

# Test of FAITH documentary summary

## Part 1: Beyond Reason?

Today, atheist critics of religion argue that science and faith are in conflict and that science eliminates the need for a Creator. Contemporary believing scientists argue otherwise. For them, science studies material processes but cannot and does not deal with ultimate questions of meaning and value. In recent decades, historians have also shown that science emerged from solid theological foundations in Christian Europe, suggesting that the idea of warfare between science and religion is relatively recent. Scientist-believers in the field of cosmology argue that the Big Bang says nothing about the existence or non-existence of God, while the laws of physics actually indicate we live in a wildly improbable universe. Although some atheist scientists claim a multiverse – or infinite number of universes – would explain our statistically unlikely universe, believing scientists see no threat in a multiverse. For them, God remains Creator, whether of one universe or many. Moreover, they maintain that God can hardly be threatened by any human knowledge, and that believers should embrace an intellectually questing spirit rather than pushing God into science's current gaps. However, the scientists spoken to here come from the realm of physics with its love of mathematical order and beauty. It has often appeared a very different picture in the realm of biology, with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

## Part 2: An Accident in the Making?

Some evolutionary biologists maintain our world is one without design or purpose, one engineered by evolution rather than created by God. Believing scientists contest this claim. Two positions critical of evolution as an explanation for human life are Young Earth Creationism and Intelligent Design. Young Earth Creationists regard evolution as incompatible with faith. But evolution is actually compatible with many different metaphysical views, including faith ones. It is also backed up by robust genetic research. For the Human Genome Project's former director, and other believing scientists, it's natural to view evolution as God's mechanism for creating biological diversity – a position known as 'theistic evolution'. However, such scientist-believers still have to wrestle with questions of how pain, disease and death in evolution are compatible with a loving God. Evolution remains a complex, paradoxical process for them, with new life constantly emerging in the shadow of natural wastage and death. These scientists also point out that evolution provides no recipe for moral life. Indeed, they maintain that debates about evolution are secondary, at a time of unprecedented global warming, to the urgent Biblical command to care for creation. For them, science and faith must unite in helping finding solutions to this urgent problem. But there remains a further challenge to faith from science, and that's in the fields of genetics and neuroscience. Here, concepts of human free will and responsibility are being challenged as never before.

## Part 3: Is Anybody There?

The Bible asserts that human beings are made in the image of God. But modern neuroscience and genetics claim that we run on rails laid down by our biology. Some atheist scientists say that brain imaging shows we are totally driven by our neurons and genes – even that spiritual experience is an illusion beginning and ending in our heads. However, scientist-believers disagree, arguing that there will always be neural correlates to any behaviour. Attempts to reduce human beings to sophisticated machines, they say, fail to account for our rich complexity. Moreover, contemporary theories of 'emergence' suggest that the brain is more than the sum of its parts. Instead, it is suggested that complex higher-level phenomena – such as 'mind' – emerge over a long evolutionary process. For these believing scientists, it is wrong to think that we are no more than our biological makeup. For them, human identity also depends on other key factors, including our relationship with others and our environment, and our own actions. Even a genetic clone would be far more than the sum of his or her DNA. Moreover, although genetics rightly points to our affinities with certain animals, humans are also distinguished by unique attributes like consciousness, creativity and moral awareness. For scientist-believers, in conclusion, human beings remain made in the image of God. The idea of science and religion in conflict is misguided. Both domains stem from our age-old desire to investigate and explore. And, for the believer, science can lead to increased wonder at God.