**SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH**

by Adam Dodds

*Hasn't science disproved Christianity?  Are science and Christian faith compatible?*

There is, amongst some, the perception that science and Christian faith are at odds with each other.  However, the truth of the matter is precisely the opposite.

To take the second question first – absolutely, yes, science and Christian faith are compatible.  In fact, it was the worldview generated by Christian faith that led to the rise of modern science!  It's no accident that modern science developed in Christian Europe, and not the great civilizations of Egypt, China, India, Greece, Rome, or the Islamic empire.  Paul Davies (physicist) avers, "in Renaissance Europe, the justification for what we today call the scientific approach to inquiry was the belief in a rational God whose created order could be discerned from a careful study of nature."  Based on the Bible, Christians believe in (i) the orderliness of creation, and (ii) the intelligibility of creation. This means, if we conduct and repeat the same experiments under the same conditions, we shall get the same results.  This differs from other views of creation, such as pantheism (Greek & Roman), or the illusory nature of the material world (Hinduism).

Alister McGrath (who has PhDs in Biochemistry and Theology) explains, "There is a fundamental line of continuity between the creator, the regularity of the creation, and the human perception and expression of this regularity in the form of 'laws of nature'." Theologian Colin Gunton remarks that virtually everyone now admits that "the biblical view of creation is among the determining factors in the development of natural science."

Historically, Christian faith provided the intellectual underpinning, and justification, for the rise of the modern scientific enterprise.

Furthermore, many of the pioneer scientists became scientists because of their Christian faith.  Johann Kepler argued that, since geometry had its origins in the mind of God, it was only to be expected that the created order would conform to its patterns. Michael Faraday believed that the truth of the first chapter of Genesis was what gave him reason to be a scientist.  Robert Boyle, who developed the idea of atoms, entitled one of his books The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation.  Isaac Newton wrote more about theology than mathematics or physics.  Contemporary scientist Francis Collins, leader of the Human Genome Project, explains: "for me the experience of sequencing the human genome, and uncovering this most remarkable of all texts, was both a stunning scientific achievement and an occasion of worship."

For many leading scientists, their Christian faith led them to study science!

Now, returning to the first question: "Hasn't science disproved Christian faith?", the simple answer is 'no'.  Many leading scientists, such as Francis Collins (geneticist), John Polkinghorne (physicist), and Russell Stannard (physicist), have studied the evidence in comprehensive detail and have come to the opposite conclusion.

But what about claims such as: "people used to think that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, but now we know from science that the world came from the Big Bang"?  Or, in other words, "hasn't science disproved Christianity?"

The problem with this claim is it involves sleight of hand.  There is no logical contradiction between the profession that God made the heavens and the earth – an explanation of agency, and the Big Bang – an explanation of process.  In short, Christian faith and science address some similar matters (such as ultimate origins) from differing but complementary perspectives.  Let me explain.

Consider, for example, a medical doctor prescribing medication to a patient who has an infection.  The medication works, and the patient is cured.  How do you explain how the patient got better?  Two possible answers present themselves.

(i) The medicine was effective in fighting the infection and this caused the patient’s health to improve.  (ii) The doctor made the right diagnosis and the right prescription.

These two explanations are two different types of explanations, and they are logically compatible.  The first explanation makes plain the scientific process involved, and the second explanation makes plain the action of the agent (in this case the doctor).

It would be illogical to be forced to choose between these two explanations, because they are different types of explanation, and thus are not in competition with each other.  So more broadly, science addresses the issue of process, and Christian faith addresses the issue of agency.

So no, science has not disproved Christianity.