science is going good in the world.” Evangelicals particularly join the vast majority of other Americans in affirming science’s contributions to technology and medicine.

Ecklund’s research is good news for people of faith who believe Christians should engage culture constructively rather than hide from culture or fight it at every turn. She provides valuable support for evangelistic, caring Christians who believe loving God with both one’s heart and one’s mind not only is possible, but it happens over and over.

The role of religion is to explain the Who and Why of Creation. The task of science is to explain How.

Her latest findings echo previous research that showed most scientists likewise see no conflict between their vocation and faith: 76 percent of scientists surveyed among a cross-section of the population identify with a religious tradition.

This may sound like news, because we often hear from Christians who take such a narrow view of the Bible they feel compelled to denigrate and undermine science and scientific discovery. They grab the microphone at school textbook debates and step in front of the camera at public hearings.

But this “news” really is old. Augustine of Hippo, a Christian theologian who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries, said, “All truth is God’s truth,” as the RNS article reported. It also cited astrophysicist Debora Haarsma: The truth revealed in the cosmos is “a scientific description of the universe God created.”

That points toward gentle wisdom handed down by pastors and science teachers across the generations. Properly understood, religion and science cannot conflict. The role of religion is to explain the Who and Why of

Creation. The task of science is to explain How.