

Science and Religion - Hasn't Science disproved God?

(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)

Pages 1-12: Understanding the Evidence and Strategy for Answering

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PAGES 1-12: UNDERSTANDING THE EVIDENCE AND STRATEGY FOR ANSWERING

1. IDENTIFY AND CLARIFY THE ORIGINS OF THE QUESTION

- a. Existential (Heart)
 - The Bible (and Christians) are pre-scientific;
 - The Bible is full of weird stuff;
 - This is just what everyone believes – i.e., that science has disproved Christianity;
 - Christianity is irrational and unintelligent.

- b. Presuppositions (Worldview, Plausibility Structures)
 - Evolution proves there is no God;
 - Science proves there is no God;
 - Miracles do not exist;
 - Science deals with 'fact' and religion deals with 'faith';
 - Religion gives us a 'god of the gaps'.

- c. Evidence (Mind)
 - Fossils, scientists, etc.;
 - Arguments by Richard Dawkins.

2. EMPATHISE WITH THE QUESTIONER, THE QUESTION, THE OBJECTION

- a. Find common ground and empathise with their question – “I too wish that ...!”
- b. Show the Bible also contains their question (as it often does)!
- c. Agree the Bible is full of stuff that is hard to believe, and it was hard to believe also for the original people involved in the events (e.g. Matthew 28:17).
- d. The Bible is made up of claims that religious and ‘scientific’ leaders at the time of writing did not agree with.
- e. Agree there are unthinking people who call themselves Christians who are anti-scientific.

3. DISMANTLE THEIR PRESUPPOSITIONS

- a. Show that it works against their position as well – i.e., their question is a 2-edged sword.
- b. Show that their position is as much a faith-based position as yours (Tim Keller).
- c. Show that their position is largely a product of their culture (Western) (Tim Keller).

Presupposition 1: “Science and Religion are incompatible as one deals with ‘fact’ and the other deals with ‘faith’”

Response

Both science and religion are studying the same thing – reality.
But they differ in what they *concentrate on*.

Science studies → material causes (ONLY!);
Christianity studies → material, revelation *from God* (in its various forms).

Science can't say, there are only material causes because it deliberately only limits itself to material causes.

You can't have it both ways:

- Deliberately only study material causes;
- AND go beyond your assignment and make statements about non-material causes.

It is common to believe today that there is a war going on between science and religion. The media likes to report on battles between secular and religious people. These battles give credibility to the claims of Dawkins and others that it is *either/or* – *you can be either scientific and rational or religious*.

But many atheistic scientists believe Dawkins is wrong and that science cannot explain everything and scientific thought can be compatible with religious belief. Atheists like Thomas Nagel, a philosopher who critiqued Dawkins' approach in a journal, thinks Dawkins is wrong to insist that if we are going to be scientific at all the ultimate explanation of everything must lie in particle physics and string theory. Nagel concludes that conscious experience, thought, values etc. are not illusions, even though they cannot be identified with physical facts.¹

The metaphor of warfare to describe the relations between science and the Christian faith became widespread during the first half of the twentieth century. However, during the second half of the twentieth century historians and philosophers of science came to realise that this supposed history of warfare *is a myth*. They pointed out that for more than three hundred years between the rise of modern science in the 1500s and the late 1800s the relationship between science and religion can best be described as an alliance. *Historians of science now recognise the indispensable role played by the Christian faith in the rise and development of modern science*. Science requires a unique soil in order to flourish. Modern science did not arise in the Orient or in Africa, but in Western civilisation. This is due to the unique contribution of the Christian faith to Western culture. In contrast to Eastern religions and folk religions, Christianity does not view the world as divine or as indwelt by spirits, but rather as the natural product of a transcendent creator who designed and brought it into being. Thus, the world is a rational place that is open to exploration and discovery.

Up until the late 1800s, scientists were typically Christian believers who saw no conflict between science and their faith (e.g. Kepler, Boyle, Maxwell, Faraday, Kelvin etc). The idea of warfare between science and religion is a relatively recent invention, a myth carefully nurtured by secular thinkers who had as their aim the undermining of the cultural dominance of Christianity and its replacement by naturalism – the view that nothing outside nature is real and the only way to discover truth is through science.

But philosophers of science during the second half of the twentieth century came to realise that the whole scientific enterprise is based on certain assumptions that cannot be proved scientifically, but that are guaranteed by the Christian worldview: for example, the laws of logic, the orderly nature of the external world, the reliability of our cognitive faculties in knowing the world, the validity of inductive reasoning, and the objectivity of the moral values used in science. Science could not even exist without these assumptions, and yet these assumptions cannot be proved scientifically. They are philosophical assumptions, which, interestingly, are part

¹ Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God. Belief in an age of scepticism* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2009) 91-92

and parcel of a Christian worldview. Thus, theology is an ally to science in that it can furnish a conceptual framework in which science can exist.²

Alister McGrath, a theologian with an Oxford doctorate in biophysics, writes that most of the many unbelieving scientists he knows are atheists on other grounds than their science. Many complex factors lead a person to belief or disbelief in God. It is often our peer group and primary relationships that shape our beliefs much more than we want to admit. Scientists, like non-scientists, are very affected by the beliefs and attitudes of the people from whom they want respect. In McGrath's experience, *most of his atheist colleagues brought their assumptions about God to their science rather than basing them on their science.*³

Presupposition 2: "There can't be miracles – they are supernatural and they break the 'laws of science'".

Response

Are miracles possible?

In the 1600s Benedict de Spinoza gave us the idea that miracles are absurd. He built into his premises his own view that nothing exists beyond the universe. So once he has defined natural law as fixed and immutable, it is impossible for miracles to occur.

But today scientists understand that natural laws don't tell us what *must* happen, but only describe what usually *does* happen. They are statistical probabilities, not unchangeable facts.

So we can't rule out the possibility of miracles by definition.⁴

But what is a 'miracle'?

Usually we mean things like:

- Rare, unlikely (David Hume's objection⁵);
- Beyond a natural explanation;
- 'Break' the 'laws of science/nature' (David Hume).

But why can't these things happen?

- Rare and Unlikely

Life is full of one off, unrepeatable events. This is especially true when it comes to people and historic events such as an atomic bomb, or man landing on the moon.

Because God is both personal and acts in history, he will do these one-off events.

- Beyond natural explanation

Philosophically having an event beyond natural explanation is not a difficult tension to hold if God, by definition, is supernatural, and science, by definition, observes the natural.

Science cannot forbid miracles because *natural laws do not cause*, and therefore cannot forbid, anything. They are merely descriptions of what happens.⁶

² William L. Craig, 'Though Questions About Science', in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (eds.), *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Thought Questions of Faith* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003) 49-51

³ Keller, *Reason For God*, 90

⁴ Norman L. Geisler, Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask. A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2008) 77

⁵ For David Hume 'greater evidence' means 'that which is repeated more often'. So any rare event can never have as much evidence as common events. That means that no miracle can ever have enough evidence for a reasonable person to believe it. Hume doesn't really weigh the evidence at all; he just adds up the evidence against miracles, Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 79

⁶ Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1988) 110

- If you grant that God – by definition – is supernatural;
- THEN you must also grant that he can perform supernatural acts.

- **‘Breaks’ the ‘Laws of Nature’**

But ‘Laws’ are stated this way:

“All things being equal, _____ should be repeatable”

An Example:

“At sea level, and with no impurities, water boils at 100°C and this should be repeatable”.

But in the case of a miracle, *all things are not equal*, because God has intervened.

Examples of interventions (that are not violations of natural law):

- If someone catches a pen before it drops to the ground;
- If someone adds salt to the water you are boiling.

To take the position of saying ‘miracles are a violation of natural law’ is practically to deify natural law, to capitalise it in such a way that whatever God there may be becomes the prisoner of natural law and, in effect, ceases to be God. But God is over, above and outside natural law, and is not bound by it.⁷ *Or to put it another way, while the laws of nature are generalisations about ordinary events caused (and preserved) by God, miracles are unusual events caused by Him.*⁸

Scientific mistrust of the Bible began with the Enlightenment belief that miracles cannot be reconciled to a modern, rational view of the world. The premise behind that belief is, ‘Science has proven that there is no such thing as miracles’. But embedded in such a statement is a leap of faith. It is one thing to say that science is only equipped to test for natural causes and cannot speak to any others. It is quite another to insist that science proves that no other causes could possibly exist.⁹

There would be no experimental model for testing the statement: ‘No supernatural cause for any natural phenomenon is possible’. It is therefore a philosophical presupposition and not a scientific finding.

The other hidden premise in the statement ‘miracles cannot happen’ is, ‘There can’t be a God who does miracles’. If there is a Creator God, there is nothing illogical at all about the possibility of miracles. To be sure that miracles cannot occur you would have to be sure beyond a doubt that God didn’t exist, and this is an article of faith. The existence of God can be neither demonstrably proven nor disproven.¹⁰

Presupposition 3: “You can only believe what science proves to be true”.

Response

But science is a method of ‘inference to best explanation’. It cannot 100% prove things. This is why in the conclusion of scientific papers it always reads, ‘within the limitations of the present study’.

Science itself is just as much a faith-based position as any other claim!

⁷ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 102

⁸ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 105

⁹ Keller, *Reason For God*, 85

¹⁰ Keller, *Reason For God*, 86

- Repeatability and orderliness of the universe (and therefore one can predict its behaviour)¹¹;
- Reliability of memory;
- Reliability of our observations and sense of perceptions (One must believe that our senses are trustworthy enough to get a true picture of the universe and enable us to understand its orderliness)¹².

It should be observed here that the scientific method, as we know it today, began in the sixteenth century among people who were Christians. Breaking with the Greek polytheistic concepts which viewed the universe as capricious and irregular, and therefore not capable of systematic study, they reasoned that the universe must be orderly and worthy of investigation because it was the work of an intelligent Creator.¹³

Further, science is very limited in what it can ‘prove’. It cannot answer questions such as, ‘Where do we come from?’, ‘Why are we here?’, etc. And science cannot give us answer to ethics.

Additionally, if you can only believe what science proves to be true, then there are many things that you are no longer allowed to believe:

- I know my wife loves me;
- We should feed the poor;
- There should be racial equality.

You can't have it both ways:

- Every statement must be scientifically proven AND then make a statement just like that! (which is not scientifically proven);
- Have no faith-based beliefs AND then make a faith-based claim like that;
- Believe in love, justice, mercy, equality, freedom AND then say we are only allowed to believe in materialistic causes that are studied by science.

Atheists have a false understanding of faith. They say that faith is believing in something without evidence. But not all faith is blind faith. I believe that my wife loves me is evidence-based faith. So is Christianity, an evidence-based faith, based on historical facts.

Presupposition 4: “Evolution has disproved Christianity”.

Response

This is quite a furphy because many Christians scientists are happy to believe in evolution.

- Catholic Church;
- Francis Collins from the human genome project.

But look at these statements:

- Mangoes come from mango trees ...
- Oaks come from acorns ...
- Humans have evolved from a common ancestor with other mammals ...

→ Therefore there is no God

There is a problem here isn't there? There is a:

- Non-sequitor (no logical link);

¹¹ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 116

¹² Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 117

¹³ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 116

- Category mistake.

It is true that some Christians – because of their interpretation of a poem (Genesis 1) – do not believe in evolution. But this is very different to saying that, ‘evolution means there is no God’.

You can't have it both ways:

- Believe evolution is a deliberate naturalistic explanation for the origin of life;
- AND then use it to make supernatural metaphysical claims → ‘there is no God’.

Evolutionary science assumes that more complex life-forms evolved from less complex forms through a process of natural selection. Many Christians believe that God brought about life this way. *However, Christians may believe in evolution as a process without believing in ‘philosophical naturalism’ – the view that everything has a natural cause and that organic life is solely the product of random forces guided by no one.* When evolution is turned into an All-encompassing Theory explaining absolutely everything we believe, feel and do as the product of natural selection, then we are not in the arena of science, but of philosophy.

In this case evolution is no more understood as a biological process but a worldview which is no less a faith position than Christianity. Thus, if ‘evolution’ is understood as a worldview of the way things are, then there is direct conflict with biblical faith. But if it is viewed as a scientific hypothesis, then there is little reason for conflict between Christian belief in a Creator God and the scientific explorations of the way which God has gone about his creating processes. So if someone says ‘I don’t believe in God because I believe in evolution’ it is important to ask what he/she means by ‘evolution’. Does he/she mean a worldview or a scientific biological hypothesis?¹⁵

4. DISCUSS THE EVIDENCE

1. Modern Science is based on Christian Presuppositions

- 40% of scientists are Christians both at the start and end of the 20th Century.
- The 1500s scientific revolution was based on Christian presuppositions. Modern Western Science would be nowhere without Christianity.

Science is based on induction, which itself requires:

- Existence of an orderly, external world;
- Reliability of the mind, senses and reasoning.

But it can’t scientifically prove any of this!

It has to just assume a priori that this is the case → by faith!!

Further it was Christian Theism that gave Science this foundation.

- cf. Greek gods who are disorderly and dishonest;
- Asian worldview where the external world is an illusion;
- Asian gods who are capricious and disruptive.

This is why most of the famous scientists were also theists.¹⁶ Consider, Galileo (1564-1642), Kepler (1571-1630), Pascal (1623-62), Boyle (1627-91), Newton (1642-1727), Faraday (1791-1867), Babbage (1791-1871), Mendel (1822-84), Pasteur (1822-95), Kelvin (1824-1907) and

¹⁴ Keller, *Reason For God*, 87

¹⁵ Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God. Conversations on Faith and Life. Discussion Guide* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010) 20

¹⁶ John Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion, 2007) 20

Clerk Maxwell (1831-79).

To say that it's either God or science (Hawkins) is based on a false understanding of God. Isaac Newton did not deny God after his discoveries. The more he understood the universe the more he admired God. It's not 'either or' but 'both and' - God and science.

The great irony is that:

<i>Christian Theism</i>	→	<i>Scientific Method</i>	→	<i>Scientism</i>
God's order, design	→	Assumes God's order	→	No need for God
beauty exists in	→	in the natural world	→	the natural world

- c. Christians believe that science is one avenue to the discovery of truth about physical things, but that there are other non-material realities and other means of attaining truth.¹⁷
- d. Science is incapable of making value judgments about the things it measures. There is nothing inherent in science to guide them in the application of the discoveries they make. There is nothing in science itself which will determine whether nuclear energy will be used to destroy cities or destroy cancer. This is a judgment outside the scientific method to determine.¹⁸
- e. Further, science can tell us how something works but not *why* it works that way. Whether there is any purpose in the universe can never be answered for us by science. Science can give us the know-how but it cannot give us the know-why. The Bible does not tell us the *how* of many things, but it clearly gives us the *why*.¹⁹

2. Science itself is not neutral and objective

Science is not a neutral, detached, agenda-free observer.

- Science also 'sees what it wants to see';
- There is no fixed observer (Einstein);
- Observers are biased (sociologists);
- Paradigms come and go (Thomas Kuhn).

A Christian exercises faith and has presuppositions, as does a scientist, and in this he sees nothing incompatible with reason or intelligence.²⁰

*We once used science to unlock the beauty of God;
we now use science to pretend there is no God.*

3. Origin of life – reasoning by analogy

All the theories about the origin of life that tried to use a natural explanation have been rejected by scientists. To believe then that life is the random product of unguided nature *needs a great deal more faith than to believe in an Intelligent Designer*.

The analogical method can be used for the origin-of-life issue. For the past 150 years, scientists have used

¹⁷ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 117

¹⁸ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 117

¹⁹ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 117

²⁰ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 117

arguments based on analogies to things we do understand to formulate new hypotheses in emerging areas of scientific work. Hence, if the only time we see written information – whether it’s a painting on a cave wall or a novel from Amazon.com – is when there is an intelligence behind it, then wouldn’t that also be true of nature itself?

What is encoded on the DNA inside every cell of every living creature is purely and simply written information. In DNA there is a four-letter chemical alphabet, whose letters combine in various sequences to form words and sentences. These comprise all the instructions needed to guide the functioning of the cell. They spell out in coded form the instructions for how a cell makes proteins. Now when we see written language, we can infer, based on our experience, that it has an intelligent cause. And we can legitimately use analogical reasoning to conclude that the remarkable information sequences in DNA also had an intelligent cause. Therefore, this means life on earth came from a ‘who’ instead of a ‘what’.²¹

5. EXPOSE THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE AND LEAD TO THE GOSPEL

Christian belief and evolution

Different Christian thinkers have different views on the relationship between science and faith. On the one end are those who insist that Genesis 1 teaches that God created all life-forms in a period of six twenty-four hour days just several thousand years ago. At the other end of the spectrum are Christians who simply say that God was the primary cause in beginning the world and after that natural causes took over. Other thinkers occupy the central positions. Some hold that God created life and then guided natural selection to develop all complex life-forms from simpler ones. In this view, God acts as a top-down cause without violating the process of evolution. Others believe that God performed large-scale creative acts at different points over longer periods of time.

The relationship of science to the Bible hinges not only on how we read the scientific record but how we interpret certain key biblical passages, such as Genesis 1. Christians who accept the Bible’s authority agree that the primary goal of biblical interpretation is to discover the biblical author’s original meaning as he sought to be understood by his audience.

With regards to Genesis 1, there are two key areas that bring controversy to how it should be interpreted/understood:

1. Genre; and
2. The language of ‘day’.

If Genesis 1 is to be understood as historical narrative, it must be acknowledged that it is an unusual narrative as a result of the highly patterned manner of the description. Because of this highly patterned manner, many get the impression that Genesis 1 uses “exalted, semi poetical language” within a narrative structure. This enables factual content to be conveyed within a memorable structure and allows the possibility for the ‘days’ of Genesis 1 not to be ‘24 hour earth days with no time lapse in between’.

As a consequence of the above, 3 main views of Genesis 1 exist:

1. The 24 hour view – The days are seven, 24 hour days of one earth week, about 6000 years ago.
2. The day-age view – The days are in chronological order each representing a period of time of unspecified length.
3. The framework view – The days exhibit a logical, rather than chronological, order. The author is actually conveying an understanding about the process of events rather than the chronology of the events.

For more information on the interpretation of Genesis 1 read, ‘Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning according the Genesis and Science’ (2011), by John C. Lennox (Professor of Mathematics, Oxford University).

Thus, since Christian believers occupy different positions on both the meaning of Genesis 1 and on the nature of evolution, those who are considering Christianity as a whole should not allow themselves to be distracted by this intramural debate. Rather he or she should concentrate on and weigh the central claims of Christianity. Only after drawing conclusions about the person of Christ, the resurrection, and the central tenets of the Christian message should one think through the various options with regard to creation and evolution.

Walter L. Bradley, ‘Objection #5: Evolution Explains Life, So God Isn’t Needed’, in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Questions to Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000) 153

Miracles

Miracles are hard to believe in, and they should be. However, in Matt 28:17 we are told that even some of the apostles, some of the founders of Christianity, couldn't believe the miracle of the resurrection even when they were looking straight at the risen Jesus with their eyes and touching him with their hands. The passage shows that we are not to think that only we modern, scientific people have to struggle with the idea of the miraculous, while ancient, more primitive people did not.

The most instructive thing about this text is, however, what it says about the purpose of biblical miracles. They lead not simply to cognitive belief, but to worship, to awe and wonder. Jesus' miracles were never magic tricks. Instead, he used miraculous power to heal the sick, feed the hungry and raise the dead. *We modern people think of miracles as the suspension of the natural order, but Jesus meant them to be the restoration of the natural order.* The Bible tells us that God did not originally make the world to have disease, hunger and death in it. Jesus has come to redeem the world where it is wrong and heal where it is broken. His miracles are not just proofs that he has power but also wonderful foretastes of what he is going to do with that power. His miracles are not just a challenge to our minds, but a promise to our hearts, that the world we all want is coming.²³

6. SOME SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS

What about science?

Yes, the automatic default position is that science is incompatible with Christianity!

But studies show that 40% of scientists are Christians and this number has not changed over the 20th and 21st Centuries!

So this is overly simplistic. There is no conflict between Christianity and science but between different worldviews: one that acknowledges that there is more than the material world and one that denies it and wants to explain everything with science. So the question is, which of the worldviews sits most comfortably with science? The rise of modern science in the 1500 and 1600 in Western Europe provides the answer.

In the end, science and Christianity are both based on assumptions about the universe (it's constancy and repeatability), and both study the same thing.

- But science deliberately restricts itself to naturalistic explanations;
- Whilst Christianity is free to also look at other explanations.

If you want only to stick to natural explanations, that's fine for studying the world, but it leads to a very limited experience of life!

Illustration

This weekend we will have a birthday party for my son. And there will be a cake for him.

A scientist will only be allowed to say that the cake is a product of:

- A chemical reaction between proteins, starch, bicarbonate, etc.

But a non-scientist is free to go beyond this and say that this cake is a product of:

- His wife who baked it;
- His wife's love for his son.

So we need to go beyond what science can study, if we are to fully experience life.

7. EXTRA QUESTIONS

²² Keller, *Reason For God*, 92-94

²³ Keller, *Reason For God*, 95-96

1. “Where does the universe come from?”²⁴

Presupposition

The universe has neither beginning nor end, it just is. Thus, there is no need for a creator.

Response

- The Bible begins with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Bible thus teaches that the universe had a beginning. From ancient times until the twentieth century this biblical doctrine has been repudiated by both Greek philosophy and modern atheism.
- Evolutionary scientists have told us that the universe either came from nothing by nothing or that it was always here. In either case, holding to such beliefs has a high cost for the scientist, for both of these violate a fundamental law of science: the law of causality. Even the great sceptic David Hume said that he never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without cause.²⁵
- In 1929 the scientist Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe is growing apart – it is expanding. The staggering implication is that, as we go back in time, everything was closer and closer together. Ultimately, at some point in the finite past, the entire known universe was contracted down to a mathematical point, which scientists call the ‘singularity’ from which it has been expanding ever since. This initial event has come to be known as the ‘Big Bang’. Nothing existed prior to the singularity, for it is the edge of physical space and time. So the question is: Why does the universe exist rather than nothing? There can be no natural, physical cause of the Big Bang event since it is not the effect of prior physical events or process. Some people were understandably disturbed by the idea that the universe appeared to have been created from nothing and tried to find alternative explanations to avert the initial singularity – but all in vain. It has been the overwhelming verdict of the scientific community that none of these alternative theories are superior to the Big Bang theory.
- Given the obvious theological implications of the origin of the universe from nothing, we can expect that alternative theories to the Big Bang model, which attempt to restore an eternal universe, will continue to be proposed. However, despite many people’s predisposition to the contrary, the accumulating evidence has consistently supported the view that the universe was created out of nothing. Against all expectation, science thus verified the Bible’s prediction of the beginning of the universe.

2. “What explains the origin of life?”²⁶

Presupposition

Life originated in the so-called ‘primordial soup’ by chance chemical reactions.

Response

- The fact that the universe exists is no guarantee that it will be life-permitting. Scientists once thought that whatever the initial conditions of the universe were, eventually the universe would evolve the complex life-forms we see today. One of the newest findings concerning the origin and evolution of life, however, has been the discovery of how incredibly fine-tuned our universe had to be right from the moment of the Big Bang in order for life to originate anywhere at all in the cosmos. In the various fields of physics and astrophysics, classical cosmology, quantum mechanics, and biochemistry, discoveries have repeatedly disclosed that the existence of life depends on a delicate balance of physical constants and quantities. If these were to be slightly altered, the balance would be destroyed and life would not exist.²⁷ And it’s not just each quantity that must be fine-tuned, but their ratios to one another must also be

²⁴ Craig, ‘Though Questions About Science’, 54-58

²⁵ Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 219

²⁶ Craig, ‘Though Questions About Science’, 59-66; William L. Craig, ‘Objection #2: Since Miracles Contradict Science, They Cannot Be True’, in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith. A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Questions to Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000) 103 – 109; Bradley, ‘Objection #3’, 131 - 156

²⁷ For example, changes in the gravitational force or the electromagnetic force by only one part in 10⁴⁰ would have

finely tuned. Scientifically speaking then, it's far more probable for a life-prohibiting universe to exist than a life-sustaining one. Life is balanced on a razor's edge.

- However, while the finely tuned conditions are *necessary* conditions for life, they are not *sufficient* conditions for life. In schools it is still taught that life originated by chance in the 'primordial soup': The earth was covered with pools of chemicals and had an atmosphere that was conducive to the formation of life. With energy supplied by lightning, chemicals in this primordial broth over a period of billions of years linked together and a simple life form emerged. This theory stems from an experiment by Stanley Miller back in the 1950s where amino acids was synthesised by passing electric sparks through methane gas. However, studies later have revealed that such a scenario is hopelessly improbable and scientists today have abandoned this theory. They believe that there never was a primordial soup because natural processes of destruction and dilution would have prevented the chemical reactions supposedly leading to life. In addition, Miller's experiment based on assumptions about the earth's early atmosphere was later rejected by scientists.²⁸
- Scientists once believed in the idea of random chance plus time yielding life. But the mathematical odds of assembling a living organism are so astronomical that scientists don't believe that random chance accounts for the origin of life. Even if you optimised the conditions, it would not work. If you took all the carbon in the universe and put it on the face of the earth, allowed it to chemically react at the most rapid rate possible, and left it for a billion years, the odds of creating just one functioning protein molecule would be one chance in a 10 with 60 zeroes after it.²⁹
- In fact, the whole field of origin of life studies is in a quandary. All the old theories have broken down; no acceptable new theory is on the horizon. The origin of life seems inexplicable. And even if new theories appear, we still must account for the elements scientists use to produce life. Where did they come from? Could they have merely evolved? The most logical explanation is that God created those elements.³⁰
- The scientific evidence is certainly in accord with the origin of life's being a miracle, that is, an event that was supernaturally wrought by God. The Bible and science are certainly not in conflict at this point.

precluded the existence of stars like our sun, making life impossible, Craig, 'Though Questions About Science', 59.

²⁸ Miller didn't have any proof that the early earth's atmosphere was composed of ammonia, methane, and hydrogen which he used in his experiment. He wanted to get a chemical reaction that would be favourable, and so proposed that the atmosphere was rich in those gases. But from 1980 on, NASA scientists have shown that the primitive earth never had any of these gases to amount to anything. Instead it was composed of water, carbon dioxide and nitrogen – and you absolutely cannot get the same experimental results with that mixture. More recent experiments have confirmed that, Bradley, 'Objection #3', 133-35

²⁹ Bradley, 'Objection #3', 141

³⁰ Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 118-19

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William L. Craig, 'Though Questions About Science', in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (eds.), *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Though Questions of Faith* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003) 49 – 71

William L. Craig, 'Objection #2: Since Miracles Contradict Science, They Cannot Be True', in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith. A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Questions to Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000) 77 – 119

Science and Religion - Hasn't Science disproved God?

(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)

PAGE 13: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

IDENTIFY AND CLARIFY THE ORIGIN OF THE QUESTION

Case Scenario: During the past three months you have had the opportunity to get to know one of your classmates better as the two of you take the same train home. You learn that your classmate grew up a catholic but hasn't been in a church for many years. Your classmate these days views religion more as a cultural thing and faith in God an out-dated concept. One day on your way home, your classmate, knowing you are a Christian, asks, "*As an intelligent and enlightened person who studies and applies science, how can you seriously believe in a God? Don't you think science has once and for all disproved faith in God?*"

1. Consider as a group the possible origin(s) of your friend's question.
2. In groups of 2 or 3 consider how you would react and empathise with your friend's objection(s)?
3. Every person holds one or more presuppositions, i.e. beliefs that are subconsciously assumed when they ask the question or hear your answer.
Analyse the comments/questions raised by your friend and identify 3 presuppositions held by them in the sphere of science and Christian faith.
In groups of 3 – provide a 3 point argument to 'dismantle' each of the identified presuppositions.
4. Having challenged the subconscious, incorrect presuppositions held by your friend he/she is now more capable of receiving an answer to his/her question.
In pairs, as a role play, use the following 4 facts as conversation points to naturally explain to your friend that science has not disproved Christianity, but on the contrary science is compatible with the Christian faith.
 - a. Modern science arose (in the 1500s) in the Western civilisation rather than in Asia or Africa;
 - b. Many famous scientists (e.g. Galileo, Kepler, Pascal, Newton, etc) believed in God and even today many are Christians;
 - c. Science cannot explain everything, it has limitations;
 - d. Science is based on some fundamental assumptions (e.g. repeatability and orderliness of the universe, reliability of our mind and our observations, etc.).

When you are done, share with the whole group what you have discussed.

5. Having spent time addressing the 'defeater beliefs' and presuppositions held by your friend, he/she may be now more willing to hear some of the biblical truths regarding their question.
 - a. Many people believe that the biblical account of the creation contradicts the generally accepted theory of evolution that can be explained in the natural world. Considering the creation story in Genesis 1 and its literary genre:
 - i. What can we say about the biblical author's primary intention of this passage?
 - ii. How can knowing this intention help in your discussion with your friend?
 - iii. Consider the following opinion:
"Since there are many different views on Genesis 1 among Christians, those who are considering Christianity as a whole should not allow themselves to be distracted by this debate. Rather they should concentrate on and weigh the central claims of Christianity. Only after drawing a conclusion about Jesus and the central biblical message should

one think through the different views regarding creation and evolution.”

Do you agree? Why or why not?

- b. Read Matt 28:16-17. The passage tells us that even some of the apostles couldn't believe the miracle of the resurrection although they were looking straight at the risen Jesus and touching him. How can this passage help in a conversation with your friend?