

Has Science disproved the Bible? (part 1)

Introduction

Trust in the Bible has been on the decline in many countries, which is a real shame. The reasons are probably twofold. The first is that, remarkably, the people who should be defending it, the theologians, often publicly undermine its authority. Secondly, it is commonly but mistakenly believed that science has disproved the teaching of the Bible.

It is very important to note that the vast majority of the great scientists of the past were believers, and some of them, like Sir Isaac Newton, were accomplished Bible students.



But belief in the Bible is not just limited to the scientists of the past. There are many eminent scientists who are believers in God and the Bible. These include both current and past fellows of the Royal Society, as well as a number of Nobel prize winners. In 1997 a survey was carried out by the science journal "Nature". They found that 40% of all scientists in America believe in God. So many scientists themselves believe in God, and their job does not stop them believing.

Here are a few quotes from past Nobel Prize winners who were believers:-

"To postulate that the development and survival of the fittest is entirely a consequence of chance mutations seems to me a hypothesis based on no evidence and irreconcilable with the facts."

Sir Ernest Chain, 1945 Nobel Prize

"I just cannot believe that everything developed by random mutations."

Dennis Gabor, 1971 Nobel Prize

"The burden of proof is on those who don't believe that "Genesis" was right, and there was a creation, and that Creator is still involved."

Richard Smalley 1996 Nobel Prize

The late Stephen Jay Gould who was a famous palaeontologist, evolutionist, & science historian said:

"Unless at least half my colleagues are dunces, there can be – on the most raw and empirical grounds – no conflict between science and religion."

In other words, he was saying that science and religion are not incompatible. The Bible, as we will see, is not a science text book. It deals with questions like *why* we are here and *why* things were created, and not *how*. Many believing scientists will say that their job helps them to look into *how* things work, and actually strengthens their faith in God.



Many of us think that it's not possible to take science seriously and still believe what the Bible has to say.

- Some people believe that scientists have proved that the universe started with a “Big Bang”. The same people might also think that the Bible contradicts this.
- Many people also believe that scientists have proved that all the variety of life evolved. If this is true, then the Bible would be wrong in talking about life having being created.

These are some of the things we are going to think about a little more closely.

It will help us find out more about these things if we distinguish between facts and theories.

Comparing the Bible statements with the scientific observations, we will find that:

- Both suggest the universe had a beginning.
- And both indicate that life appeared in a complete form.

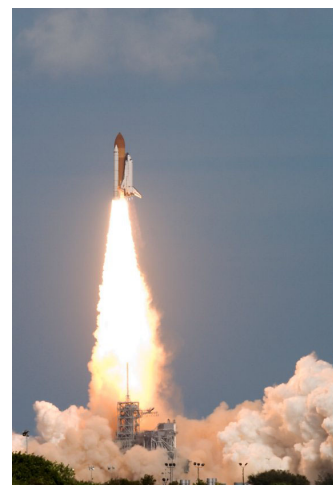
There is no conflict between
scientific facts and what the Bible says

1. Facts and theories

There's a lot of conflicting information about both science and the Bible. It will help us find the most useful information if we distinguish between two different fundamental ideas. Firstly we need to think about observable facts. Then we need to think about theories.

Observable facts

An observable fact is something that can be proved beyond doubt. These observable facts are tangible, measurable and repeatable. They can be felt through our senses and can be experienced first hand if necessary. Gravity is a good example of an observable fact. We all experience the effects of gravity every day of our lives. Whenever we drop anything it always falls to the ground. Whenever we throw a ball into the air it always falls back to us. Scientists have done experiments and understand gravity enough to launch rockets into space and put satellites into orbit around the earth. So gravity is real and it can be experienced and measured. It is an observable fact.



Theories

A scientist then creates a theory about something he wants to look at in a little more detail. This will be based on a set of assumptions. This theory should be the best explanation of the observable facts. He could, for example, have a theory that gravity acts upwards. It would be obvious to anyone that this does not fit the observable facts. Such a claim would be ignored.

But sometimes we have no way of knowing whether the assumptions used in a theory are right. This is often the case when considering what happened in the past. We can't do experiments to test the theory and check the assumptions.



So it is important that we know what can be proved and what is only a theory that we can't prove.

We want to look quickly at a couple of examples where theories which lacked vital facts were trusted. The consequences were terrible.

Trusting unproven theories

In mid-nineteenth-century England, some public-health authorities believed the “miasma” theory. This theory said that diseases were caused by a poisonous vapour known as “miasma”.

In the same era, some doctors accepted the “dyscrasia” theory, which said that disease was caused by an imbalance in the body's temperament.

People did their best with their limited knowledge. They were unaware that they lacked vital information about viruses and bacteria.

They trusted theories that were not based on all the facts. They saw no problem in drinking water that had been contaminated with sewage. The result was that tens of thousands of people died in the four cholera epidemics that broke out in England between 1831 and 1854.

Nor did they see a problem in a doctor or nurse moving from a dead body to a living one without washing their hands in between. So, up to one in three women died in hospital giving birth to children. Many women preferred to give birth in the street rather than go to hospital.

Countless people died because these theories lacked vital facts. These two examples show that we need all the facts to come up with a correct theory. They also show us that we may not realise that we don't have all the facts.

- We can verify scientific facts. Facts are things we can repeat, touch, see and handle.
- Scientists create theories by looking at the observable facts and making assumptions to explain what has happened.
- A theory should be the best explanation of the facts.
- Lack of vital facts can result in wrong theories that can have terrible consequences.

Now that we understand the difference between facts and theories, let's see what this means for the “Big Bang” and evolution theories.

2. The theories of the “Big Bang” and Evolution

The observable facts of the “Big Bang” theory

Fact 1

When people use modern telescopes to look at distant galaxies they find that the light looks slightly different from sunlight. The simplest way we can describe this difference is to say that the light from distant galaxies looks slightly red. Hence this observation is known as the “red shift”.

Fact 2

When we look out into outer space using a telescope already in space, we detect radiation known as cosmic microwave background radiation.

Fact 3

This fact involves the elements in the universe – things like hydrogen and helium, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon and so on. Scientists have noticed that the universe contains mainly elements that are light in weight. The lightest elements, hydrogen and helium, are by far the most common elements in the detectable universe.

Fact 4

The fourth fact that is often mentioned is the fact that galaxies seem evenly spread through space. It does not matter in which direction we look, the spread of galaxies looks basically the same.



These are the four observable facts on which the “Big Bang” theory is based.

The development of the “Big Bang” theory

It was the first of these observable facts that originally made scientists develop the “Big Bang” theory. Scientists believe that the “red shift” in light coming from space indicates that the light source is moving away from us. This would mean that the universe is expanding.

The other observable facts we have looked at are also consistent with the idea that the universe started with an explosion and is expanding in all directions.

- The background radiation that we detect is considered to be the remains of the “Big Bang” explosion.
- The “Big Bang” theory predicts that the lightest elements would be produced first, the heavier elements being built up from them.
- Scientists also realised that the galaxies *will* be evenly distributed through space if the universe is expanding in all directions following the “Big Bang”.

Scientists then make the following assumptions:

- nothing has ever happened to change the physical laws that we know today.
- these laws are consistent and the same throughout the whole of the universe.
- the red shift is caused by the light source moving away from us.

Using these three assumptions, together with our four observable facts, it becomes obvious that if our universe is expanding, then, if we roll back time, everything can be traced back to a single point in space time from which it all started. And that is what is called the “Big Bang”.

The “Big Bang” – fact or theory?



We must remember that this theory is based on what we can see today. No one knows what information modern telescopes would have given us thousands or millions of years ago. We must also remember that we cannot do any experiments to prove that the red shift is caused by the light source moving away from us.

We can see that, contrary to the impression you may already have, there are not many facts that support the “Big Bang” theory. The few facts we do have support the theory if we

accept the assumptions that we cannot prove. Scientists are doing their best with the available information. But, like the miasma and dyscrasia theories we looked at earlier, we may be missing some important information.

The “Big Bang” must remain an interesting theory, and cannot be regarded as a fact.

The observable facts of the theory of evolution

We saw earlier that a theory should be the best explanation of the facts we see around us. The theory of evolution talks about gradual change over many millions of years. So we should expect the fossil record to show a continuous progression through all sorts of stages of development, enabling us to trace evolution. For example, we should see features such as wings in stages of development.

When we look at the fossil record, we see that all the fossils appear to be fully formed, well-defined species with well defined features.



Trilobite fossil



Archaeopteryx model

An example that is often used to support the idea of transitional species is the fossil of “Archaeopteryx”. “Archaeopteryx” had feathers like a bird, but it appears to have had a toothed jaw like a reptile. But the fact is that all the features of “Archaeopteryx” come fully formed. It doesn’t have half feathers – it has fully formed feathers just like those on the wings of birds we have today. As much as we can tell from the fossil record, it suggests that everything that was needed for flight is present. It had a braincase similar to a modern bird. From the facts we have, it was a fully formed bird-like creature.

This lack of transitional fossils was acknowledged by Professor Steve Jones of University College, London, when he published an updated version of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1999. This is what he wrote:

*“The fossil record - in defiance of Darwin's whole idea of gradual change - often makes great leaps from one form to the next. Far from the display of intermediates to be expected from slow advance through natural selection many species appear without warning, persist in fixed form and disappear, leaving no descendants. Geology assuredly does not reveal any finely graduated organic chain, and this is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against the theory of evolution.”*¹

There are other recent scientists who have come to the same conclusion:

*“There is no need to apologize any longer for the poverty of the fossil record. In some ways it has become almost unmanageably rich, and discovery is outpacing integration ... **The fossil record nevertheless continues to be composed mostly of gaps**”.* (emphasis ours)²

G. T. Neville in “Science Progress”

*“It is not even possible to make a caricature of evolution out of the ... facts. The fossil material is now so complete that the lack of transitional series cannot be explained by the scarcity of the material. **The deficiencies are real, they will never be filled**”.* (emphasis ours)³

Professor N. Heribert-Nilsson of Lund University, Sweden

“The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record ... [is] the trade secret of paleontology” (the study of fossils).⁴

Stephen Jay Gould

*“We paleontologists have said that the history of life supports [the story of gradual adaptive change] all the while knowing that it does not.”*⁵

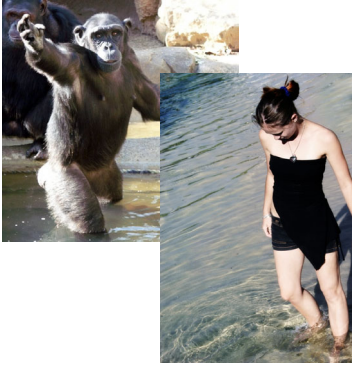
Niles Eldridge

So we can see that the fossils give us an important fact. That is that the fossil record does not contain the partly developed animals that the theory of evolution predicts.

Before we finish looking at the theory of evolution, let's look at some of the other facts that are used to support this theory.

Classification of animals

Another argument used to support the theory of evolution is comparative studies of modern animals, known as "cladistics". When you look at animals, you will see that certain animals look like other animals. And scientists have produced a classification system so that things that look like each other are classified as being similar.



For example, monkeys and humans both have arms and legs and five fingers and five toes, and therefore humans and monkeys are classified together.

As another example, horses and donkeys and zebras all look like each other, with minor variations. Scientists have looked at all the creatures around the world and classified them all in this way. However, we can't do any experiments, and there is no way of knowing how these observable facts came to be. The theory of evolution simply provides one possible explanation of how animals came to look like they do. A perfectly valid alternative explanation is that some intelligent power created them like that.



Variations within species

Another argument that is used to support evolution is variation within species. When we look at dogs we can see different breeds of dogs. Human beings on a relatively small timescale can interbreed dogs and produce very different dogs. The argument is that, given enough time, these variations could produce new species.

But the simple fact is that this has never been observed. And in fact the scale of change is vastly different. It's one thing, as Darwin did, seeing finches with different types of beak; it's a huge jump to say that the same mechanism could explain the appearance of a heart, the appearance of bone, the appearance of feathers, the appearance of warm-blooded creatures, etc. Big changes have never been observed, and it is not good scientific practice to extend known information far beyond what has been seen. So it is not scientific to use very minor changes as evidence to support the great changes required by the theory of evolution.



- The fossil record contains only fully formed animals.
- Classification of animals tells us nothing about how they came into existence.
- Minor changes are not scientific evidence of large changes.

Statements made about evolution

We need to look carefully at statements made to encourage belief in evolution. Scientific-sounding arguments are used, but some confuse *facts* and *opinions*.

Some quotations from evolutionists will illustrate this point:

*“The fossil record furnishes irrefutable proof that life on earth has changed through the ages ... Fossils prove not only that life has changed but also that it has progressed from simplicity to complexity with the passage of time. These are the facts. To those who take an unbiased view of the matter, there is only one conclusion – that all past and present life has descended from simple beings”.*⁶

William Strokes and William Lee in the book “Essentials of Earth History”

If we look at this statement carefully we can see:

- The *facts* are the fossils, both simple and complex and everything in between.
- The *opinion* based on the facts is that life has progressed from simplicity to complexity. There is no evidence to suggest *how* one has developed from another!
- Another equally valid conclusion that could be drawn from the facts is that life was created.

Here are two more statements which illustrate how some supporters of evolution like to belittle those who question it:

*“The first point to make about Darwin’s theory of evolution is that it is no longer a theory, but a fact. **No serious scientist** would deny the fact that evolution occurred, just as he would not deny the fact that the earth goes around the sun”.⁷ (emphasis ours)*

Sir Julian Huxley

*“Of the fact of organic evolution there can at the present day be no reasonable doubt; the evidences for it are so overwhelming that those who reject it **can only be victims of ignorance or prejudice**”.⁸ (emphasis ours)*

M. J. Kenny

These quotations give the impression that evolution has the same kind of evidence behind it as a scientific law. But, as we have seen in “The observable facts of the theory of evolution” section on page 23, the *facts* do not support the theory of evolution.



We see a hint of the reason for this unscientific bias in favour of evolution in another quotation:

Scientists cannot find evidence in the fossil record to support evolution

“When it comes to the origin of life on this earth, there are only two possibilities: creation or spontaneous generation. There is no third way. Spontaneous generation was disproved (by Louis Pasteur) 100 years ago, but that leads us only to one other conclusion: that of supernatural creation. We cannot accept that on philosophical grounds; therefore, we choose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance”.⁹

George Wald, winner of the 1967 Nobel Peace Prize, in “Science”

This quotation indicates the reason why *opinions* are sometimes used as *facts*. The only alternative, a special creation, is totally unacceptable to some people.

Has Science disproved the Bible?

Scientists say the evidence points to the Big Bang as the beginning of the universe. 3,500 years ago it was written in the Bible that the universe had a beginning:

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1 v 1*



So science and the Bible are in agreement.

Summary

Here is a summary of what we have seen:

First of all, it is important to distinguish between facts, theories and opinions.

- Observable facts must be differentiated from opinions, and opinions should not be treated as facts.

Both the Bible and science suggest that the universe had a beginning.

- Science can only work with the facts of the universe as they are now.

The scientific facts that are used to support evolution could also be used to support creation

- An equally valid explanation of the facts is that the universe and life were created.
- Evolution is sometimes upheld because creation is an unacceptable alternative.

When we consider the facts about the Big Bang or evolution, the overall conclusion we must come to is that Science and the Bible are not in conflict.

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