

Schooled by Francis Collins

Read the passage from Collins' bestseller, *The Language of God*¹, then answer the reflection questions that follow on the other side.

In the twenty-first century, in an increasingly technological society, a battle is raging for the hearts and minds of humanity. Many materialists, noting triumphantly the advances of science in filling the gaps of our understanding of nature, announce that belief in God is an outmoded superstition, and that we would be better off admitting that and moving on. Many believers in God, convinced that the truth they derive from spiritual introspection is of more enduring value than truths from other sources, see the advances in science and technology as dangerous and untrustworthy. Positions are hardening. Voices are becoming more shrill.

Will we turn our backs on science because it is perceived as a threat to God, abandoning all of the promise of advancing our understanding of nature and applying that to the alleviation of suffering and the betterment of humankind? Alternatively, will we turn our backs on faith, concluding that science has rendered the spiritual life no longer necessary, and that traditional religious symbols can now be replaced by engravings of the double helix on our altars?

Both of these choices are profoundly dangerous. Both deny truth. Both will diminish the nobility of humankind. Both will be devastating to our future. And both are unnecessary. The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome. He can be worshiped in the cathedral or in the laboratory. His creation is majestic, awesome, intricate, and beautiful—and it cannot be at war with itself. Only we imperfect humans can start such battles. And only we can end them.

Reflection Questions

1. Summarize the position of the materialists mentioned in paragraph one.
2. Summarize the position of the believers mentioned in paragraph one.
3. What does Collins say is the danger of abandoning science in paragraph two?
4. What does Collins say is the result of atheistic science in paragraph two?
5. What does Collins say will result from either of the extremes in paragraph three?
6. What does Collins believe is the relationship between God and science according to paragraph three?
7. Do you disagree with any of Collins' comments in the above passage? Why?

¹ Taken from: Francis Collins. *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. New York: Free Press, 2006. pp.210-211. Francis Collins served as the director of the Human Genome Project (NHGRI) from 1993-2008.

