

SERMON

'There Is No God' says Science (Colossians 1:15-23)

A parent wrote a letter to a school after his son had been taught by the Physics teacher that in an atom the electrons which went round the outside of the atom were held there by electrical forces because they were negatively charged and the nuclear, the centre of the atom was positively charged and what is true for people and for magnets is also true to electrical particles - Opposites attract. The teacher went on to talk about the nucleus and that this is usually made up of two sorts of particles, proton and neutrons. Neutrons have no charge, but protons are positively charged. This gives the nucleus its positive charge, which attracts the electrons flying around the outside.

But as opposites attract, then like with like will repel, so a nucleus with positive protons should not stay together, it should blow itself apart – but it does stay together! So Physicists have put forward that in the nucleus there is a force holding particles together, called a nuclear force. There is even an equation for it.

All was going well in the class and as happens sometimes, sometimes rarely it seems, but at least one pupil went home and told his parents about the Physics lesson that had happened that day.

The following day, the head of Physics received a letter from one of the parents. It went

Dear Mr

Yesterday in my child's Physics lesson the teacher Mr..... stated that in a nucleus that all the particles were held together by nuclear forces. This of course is absurd because we are told in the Bible that

'Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together.'
(Colossians 1:17 NIV)

I would therefore appreciate it if your staff could change their teaching content accordingly.

Yours truly,

I was shown the letter and asked for my comment as a Christian teaching Physics – it had not been my lesson that was being spoken of in the letter.

- The Bible says that Christ holds all things together, whereas Science tells us that it is nuclear forces.
- The Bible tells us that the world was created in six days, Science tells us that it took millions of years and that evolution took place.
- Psalm 139 says

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalms 139:13-16 NIV)

The Bible says that it is God who made each one of us, but Science tells us that we are made when a sperm cell meets an egg cell and they become one cell which then divides and divides and along the way certain cells specialise into different functions, so different organs and parts of our bodies are produced until out comes a human being.

God is dead, we have grown up, Science gives us all the answers we need. Usually at this point most arguments tend to go down the line of creationism versus evolution, the Bible against Darwin. But the rise of Science was wider than this.

I can remember my grandfather saying to me, 'If Adam and Eve began the human race and they had two sons Cain and Abel, and Cain killed Abel, then how did the human race continue? Being only about 12 at the times and not too knowledgeable about the Bible in those days, I could give no real answer, although I was impressed with the Bible knowledge he knew. I now know that he needed to read a little more into Genesis.

However just a couple of years in April 2005, Dr. Spencer Wells, Genographic Project director for a joint project run by the National Geographic Society in partnership with IBM looking into DNA mapping said

"DNA can help us go all the way back to the beginning,. We can go back to the very early days of our species, to infer where we come from and how we got to where we live today.

"By studying patterns in DNA, we will be able to map the migration of the human species -- and may pinpoint where the original humans came from in Africa, and how humans spread and diversified as they moved to distant parts of the globe.

"...in spite of the tremendous diversity of human beings, we are all "effectively members of an extended family.

"The amazing thing to come out of all of this is how closely related we all are. We share a common ancestor -- a man who lived in Africa around 60,000 years ago. That's only about 2,000 generations." (Dr. Spencer Wells, Genographic Project director, 13 April 2005)

Scientific American, back in the Eighties said that the whole human race can be traced back to one woman in the North East region of Africa! All of this is not too distant from the account given to us in Genesis 1 and 2, and this account being from the point of view of a non Scientist.

However there is a greater threat of Science, or at least there was. Back in the days of the sixties and seventies, the 1960s and 70s that is, we saw in programmes like Star Trek, that God was dead, the human race had come of age, humans had grown up and so had put childish things behind us, just as a child does with Father Christmas and the tooth fairy. The original series does not mention God except in one episode when the crew actually defeat a god and get the better of him.

But is that the reality of the situation? Has Science said, 'God is dead.' Or is the situation a little less clear cut, a little more muddied?

If we move on to the later Star Trek group of programmes i.e. The Next Generation, Deep Space Nine, Voyager, these were all came into being in the nineties and there has been a shift. No longer is God dead, but we each have our own god, whom we worship in our own way, but are not in the business of proselytising others, of being evangelistic and trying to convert others to my faith, my religion.

So has Science says that God is dead, or is that the popularist version of it? One Scientist wrote this

Science advances by discerning patterns and regularities in nature, so that more and more phenomena can be subsumed into general categories and laws. Theorists aim to encapsulate the essence of the physical laws in a unified set of equations and a few numbers. There is still some way to go, but progress is remarkable.

(Martin Rees, Just Six Numbers)

Science as he says works by looking for patterns in nature and then formulates laws and equations. It is the use of the word 'law' that can be misleading. A law sounds as if it stands for all time and is immutable and never changing, especially in Science. However as Martin Rees says Science works by

- Observing
- Seeing if there is a regularity or a pattern emerging from the happenings being observed
- Making a guess as to when the next happening from writing an equation
- If the guess works one has a hypothesis

The process should stop there, but then it is made into a law and seems to be fixed and seems to be unchangeable. Many of you, or at least some of you, or maybe a few of you will recognise these

$$v=u+at$$

$$s=ut+\frac{1}{2}at^2$$

$$v^2=u^2+2as$$

These are Newton's equations of motions, coming from his laws. These lasted for some four hundred years, until Einstein, he of $E=mc^2$ put pay to all that because nothing he says can move faster than the speed of light, a mere 186,000 miles per second, or 3 hundred million metres per second. At low speed Newton's equations work well, at speeds approaching the speed of light they go wrong, so they are not law, they are the best fit to the evidence we have at this particular moment. As Stephen Hawkins says

Any physical Theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it. (Stephen Hawkins, Brief History of Time)

So Science does not know everything and even Scientists, very famous ones do not always rule out God. In the book by Stephen Hawkins entitled A Brief History In Time, he puts forward the theory of the Big Bang and that at one point in time and space, there was this event which began everything off. This means that the universe and space and time are finite, it is a closed system because many Scientists believe that there was a beginning and then there will be an end. Stephen Hawkins, as far as I know, an atheist, says this about it:

The idea that space and time may form a closed surface without boundary also has profound implications for the role of God in the affairs of the universe. With the success of scientific theories in describing events, most people have come to believe that God allows the universe to evolve according to a set of laws and does not intervene in the universe to break these laws. However, the laws do not tell us what the universe should have looked like when it started - it would still be up to God to wind up the clockwork and choose how to start it off. So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator. But if the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end: it would simply be. What place, then, for a creator?

Or, to put it another way, the Big Bang theory does not rule out god, but it could rule out a god who is interested in the universe, who came to die for humanity, who wants to have a relationship with you and me.

Also the universe, this universe in which we live, is a remarkable place, but it is also a very fragile place. Martin Rees, a Royal Society Research Professor at Cambridge University writes

...six numbers constitute a 'recipe' for a universe. Moreover, the outcome is sensitive to their values: if any one of them were to be 'untuned', there would be no stars and no life. Is this tuning just a brute fact, a coincidence? Or is it the providence of a benign Creator? (Martin Rees, Just Six Numbers)

Again Martin Rees is an atheist, because he goes on to say in the next line

I take the view that it is neither. (Martin Rees, Just Six Numbers)

But the fascinating thing for me is that he writes a whole book on the six numbers which keep, as he says, our universe together and with any slight change in any of them the universe does not exist and he does postulate a god putting everything together, or a quirk of nature, or many, many parallel universes, of which our survives, due to the six numbers being right. He goes for the multiple universes, and we happen to be one of the few that survived, or sustained life. This I can only see as needing as much faith as believing that God does exist and that he did begin the universe.

Can we bring Science and Christianity together within the Bible? Not really. Science is mentioned twice in the Bible in Daniel 1:4 and then in 1 Timothy 6:21, but you will not find it in the Church Bibles only in a King James or New King James version of the Bible. The NIV has knowledge instead.

However Science does not contradict the Bible and cannot prove or disprove God and so can never make the statement: 'God is dead' or 'There is no God'. As Christians we can argue that Science only exists because of the faithfulness of God. If God was not faithful, then the world would not be predictable, and so hypotheses could not be formed and we would not know where we were.

So what about the letter that began all this off? The writer was correct in his assertion of Colossians 1:17. God does hold everything together, but this does not deny nuclear forces because that is the best fit hypothesis to what is going on, so we can make predictions about what might go on if we changed things.

God is very much alive and kicking in 21st century and Science is not quite so sure of its ground any more.

Science, instead of getting more and more exact, seems to get more and more inexact. Science cannot prove that there is no god, just as Science cannot prove that there is a god, so Science and Faith and exist side by side. We need to know that God is faithful, that he made the universe and made it so that we can study it and formula theories, so we can predict – that is because he is a faithful God.