

Christian Apologetics

Foundations- Unit 316



Week 5 – Homosexuality, Miracles and Science

Introduction:

One of the key blockers for Australians when it came to Christianity, was the church's stance on homosexuality, with 3 in 10 (29%) Australians expressing that this completely blocked them in engaging with Christianity. Overall, 7 in 10 (69%) indicated that the stance and teachings on homosexuality were a block to some extent to them exploring Christianity.

“The way the church responds to them (homosexuals) is contrary to their teachings... It is a key issue.”

Dr. Robert Gagnon is associate professor of New Testament at Pittsburg

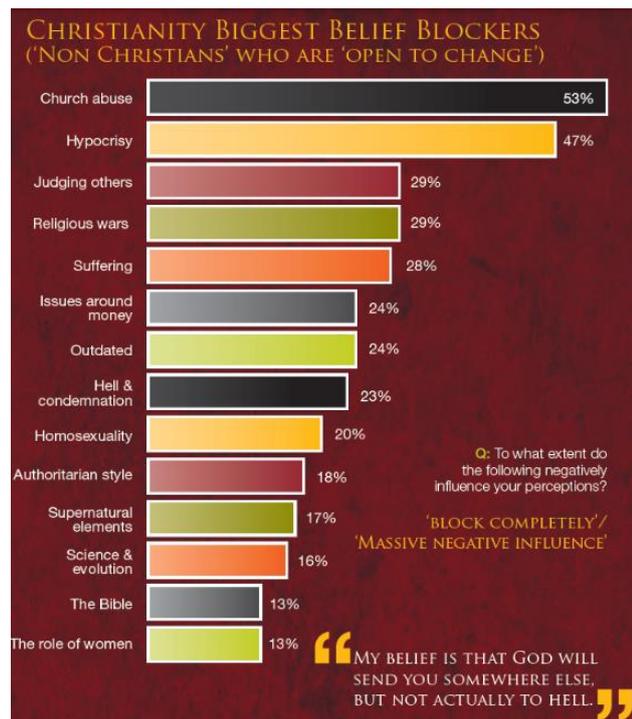
Theological Seminary and the author of arguably the best book ever written by any scholar on what the Bible teaches about homosexual behavior. Dr. Gagnon answers the hard questions and teachings of both Jesus and the Old Testament on same-sex marriage, homosexuality, and even incest.

Robert Gagnon - Homosexuality & the Bible

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqK9LkqAgw0>

Notes on Presentation:

- Laws and rules in the OT come at different levels of important; are they pervasively prescribed, absolutely prescribed, strongly prescribed and counter-culturally prescribed. These are all ways of seeing if the rule is a core issue or a perimeter issue.
- The rule against mixed cloth is not at the core of Jewish culture but more towards the perimeter. The rule against homosexuality is at the core of the culture. Incest is in the same area.
- 1 Cor. 5:1 This is sexual immorality with in the Church
- 1 Cor. 6:9-10
- Galatian 5 *porneia, akatharsia, aselgeia*



- Love is about recovering people for the kingdom of God
- At the root of the discussion is “what does it mean to really love our neighbor?”
- Sex is not just more intimacy, it is about merger. It’s about re-uniting constituent parts, in this case male and female. Therefore it has a set of parameters that makes it work;
 - Must be male and female as sexual counterparts
 - It has to be restricted to two
 - There must be both structural difference along with being complementary – hence the prohibition against incest
- Jesus did not speak about homosexuality because the Jewish culture had it as prohibitive.
- Both Jesus and Jewish culture based their position on Genesis 1
- 1 Cor. 6:9 *malakoi* “The soft man”, men who effeminate themselves to attract sexual partners; *arsenokoitai*; for 7-8 centuries only found in Christian text. Early Judaism had this term to refer to both adult men and boys. The use of this term by early Christian texts means that the prohibition is absolute and strongly held.
- Homosexual activity presents men and women in a light that devalues the *Imago Dei* in them.

Some Other Points to Consider

- Much of the angst towards the church and their treatment of the Gay community is appropriate. The church down through the centuries has been a long way from treating homosexuals as Jesus called us to treat them, to love our neighbours.
- The prohibitions against homosexual activity exist only within the Christian faith community. The Bible does not call non-Christians to this standard and so Christians need to be careful how we speak about this issue.
- Homosexuality is NOT the unpardonable sin. Matthew 12:31
- Our responsibility is to love our neighbours, including people who belong to the GLBTI community.

Tim Keller - What do Christians have against Homosexuality

Tim Keller at Veritas [8 of 11]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZFCB9sduxQ>

Supernatural Elements, Science and Evolution

Supernatural Elements:

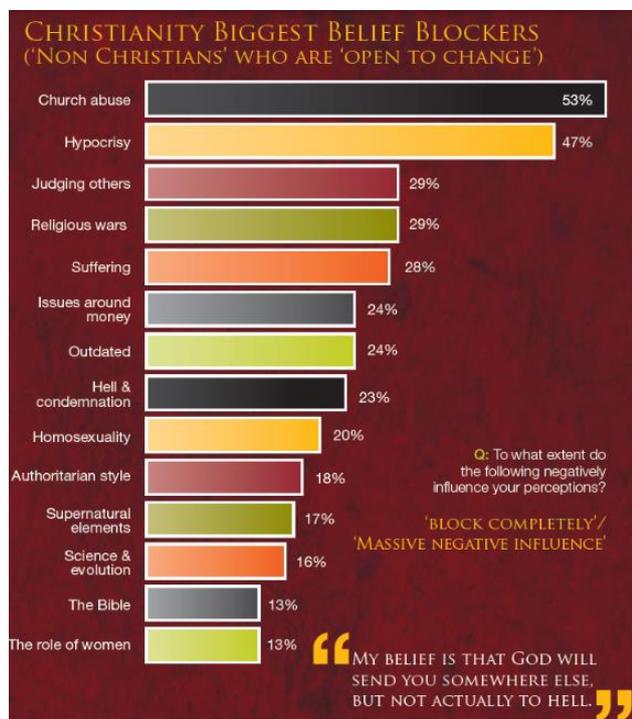
(From Ard Louis – Miracles and Science

<http://biologos.org/blogs/archive/series/miracles-and-science>)

The great, sceptical Scottish philosopher David Hume, wrote:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.

There is a lot at stake in this issue; if scientific realities naturally lead to the conclusion that God cannot or does not act in the world, then much of Christian theology is undermined. Prayer itself could no longer be considered efficacious, and the notion of God responding to human needs would become unsustainable. And of course the Resurrection, which is the center piece of the Christian story, becomes questionable.



What is Science?

Ard Louis explains it this way:

Thus, the primary role of the collective nature of the scientific process is to provide a network of error-correcting mechanisms that prevent us from

fooling ourselves. The continual testing against nature refines and filters out competing scientific theories, leading to advances in the strength and reliability of our scientific knowledge tapestries.

The limits of science

Sir Peter Medawar, who wrote:

That there is indeed a limit upon science is made very likely by the existence of questions that science cannot answer and that no conceivable advance of science would empower it to answer... It is not to science, therefore but to metaphysics, imaginative literature or religion that we must turn for answers to questions having to do with first and last things.

“Unscientific” doesn’t mean irrational

DVD clip of Ard Louis - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxywMT-MeQM&list=PL1AA5C41761C1E169&index=2>

Miracles and the Bible

How can we then judge whether or not the miracles of the Bible are reliable? Since the word miracle has taken on so many different meanings, it is important to first examine the biblical language.

The New Testament predominantly uses three words for miracle:

- *teras*, a wonder
- *dunamis*, an act of power
- *semeion*, a sign

Nature is what God does

Miracles happen against a backdrop. In this context, it is illuminating to see how the Bible describes God’s action in the natural world. For example Psalm 104.

The New Testament is even more explicit:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (Hebrews 1:3)

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col. 1:17)

In other words, if God were to stop *sustaining all things by his powerful word*, the world would stop existing.

God of the Gaps

When science can't explain it then God must be at work. The problem is that this paints God's actions into a smaller and smaller area as science discovers more and more.

From the scriptures above it is clear that the Christian story's position is that God is at work throughout the creation, not just in the areas we can't explain.

How does God work? Both in the regularity of the natural 'laws' and in the more 'miraculous' events that seem outside of these laws.

However the introduction of quantum and chaos theory may shed new light on the place in which God acts in his creation.

A Question of Worldviews

The starting point to a person's view of the validity of miracles, or not, is not the event itself but rather the worldview the person holds.

What of Science?

DVD clip of John Lennox – Science and God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJMp6p3tLj4>

Lennox in most of his presentations would make the point that often the question is not about science burying God but rather a question of worldviews.

DVD clip of John Lennox – What is the Conflict?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGKbvt4saKI>

What of Evolution?

Perhaps the most passionately argued area where science and Christianity intersect is in the area of origins, especially the discussion of evolution.

It is important to remember that there are a number of different ideas within the Christian family, one of which is that the process of evolution is the process that God created in order to develop the world into what it is today.

Just as we need to be sure we as Christians are arguing the correct understanding of the Christian faith and not a 'straw man', so we need to make sure when discussing evolution that we don't erect an evolutionary 'straw man' to knock down.

1. **Evolution claims that we evolved from monkeys.**

No it doesn't. It doesn't even claim we evolved from chimpanzees! Rather, evolution predicts that all life on the planet is related.

2. **If we evolved from monkeys, why are there still monkeys around?**

Start with the same correction as given in #1—apes are closer relatives than monkeys. And then there is a similar misconception. The theory of evolution does not say that currently existing species came from other currently existing species.

3. **The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics disproves evolution**

The reasoning here seems to be that the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics says that disorder (a.k.a. entropy) increases over time. If you include the sun within our system, then yes, things are running down. But we've got a few billion years left before the usable energy from the sun is gone.

4. **No new information can be added to DNA through natural processes.**

Yes it can. That happens a lot through genetic mutations and gene duplication.

5. **Evolution is a theory in crisis.**

No it's not. Of course scientists debate and argue about the specifics—that's how science works. But the general framework of evolution including the common descent of all species is overwhelmingly supported by scientists. 98% of the members of [AAAS](#) (and 99% of research scientists) accept human evolution ([see study](#)).

6. **There are no [transitional fossils](#).**

Well, that depends on what you mean by that. When we find a specimen that appears to have "transitional" characteristics between two species, like a whale-ish creature with tiny legs, it would be rare if that organism itself led directly to modern whales. But when it is found in the right place and right time period, it is

undoubtedly closely related to the truly transitional organism. We might better call these “intermediate” fossils. And there are gobs of these in the fossil record. Together, they make an impressive picture of the transition that occurred between species.

7. **Evolution is merely “Historical Science” and therefore can’t be tested or confirmed.**

This is so widely proclaimed, and it perpetuates massive misunderstanding about science. Evolution begins with careful observations (e.g., I found this bone in this layer of rock); then hypotheses are offered for why those specific observations were made (e.g., the bone belonged to a species that lived 65 million years ago); as the hypotheses are developed, they give rise to predictions of other observations (e.g., we should be able to find similar bones in these other layers of rock); and the hypotheses are tested by making those new observations. When the new observations turn out as predicted, they count as confirming evidence (not absolute proof--that doesn’t happen much in any science); when the observations are different than expected, we have to rethink our hypotheses. That kind of process is as scientific as you get.

- See more at: <http://biologos.org/blogs/jim-stump-faith-and-science-seeking-understanding/10-misconceptions-about-evolution#sthash.iYCJ0GYX.dpuf>