

Q&A: Is DNA evidence for the existence of God?

by Frank Turek

Once read an atheist who complained that there was not enough evidence to believe in God. When a Christian asked him what kind of evidence he would need to believe, he said he would believe if he looked up and saw written in the sky, “Hey, Roger! This is God. I certainly do exist!”

The immediacy and specificity of such a message would rule out a skywriter. Roger certainly couldn’t explain it away as a chance collection of cloud material or an unusual cloud formation. Nor would he say that, given enough time, the clouds would form that way naturally due to some kind of cloud evolution. A message such as this would have to be the product of intelligence. Why? Because natural laws don’t create specific, complex messages. In all our experience, the only forces we see creating specific complex messages are intelligent minds. Natural forces never do it.

That’s why when you’re walking down the beach and you see “John loves Mary” scribbled in the sand, you know a human being has been there. You don’t assume that a crab wrote the message or that the lapping waves produced it. Only minds produce messages. This is why archaeologists know that inscriptions dug up from the ground were made by ancient humans, not natural forces.

Well, it turns out that all life forms contain messages that are far more specified and complex than the message the atheist above said he’d like to see in the sky or any messages found scribbled on beaches or ancient tablets.

How much more?

The simplest independent life we know about (the amoeba) is a miniature machine of astonishing complexity. Even the ardent Darwinist, Richard Dawkins, admits that the amount of information in this one-celled life form has as much information in its DNA as one thousand complete sets of an encyclopedia—that’s thirty volumes times one thousand in a cell that’s much smaller than a grain of salt. Now, believing that thirty thousand books came into existence from non-living chemicals by natural law without any intelligent intervention is like believing that an entire library resulted from an explosion in a printing shop! I don’t have enough faith to believe that.

This is not a God-of-the-gaps argument, which is a kind of argument that says God must be the explanation for things we don’t know or understand. We don’t simply lack a natural explanation for the complexity of DNA. Rather, evidence for the complexity of DNA is positive and empirically-detectable, and it points to the work of an intelligent Creator. There is no natural force that can create such a message, especially one that is thirty thousand books long. Messages only come from minds.

In summary, DNA points to a supreme intelligence. This is why Francis Collins, former head of the Human Genome Project, calls DNA the language of God. To paraphrase the seventeenth-century mathematician, physicist, and religious philosopher Blaise Pascal, God never performed a miracle to convince an atheist because his ordinary works provide sufficient evidence. DNA is one of those ordinary works.