

# I'm a Christian because...

## I'm a scientist

I'm a scientist because I have an innate curiosity for the natural world. The complexity of my chosen field, molecular biology, has drawn me into its endless scavenger hunt that raises more questions than answers. Without God, this challenging pursuit of knowledge might seem futile. The biology of the cell is extraordinarily complex, and so many components must interact perfectly to sustain life. Indeed, all organisms are destined to die. A human is considered long-lived to reach a century in age, which is less than 5% of the age reached by some trees and an infinitesimal blip compared to the age of Earth, much less the universe. At a molecular level, the genome contains apoptosis programming, which provides cells with an efficient and organized death mechanism, and telomeres are constantly shortening, acting as a molecular countdown to death. I once heard a professor lecture that cells are "designed to die."

With death in our DNA, why do we care about biology? Is our goal like that of the Spanish explorers seeking immortality via the fountain of youth? (Even if we attain immortality, which seems unpleasant if not impossible, physicists tell us that the sun is destined to run out of fuel after it has burned Earth.)

The writer of Ecclesiastes asked the question more generally: "What gain has the worker from his toil?" (3:9) The answer is that God "has put eternity into man's heart" (Eccl. 3:11). The reason that believers and atheists alike are searching for truths in science is that human nature is endowed with an innate yearning for the eternal. The natural world provides a glimpse of the nature of the eternal God, because He created it. Its complexity, from subatomic particles to massive galaxies, is a reflection of God's character.

Nature is awe-inspiring, so it is no surprise that humans have worshipped nature since the beginning of recorded history. (Indeed, many professing atheists today seem to elevate science to a religion.) The Bible says that God made nature awe-inspiring for a reason: "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:20). Nature is not the thing to be worshipped; rather, it is supposed to point to God and provide us with a physical image of his eternal power and divine nature, which are otherwise invisible.

Physical death is a troubling phenomenon for many religions. Thus, they promise liberation from the body and from physical reality. Christianity, on the other hand, affirms the importance of physical reality. Death was not part of the original creation, but it is a corruption that results from sin (Gen. 2-3). "Just as sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom. 5:5).

In his mercy, God has provided the way to eternal life through his son, Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a sinless life, yet he willingly subjected himself to a criminal's death by hanging on a cross. Jesus conquered death by rising from the dead three days later. Those who follow Jesus have their sins forgiven through his sacrifice and resurrection, and they are rewarded with eternal life in heaven with God. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

This eternal life is not simply a spiritual one. Our physical bodies will be resurrected and remade in the fullness of God's glory (Phil. 3:21). Eternity in heaven will not be an abandonment of the earthly body. Rather, the flawed and mortal bodies that we now inhabit will be replaced with imperishable bodies (1 Cor. 15). Likewise, the rest of creation will be experienced in its glorious perfection. God promises a new heaven and a new Earth (Rev. 21).

Since the Bible affirms the value of the physical realm, it is a worthy goal to pursue scientific knowledge as a Christian. When I discover more and more of the amazing complexity of God's creation, it causes me to worship Him as the great Creator. Additionally, the ultimate goal of most biological research is to treat or prevent human disease. This is also a worthy goal as a Christian, as Jesus spent much of his time healing the sick.

Like any scientist, I demand a high level of reasonable data to be convinced of the veracity of a scientific claim. Show me the facts and I will respect your interpretation. While spiritual belief relies on evidence of a different sort, I have similarly stringent standards for my faith. I refuse to suspend reason when approaching spiritual matters. I find God's revelation in the Bible to be entirely reasonable and consistent, both internally and externally. Every proposition in the Bible is compatible with every other proposition in the Bible, and furthermore, those propositions are compatible with our observations of nature. Study of the physical world does not reveal the entirety of truth, such as the truth that there is a personal God who has redeemed His people through Jesus Christ. He offers you this redemption if you would believe and follow Jesus Christ.

## Ian Flaniken '10

flaniken@princeton.edu

[www.tennentmedia.com](http://www.tennentmedia.com)