

Has science disproved God?

Saturday 30th October 2010

10am – 12 noon

**Nazarene Theological College,
Dene Road, Didsbury,
Manchester, M20 2GU**

Rev John Allister, curate of Holy Trinity, Hurdsfield, looks at the charge that science has long since disproved the existence of God.

John studied Physics at Cambridge and Theology at Oxford, both times getting first class honours. He taught Physics for 5 years and is now an ordained minister. He is currently writing a book on science and theology and so is in a unique position to talk on this subject.

AiM

**Apologetics in Manchester
Explaining the reasons for faith**



Has Science Disproved God?

- The Popular Narrative
- Objection 1 – Biblical
- Objection 2 – Historical
- Objection 3 – Logical

BREAK

- Creation / Evolution
- Other Questions

Has Science Disproved God?

The popular narrative:

[Napoleon] M. Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on the system of the universe, and have never even mentioned its Creator.

[Laplace] I had no need of that hypothesis.

(circa 1806)

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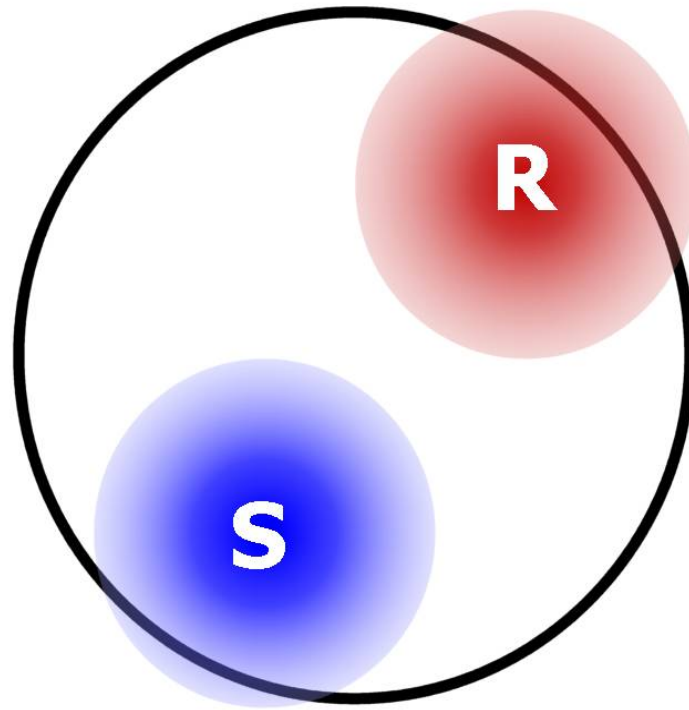
The popular narrative:

It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going.

Stephen Hawking (2010)

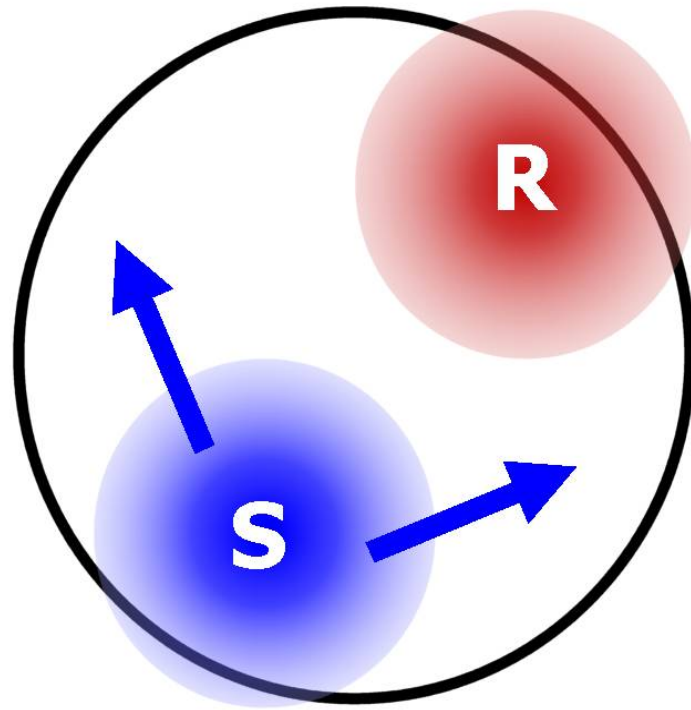
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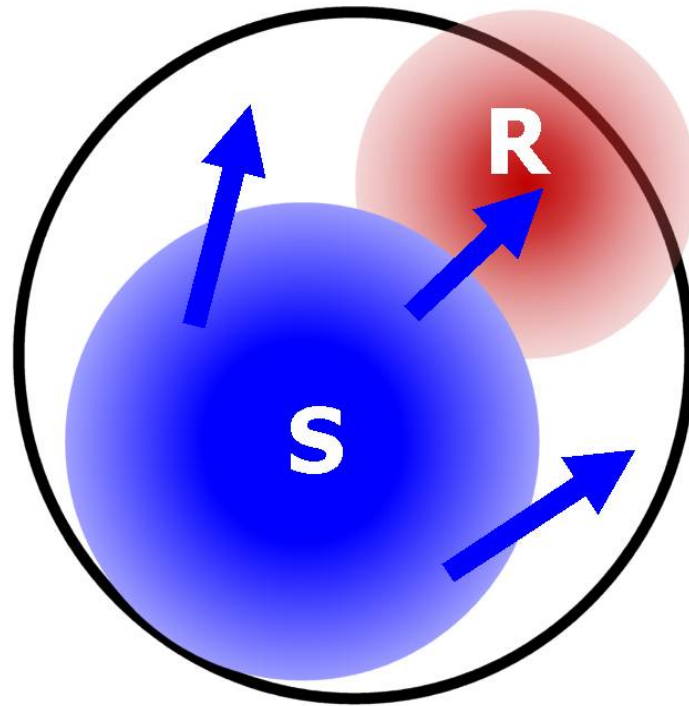
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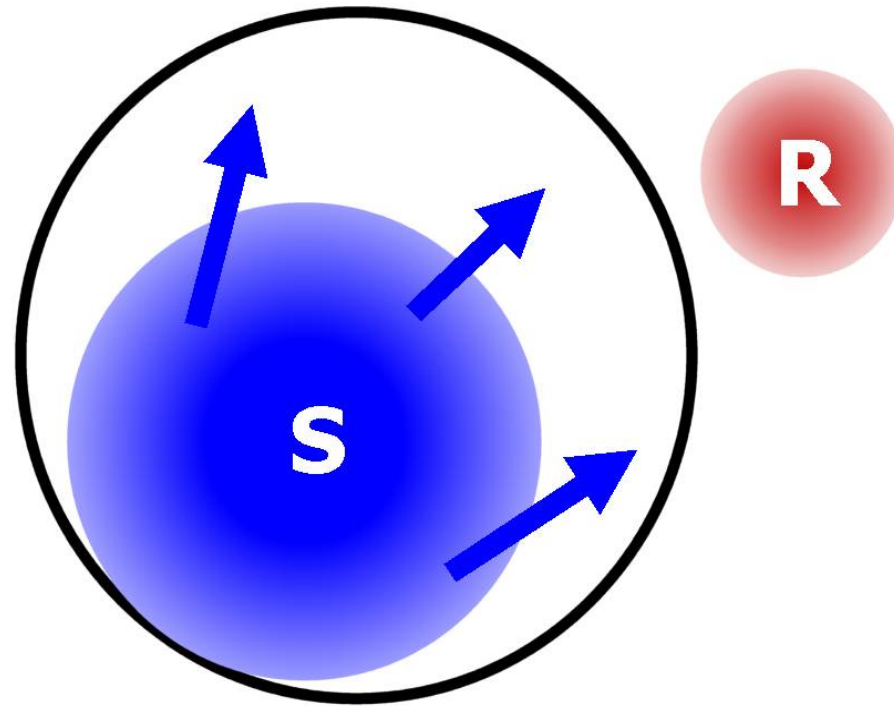
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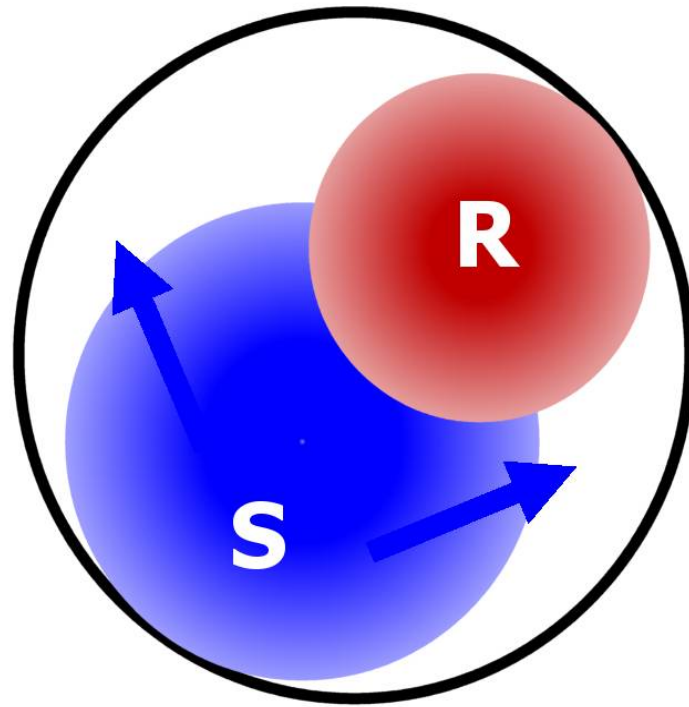
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Popular Solution 1: Religious Relativism



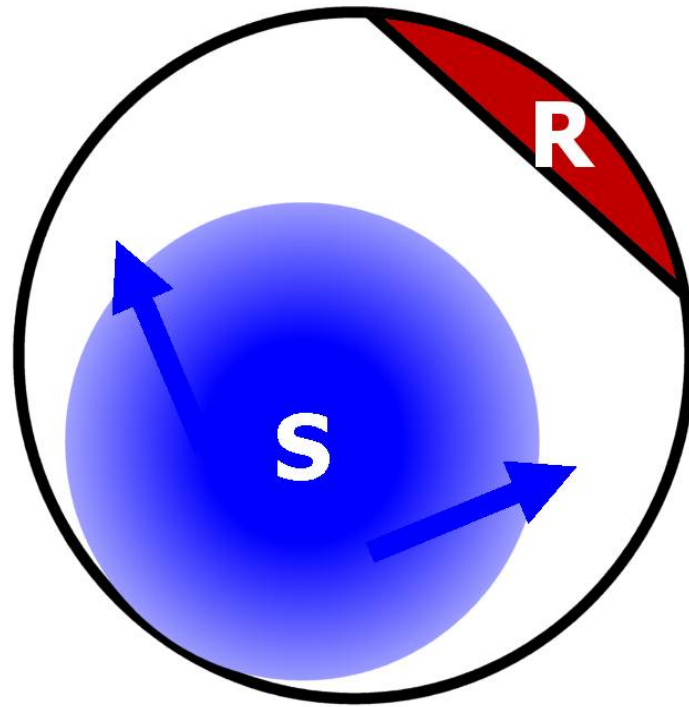
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Popular Solution 2: Religious Fundamentalism



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Popular Solution 3: No Overlap



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Popular Solution 3: No Overlap (NOMA)

I know Stephen Hawking well enough to know that he has read very little philosophy and even less theology, so I don't think we should attach any weight to his views on this topic. I would support peaceful co-existence between religion and science because they concern different domains. Anyone who takes theology seriously knows that it's not a matter of using it to explain things that scientists are mystified by.

Lord Rees (2010)

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Quick Discussion

When have you seen people assuming this story?
Why do you think people assume it so easily?

Which of the popular solutions do you see most often? What are the problems that come from people assuming them?

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Objection 1 – Biblical

Science Describes How God
Runs the World

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I. Science Describes How God Runs the World

[God] made the moon to mark the seasons; **the sun knows its time for setting.**

You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the beasts of the forest creep about.

Psalm 104:19-20 (ESV)

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I. Science Describes How God Runs the World

[God] draws up the drops of water,
which distill as rain to the streams;
the clouds pour down their moisture
and abundant showers fall on the human race.

Job 36:27-28 (NIV)

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I. Science Describes How God Runs the World

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night **the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind** and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Exodus 14:21-22 (NIV)

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I. Science Describes How God Runs the World

When [a miracle] happens, it appears to us as an event contrary to nature. But with God, it is not so; for him 'nature' is what he does.

St Augustine, Literal Commentary on Genesis

The laws of motion... did not necessarily spring from the nature of matter, but depended on the will of the divine author of things.

Robert Boyle (of Boyle's Law)

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Objection 2 – Historical

Without Christianity, Modern
Science is Unlikely

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2. Without Christianity, Modern Science is Unlikely

Why did modern science arise
in Protestant Northern Europe
in the 1600s?

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 - c) There are underlying patterns to the way the world works
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 - e) We can't reliably understand the patterns without experiment and peer review.
 - f) It is possible for people's understanding to improve with time**

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- Professional "scientists"
- "Great Man" theory of history
- changing character of universities
- rise of the educated working-class
- Darwin and the *Origin of Species*

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Objection 3 – Logical

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Ultimate Reality

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- b) Science tries to find "fundamental" laws, but they cannot rest on nothing.
- c) Science cannot show us the meaning of what it discovers.
- d) Science cannot disprove the possibility of a director behind the scenes.

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Discussion

Which of the three objections to the popular story did you find most persuasive? Why?

How has your view of the relationship between science and Christianity changed?

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask?