

towards ► belief

Science & God

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

We live in a 'scientific age'. Today in Australia science is honoured as representing what is logical, verifiable and repeatable, whereas 'faith in God' is portrayed in some circles as irrational and superstitious. New Atheists like Richard Dawkins and naturalists claim that science has removed all need for belief in God, and religion is no better than fairy tales (like Santa Claus). Sam Harris even adds that *'There is a price paid whenever an eminent scientist pretends that there's no conflict between science and religion.'* Is he right or wrong? The New Atheists, like Harris and Dawkins, claim that no sane, intelligent person can believe in God and they try to pit science against God.

On the other side, mathematician Dr John Lennox says, *'a simple observation on the history of science shows that it exploded in the 16th and 17th centuries in Western Europe in a theistic context ... and the best summary of it is again C.S. Lewis, "Men became scientific because they expected law in nature and they expected law in nature because they believed in a Law Giver." So the basic stance is this – that far from belief in God being a hindrance for science, it was the motor that drove it.'*

WATCH THE DVD

GOD THE CREATOR

Genesis 1:1-5, 21-26; Psalm 19:1-5;

Q1. What do these passages teach us about God?

'The main memory for me was that sense of wonder of actually knowing the God who knows how those things work already and being a scientist is actually discovering the work that God has already laid out and made. Not only that but you can actually know the Person behind it.' (Sharon Dirckx)

Creation is **one colossal doxology (cry of praise)**! We see the glorious presence of God in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat! God reveals Himself through creation as there in the place where we work and play, live and love. The whole cosmos is drenched with sacred (special) significance. Life is shot through with God's presence. It is charged with God's grandeur. This vision of reality ought to enable us to see Him in everything and prompt us to a life of joy, worship and gratitude!

Q2. What popular worldviews does Genesis 1:1 deny?

1. "In the beginning God"-- denies Atheism & Naturalism with their belief of no God & natural causes.
2. "In the beginning God"-- denies Polytheism with its belief of many gods.
3. "In the beginning God"-- denies Humanism because God, not humans, is the ultimate reality
4. "In the beginning God created"-- denies Fatalism with its doctrine of chance or Karma.
5. "In the beginning God created"-- denies Dualism because God was *alone* when he created
6. "In the beginning God created"-- denies Eastern religions where time rotates (Hinduism Buddhism)
7. "God created heaven and earth"-- denies Pantheism because God transcends that which he made.
8. "God created heaven and earth"-- denies Materialism which asserts the earth can be exploited.

Q3. Time, light, matter and space seem to have been created by God 'in the beginning'. What might a Christian scientist want to say about these things?

(Dr John Lennox) *“Can Faith and Science Coexist?” ... Indeed, one of my main reasons for believing in God is that we can do science. The mathematical intelligibility of nature is evidence for a rational spirit behind the universe. If we take the atheist view, then rationality dissolves.”*

GOD THE CREATOR AND MORALITY

Q4. Discuss ‘God the Creator’ as the basis for the moral instruction in each case?

i. Colossians 3:9-10, James 3:9-10

ii. Romans 13:1-2, 6-7

iii. Romans 14:19-23

In each passage God as Creator (and humans as his image-bearers) is the basis for the instructions given: i. not lying to each other; ii paying taxes to governments God established; iii not eating certain food, even though it is God’s good gift, because it will cause a fellow-believer to fall. Paul and James imply that at creation humans were invested with a moral conscience that can be appealed to. Marred as it is by sin it still operates; and, after conversion to Christ, can be renewed for ethical behaviour.

“There is something very deep intrinsically inside of us that’s moral. If you assume what’s called naturalism, there is no God, then you have to somehow explain why those moral instincts correlate with the true moral facts about the world. And that’s a very difficult thing to do. I think people who don’t believe in God, ie naturalists, need to come up with a much better explanation for why our moral sentiments correlate with moral reality...They haven’t to my satisfaction done anything close to coming up with a good argument for why moral instincts correlate with moral reality.” Ard Louis

NATURALISM/ATHEISM V BELIEF IN GOD

Psalm 8:3-9; Romans 1:20

Q5. How might a naturalist explain the apparent design of creation and human intelligence? In contrast how do the above passages describe creation and humanity’s place in it?

“Either human intelligence ultimately owes its origin to mindless matter; or there is a Creator. It is strange that some people claim that it is their intelligence that leads them to prefer the first to the second.” Dr John Lennox

Q6. What is the basic purpose of science? What is religion’s basic purpose?

“Science has purchased its great success essentially by the modesty of its ambition. It only seeks to answer one fundamental question about the world – how do things happen? What’s the process of the world? Religion is concerned with asking another sort of question – the why questions, like is there something going on in what is happening? Is there meaning and value and purpose in the world? And science, when it’s true to itself, has bracketed it out and you need both in science to understand what’s going on. My favourite example is the homely one, natural to an Englishman, of a kettle boiling in the kitchen. I put on my scientific hat and I say the kettle’s boiling because burning gas heats the water, et cetera, et cetera. I take it off. I say I want to make a cup of tea. Would you like to have one? I don’t have to choose between those two answers. They’re both true and in fact if I’m to understand the mysterious events of the boiling kettle, I need both answers. I need both the insights of science and the insights of religion.” John Polkinghorne

SUMMARY: WHAT TO SAY TO THOSE WHO CLAIM ‘SCIENCE’ CALLS FAITH IN GOD INTO QUESTION?

i. Science and Faith are not in conflict because they are answering different questions.

- ii. Faith in an intelligent Creator is more reasonable than faith in naturalistic explanations for the cause and design of the Universe.
- iii. Naturalism/Atheism have no solid basis for morality; faith in God reveals His will does have a solid basis for morality.
- iv. More satisfying answers to life's ultimate questions such as 'who am I?' 'why am I here?' 'what's wrong?' 'Is there a God?' 'Is there an afterlife?' etc, are given by Christianity rather than Naturalism.

SHARING & PRAYER