

SCIENCE & YOU

VISIBLE CREATION SHOWING US THE INVISIBLE GOD

Is God Dead? Or Just Improbable?

History does seem to repeat itself. The old 1960s philosophy that “God is dead” has been updated in the new millennium and is now marketed as “God is not probable.” That is, one can’t say for sure whether God is alive or dead without one actually being God. But by using a statistical method, supposedly one can estimate how probable or likely it is that God exists. In the July 2004 issue of *Skeptic* magazine¹ the editor, Michael Shermer, reviews a recent book that calculates the likelihood, or chance, of God existing as 67%. This surprisingly high, better than 50-50, chance of God being real does not sit well with Shermer who asserts that “religious faith [has] little or nothing to do with probabilities, evidence and logic.” Shermer puts his own values into the formula and produces the much more, shall we say, skeptical probability that God exists, of 2%. Apparently both God’s popularity as well as His chance of even being real is down among the ranks of skeptics.

Shermer graciously allows for a 2% chance that he could be wrong about God. I’m sure in reality he believes the chance is 0% but he wants to convey the impression that, compared to the optimistic figure of 67%, it is highly improbable that God exists, and that people of faith believe in God despite evidence, logic and probabilities. He gives the 2% figure to avoid the criticism that to know absolutely that God does not exist one would have to know everything—but if one knows everything, then one would, in fact, be God, something that even a skeptic like Shermer is hesitant to claim.

What he seems to not realize is that a 2% chance means one chance out of 50 that God exists. That means his estimate of God’s existence is actually much, much more probable to be true than his own evolutionary faith that a single small protein molecule, made up of specific amino acid building blocks, would form by random chance. Such calculations about the chances of simple protein formation have been widely discussed and vary from one incomprehensible number to another, depending on the size of the protein and other assumptions. A number like one chance in $10^{40,000}$ has been calculated by Sir Fred Hoyle² as the probability of a single small protein forming by random processes. Henry Morris, in his book *The Biblical Basis of Modern Science*³ says, “This number is so miniscule as to be equivalent to zero. That is, there is no chance whatever that it could have happened by chance.” By contrast, then, the figure of 1 chance in 50 given by Shermer for God’s existence seems like absolute certainty when considered in the light of the impossibility of even a simple protein forming by chance, let alone the entire “tree” of evolutionary life-forms. Even a skeptic’s worst case probability of God’s existence is billions and billions and billions of times more likely than even the best-case scenario of the biochemical evolution of a single protein.

Whose faith then is the more improbable?

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1 Shermer, M. “God’s Number is Up.” *Skeptic*, July 2004, p 46.

2 Hoyle, F. and Wickramasinghe, C. “Where Microbes Boldly Went.” *New Scientist*. 91:412-415, 1981.

3 Morris, H. *The Biblical Basis of Modern Science*. Baker Book House, 1984.

