

#7 Who Is God?

What do we know so far?

In this series, we have been thinking deeply about origins and destiny and comparing the atheistic worldview of Naturalism that currently dominates science, to the theistic worldview that most people have held since the beginning of human history. We've been asking Big Questions in the spirit of Socrates that seek out evidence-based answers using modern scientific, philosophical, and legal reasoning, not just concluding a matter based on dogma or blind faith. We have noted along the way that our initial assumptions and worldview play a major, if not defining, role in arriving at our conclusions, sometimes even transcending the clear verdict of evidence. We've learned to discover and challenge our own presuppositions, then follow a path of unencumbered inquiry no matter where it may lead, whether we like the conclusion or not. We are curious. We want to know.

Since it is evidence that points to the best explanation, we've learned to measure any proposed explanation against how well it conforms to reality. In other words, is what we know *objectively* true and not just what we want to believe (subjective)? We have found that to arrive at a conclusion almost always requires an element of faith to close the gap between "absolutely true" and the evidence, which can only be "the preponderance of" or "beyond a reasonable doubt." For our kinds of questions, some evidence is always missing. Only in formal logic, e.g., $2+2 = 4$, can we be absolutely sure of a conclusion without closing the gap with an element of faith. This is true in science as well as religion. Evidence is what minimizes the gap.

What can we know about God?

In this final session, we explore the deepest of all questions: What can we know about God? We may ask, "What or who is God?" however my main thrust will be based on the Judeo-Christian conception of God as given in the Bible. I will use a definition of God as proposed by Saint Anselm (11th century). He is known to be the first to reconcile ancient Greek philosophy with the Bible and is considered the father of the Scholastic Movement. He developed what is known as the "ontological argument" for the existence of God. Anselm developed a workable

definition for our study: ***“God is that entity of which nothing greater can be conceived.”*** He encourages us to keep elevating our questions and investigation until we reach the greatest conceivable dimension of that subject. As we seek to compare an understanding of God derived from science with one derived from religion, we would say: God is that “Being” maximally endowed with capabilities in any and all “physical” attributes imaginable, e.g., power, knowledge, presence; as well as all “human” attributes imaginable, e.g., love, goodness, justice, forgiveness, mercy.

Using Anselm’s definition, our question becomes “Who is God?” eliminating an impersonal God since “life” is obviously greater than “non-life,” and “personhood” is greater than “non-personhood.” God must be a *who* and not a *what*. We will not be investigating what science says from the perspective of the Eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism and their derivatives, since they are not open to scientific comparison because they do not profess an essential differentiation between the *creator* and the *created*, i.e., the spiritual and material universe (Pantheism). In Pantheism there is no “Creator” that is separate from the material creation. There is one impersonal animating force that coexists with all things. Therefore, there is not a subject/object distinction that is required for scientific investigation. Also, we will not be investigating ethical-based religious belief systems such as Taoism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. They, too, are not subject to evidential-based analysis. Nor will we be comparing to the polytheistic religions of the Greco-Roman empire whose gods were mythical and metaphorical entities. They, too, are insulated from scientific inquiry. We have been evaluating evidence for creation from the perspective of the three great monotheistic religions of the world: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. All three view God as a transcendent Creator. Even though they have differing conceptions of God’s attributes, they all agree that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and all things in them.” This assertion is open to scientific inquiry. I will refer to it as the “Genesis account.” We are employing logic and reason to evaluate the “Genesis account” of creation against the hard data of today’s empirical scientific findings, but without the arbitrary ideological restriction imposed by Naturalism.

What is open-minded science?

In its original form, the scientific method was open to 360-degree evaluation of competing hypotheses. As we have previously discussed, modern science was

given birth by the Christian worldview in the 16th through 18th centuries as the first great scientists were believers and saw the universe as comprehensible and rational, being created by a rational God. When Naturalism took over the National Academy of Sciences in the mid-19th century, it established the dogma to remove God from “scientific consideration.” But who gave the National Academy of Sciences the right to decide that science can only consider “naturalistic explanations,” and that explanations involving “in the beginning God created” were unworthy of consideration? Who gave the National Academy of Sciences the authority to decide that only scientific conclusions of the materialistic kind are valid, and that conclusions derived from the humanities, philosophy, theology, and history — the best of human thought — are not equally valid paths of discovery? It is ironic as science is founded on *philosophical not scientific* presuppositions. Who gave the National Academy of Sciences the right to say that incorporating any thinking in the classroom other than Naturalism “*stifles the development of critical thinking patterns in the developing mind and seriously compromises the best interests of public education... hampering the advancement of science and technology*” (quotes from NAS published documents)? Really? Tell that to Plato and Aristotle, and Newton and Copernicus, who originally taught us how to think critically and consider all possible causes for events — transcendent ones such as purpose and design, as well as mundane causes such as material and natural law. Naturalism arbitrarily limits investigation to the mundane (a 180-degree view) no matter how ridiculous the explanation may be — and its proponents are even proud of it! Richard Lewontin, a key leader in evolutionary biology articulated this:

“Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs... in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment... to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine

Foot in the door.”

In our study we have allowed “a Divine Foot in the door” (in the customary Socratic manner) and found the result to offer a more robust explanation than Naturalism. We implore the academy to return to its foundational principles of scientific investigation and be open to “causes” whether visible or invisible, whether they like the path being explored or not, and base the inquiry on evidential merit not dogmatism. Especially when they have to resort to censorship of ideas they don’t like. Ironically, Naturalism rejects Theism as being dogmatic and not worthy of scientific consideration. Wouldn’t it be better to eliminate the dogma wherever it appears and allow evidence to speak for itself, deriving conclusions based on merit alone? Reason will prevail. Fantasy will be readily exposed. The inquiry will develop the path to follow and lead to where it should go — truth!

The author’s conclusions

Beginning of the Universe — Science and Genesis both agree that the universe had a beginning. It couldn’t create itself or be born out of nothing. Furthermore, science says it cannot tell, or even know, what was before the beginning of the Big Bang. “Something” had to be self-existent, transcendent and amazingly powerful to start it off — or we wouldn’t be here to inquire. Science’s current best explanation is the “multiverse,” which is total speculation and not subject to verification. The multiverse, since it, too, needs a beginning, doesn’t explain our universe except to push off the cause to some unknowable universe-generating “machine.” So it, too, requires an explanation. That’s just “kicking the can down the road.” On the other hand, the Bible clearly identifies the “something” to be God the Creator, [Session 2](#).

Privileged Planet Earth — Science and Genesis both agree that Earth has been elegantly tailored with purpose and design for life to be born and sustained. To happen by natural law and chance alone is beyond the bounds of credulity and believability. Naturalism might plead a better explanation will be forthcoming from unknown sources, but it offers no empirical basis for such a hope. Genesis has already given us an answer. God is the Creator, and he had a purpose for his creation: to build a home to give birth to and nurture human life, [Session 3](#).

Origin of Life — Science doesn’t have a credible hypothesis regarding how life

originated, although naturalistic speculation abounds concerning unknown processes that may be found that could have created the first “self-replicating molecule.” This “hope” is passing for knowledge in science. Media headlines that life has been created out of non-life in the laboratory turn out to be either false reports, or the product of human intelligent manipulation of previously living matter. Genesis states that God directly created life from non-life, [Session 4](#).

Origin of the Species — Science claims that Darwinian evolution (natural selection working on random mutation) has the power to create all the variety of life on earth. This has never been shown. Only minor adaptation to environmental changes has been demonstrated (micro-evolution). That evidence has been unduly extrapolated to be the so-called proof for large-scale evolution (macro-evolution). There is no causal link between the two, only speculation and hand-waving. The historical evidence (fossil record) and the empirical evidence (biochemistry) of the irreducible and specified complexity of the living cell, are best explained by the intelligent design of a species by a Designer, [Session 5](#).

What Is Being Human? — Evolution claims that mankind (along with his mind) is just an evolved variation of an ape-like ancestor, but Naturalism has not demonstrated that, nor does it have a credible hypothesis of how that might happen. Evolution of man is a speculative assumption of Naturalism supported by very little concrete evidence. The competing hypothesis, that man is a direct creation of God, is not only more likely but also provides the theological reasoning for man’s privileged position within the realm of creation — made in God’s image to rule his creation, [Session 6](#).

Who Is God? — In this session we ask the biggest question of all. Naturalism assumes that “God” is the creation of the wishful thinking of mankind (secular psychology), or is some unknown remote force or agent of creation that is not involved in sustaining the creation (deism). Theism, however, concludes rightly the existence of God as Creator based on the cumulative case of the evidence above. The path so far points most likely to the direct and special creation by God. This is more convincing than the case for atheistic Naturalism.

It’s time for open-minded science

Neither Naturalism nor Theism can be fully proved, but in our study, each has been given the opportunity to present its evidential support so that people can

make up their own minds. It's outrageous that in our public education system, students are not exposed to all the data nor the legitimate competing hypotheses. They've only been exposed to the handpicked data of Naturalism and Atheism. That's not education, that's indoctrination.

Naturalism is not a requirement for doing good science as proclaimed by the National Academy of Sciences. In fact, in the 20th century, of all the Nobel Prize winners in science, some 65% self-identified as Christians and 20% as Jews. They are obviously familiar with the "Genesis account" and it didn't point them in the wrong direction. Only 11% of the winners self-declared "no belief in God," i.e., atheists and agnostics (Baruch Shalev report, Los Angeles, 2005). Yet over 90% of the members of the National Academy of Sciences identify as atheists or agnostics. Through their influence they determine what can and cannot be taught in public schools, universities, museums, textbooks, and public broadcasting presentations. And that determination is grounded in Darwinian macro-evolution with no criticism or skepticism permitted.

On the other hand, dissent over the plausibility of Darwinian evolution is rampant among professional biologists (in private), and some are speaking up. Over 1,000 PhD scientists have publicly declared that they are skeptics of evolutionary theory and have signed a public document attesting to the fact — *A Scientific Dissent from Darwinism* (dissentfromdarwin.org). Many signers hold professorships or doctorates from top universities, including Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard, MIT, University of Pennsylvania, Berkeley, and UCLA, among many others.

Many open-minded self-identified atheistic or agnostic top scientists who are ideologically committed to Naturalism are even coming to theistic-laden conclusions as they consider the empirical data with an open mind.

Francis Crick, molecular biologist. *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 be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.* (Crick, however, goes on to defend his atheism in spite of the evidence by believing that design in nature is an illusion.)

Paul Davies, mathematical physicist. The laws of physics "*seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design.*" "*The impression of design is*

overwhelming.” “If physics is the product of design, the universe must have a purpose.” (Davies maintains his agnosticism in spite of his evidence-based conclusion by holding out for some future scientific teleological discovery.)

Fred Hoyle, astronomer. *A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question. (Hoyle remained agnostic/atheistic.)*

Freeman Dyson, theoretical physicist. *Knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of grace and beauty, knowledge of ethical and artistic values, knowledge of human nature derived from history and literature or from intimate acquaintance with family and friends, knowledge of the nature of things derived from meditation or from religion, all are sources of knowledge that stand side by side with science, parts of a human heritage that is older than science and perhaps more enduring. (Dyson remained agnostic.)*

Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist. *The harmony of natural law reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. (Einstein believed in an impersonal intelligence behind the universe.)*

Great science can be done no matter what one’s ideological or theological worldview may be. By arbitrarily limiting science to exploring only naturalistic (atheistic) answers, scientific inquiry has become hampered, and young minds have been prevented from exploring the full range of options. Also, they have been discouraged from using science to mature in the full range of human inquiry and development. I was one of them.

The author’s search for a “reasoned faith”

I was a hard-core skeptic as an undergraduate physics major, and a systems engineering graduate school major, firmly entrenched in the assumptions of Naturalism. In my mid-30s, and at a crucial time in my life, I went in search of answers for meaning and purpose to life. Naturalism communicated to me that there was no meaning and purpose — other than accepting what is known about the universe as a materialistic entity — and making the most of that. Carl Sagan, astronomer, science communicator, and originator of the award-winning TV series

Cosmos (still popular after four decades) put it this way, “*The Cosmos is all there is, or ever was, or ever will be.*” Steven Weinberg, theoretical physicist, Nobel laureate, and atheist, adds, “*Human life is... just a more-or-less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes*” (of the Big Bang). “*The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.*” Theoretical physicist and atheist Lawrence Krauss: “*You couldn’t be here if stars hadn’t exploded. Because the elements, the carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, iron, all the things that matter for evolution weren’t created at the beginning of time. They were created in the nuclear furnaces of stars. And the only way they could get into your body is if the stars were kind enough to explode. So forget Jesus. The stars died so that you could be here today.*” This author needed something more satisfying than that — not a “blind faith” of dogma, but a “reasoned faith” with evidential support.

As part of my search, I was introduced to the Christian worldview and the Bible through the work of philosopher Francis Schaeffer. I couldn’t shake off the possibility that the Bible was correct regarding creation since my fundamentalist scientific training kept bringing me back to the first and second laws of thermodynamics. #1: Matter and energy cannot be created or destroyed. Yet here it is, and here I am, “created”! #2: The universe (and I) is running down like a wound-up clock (entropy). If the universe has an ending, it had to have a beginning — otherwise we wouldn’t exist at this point in time. Along with the fundamental law of cause and effect, the idea of a self-existent, transcendent, all-powerful Creator became a logical possibility — actually more logical since the universe could not come out of nothing, and it was not infinitely old. I investigated the claims of the Bible and was amazed at how it not only accurately described the sequence of the creation events in Genesis 1 and 2 but, more importantly, it better explained our human condition and the secular milieu in which I was living. It opened my mind to the spiritual, moral, and philosophical dimensions of life from which I was sheltered in my secular science education. I considered that the idea of God would give me the meaning, purpose, and hope I was seeking. And I was right.

What is the Bible?

I was a skeptic about the Bible and its claim to be the Word of God, a special revelation by the Creator himself (John 1). How could I possibly believe such an *extraordinary* claim? It would require *extraordinary* evidence. What I discovered

is that the Bible, unlike many other holy books, makes testable evidential claims of history and science using standard academic disciplines that are routinely used to validate the accuracy, authenticity, and authority of any historical document. The Bible has been put to that test for 2,000 years and has proven to be true. It is beyond the scope of this study to review the evidence and methodology, but the reader is urged to investigate the claim. Perhaps a good place to start research would be a general analysis of the truth-claims of the Bible in a source such as *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.

When you read the Bible, you will discover that it asks you to “*examine*” it and “*hold fast to that which is good*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). God begs the reader to “*reason*” with him (Isaiah 1:18), which I did. It declares that nature herself gave an unambiguous testimony to her Creator (Romans 1:20) — even of God’s supernatural attributes (Hebrews 11:3). The Bible introduced me to the reason for man’s separation from God and his rescue plan for mankind through Jesus Christ, as well as a future destiny of eternal life. This was not only reasonable once I understood the biblical worldview of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, but its explanation of reality far outshone any other secular or religious truth-claim I had been investigating. And there had been many: from the great religions of the world to the prevailing secular philosophies of existentialism, objectivism, materialism, nihilism. Today, more than 40 years later, those truths are even more real to me since life’s abundant experiential opportunities and challenges have testified to the reality of the Bible’s wisdom. Christianity has become the organizing principle of my life — my worldview — and it has given me the meaning, purpose, and hope I was seeking, and as a bonus, eternal life and a concluding destiny. Elizabeth Elliot verbalized my commitment well, “*There is nothing worth living for, unless it is worth dying for.*” I had taken Socrates’ challenge to “*know thyself*” seriously and examined the Big Questions of life through the eyes of scientific knowledge and biblical faith. I have followed the path of both for over 40 years with joy and without regret. [Click here](#) if you are interested in my personal journey.

What are your conclusions?

How has this study impacted your thinking about origins and destiny? About meaning and morality? About the Big Questions of life? What’s your takeaway? How might you be different as a result of what you have learned? Are you more

aware of your own worldview? Do you better appreciate the worldview of others? How might you want to follow up in action and study? Join the club on the link below and start asking questions and entering into discussions on the **Socrates Forum**.

Blaise Pascal was a renowned 17th century physicist, mathematician, philosopher, and theologian. He argued that a rational person should live as though God exists and seek to believe in God. He put the terms in a probabilistic formulation known as Pascal's Wager: If God does not exist you will have only a finite loss (perhaps some pleasures, luxury, etc.), whereas if he does exist you stand to receive infinite gains (heaven) and perhaps avoid infinite losses (hell).

Pascal said it this way, *"If you win you gain all. If you lose, you lose nothing. Wager then without hesitation that He exists."*

*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes —
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware...*

— Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*

Author Oscar Wilde put it a little less poetically, *"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."*