

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Has science disproved the existence of God?

"...when he goes into his science lab he never leaves his faith in God outside the door but takes it with him and equally he does not leave his science outside the gates of the church either..."

Has science disproved the existence of God? The simple answer to this question is no, because science can neither be used to *prove* nor *disprove* the existence of God.

The main reason why science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God is primarily because God is infinitely more superior being than we are, indeed the immense amounts of knowledge that we currently possess is still miniscule compared with the vastness and complexity of the God in whose universe we live. It would be rather like a snail trying to comprehend a human in whose garden it happens to be in. The snail simply does not possess the intelligence to discover or adequately explain what a human is. Likewise man can never fully explain or for that matter explain away God, simply because he is a greater being.

This is why God says:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9) (NIV)

It is therefore down to the superior being to reveal himself to the inferior being. It is down to God to reveal himself to us and that is precisely what he has done most clearly through his Son Jesus Christ but also through his written word the Bible as well as through the creation he has made. We therefore have to weigh up and examine all the evidence revealed to us, which is a scientific principle in itself.

Unnatural Enemies

John Blanchard points out that when the Royal Society, Britain's oldest and most prestigious body of its kind, was founded in 1662, its founders had no qualms about dedicating their scientific work 'to the glory of God'.

Nowadays however, it appears that there has been a divorce between science and religion, which should never have occurred. They are not enemies, but friends, for Biblical Christianity has never had anything to fear from honest science. Indeed, science sheds much light on the sheer wonder, vastness and complexity of the creation that God has made for us to explore. Science tells us a great deal about how the world works and how God-given natural laws function. At the same time the Bible tells us about the God who put those natural laws there in the first place.

Throughout history some of the most prominent scientists who ever lived have retained the benefits and balance between their faith in God and their scientific fields of study. They saw that the laws of nature are in fact the laws of God. Here are a few of the more well known committed Christians who were scientists:

- Francis Bacon, (1561-1626), who drew up the inductive method of scientific investigation;
- German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), acknowledged as the father of modern physical astronomy;
- French mathematician, philosopher and scientist Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), who made massive contributions to hydrostatics, hydrodynamics and differential calculus;
- Irish physicist Robert Boyle (1627-1691), one of the Royal Society's founders and the father of modern chemistry;
- Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), universally acknowledged as one of the greatest scientists who ever lived;
- Chemist and physicist Michael Faraday (1791-1867), who discovered electromagnetic induction and introduced the concept of magnetic lines of force;
- Samuel Morse (1791-1889), the American inventor of the electric telegraph;
- British scientist James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), the father of modern physics.
- Physicist James Joule (1818-1889), the first man to measure the mechanical equivalent of heat;
- Physicist William Thomson (1824-1907), who established the Kelvin scale of absolute temperatures and gave precise terminology to the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics;
- Physicist and astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington (1882-1944), who dominated the

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world of stellar astronomy and was one of the earliest exponents of the theory of relativity.

(kindly supplied by John Blanchard)

This list of prominent scientists who are committed Christians continues to this day. One of whom is Sir John Houghton, chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and former Chief Executive of the Meteorological Office up until 1991.

In the opening pages of his book *'The search for God'* Sir John states ' I am a working scientist; most of my contributions have been of a fairly practical kind to experimental science. I have no training in or detailed knowledge of philosophy or theology. But it is important to me that my science and my faith should not be held in separate compartments but should support and illuminate each other.' (*The Search For God* Lion Publications 1995 p8).

Sir John points out that when he goes into his science lab he never leaves his faith in God outside the door but takes it with him and equally he does not leave his science outside the gates of the church either. So science and Christianity are perfectly compatible and ought to have due respect for each other.

This is why Professor Ghillea Prance, until recently the Director of London's Royal Botanic Gardens confidently said : 'All my studies in science ... have confirmed my faith. I regard the Bible as my principal source of authority.' This view is echoed in the words of Professor Verna Wright, an outstanding British medical expert who originated multi-disciplinary research on bio-engineering, who said : 'Because Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he can address himself to the very issues which science highlights but cannot solve. He deals with the problem of our nature'. Here Professor Wright hits upon an interesting point, that despite the immense benefits and abilities of science, it does have its limitations too.

There are some things that science cannot explain nor for that matter solve, regardless of its great advances.

Science has limitations

Fraser Watts, Starbridge lecturer in both theology and natural science at Cambridge University, stated 'I do not know of any research that conflicts with religion. The problem comes from the ideological position, held by a minority of scientists, that science is the only valid form of knowledge and has got all the answers.'

(provided by John Blanchard)

Watts recognised the fact that although science can tell us much about the world we live in, science has its limitations. Science can tell us how an instrument makes a sound, but it cannot answer the question 'is the music enjoyable?' It can tell us how a plant grows but it cannot quantify the beauty of a flower. It can tell us that a kiss is an exchange of microbes, but it cannot tell us what love is. Science can examine creation, but it cannot examine the Creator.

Incompatibilities between science and religion do tend to arise when some scientists step beyond their sphere of study and enter into philosophical speculation. They make statements which go beyond the scientific data and the truth or falsehood of those statements is not determined by that data. This is what many Christians object to, when certain scientists make absolute statements that are not backed up by sufficient evidence and which often ignores other evidences. Perhaps the reason why some scientists dismiss the possibility of God is based far more on a preconceived philosophy.

Some scientists have preconceived ideas about God

Some scientists do not believe in the miraculous and therefore approach the whole subject of God's existence with the preconception that he does not exist! This in itself is unscientific because the scientist is making a presupposition prior to the examination of the evidence. This evidence is found by considering the following data; the person of Jesus Christ, the authenticity of the Bible, the uniqueness of man, the orderliness of the universe, the changed lives of Christians, archaeological evidences and the possibility of the miraculous (that which goes beyond known natural explanations due to the intervention of God).

The dismissal of the above mentioned evidences are commonplace amongst some claim to be scientific and yet a failure to examine carefully the person of Jesus Christ and the Bible is a failure to examine the clearest evidence we have anywhere concerning the question of God's existence and that in and of itself would be the worst case of scientific neglect.

A common misconception some people hold is that they cannot possibly believe in God because 'they are a scientist!' But as Roger Carswell rightly points out 'there are scientists who do not believe in God, but

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that is because they are people who do not believe in God, not because they are scientists.' (Roger Carswell *Questions and Answers from the Bible* p 40). As you will see from this brief paper, being a scientist is not an adequate reason for not believing in God, because there are many scientists who do believe in God.

What experiment would you use to examine God?

If you want to test the temperature of water you use a thermometer; if you want to examine sound you use a microphone; but what experiment does one set up in order to examine God? Therein lies the key problem for the atheistic scientist who seeks to dismiss God's existence from examining nature alone. There is absolutely nothing in testable science that has disproved God's existence. There is also nothing in testable science that conclusively proves God's existence either!

Yet everything that is portrayed in classrooms, universities and the television today gives the distinct impression that science has indeed disproved God's existence and of course it never will. Why? Primarily because science deals with the examination of matter, atoms, molecules and electrons, but the Bible states that '*God is Spirit*' (John 4:24), so what experiment does one use to examine non-matter? Indeed, can you examine non-matter?

If we can't then how can any scientist operating at the natural level make an absolute statement regarding the supernatural level? No scientist can. As Michael Poole, lecturer in science education at King's College, London says, 'Science is the study of the physical world. Therefore questions about God's existence lie outside its terms of reference.' (Michael Poole *A Guide to Science and Belief*, Lion Publications, p.28).

Perhaps this is why God himself says, '*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,*' declares the LORD. '*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts*' (Isaiah 55:8,9) (NIV).

The closest the Bible ever comes to an experiment is found in the following verses, the first is from the Old Testament in Psalm 34:8 which says: *Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.* (NIV). The second is from the lips of Jesus himself where in John 7:17 he says: "*If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my*

teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (NIV).

Having said this the examination of the orderliness of the universe and the laws of nature *have* enabled many scientists to conclude that there is an intelligent mind and creator behind the complex laws that govern the universe. Take for instance the example of Dr Boris Dotsenko who was a top Russian scientist. He studied in Moscow's State University, where in 1954 he obtained a Ph.D in Physical and Mathematical Sciences.

After doing research in rocket technology in the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, he moved to the nuclear branch of the Institute of Physics in Kiev. He described himself as being 'a convinced atheist, having absorbed Marxist thinking into the very marrow of my bones.'

Yet his studies in science and a chance discovery of a copy of the New Testament led him to the most remarkable discovery of his career. He said: 'At that time I had a particular interest in the Law of Entropy, a fundamental law of nature concerned with the probable behaviour of the particles (molecules, atoms, electrons and so on) of any physical system. This law, also known as the Second Law of Thermodynamics, says that left to itself any physical system will decay as its matter becomes increasingly disorganized. As I thought it through, it occurred to me that as the universe was still intact there must be an amazingly powerful organizing force at work, keeping the universe controlled and in order. What is more, this force must be non-material or it would disintegrate.

Eventually I came to the conclusion that this omnipotent and controlling force was the God of whom the Bible speaks.' (supplied by John Blanchard)

Please note that Dr Dotsenko did not abandon his scientific views in order to accept a transcendent God, instead his new found Christian faith has enriched every aspect of his studies as a scientist and he wishes to pass this on to his students. Now a professor of science in Canada he says: 'As a professor, I want to train my students in science. More importantly, I want to help them to become people who realize their chief responsibilities — to society, to the world around them, and above all to God himself.'

Many Christians are Scientists

If science had 'proved' that God did not exist, then no-one in their right mind would be a Christian, least of all

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a scientist. Yet at this moment in time there are thousands of scientists who are committed Christians and see no contradiction between their faith and their specialised scientific field of study.

Here are what some more well known scientists from the past have said about their faith:

Samuel F.B. Morse the inventor of the first telegraph said 'The nearer I approach the end of my pilgrimage, the clearer is the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible, the grandeur and sublimity of God's remedy for fallen man are more appreciated and the future is illuminated with hope and joy' (Roger Carswell *Questions and Answers from the Bible*; Ambassador publications pg 40).

Michael Faraday – Inventor of the electric generator. "The Bible, and it alone, with nothing added to it nor taken away from it by man, was the sole and sufficient guide for each individual at all times and in all circumstances." (Roger Carswell *Questions and Answers from the Bible*; Ambassador publications pg 40).

Dr Boris P. Dotsenko – one time head of nuclear physics, Institute of Physics, Kiev: "Today I know that the Bible is the greatest book of faith, in which the acts of God are recorded for believers. Its final proof will come with the return of our Lord and the establishment of His kingdom." (Roger Carswell *Questions and Answers from the Bible*; Ambassador publications pg 40).

Albert Einstein was once commended for his great discoveries in his theory of relativity, but Einstein humbly replied, 'All I am doing is tracing the lines that God already put there in the first place!' I believe that Einstein got it right and his comment expressed the balance between true science and the true God. Science explores the universe that God has made, and yes it might find out some of the means that God used in order to create the universe, but it must never exclude God from his own universe, for to do so is to create the greatest 'missing link' in all our equations.

The same evidence but a different conclusion

There is absolutely nothing that has been discovered by science that has shaken or disproved God's existence. Christians who are scientists look through exactly the same microscope at molecules and organisms and peer through the same telescope at the night sky and yet come to a totally different conclusion based on the same evidence as the atheistic scientist.

In fact the Christian has included extra evidence that the atheist cannot bring themselves to seriously consider - the Bible as God's revelation of Himself to us. Yet the Bible contains evidence that is equally as valid as any fossil that is dug from the ground or new planet that is discovered. This discovery of God has enriched each of these scientists perspective in their respective field of scientific study and robbed them of nothing - least of all their intelligence.

As Sir John Houghton concludes at the end of his book *The Search For God*: 'Theology by its very nature should have very wide horizons. God, after all, if he is God at all, is involved in everything. Yet so often our view of God is a limited one; we allow him to be present in the spiritual side of life, but give him little say in more material things. There are two revelations of God – the revelation in nature and the revelation in the person of Jesus.

Including God in the scientific picture is like the inclusion of perspective in a picture. But a picture is still a two – dimensional image. Adding God's self-revelation in Jesus is like having binocular vision of a three dimensional scene. An appreciation of depth is present when a scene is viewed with both eyes or through a pair of binoculars rather than through one eye...

Our appreciation of God is very flat unless we look at the whole range of his activity in an integrated way. ... 'Science and religion are not poles apart. Both are searching for reality and truth... A common experience of those who pursue the search for God is the discovery that God is quietly but intently searching for them. If you feel that God is pursuing you, don't play hard to get!' (*The Search for God* p 216)

Its amazing to think that millions of dollars are ploughed into developing satellites that listen out for possible signs of superior life forms on other planets that may be trying to contact us– yet at the same time

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some people cannot bring themselves to accept that *THE* most superior life form of all has already been in touch with us – but many chose to ignore him!

The most unscientific thing a person can do is to write off something which they have not examined properly. But that is exactly what many people do when it comes to Christianity. They may have some vague idea about what the Bible says or a bad experience of church-ianity which gives them enough religion to inoculate them from the real thing! Re-examine the Bible and the God who is there and who has not left himself dumb.

The response to this question is based on work done wholly or in part by Colin Webster.

<http://www.cornerstone-evangelical.org.uk>
colinwebster1@ntlworld.com

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