



- 'Explain how science poses a challenge for Christian truth claims' (20)

Many scientists believe that religion and science are at a dichotomy because science disproves many of Christianity's truth claims. The most obvious challenge for Christianity is the scientific theory of evolution. Many prominent scientists are influenced by Darwin's theory of natural selection, none more so than Richard Dawkins. Dawkins claims that natural life evolved and adapted to become the complex bio-diverse state that it is. This poses a significant problem for Christians, as the core Christian belief as found in Genesis 1 is that God created life through Adam and Eve. Therefore, the empirical fossils we have found which suggest humans evolved, challenges the fundamental belief that God created Adam and Eve.

Another major challenge is that scientists often regard religion as an aberration. This means that religion (and indeed Christianity) was a fundamental part of evolution which helped humans survive. By providing religious rules, this made it possible to control a tribe and also encouraged people to respect their elders. This meant that humans could respect and look after people who are weak, as opposed to neglecting them as would be encouraged through survival of the fittest. Dawkins suggests that this aberration has been psychologically passed on through generations by 'memes' and have manifested themselves in cultural and social elements of life. This is a challenge for religion because it is fundamentally denying God's existence and attributing another reason for Christianity's popularity.

Another challenge against religion from scientists is the 'God of Gaps' argument. This argument, as grounded in David Hume's work, is the criticism that whenever there is a gap in knowledge, religious people often place God as the answer. This, for Hume, was a particular problem with the teleological argument (T.A). The T.A as espoused by Aquinas and William Paley, suggested that because there is evidence of design in the world, there must be a designer, and this designer must be God. For Hume and other scientists there is no empirical proof for this claim. Hume's fork encourages us to only find knowledge in analytic (true by definition) or synthetic (true by experience) claims. For Dawkins and other scientists, God is neither analytically nor synthetically true, and therefore it is wrong to place his existence into any gaps for knowledge. This is a challenge against the fundamental Christian philosophical arguments as put forward by Aquinas, which have greatly influenced Christian thought.

Moreover, scientists pride themselves on searching for evidence, which is a challenge against religion which arguably offers answers without any evidence. The very concept of 'faith' in Christianity follows along Kierkegaardian lines that a Christian has to ultimately make a leap of faith to believe in God. For a scientist, no new knowledge is released unless there is definitive and absolute empirical proof i.e. the proof of fossils dating back millions of years which helps us learn more about evolution as discussed above. Faith is a fundamental challenge for scientists as there is simply no empirical proof of God's existence let alone proof that Christianity is the correct 'religion' to be following. This therefore creates a wall between religion and science.