

Evangelism for 2000 and Beyond

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Evangelism for some is a repugnant concept because it is the process of persuasion. These days, Christians are discouraged from persuading because nobody is supposed to do that in the New Age culture that has so much of our society by the throat.

Others are **afraid** of evangelism for a variety of personal reasons:

- ❑ People may have an incorrect view of the term. Is it like the bellowing preacher of mass rallies? Yes, and no.
- ❑ They believe they may not have the ‘gift of evangelism’. Again, they have an incorrect view, this time of the way each Christian should be functioning. See my booklet on *Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gift*.
- ❑ Individuals may be afraid of getting into an unpleasant argument. They may be afraid of not being able to answer someone’s question. They may be afraid of being labelled religious, and of becoming an object of ridicule. They may be **afraid**.

But discipling is the purpose of the church, and it starts with evangelism.

In the sixties, when I was converted, evangelism was easy. You could get a hearing for the gospel with somebody very easily, share the fact within 10-30 minutes, and you might have won another convert. It was easy because society was still permeated with God’s truth as presented by the church. It was easy, too, because society had not been infected with alternatives like Islam, Buddhism, Maori paganism or New Age spirituality, and downright disregard for spiritual values. The results are a breed of young people who have been described by social workers and politicians as people ‘devoid of feeling, ambition and purpose.’ ‘The law holds no fear for them,’ said one about the young people of Mangakino, where a policeman was killed. They represent one end of the spectrum of young people, but many would think these things, even though they might not have the courage to do them.

I’m not surprised that young people are like this, with parents of no religious convictions and an education system that has for decades been teaching as fact the theory of **evolution—the implications of which are that we came from nowhere, have no purpose here, and go nowhere when we die**. But the belief is widespread because rebellious humans have fallen on this alternative to God and his creation and adopted it with alacrity.

My story:

I had had a basic Christian education as a boy, in Scotland. I learned to expect money collected in church to vanish through the roof, I memorised the order of books of the Bible, and learned that I shouldn’t whistle on Sundays.

In New Zealand I attended Whakatane High School. One of my two science teachers was an evolutionist. He taught biology, and that evolution was the way all of life came about. The other one, the head of department, was a Christian. The Christian’s life was different. He was full of optimism and vigour. He also tried to get across the Bible’s view of existence at a Bible class I attended. But my commitment as a 16 year-old was to evolution because it seemed more credible than the Bible’s account. I drifted spiritually until I was 23.

During my studies for a career in broadcasting I was spoken to a young architecture student in the Auckland YMCA, where I was staying. He asked about my spiritual life. I told him I didn't have one. He invited me to his room.

I had four objections to what he was beginning to say:

1. The authenticity of the Bible
2. The creation story—it was so different from the discoveries of science
3. The flood could not have been as large as what the Bible said
4. Jesus' miracles were impossible

Authenticity

Peter spent some time convincing me that the Bible as we have it today was as it was written thousands of years ago. I accepted his view. It is a view I hold today, with much greater confidence than that evening in 1966.

Logic

- He then tackled the foundations of my view of what the Bible declared with simple logic. He asked one telling question: 'Do you believe that God exists?' I did. And he led me in the first philosophical thinking in all my 23 years.
- If God existed, then by definition, he could do as he pleased, including create the universe in six days.
- If God could do that he could cause a world-wide flood.
- If God could do all that, and if Jesus were God, the miracles recorded by the eyewitnesses who wrote the four gospels were true.
- Conversely, if Jesus did all these things, include rising from the dead, he must have been God in human form.
- Therefore we ought to take close note of what he said to the world.

To the gospel

Having demolished my point of view with one stroke (does God exist?) this ordinary fellow began explaining the gospel from the New Testament. I was convinced by it and became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, that night.

Genesis

The next day I opened a Bible at Genesis and began reading. I knew that everything began there, and that problems were created and solved in that book.

Conflict

Immediately the conflict between the assertions of science and the revelation of God in scripture became glaringly obvious. 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.' But science said everything was an accident; it had come about through random processes—the universe, the earth, plants, animals and people. I went through a phase of trying to reconcile or harmonise both views, like many distinguished churchmen before me, but I couldn't do it. After some study I concluded that it could not be done. But by faith I was committed to God and creation; the Holy Spirit within me gave me this conviction, so I left the problem alone for some years, hoping that one day I would get some answers.

Solution

The beginning of a solution came when I read the book *The Genesis Flood* by John Whitcomb, a theologian, and Henry Morris, a geologist and hydrologist. They said that the geological evidence all around us points to there having been a cataclysmic flood, as described in Genesis 6-8. The evidence, thus interpreted, destroyed the validity of the theoretical geological column and the supposed evolutionary progression of the fossils. And for the first time I realised that science was biased and unscientific. Everything science was

saying was predicated on the theory of evolution. Morris had stepped outside the establishment and risked his reputation for the sake of truth. So I became even more committed to the history of the universe as outlined in Genesis.

Dinosaurs

I thought I had it all figured out, but I had missed one section that has become very important to all young people. One of them, a neighbour's son, asked me 'If Genesis is true, where do the dinosaurs fit in?' I couldn't give him an instant answer, but promised him that I would study the Bible and tell him as soon as I knew. He accepted that.

God created dinosaurs

It didn't take me long to realise that God had created all the animals, and so he must have created dinosaurs with the rest. Did the flood wipe them out? No, because God saw to it that representatives of all the animals got on board and were released into the new world. I noticed some descriptions of great creatures in Job that didn't fit the marginal notes in my Bible. I matched their descriptions happily with reconstructions from fossil skeletons of dinosaurs. Where were they today? There were many historical accounts of dinosaur-like animals all over the world, and evidence is growing steadily that shows humans and dinosaurs walked the earth together. Like many animals, they became extinct gradually. I reported back to the teenager, and he accepted the information. Much later, that teenager finally believed in the historicity of Genesis when he watched a video that showed one possible theoretical mechanism for the flood.

Evangelised from Genesis

This young man did not realise it at the time, but he had been evangelised largely from the book of Genesis, which built on the knowledge of Jesus gained from his mother. He had been won despite the prevailing climate of evolutionism. But what if he had not received the knowledge of Jesus from his mother? Later, we had opportunity to test our views with Asians who knew little or nothing of the Bible.

Experiences with Asians

A friend who was witnessing to Asians constantly sometimes brought a carload or two to our home for contact with a Kiwi home, and to hear more of God's truth. He brought students from many countries. How were we to communicate the important truths to them? We told them the story of humanity, from Genesis, and we began by asking questions:

'Which country do you come from?' They named the country

'Where did your ancestors come from?' The same country, perhaps another.

'Where did the ancestors come from?' They did not know.

So we told them the story of the spread of humanity from the brothers Shem, Ham and Japheth, telling the story of Babel. Then we took them back even farther, to the flood, and before the flood, right back to the first humans, Adam and Eve, who were the parents of us all, and whose father was God. We told them about the rebellion, and the tendency of humans to hate God ever since. Then we took them forward to the Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died to take away sin and restore us to our original Father.

On to something!

We never saw clear results, except reports that what we had said was very helpful. But the ease with which the presentations transcended philosophical, religious and cultural barriers persuaded us that we were on to something—something that might work in New Zealand too.

We soon realised that this is a classical method that Paul used to the Greek philosophers and scholars as recorded in Acts 17. Again we saw the ability of the message to transcend the gap between the religious, Judaeo-Christian world and that of the pagan Greeks.

So we continued to use Acts 17 in a formal presentation. Again the feedback we got was positive—and it all hinged on the opening statement: The God who made the world and everything in it . . .’ One young man, another Asian, objected to that idea, and clung to evolution, so the message was getting through. If they could concede that point, they would be well on the way to belief.

David’s story

David is a friend of ours. We met at Lincoln University only days after he had become a Christian following some meetings held by creation science people at a local church. He had been given a Catholic education, but it was evolutionised. God had somehow created the world, but the mechanism was evolution. His view was challenged by the absence of fossils that represented the supposed development between one species and the next. The missing links were missing! David’s conversion to Christ was in two parts:

He realised the unscientific nature of evolution
He realised the first words of Genesis were true

David represents many young people today. They know something of God, perhaps through their parents, their friends, their school or through watching videos, but it is not substantial. But they have been taught evolution as a fact as part of their education as laid down by the State, so their inclination to get to know more is low. If their trust in evolution could be shaken they might be more open to hear the alternative view, from the Bible.

Every view challenged

The theory of evolution provides people in all cultures an alternative to believing in the Creator. Henry Morris, who has since *The Genesis Flood* written many books, says that all religions and philosophies depend eventually on evolution, be they communist, fascist, atheist, pantheist, polytheist or deist. So the opening of Genesis and the opening of Paul’s presentation in Acts 17 challenge every view.

Therefore instead of our having to worry about how to present the gospel to New Age cultists, or Buddhists, or atheists, or so-called rationalists, we merely present the simple, transcendent truth of God.

We back up the truth with a Christ-like life, with good relationships, with you and verve that are not available anywhere else but from the power of the resurrection.

Paul’s presentation to the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-31)

The audience: a council that met on Mars Hill in Athens, a court that sat there for many ages. It was charged with questions of morals and the rights of teachers who lectured in public. Paul was brought before this council to be examined about his teaching. These were solid citizens, the bulwark of religious conservatism. He met the mocking taunts of the two most popular philosophies, Epicureanism and Stoicism. His address as recorded is today more widely read than any of the Greek philosophers. And he gained a convert from this council, Dionysius.

Verses 22-23	Ideas He acknowledged the religiosity of the audience. People are religious. Evolutionists are religious because they have no supporting evidence, but cling to their faith. Many people are vaguely aware of the existence of God, but they know very little, so for them God is unknown. They need the big picture. The following verses give it—a treatise on God, the universe, and all that.
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24. *God made the world and everything in it.* . . . A summary of Genesis chapters 1 and 2, without getting into the technicalities which give opportunity for disputes. The opening statement answers the big question: 'Where did all this come from?'
- 24b-25 *He does not dwell in temples built by hands . . .* God is the master of heaven and earth. Note the contrast between the small human temple and the vast universe he has created. This **destroys all human religion** in one blow and it destroys the need for appeasement by gifts, since God owns everything.
25. *He gives to all men life and breath and everything else.* Individuals receive the breath of life at birth; the mechanism for breathing was designed and set in place by the Creator. He assembled the complex DNA code in their correct order so that everything works together well. The Creator provides everything else—land to walk on, air to breathe, food and water, other people to stimulate us and care for us.
25. From one man he made every nation on earth . . . The Creator made all nations from Adam. Eve was made from Adam and she became the mother of all living. Genesis 1-11 tells the story of the **spread of humanity** over the earth, beginning at Adam and Eve, including the **rebellion** against God by the misuse of God-given free will. The story includes **murder** in the first family, increasing **violence** and lawlessness in the 10 generations to Noah, and God's **judgement** of the possibly 200 million people in the flood. A remnant of humanity is **saved** on the ark, a **new start, more rebellion** at Babel, the confusion of **languages** and the **scattering** of these embryonic nations according to language groups centred on the descendants of the families of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. This **answers** the questions: 'Where did people come from? Where did my family come from?'
- God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him . . .* **God's purpose** is revealed. God is working in human affairs today, working on nations and boundaries, where people will live and for what period, so that the greatest number (and I believe everyone) might have **a chance** to come back to their Creator and master. This section answers the question usually presented as an assertion: 'Didn't God just set everything running and then stand back to let it all happen, without interfering?' God has always been active in the world because he loves his creation, and wants every person to turn in submission to his loving appeal.
28. *He is not far from each one of us . . .* **He is so close.** We are his sons and daughters, and he can be reached instantly, from anywhere. No phone bills to pay, no engaged signals, no computer messages. God direct!
29. **God is a spirit** and must be worshipped sincerely. (John 4:24) He is greater than idols that purport to represent various deities or spirits. Such a view is ignorant, i.e., without knowledge of the Creator. He has up to this moment ignored or passed over.
30. Nowadays, since the death of Christ, who was God in human form, he **commands everyone**, everywhere to come back to God in obedience.

This **answers** the belief that there are many ways to come to God.

31. **A day of judgement is coming.** The day has been set, but we don't know the date. God will judge everyone—you, me—according to the best justice ever given. This **answers** the perception that there is **no justice** in this world. This may be true, but true justice will take place. The proof that this will be so has already been given: God raised the man Jesus, who will be the judge, from the dead. This raising of Jesus from the dead confirms that he is really God, that was he said was and is true, and that what he set out to accomplish was achieved.

To expand on this thought— God abhors sin, which separates us from his company. Sin causes death—physical and spiritual, and will send sinners (rebels) to a fearsome eternity. Sin must be paid for by us, or by a substitute, Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, paid the penalty, and this payment is offered to all who will take it submission and obedience. This **answers** the question **Where am I going to spend eternity?**

Questions answered from Acts 17

Where did the universe come from?
Where did I come from?
Why am I here?
Where am I going?
What is the purpose of life?

So what is wrong with evolution?

It is a theory that tries to explain the existence of everything without the action of a Creator. A Christian cannot subscribe to evolution because at its core is the presupposition that God does not exist.

There is no evidence for evolution. Supposed fossil evidence showing the incidence of simple organisms at the bottom or 'oldest' layers and complex organisms at the top or 'youngest' layers of the geology of the world is totally invalidated by the historical, global flood of Genesis 6-8.

In addition, there is no fossil evidence of fossils in transition from one species to another. There are **no 'missing links'** because after 150 years' search they are still missing!

The **complexity of information** in the simplest of organisms is such that there **is not enough time** in the universe, even by evolutionary standards, for them to have come about by random processes.

It is a fallacy to say that complex organisms developed from less complex ones either gradually or suddenly because a complete set of **new information** has to be added. That is, the designs for new organs, like the complete eye, must be introduced from outside.

Variation within species, such as the incidence of varieties of dogs, for example, does not prove evolution. Variation merely rearranges existing information. Breeding isolates the organism from the pool of available information, producing an organism with **less** information that was available, not more.

Mutations do not prove evolution, either, nor do they advance it. They are almost always harmful because they degrade the organism, but the corruption and loss of information.

The age of the universe, estimated currently at 4.5 billion years, proves nothing because of the fallacy of producing life from non-life by random processes still is a fallacy. According to Scripture, the universe is much younger than 4.5 billion years. I accept the estimate of about 6,000 years, derived from Scripture.

Radiometric dating, such as carbon and potassium-argon, is based on a number of assumptions:

1. That we know the condition of the sample at the start
2. That we know everything that has happened to it
3. That we are talking in huge numbers

We don't know 1 or 2, and 3 is a presupposition based on the evolutionary position.

To summarise the two models to explain existence:

Evolution model

Matter plus energy plus time produces order and complexity.

Creation model

Matter plus information plus energy produces order and complexity.

Conclusion

Today, a part of being always ready to **explain your faith** (1 Peter 3:15) must include being able in principle to **debunk** the atheistic alternative, evolution. You don't have to be able to talk technically at every level in every scientific discipline, but you should be able to think about and talk about evolution's fallacies and weaknesses in **principle**. This means homework.

It also means being committed to the **authority of Scripture**. If you are uncertain about the authenticity or historicity or inspiration or the authority of Scripture, particularly Genesis, you will make no headway. Young people, are steeped in evolution (so-called science), pantheism (Maori spirituality), and New Age religion (alternative mysticism).

In fact, compromising with the biases of science suppresses the truth about God (Romans 1:12). It undermines the authority not only of Genesis, but the whole of Scripture. All the prophets of the Old Testament, all the apostles and disciples of the New Testament, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself held tightly to the plain, obvious meaning of Genesis—that it was God who created the universe, and he did it in six days.

If you undermine this truth by compromise with so-called science, you undermine the gospel itself, and you will make no impact on the beliefs of young people today.

What is wrong with evolution? The answers on one page, following.

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