

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

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Speaker: Mr. David Anderson

Challenges to the Gospel in the 21st century: The challenge of science

Radio 4's programme, '*A history of the future*', broadcast on 14 September 2012, made comment that Leonardo da Vinci was both a man of God and a scientist - and in that order! Because he knew that his entire life would be scrutinised at the Judgment, with heaven or hell as an eternal destiny, he ensured that his science always honoured his Creator. This attitude was contrasted with today's scientists, with statements such as "Science, not the Bible, is now the authority for people". Hence the relevance of today's talk to introduce our series, "Challenges to the Gospel in the 21st century".

Twenty-first century science challenges not only whether God is the Creator of the universe, but also whether or not He really exists. Yet, science was not always like this. In fact, many of the early scientists were God-fearing men. For example, Kepler described his scientific investigations as "thinking God's thoughts after Him". I must also emphasise that there are many genuine Christian believers amongst today's scientists. Take the *Truth for Today* team for example - 7 of the 13 team members are qualified professional engineers or scientists.

As a scientist myself, let me admit that science serves society very well by its operating technologies. But I must point out some of its short-comings, which are relevant to the challenges it poses to the Christian Gospel:

- Science interprets information from the natural world to produce "best-fit" descriptions of reality, as we readily see in weather forecasts. Although the data usually comes from experiments or observations, sometimes the conclusions reached are incorrect. And, with the exception of its established laws, results are at best tentative and always subject to change if/when the science advances. What is scientifically 'true' today may be falsified tomorrow!
- Science isn't always objective. Scientists are human beings belonging to Adam's fallen race, who may have pre-conceived ideas. Their worldview can lead to dogmatism or deliberate bias in scientific statements.
- Science sometimes goes beyond the limits of its knowledge by using a technique called Extrapolation. This always happens when it investigates both recent and remote past events.
- Scientific truth is sometimes exaggerated, or generalised, and sweeping deductions are sometimes made.
- Science usually can answer "How?" and "What?" about the universe we live in. It can **never** answer the key question: "Why?" (or, for the purpose of this talk, "Why did God create the universe?" and "Why do I exist?")
- Science doesn't know everything. Rather, the more science discovers, the more complicated physical realities become. We scientists should be brutally honest about this - just as Donald Rumsfeld, former Vice President of USA, was about Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, the so-called WMD's, when he confessed: "some we know exist; some we know we don't know about; others we don't know we don't know about!"

So what are the challenges of science to the Gospel in the 21st century as generally perceived by Joe and Flo Public? They're that the Gospel isn't true because:

1. Science has proved that God does not exist.
2. Science teaches that God created neither the universe nor man.
3. Science has disproved the Bible.

For the rest of this talk, I'll address each of these issues then finish with a test of the Gospel you can do in a 'scientific way'. As I continue, please keep in mind that it's only the Bible which informs us about the real, true, living God - the God of gods, as it describes Him (see Deuteronomy 10:17; Joshua 22:22; Psalm 136:2; Daniel 2:47; Daniel 11:36).

1. Science has proved that God does not exist.

Militant scientific atheism claims: "There is probably no God!" - the slogan used in their London bus advertisement campaign a few years ago. "Fools say to themselves, 'There is no God.'" states Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1 (International Standard Version). Psalm 10:4 adds, "With haughty arrogance, the wicked thinks, 'God will not seek justice' [and] always presumes 'There is no God'" (International Standard Version). The Psalmist isn't calling a person a fool for thinking there is no God, but for telling himself/herself there is no God! Notice the atheists' uncertainty. Mathematicians have calculated the probability of God existing is just greater than 62%. Hence, the queen of sciences concludes it's more likely that He does exist, than that He doesn't!

Here I must stress the limitations of all science - the scope of science is the natural and material universe. Theologians perhaps, and maybe philosophers, can comment about God; but study of the spiritual world is definitely not a scientific discipline. The Bible declares: "God is spirit" (John 4:24), therefore He cannot be discovered by scientific investigation: "Can you search out ... God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?" Job asks in Job 11:7 (New King James Version). The truth of the matter is that everyone who's ever lived knows that God exists, although many today will strenuously deny it. God told Moses His name, "I AM WHO I AM", which basically means "the One who is" (Exodus 3:14, Septuagint). The Bible asserts: "[God] has put eternity into [people's] heart, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end." (Ecclesiastes 3:11, New King James Version).

Today, the human race is merely continuing its history of constant rebellion against God. Romans 1:18-25 makes this clear: "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals, and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie [that is, that God did not create], and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 1:18-25).

The Greek for "the things that are made" in Romans 1:20 is one word, "workmanship". Anyone who honestly examines creation must conclude it's all God's handiwork for it bears His signature. Psalm 19:1-6 state creation shouts out the glory of God. Romans 1:20 reaches an emphatic conclusion: to ignore the truth of the Creator leaves a person without "a rag of excuse" (JB Phillips paraphrase)! Romans 1:25 goes further and says it's also to deliberately believe a lie. Moreover, Romans 1:28 states that God gave mankind debased or degenerate minds in response to their deliberate actions. Ever since, mankind has wilfully neglected God and has been at enmity with Him in their minds, or thinking - see Colossians 1:21. Science is the modern day version of this situation. The only difference nowadays is that the public are told they can confidently rely on the scientific theories, advanced in the last 150 years or so, concerning the origins of the universe and about life itself. Or so the public voice of science, aided and abetted by the media, would have us believe. But is this really how the public feel about spiritual matters and God Himself? Two recent research projects both concluded that humans are "programmed" to believe in God.

2. Science teaches that God created neither the universe nor man.

During the 1960s, a friend of mine was converted to Christ whilst in his teens. He wanted to become a pharmacist, so he studied Biology but he objected to being taught that life simply "evolved". One chemistry lesson experiment demonstrated the effervescence of carbon dioxide gas when aqueous acid is added to a carbonate salt solution, about which his science teacher exclaimed: "There you are, Chapple, evolution you can believe in!" That's exactly it! Evolution is something scientists have faith in, in the same way that we believers have faith in God. As Professor Edgar Andrews astutely observes in his book *'Who made God?'*: "So pervasive is the belief that evolution can be the only truth, that today it is simply assumed" (Edgar Andrews, *Who made God?* EP Books, Darlington, 2009, ISBN: 9780852347072, page 215.)

Yes, Evolution is the god of naturalism, the religion of science, which must, at all costs, replace the true and living Creator, as we have seen from Romans 1:25. This is the challenge that Christianity faces from science, because it undermines the truth of the Gospel. If I am just the product of blind chance Evolution, then the Creator did not make me. There are no standards of right and wrong - I can live as I please! There's no prospect of coming judgment from a holy and a righteous God; and therefore I have no need of Christ, the Saviour.

Evolution is, at best, a debatable hypothetical process for how life arose. It has not, and cannot, be tested by experiment to show that it actually works. It has never been observed to happen. And there's much scientific evidence to prove that it's simply impossible. For example, in surgeon Dr. Vij Sodera's book *'One Small Speck to Man'* (Vija

Sodera Productions, ISBN: 9780953137626 page 8, 2nd edition of book). “Also, the Law of Biogenesis states life can only come from life. But, more importantly, as regards the Gospel, it’s directly falsified by many Scriptures. For example, Genesis 1:1-2:7 records how God created the heavens and the earth with everything that’s in them; and they describe His special creation of man. ‘But Evolution does work!’ protested a Ph. D. geneticist when we discussed it. He’d researched genetic variations in human populations and therefore we were talking at cross-purposes. He meant micro-evolution, the preferred name used for natural selection. I thought he meant macro-evolution that life originated by chance as micro-organisms then gradually developed by infinitesimal mutational changes. Herein is the danger that science presents to the Gospel: by extrapolating so-called micro-evolution facts to prove macro-evolution, truth gets confused with unproven ideas; and the public get misled!”

The famous Big Bang theory for the origin of the universe suggests that the universe did actually have a beginning, but uses theoretical (metaphysical) explanations of how it formed. However, the question “How and where were the materials of the universe created before the Big Bang?” always remains unanswered! But the Bible informs us: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Genesis 1:14-19 then describe how the universe was established on the fourth day of creation. Although earth, with its atmosphere, is the focus of Genesis 1, several Old Testament Scriptures state that God stretched out the heavens like a curtain, for example Isaiah 40:22, which adds: “and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.” God has positioned the earth within the universe for man to live in: “He ... hangs the earth on nothing” (Job 26:7).

Also, a physics question, which is conveniently forgotten or brushed aside by scientists, is “Why is the universe so finely-tuned for human life upon earth?” It’s called the Anthropic principle and is self-evident - that all constants of the universe discovered by physics, such as the correct distance of the earth from the sun and its near-perfect circular orbit around it, the size of the earth and its atmosphere, its tilt, the force of gravity, etc., are precisely those necessary to sustain intelligent life and especially mankind. As Isaiah 45:18, New King James Version, confirms: “For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the LORD, and there is no other.’”

3. Science has disproved the Bible

When a girl relayed to her mother the realities of heaven and hell that the children’s evangelist had spoken about at a holiday club, the mother complained to the club organisers. She said that Bible stories such as Noah and the ark (Genesis 6:1-9:29) were OK, but she objected to straight Gospel-preaching. But how could anyone think the destruction of the earth and the total wipe-out of mankind except for a few folk saved in the ark is OK? Only because geologists have taught that the Flood was a myth and therefore need not be taken seriously. This is the direct result of geological science over the past 300+ years, in which the study of fossils in the earth’s strata has led to ideas of millions of years of slow deposition. This was the first way that modern science undermined public trust in the Bible (and it was used as a launch-pad for the teaching of evolution). The truthfulness and historical reliability of the Bible were therefore challenged by scientists. But fossils point to catastrophes and rapid burial, which are more in line with the Flood account in Genesis 6:1-8:22. Modern geology now accepts catastrophic explanations, which are especially obvious after the tsunamis of Boxing Day 2004 and Fukushima in 2011, not to mention more recent UK severe weather events. Gospel warnings about judgement and punishment for erring mankind cite the Flood as an example in 2 Peter 2:4-9; and 2 Peter 3:3-9 predicted scoffers who deliberately ignore the Bible accounts of creation and the Flood. This seems to be what today’s scientists are doing and the world esteems them to be authorities on everything imaginable! When their pronouncements directly contradict the Word of God this is a very disturbing challenge to the Gospel. But scientists are neither omniscient nor infallible! It’s the Scriptures which are reliable. The Lord Jesus said “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35); and to His Father: “Your word is truth” (John 17:17). Three times Paul wrote that “God is faithful” (1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 1:18), always absolutely true to His word.

We can now authoritatively answer the challenges of scientific teaching to the Gospel from Scripture:

1. Genesis 1:1 states God brought our universe into existence. John 1:1-2 stress that nothing was made without God’s Son, the Word. He continues to uphold or maintain the universe by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3): “... by [the Son] were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible ... all things have been created by him and for him. And he is before all, and all things subsist together by him” (Colossians 1:16-17, JN Darby Translation).
2. Life did not begin by chance on earth from inorganic material sources. Nor was it brought here by some meteorite. Nor did it evolve. God separately gave life to each kind of plant, tree and animal, Genesis 1:11-13 and Genesis 1:20-25. Specifically, man was His special creation, Genesis 1:26-29. God made both man and woman in His image and likeness. He breathed life into Adam so he became a living being - one with spiritual life as well as natural life, Genesis 2:7. Life is conscious existence, the reality of which is to know that it comes

from God, the source of all life. And the Gospel offers everyone eternal life, that is, the knowledge of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

3. Death is not an inherited feature of life from the process of evolution; it's the direct consequence of Adam's disobedience at the Fall: "Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Romans 5:12, English Standard Version). The Gospel is the good news of salvation: "For as by [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by [Jesus Christ's] obedience [unto death] the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). Also, the Gospel brings the hope of life beyond the grave through Christ's resurrection.
4. The central claim of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ is God incarnate. Science can't explain this, or His miracles, or His resurrection from among the dead. Science can only comment on on-going laws of the universe; interventions by God into His creation are entirely outside of its scope!
5. The Gospel introduces us to the Light of the World (see John 8:12, 9:5) in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4, English Standard Version). In Scripture, light is the knowledge of reality. As "the Word" (see John 1:1, 14; Revelation 19:3), He is the only One personally capable of expressing who God is. John 1:18 goes further by stating He has made God fully known. 1 John 5:11-13 testifies that Christians are confident they know God through His Son and have been brought into ultimate reality, called eternal life. Yes, we know that we know that we know! Sadly, unbelievers don't know that they don't know that they don't know!

Scientific Test

Finally, I said I'd finish with a kind of scientific test you can do for yourself to prove that the Gospel is true. I call it "the Taste Test" for Psalm 34:8 invites everyone: "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" In the early part of my career as an analytical chemist, I actually performed taste tests. But the "taste and see that the LORD is good" is not restricted to professionals, for Jesus said whoever wants to may come to Him (see Matthew 11:29-30, John 6:37). However, there are two control conditions, as we would say in the trade, you must apply:

1. Faith. Hebrews 11:6 says you need to have faith that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. I suggest you read Job 38:1-41:34 to find out about Him, the Creator and be humbled before Him.
2. Repentance. You must understand how far short of His standards you have fallen and admit this to Him. You must therefore repent of your sins and place your faith for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for your sins and rose again. I suggest you read Romans 1:1-5:21 to get a good understanding of the doctrines of the Christian Gospel.

By carrying out the "Taste Test" in this way, you're definitely assured of a positive result for the Bible says: "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13, English Standard Version).

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