

Is the Bible Unscientific?

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About me

- Grew up in Croydon
- Neuroscience and Medicine at uni
- Worked as a doctor
- Now bioethics and philosophy of science/religion research

Science or Christianity?

- If in conflict, we have to reject one: either reject Christianity or reject science
- But maybe we can have both



Five questions

- Can a scientist be a Christian?
- Methodology?
- What about evolution?
- What about miracles?
- Can science support Christianity?

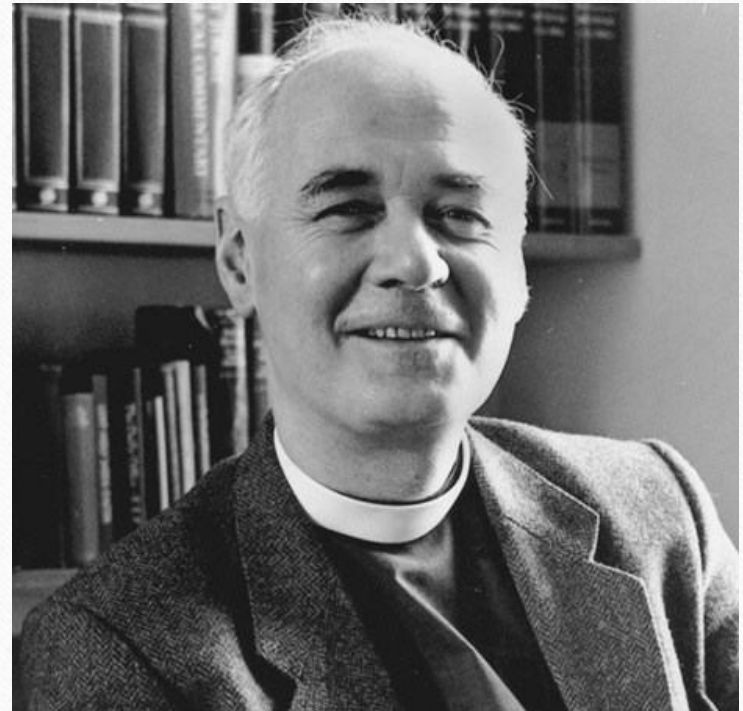
Can a scientist be a Christian?

- Method: Francis Bacon, William of Ockham
- Astronomy: Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo
- Mathematics: Descartes, Pascal
- Everything: Isaac Newton
- Genetics: Gregor Mendel



Can a scientist be a Christian?

- Modern-day: John Polkinghorne, Francis Collins, Bill Newsome, Jennifer Wiseman, John Morris, Lionel Tarassenko, Simon Conway Morris



Can a scientist be a Christian?

- Modern science has Christian roots:
- Belief in the Law of God
- Belief in Nature as God's Temple
- Belief in beauty and reason of God
- Belief in our rational minds

Faith

- Faith is about what you cling to
- But if you cling to something that is false, it will never satisfy you

Faith

- Believing without evidence?
- Or trusting and investing in someone?



Faith

- Believing without evidence?
- Or trusting and investing in someone?



Science

- Falsifiability? M-theory, mathematics
- Repeatability? History
- Observability? Most of physics

- Science: using natural phenomena to support or discredit theories

Science

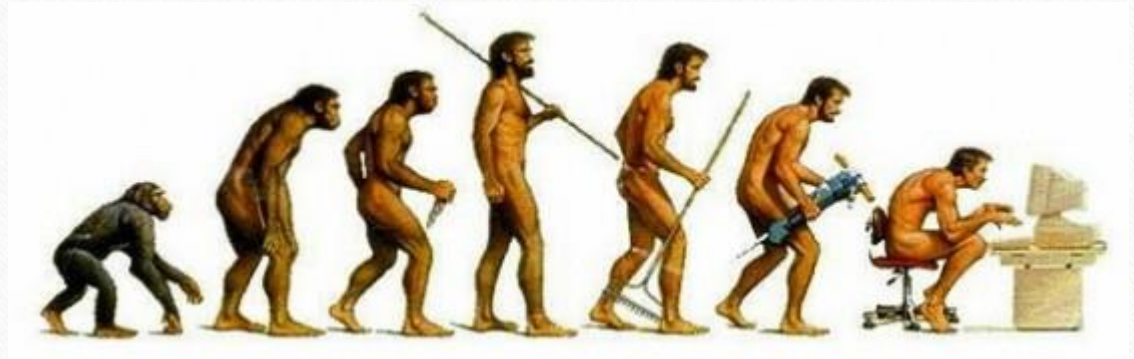
- Religious theories can be supported by observational evidence – the disciples used the empty tomb as evidence for the resurrection!

Science and Christianity

- Both can use evidence and then challenge us to live accordingly
- Both care deeply about truth
- “I believe in Christianity like I believe in the sun: not because I see it, but because by it I see everything else” – CS Lewis

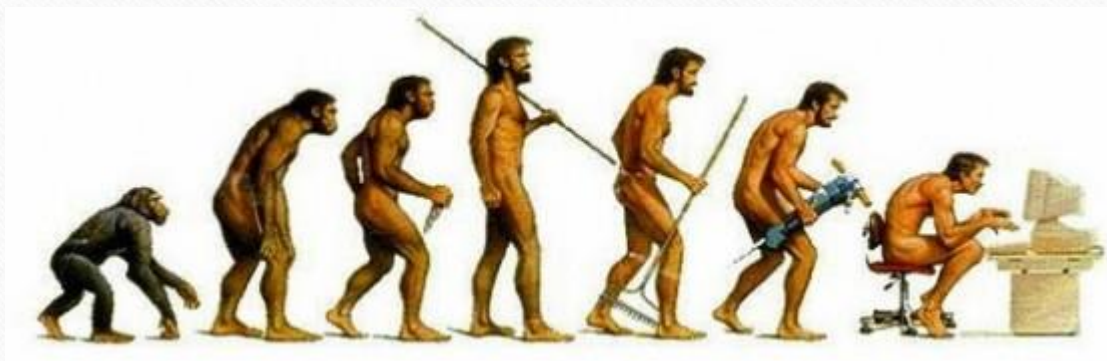
Evolution

- Humans evolved from lower forms of life by natural selection
- Natural selection: random variation in genetics -> fittest survive -> slowly evolve over time



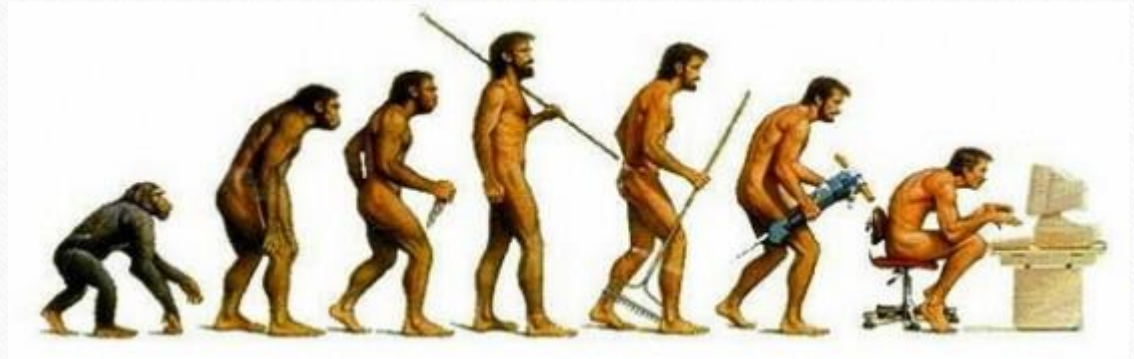
Evolution

- Possible sources of conflict:
- Bible says God created us
- Bible says *how* and *when* God created us
- Adam and Eve?
- Moral problems?



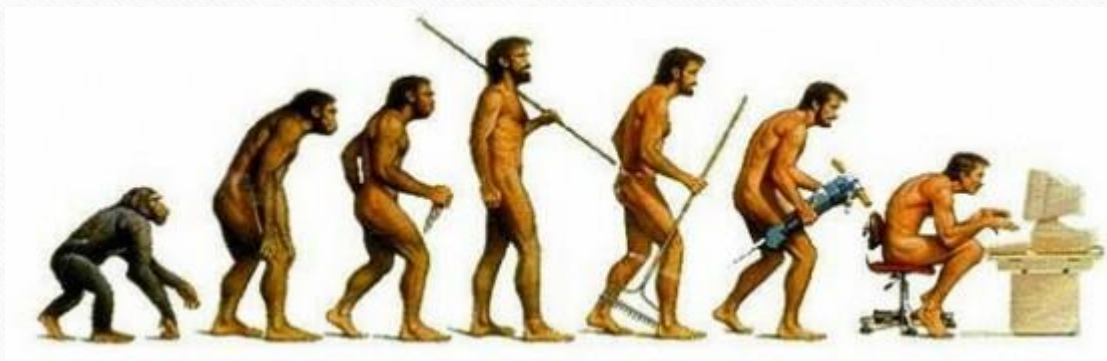
Evolution

- God created us
- Just because God created us doesn't mean he didn't use instruments: God gives us our daily bread, but we can still believe in agriculture



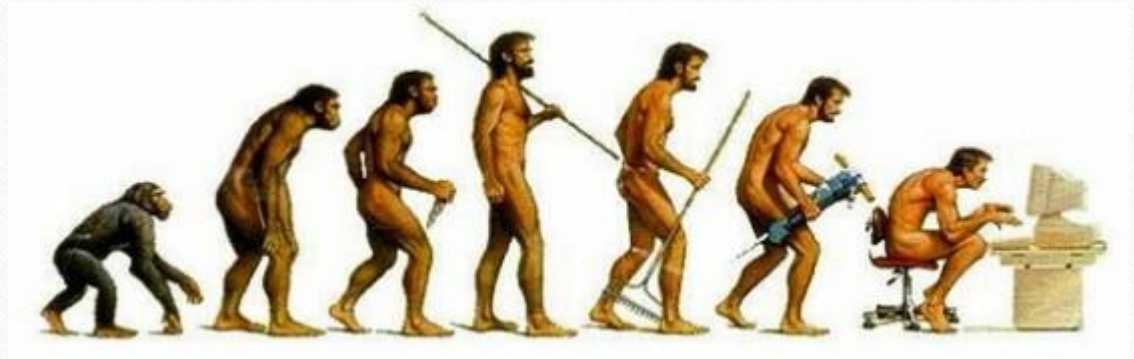
Evolution

- How and when?
- Genesis 1 not intended as a scientific account of origins: it is a strictly monotheistic account of the functions God gave to things, and an account of God creating the Earth as his Temple (White House idea)
- Early Christians recognised significant metaphor use in the early parts of Genesis



Evolution

- Adam and Eve?
- Few options:
- First humans with a specific knowledge of God?
- First humans who sinned in a particular way?
- Prime examples of sin?
- Metaphor: 'Adam' just means 'Man'
- In any case, not presented as the ancestors of all humans: Cain and Seth's wives?



Miracles

- Science believes in laws of nature
- But miracles (like the resurrection) are supposed to be violations of laws of nature
- So how can scientists believe in miracles?



Miracles

- Science believes in lots of one off events – like the origin of the human race!
- Laws of nature are not necessarily exceptionless – they are the best attempt at describing what nature normally does when left to itself



Miracles

- Why do scientists sometimes believe in unique events?
- They have an explanation of why unique things happened in that one instance, but not again – there is a ‘deeper law’
- Overwhelming observational evidence



Miracles

- If there is no God, then miracles could be implausible
- But if there is a God, then miracles might well happen (even if rarely)
- We have evidence for God
- And God would endorse some miracles as part of a 'deeper law'



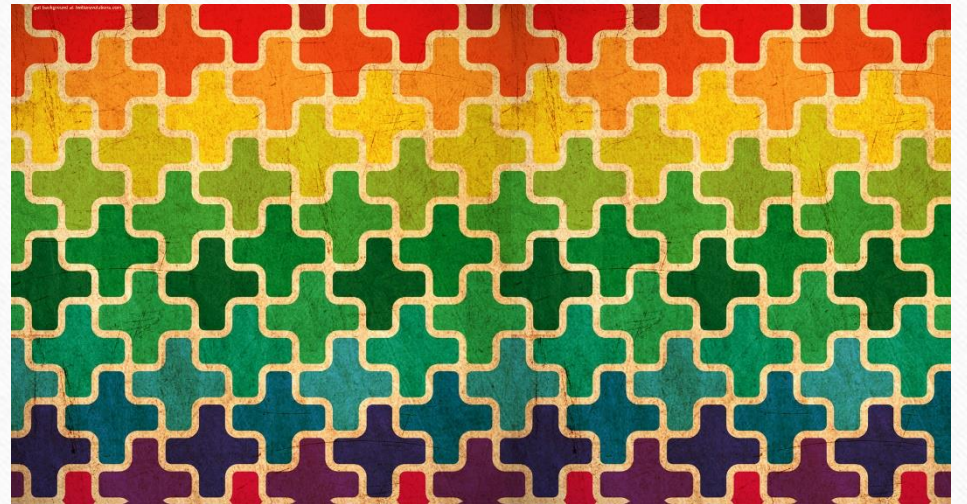
Fine tuning

- Universe had to be fine-tuned to allow life
- Physical constants need to be in tiny range
- “There is now broad agreement among physicists and cosmologists that the universe is in several respects ‘fine-tuned’ for life.” – Paul Davies



Order/induction

- Humans need a regular universe to act with responsibility
- But the regularity of the universe is an enormous coincidence
- Coincidences require explanation
- Modern science came from Christianity



Faith and Science

- Faith is useless if it's false: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins"

Faith and Science

- But if it's true, it changes everything: in Jesus God came to earth, in a time and place we can investigate, to heal our brokenness
- So that we can be called friends, sons and daughters of God

Faith and Science

- Everything else we can put our faith in can let us down
- But true, secure faith is in something that won't let us down
- The steadfastness of points us to the steadfast love and reliability of God:
- “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:22-23

Faith and Science

“Come, let us return to the LORD.

He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us;
he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us,
that we may live in his presence.

Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him.

As surely as the sun rises, he will appear;
he will come to us like the winter rains,
like the spring rains that water the earth.” Hosea 6:1-3

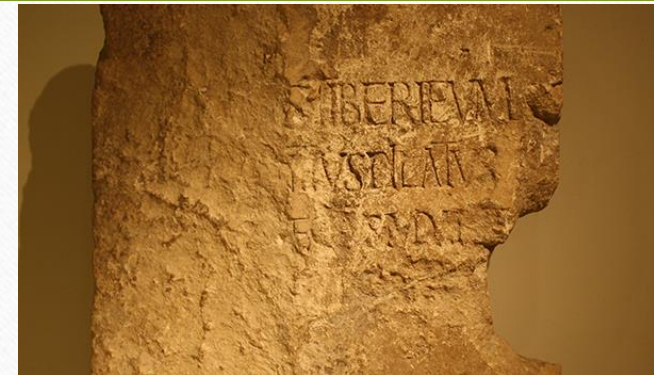
Faith and Science

All God's promises are revealed and fulfilled in Jesus

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

God in History?

- We believe in one God...
- And in one Lord Jesus Christ...
- Who for us and for our salvation became a man;
- And was crucified also for us **under Pontius Pilate**, and suffered and was buried;
- And the third day He rose again...









What about miracles?

“Jesus’ death by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate is as sure as anything historical can ever be.” – John Dominic Crossan

What about miracles?

“It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ” – Gerd Ludemann

What about miracles?

“If we apply the same sort of criteria that we would apply to any other ancient literary sources, then the evidence is firm and plausible enough to necessitate the conclusion that the tomb was, indeed, found empty” – Michael Grant

What about miracles?

- Sceptics like Paul and James were also converted and willing to die for their beliefs
- Jesus also predicted his death and resurrection, and made claims to divinity
- Any evidence against his insanity or deception is further evidence to explain

What about miracles?

- All this evidence very difficult to explain if Jesus was not God, and was not raised from the dead
- But easy to explain if Jesus was God and was raised from the dead
- So miracle at least plausible, and definitely open to scientists

Can science support Christianity?

- A life-permitting universe
- The possibility of science

What is evidence?

Theory 1



What is evidence?

Theory 1



Theory 2



What is evidence?

Theory 1



Observation:



Theory 2



What is evidence?

Theory 1



Observation:



Theory 2

