

The Ignorant God, Kew Baptist Church, 2016

“Far from faith in God being a hindrance to science, it was the motor that drove it.” John Lennox.

Science and Faith – Enemies?

Read through the following summary about the early origins of science:

- The early scientists shared the outlook of Christianity in believing that there is a reasonable God, who had created a reasonable universe; and thus man, by use of his reason, could find out the universe’s form.
- Melvin Calvin, Nobel prize winner in biochemistry states that the historical foundation of modern science can be traced to the ancient Hebrews discovery that the universe is governed by a single God
- J. Robert Oppenheimer (American theoretical physicist and professor of physics), was not a Christian, said that Christianity was needed to give birth to modern science.
- The eminent mathematician and historian of science, Sir Alfred North Whitehead observed that modern science came from ‘the medieval insistence on the rationality of God’
- C.S. Lewis: ‘Men became scientific because they expected law in nature and they expected law in nature because they believed in a lawgiver.’
- Francis Bacon, the father of modern science, taught that God has given us two books: Nature and the bible. We should give our minds to studying both.
- The towering figures of modern science, Galileo, Johannes Kepler, Blaise Pascal, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, Michael Faraday, Charles Babbage, Gregor Mendell, Louis Pasteur, Lord Kelvin, James Clerk-Maxwell were all theists and most Christian.
- The presumption of law and rationalism: Isaac Newton argued that the regulation of the solar system presupposed ‘the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being.’

Question: Some scholars have pointed out that science and faith are not contradictory, but rather, the political and cultural arguments are over whether there is a God behind the universe. Is it possible to be a passionate Christian and a rigorous scientist? Why/why not?

Question: A friend says to you that they can’t accept Christianity because of science, what would you say?

The benefits and limits of science:

Read the following bio of Professor Francis Collins- head of the Human Genome Project: Science tells us how- but not why- it has limits. Collins was an atheist medical doctor when one day he was challenged by one of his patients, who asked, "What do you believe, doctor?" He says that he began searching for answers: "I had to admit that the science I loved so much was powerless to answer questions such as "What is the meaning of life?" "Why am I here?" "Why does mathematics work, anyway?" "If the universe had a beginning, who created it?" "Why are the physical constants in the universe so finely tuned to allow the possibility of complex life forms?" "Why do humans have a moral sense?" "What happens after we die?"

Question: Discuss the benefits and limits of science as well as the usefulness of theology and philosophy in helping us understand our world and ourselves.

4 Arguments for God's Existence- William Lane Craig

Historically, there are several very strong scholarly arguments for the existence of God:

The cosmological argument from contingency

The kalam [Arabic= theology] cosmological argument based on the beginning of the universe

The moral argument based upon objective moral values and duties

And the last argument will be looked at in brief:

The teleological argument from fine-tuning

- The fine-tuning of the universe is due to either physical necessity, chance, or design.
- It is not due to physical necessity or chance.
- Therefore, it is due to design.

"Now all of these constants and quantities fall into an extraordinarily narrow range of life-permitting values. Were these constants or quantities to be altered by less than a hair's breadth, the life-permitting balance would be destroyed, and no living organisms of any kind could exist."

Stephen Hawking in *The Grand Design* also acknowledge the seemingly incredible fine-tuning, but rejects a Grand Designer: "Our universe and its laws appear to have a design that both is tailor-made to support us and, if we are to exist, leaves little room for alteration. That is not easily explained, and raises the natural question of why it is that way...The extreme fine-tuning of so many of the laws of nature could lead at least some of us back to the old idea that this grand design is the work of some grand designer."

Eminent theoretical Physicist, Professor John Polkinghorne, however, argues that: "A possible explanation of equal intellectual respectability – and to my mind greater economy and elegance – would be that this one world is the way it is, because it is the creation of the will of a Creator who purposes that it should be so."

Question: Look at the way two eminent scientists look at the data of fine-tuning and come to two completely opposite views: one says no God, the other says God. Read Colossians 1:15-20 and discuss what is says about who is behind the created universe.

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

DNA

The complexity of the cell- DNA- Darwin wrongly assumed the cell was basic and simple.

- There are three billion letters in the Human Genome.
- The DNA alphabet – A, C, G, T - carry the instructions to make all living organisms.
- Written out, the Human Genome would stretch 5,592 miles, (9,000 km).
- It would take a typist working eight hours a day half a century to type.
- Read out for 24 hours a day, it would take a century to finish.
- The human body has 100 trillion (100 000 000 000 000) cells – each contains a copy of the entire Genome.

For the last half of the twentieth century, Antony Flew (1923-2010) was the world's most famous atheist. Long before Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris began taking swipes at religion, Flew was the preeminent spokesman for unbelief.

Antony Flew was so blown away by the discovery of the human genome, he renounced his atheism: "It now seems to me that the findings of more than fifty years of Deoxyribonucleic acid: the chemical inside the nucleus of a cell that carries the genetic instructions for making living organisms. **DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design.**"

Dr Francis Collins is an American physician-geneticist, noted for his discoveries of disease genes and his leadership of the Human Genome Project says: "As the director of the Human Genome Project, I have led a consortium of scientists to read out the 3.1 billion letters of the human genome, our own DNA instruction book. **As a believer, I see DNA, the information molecule of all living things, as God's language,** and the elegance and complexity of our own bodies and the rest of nature as a reflection of God's plan.

Question: If you found the word "Cat" written on a cave wall you would infer that someone wrote it as it conveys meaning and information and could not be random or without intelligent cause. Now that science has recently discovered a 3 billion lettered word in each of your cells, what do you think the best explanation for the presence of that information is? How might you talk about this with an atheist/agnostic friend?

Summary

There is no conflict between pursuing science and having a deep love and faith in God. In fact, handled rightly and with humility, true scientific endeavor can lead to deeper awe and wonder for God and respect for humanity, and devoted and sincere love of God can lead to a deeper appreciation of the gift that science is.

Some Scientists on Science and Faith

Alan Sandage (winner of the Crawford prize in astronomy): "I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is a mystery but is the explanation for the miracle of existence, why there is something instead of nothing."

Frank Tipler (Professor of Mathematical Physics): "When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straightforward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics." Note: Tipler since has actually converted to Christianity, hence his latest book, *The Physics Of Christianity*.

Arthur L. Schawlow (Professor of Physics at Stanford University, 1981 Nobel Prize in physics): "It seems to me that when confronted with the marvels of life and the universe, one must ask why and not just how. The only possible answers are religious. . . . I find a need for God in the universe and in my own life."

Science and Faith Experts

Each of these people have written numerous books and there are many articles and media resources on the web.

- Alister McGrath, Professor of Science and Religion at the University of Oxford
- John Lennox, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford
- Nancey Murphy, Senior Professor of Christian Philosophy, Fuller Seminary
- William Lane Craig, Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology