

Are Science and Christianity Compatible?

Atheist Richard Dawkins from Oxford and leading geneticist Francis Collins debated the subject of God versus Science in a *Time* magazine feature article.¹ At issue was whether belief in Science and God are compatible.

Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, argues that belief in God has been made irrelevant by new scientific discoveries. Collins, a Christian who led 2400 scientists in mapping the human genetic blueprint, sees it differently, stating that belief in both God and science is totally reasonable.

Although the Bible clearly states that God created the universe, it reveals nothing about *how* He did it. Yet its message that God is rational and personal profoundly influenced scientists such as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Pascal and Faraday. Their belief that the world was created by a reasonable God gave them confidence in scientific observation and experimentation.

As Christians, these scientists believed in an all powerful, all knowing Creator who, although not limited by natural laws, chose to use them in the universe. These brilliant men and women were fascinated with the world around us, and sought to discover the mysteries behind what they deemed as God's creation.

Jesus and Creation

The eyewitnesses to Jesus tell us that he continually demonstrated creative power over nature's laws. The New Testament tells us that before Jesus became a man, he eternally existed with his Father in heaven. In fact, the author of Hebrews as well as the apostles John and Paul write of Jesus as Creator. Paul tells the Colossians:

"Now Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God. He existed before creation began, for it was through him that everything was made, whether spiritual or material, seen or unseen....In fact, every single thing was created through and for him....Life from nothing began through him, and life from the dead began through him, and he is therefore justly called the Lord of all." Colossians 1:15-17 J.B. Phillips

When Paul said that "life from nothing began through him [Jesus]," he was making a statement that had no scientific backing at the time. In fact, scientists were of the opinion that matter had always existed in one form or another.

Materialists reasoned that if matter has always existed, then there never had been a creation. This led atheist Carl Sagan to declare on international TV that "the cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."²

Sagan's materialistic worldview and the Christian worldview can't both be right. The question is, "does science shed any light on our origins"? So, who are we to believe? That was the question facing seventeen year-old Jeff Smith.

Jeff was confused. At a camp he heard that Jesus Christ offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life. More than that, he discovered that Jesus designed us to have a life of meaning, purpose, and hope. For the first time in his life Jeff felt like he understood why he was here on earth. He wanted forgiveness of sins, and he wanted his life to have meaning and purpose.

But Jeff struggled intellectually. He wanted to believe Jesus is real, but he loved science. He wondered, "Is it possible to believe in both creation and science?"

For Jeff and others who want to believe in both God and science, there is good news. In the past few decades, an increasing number of leading scientists have publicly spoken of stunning new evidence that supports the biblical view of creation. And many of these scientists have no personal faith in God.

So, what is this evidence that has many scientists suddenly speaking of a Creator? To answer those questions we need to look at recent discoveries in astronomy and molecular biology, letting the evidence speak for itself. [For a more in-depth study, read the articles at www.y-Origins.com.]

One Time Beginning

Throughout human history man has gazed in awe at the stars, wondering what they are and how they got there.

Although on a clear night we only see about 6,000 stars, trillions of them are spread out among billions of galaxies.

However, prior to the 20th century, most scientists believed our Milky Way galaxy was the entire universe, and that only about 100 million stars existed. The prevailing view even then was that our material universe had always existed.

But in the early 20th century, astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered the universe actually had a beginning. A beginning implies a "Beginner," which the Bible had firmly revealed. Concerned materialists like Sir Fred Hoyle scoffed at the idea of a one-time beginning, sarcastically calling the explosion a "big bang." However, the evidence for a beginning kept mounting. Finally, in 1992, COBE satellite experiments proved that the universe really did have a one-time beginning.³ Doubters were silenced by the overwhelming evidence. For lack of a better name, this beginning became known by Hoyle's label of "the big bang." [see "Back to the Beginning"]

Many scientists realized that this discovery coincided with the Genesis account of a beginning. Furthermore, they realized that prior to creation even matter and energy could not have existed. Therefore, after centuries of erroneous belief, science came around to agree with the Bible that everything came from *nothing*.

Some scientists had a major problem with this confirmation of the Bible, and sought other explanations. However, others like agnostic George Smoot, the Nobel Prize winning scientist in charge of the COBE experiment admits:

"There is no doubt that a parallel exists between the big bang as an event and the Christian notion of creation from nothing."⁴

The COBE experiments and Einstein's theorems both confirm a one time creation of the universe, a position the Bible has maintained for 3500 years.

Finely-Tuned for Life

It was difficult enough for materialists to accept the evidence for a one-time creation event. But more startling discoveries about our universe were to follow.

Scientists calculated that for life to exist, each of nature's laws had to be precisely fine-tuned. In other words, gravity and the other forces of nature had to measure within very narrow parameters or our universe couldn't exist. Had the force that led to creation been weaker, gravity would have pulled all matter back into a "big crunch." Had it been stronger, stars and galaxies couldn't have formed.

Likewise, our solar system and planet also need to be just right for life to exist. For example, we all realize that without an atmosphere of oxygen, none of us would be able to breathe. And without oxygen, water couldn't exist. Without water there would be no rainfall for our crops. Other elements such as hydrogen, nitrogen, sodium, carbon, calcium, and phosphorus are also essential for life.

The size and nature of our planet, sun, and moon also need to be just right. And there are dozens of other conditions that needed to be exquisitely fine-tuned or we wouldn't be here to think about it.⁵

Those scientists who believed in God may have expected such fine-tuning, but those who had no faith were unable to explain the remarkable "coincidences." Theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, an agnostic, writes:

"The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life."⁶

Scientists evaluated the probability of whether such remarkable fine-tuning could have been accidental. Odds-makers know that even long-shots can eventually win at the racetrack. So, just how long are the odds against life existing by chance? According to most scientists, the odds of us being here by chance is *impossible*.

Cosmologists compared the odds against life occurring by accident with those of shooting an arrow from Earth at a small target on the planet Pluto and hitting the bullseye. Imagine the engineering required if such a feat were even possible. Such odds would be comparable with winning over a hundred Powerball lotteries after purchasing

only one ticket for each. Impossible---unless the outcome was fixed by someone behind the scenes. And that is what many scientists are concluding---Someone behind the scenes designed and created the universe.

These incredible odds are far beyond anything mere chance and time could accomplish. This new understanding of our universe led scientists like astronomer George Greenstein to ask:

“Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon the scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being?”⁷

Some materialists have tried to explain away the fine-tuning of the universe as luck. However, others have been more open to realism. Sir Fred Hoyle, a committed agnostic, was stunned by the evidence for a Creator, remarking:

“A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”⁸

Einstein came to the same conclusion. Although he wasn't religious, and didn't believe in a personal God, Einstein pondered the genius behind the universe, calling it "an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection."⁹

Scientists continue their quest for an explanation as to what was behind the creation of the universe. But the deeper they dig, the more in awe they are of the unexplainable origin of our universe and its remarkable fine-tuning.

DNA: The Language of Life

Although the Bible tells us that Jesus created all life, it says nothing about how He did it. However, some of the mysteries of creation are now being discovered.

For example, in the past half century, scientists have learned that a tiny molecule called DNA is the “brains” behind each cell in our bodies and every other living thing. Yet the more they discover about DNA, the more amazed they are at the brilliance behind it.

Although evolutionists believe that DNA evolved through natural selection, they have no idea how such an intricately complex molecule could ever have begun by mere chance. DNA's intricate complexity caused its co-discoverer, Francis Crick, to believe that it could never have originated on earth naturally. Crick, an evolutionist who believed life is so complex it must have come from outer space, wrote,:

“An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to almost be a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.”¹⁰

The coding behind DNA reveals such intelligence that it staggers the imagination. A mere pinhead of it contains information equivalent to a stack of paperback books that would encircle the earth 5,000 times. And DNA operates like a language with its own extremely complex software code. Microsoft founder Bill Gates says that the software of DNA is “far, far more complex than any software we have ever developed.”¹¹

Materialists believe that all this complexity originated through natural selection. Yet, as Crick remarked, natural selection could never have produced the first molecule. Since no scientific process, including natural selection, can explain DNA's origin, many scientists believe that it must have been designed.

It is understandable for Christians to see DNA as evidence for a Creator. But for a renowned atheist to change positions after 50 years of lecturing and debating against God would be an event of seismic implications, especially to materialists.

Yet, that is exactly what happened with Professor of Philosophy, Antony Flew. After proclaiming atheism in university classrooms, books, and lectures for fifty years, Flew's atheism came to an abrupt end when he learned of the intelligence behind DNA. Flew explains why he is no longer an atheist:

“What I think the DNA material has done is to show that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements together. The enormous complexity by which the results were achieved look to me like the work of intelligence....It now seems to me that the finding of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design.”¹²

Although Flew is not a Christian, he now admits that the “software” behind DNA is too complex to have originated without a “designer.” And Flew is certainly not alone. The discovery of the incredible intelligence behind DNA has convinced many former agnostics and atheists that life in our universe is not an accident.

Fingerprints of a Designer

In summary, three recent scientific discoveries have convinced many scientists that an intelligent Designer both planned and created our universe:

1. The beginning of the universe and its laws
2. The remarkable fine-tuning of nature’s laws making life possible
3. The intricate complexity of DNA

So what are leading scientists saying about these remarkable discoveries? Stephen Hawking, recognized as one of the world’s leading theoretical physicists, asks,

What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe.¹³

Upon deeper reflection, Hawking states, “There must be religious overtones. But I think most scientists prefer to shy away from the religious side of it.”¹⁴ And even though many scientists do shy away from the religious implications of these new discoveries, an increasing number are now admitting that a Designer’s fingerprints are coming into view. (See what leading scientists are saying: <http://www.y-origins.com/index.php?p=quotes>)

The fact that many scientists are now openly speaking of God doesn’t mean that all materialists like Flew are relinquishing their atheistic views. In fact, many like Richard Dawkins are becoming even more aggressive against faith in God. Yet, when one looks objectively at the evidence regarding the origin of the universe and the intricate complexity of DNA, even many non-Christian scientists admit that the evidence of a Designer’s “fingerprints” are coming into focus.

Dr. Robert Jastrow is one such scientist. Jastrow is a theoretical physicist who joined NASA when it was formed in 1958. Jastrow helped establish the scientific goals for the exploration of the moon during the Apollo lunar landings. He set up and directed NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, which conducts research in astronomy and planetary science. Jastrow, an agnostic, wrote these thoughts, reflecting the view of many scientists:

“For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”¹⁵

As an agnostic, Jastrow has no Christian agenda behind his conclusions. He simply notes that the biblical view of a one-time beginning of the universe has finally been confirmed by science. And this “beginning” was not some happenstance explosion, but rather a precisely engineered event that made human life possible. This conclusion perfectly coincides with the biblical statement, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

If the Bible is right, and God does exist, how can we know what He is like? Has He communicated to us personally? The eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ tell us that he claimed to fully represent the one true God. And although many others have claimed they speak for God, Jesus’ followers tell us that he backed up his claim.

But did Jesus provide proof that he spoke for God? He reportedly performed miraculous deeds that required creative power. However, the most dramatic miracle of all was his resurrection from the dead. No other person in history had ever died, been buried for three days, and then returned to life. If true, Jesus Christ would have provided ample evidence that his words were truly the words of God.

Endnotes

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