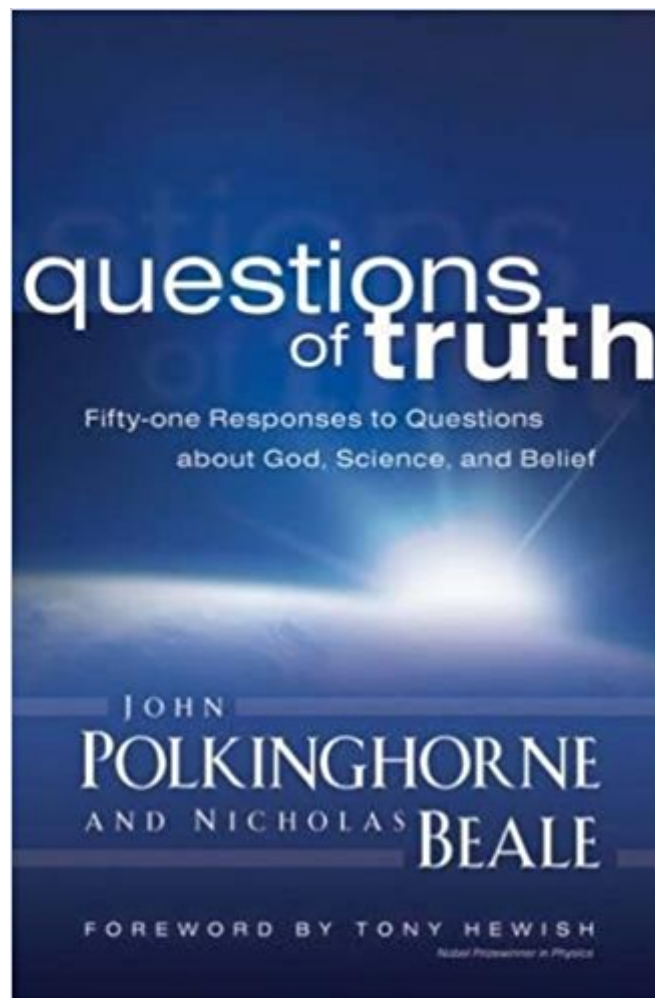




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# Questions Of Truth: Fifty-one Responses To Questions About God, Science, And Belief



## Synopsis

How did the universe begin? Can God's existence be proven? Do humans matter more than animals? For many years people have sent the scientist-turned-priest John Polkinghorne these and other questions about science and belief. In question-and-answer format, Polkinghorne and his collaborator Nicholas Beale offer their highly informed opinions about some of the most frequently asked of these questions. Readers can follow their own paths through the book, selecting questions that interest them and looking at the additional material if they choose. This unique book will help Christians clarify their beliefs regarding difficult issues and better face challenges--from within and from others--to their faith.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'Despite the complexity of some of the scientific issues discussed, Questions of Truth is a commendably clear read.' --The Financial Times, February 2009  
Standing on the rational bedrock of faith as the 'evidence of things not seen,' Polkinghorne and Beale provide richly nuanced responses to the questions that many seekers are asking. This is simply a fantastic resource.' --Francis Collins, author of The Language of God and former Director of the Human Genome Project  
'Wonderfully accessible, informative and authoritative' |An ideal starting point for those new to the field, a great stimulus to discussion for those who are already initiated.' --Alister E McGrath, Professor of Theology, King's College, London

John Polkinghorne is one of the world's leading experts on Science and Religion. A world-class

physics Professor at Cambridge who became a priest, Founding President of the ISSR and winner of the Templeton Prize, Polkinghorne's publications include Exploring Reality, Quantum Physics and Theology, Quarks, Chaos and Christianity, Science and the Trinity, Living with Hope, and Belief in God in an Age of Science. Nicholas Beale is a strategist and social philosopher and a longtime collaborator of John Polkinghorne. He is author of Constructive Engagement and coauthor, with Colin Howson, of Sense and Nonsense about God and Science.

Polkinghorne is an accomplished physicist who in his later years took theological training to become a priest. One of his idiosyncrasies is that a few years ago he decided not to be electronically connected to the world. I am not sure if that is currently the case. He and his colleagues have come up with a sophisticated philosophical / religious Christian world view that, in my opinion, is worthy of careful study. Polkinghorne is well aware of Gödel's incompleteness theorem, and has good arguments that understanding our universe will require more than rigorous science. This puts him at odds with Dawkins and other materialists / reductionists who are superb scientists but who, in my opinion also, seem to refuse to recognize that deep mysteries exist that likely are beyond the ability of science to understand. For example, what is the essence of a photon? It seems that fundamental particles and quantum fields may be manifestations of pure information. Humility is called for -- science cannot explain it all.

If someone can find soul enhancing enlightenment in this book, I applaud them. It was an erudite and scholarly - very wordy - text that I could not sink into without rehashing each paragraph. Scientists - and other highly intelligent, analytical, (prideful) individuals question faith and the presence of God and may find a precious nugget in this book that allows them to believe. I conclude that, in the end, faith is a choice. I choose to believe.

John Polkinghorne is a unique individual; an accomplished particle physicist, he decided to change careers about 30 years ago to become a minister of the Anglican church. A Templeton prize winner, his writing style is lucid and accessible. Questions of Truth is a departure from classics such as Exploring Reality and The Faith of a Physicist in that it is a collaboration between Polkinghorne and his associate Nicholas Beale, who helps with the deluge of e-mail that Polkinghorne receives. This book, while quite short, covers a great deal of ground and effectively signposts the reader to other books by Polkinghorne that deal with specific subjects in greater depth. (page 81) "Every so often in the history of the universe something intrinsically new emerges from within the deep potentiality with

which creation has been endowed. This happened with the coming-to-be of life and again with the dawning of animal consciousness. I believe it also happened in the genus Homo with the emergence of human self-consciousness." (page 68) "At some point in hominid evolution, self-consciousness - a deep self-awareness and the power to project our thought far into the future - dawned on our ancestors. At the same time, I believe that a new form of God-consciousness also dawned for them. The fall was the process by which they turned away from God into the self, an error of which we are all the heirs." I am an avid fan of Polkinghorne; he understands the flaws in the quasi-scientific arguments often advanced against faith, but even when he is dealing with crass abuse of logic or science he always tempers his great wisdom with humility and congeniality.

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I downloaded the Kindle version. I do wish they would include real page numbers in the format. As a believer who just loves astronomy and started to dabble in quantum theory, I found the book to have some really great insights. I didn't get the impression that the authors were trying to convert anyone, but just presented their thoughts on the subjects at hand. I found their answers to the issues presented by Dawkins to be well thought out, and had much more science behind them than many people have ever heard. Too many people just take Dawkins and his colleagues at face value, and just eat up everything they say. I've read other books by scientists who were Christian, but none of them, so far, have delved so deep and broadly as Polkinghorne. Polkinghorne does, however, ascribe to Open Deism, and comes as close to being a Universalist as one can. I understand his answers, I disagree, but that didn't prevent me from enjoying his answers. Die hard atheists and Christian Fundamentalists will not like this book unless they're willing to at least approach it with a desire to hear another point of view. Overall, great book! The science is deep, might not be for casual readers, but well informed seekers will find it at least interesting.

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