

Communication

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2007

This paper is going to raise various different aspects of communication. Each could do with a hour to cover it at the conference, but often Christians are aware of few of them so at least raising them will be useful.

I am circulated the written paper by email in advance to give those coming the opportunity to read through it. In the conference session I will not read it out, but will summarize the points.

Some of it is in bullet points for simplicity.

Analysis of language

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) distinguished synchronic linguistics (studying language at a given moment) from diachronic linguistics (studying the changing state of a language over time). He also emphasized that meaning depends not only on the words themselves but the context: “The sense of a term depends on presence or absence of a neighbouring term.” Communication is not by means of sharply defined and independent words, and this makes being sure of meaning harder.

From Saussure, various movements developed to become pessimistic about even the possibility of understanding meaning at all. A movement called “structuralism”¹ concluded that any *original* meaning or an ancient text (like the Bible) is irrecoverable and untranslatable. Another, post-structuralist, movement called “reader-response-criticism” regards “authorial intention as almost irrecoverable anyway” and assumes that no two readers will have the same response to a text.² Yet another development, “deconstruction” as advocated by Jacques Derrida, argues that ultimately all human communication “deconstructs” or undermines itself. All these kinds of negative or nihilistic linguistic conclusions are useless in practice. Whether we are trying to discover which medicine works, how to fix the car, what uncle Henry died of, or whether Jesus intended to forbid gay-partnerships, we try to do our best with human understanding and communication - whatever their shortcomings. We should remember the difficulties, but assume that something like a correct understanding of meaning is possible with care. Language is “socially constructed”, ie it arises in course of social interaction and intercourse rather than from someone sitting down and inventing a word for each concept. We cannot, therefore, assume that there is any simplistic “reference” from a single word to a single “real” concept in any actual human culture. Saussure showed that there may be arbitrariness in the existence or non-existence of actual *terms* in a language, and that the absence of a term does not imply that the concept is absent in the culture. The same concept may actually be expressed by a word in one culture but by a *phrase* in another culture.

Unfortunately we can do nothing else than begin by studying words – even though Barr (1961), Carson (1984), and others have raised various dangers in word studies, such as:

¹ Unfortunately there are two distinct movements using the same name “structuralism” – this is just one of them.

² Klein et al (1999) p.439.

1. Illegitimate totality transfer (the explicit or implicit transfer of all the meanings of a given word into any given passage)
2. Technification (an attempt to read as though it was a technical and precise term a word which is actually much more vague or ambivalent).
3. Root fallacy (assuming that “the ‘root meaning’ can confidently be taken to be part of the actual semantic value of any word or form which can be assigned to an identifiable root.”)
4. Dead metaphors: (a metaphor to which we become so accustomed that it loses its original force of comparison(.
5. Misuse of subsequent meaning: (reading back into terms implications which they only later came to have.)

Most of us assume that nouns used “refer” to actual objects or entities. Thus the word “Plato” *refers* to an actually once existent person, the word “Venus” *refers* to a presently existing planet. Osborne distinguishes this from the “sense” which is “the picture built in the mind by the term, ie it is the image which is connotated to the hearer.” This can be far more complex. This, then, is a distinction of *reference* (denotation) and *sense* (connotation). In Peter’s confession “You are the Christ” (Mt 16:16) the “you” is referential to the immediate person of Jesus. The word “Christ”, however, carries all kind of images and connotations – many of them unknown to the average reader of the NIV.

A further level of analysis comes in “Discourse Analysis” which is broadly defined as “language above the sentence or above the clause”. Works within this are either from a structural-formalist or from a functionalist approach. The formalist (eg Chomsky) tends to regard language as a primarily mental phenomenon, and to explain linguistic structures in terms of innate human capacities. The functionalist (eg Halliday) tends to regard it as a social phenomenon and so see similarities in languages as because they arrive through similar social functions. So functionalists like Brown and Yule (1983) say that the analysis of language “cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs.” (p.1) In other words, language has more function than the simple conveyance of objective information. Interestingly, Locke in Coleman and Carlin (2004) analyses discussions between young earth creationists and others in terms of discourse analysis, showing something about how their technique of persuasion works.

Language and Communication

One of the pioneers in looking at how communication is processed by a recipient brain was “our very own” Professor D M Mackay (1922-1987) once Professor of Communication at Keele and a leading figure in the RSCF (which preceded CiS). Mackay wrote of:

1. Conditional readiness: the range of states available for processing information ie the cognitive state of the recipient
2. selective function: what the message achieves in causing a reorientation of thinking – possible only subject to 1.
3. the intended meaning
4. the effective meaning

Persuasive appeals are more likely to be successful when they are made with full cognizance of the conceptual framework of the persuadees, and when they are couched in codes (languages) familiar to them. (Jamieson (1985) p.69).

Put crudely, one has to be on their wavelength., but it is more than this. One also has to be aware of underlying psychological, social and religious commitments which affect their readiness to process new information in a way that reorientates their thinking. Suppose, eg., that in their mind to accept that the world is old would mean that Scripture is unreliable and so evangelical faith mistaken. Any empirical evidence presented for the age of the earth is then weighed not merely against empirical evidence that it isn't, but against all the evidence they feel for the truth of their faith and religious experience. There are also other factors involved in persuasive discourse.

Applying this to “God Things”

The First Question is how God communicates to us.

With God, of course, the Holy Spirit is also a part of the communication. The words of Scripture address our spirits as well as our minds, and to leave it at a mind-level is to miss the point. We feed on the word of God. It feeds our souls. But we also need to understand what kind of language and communication it is.

One of the odd things is that few seem to have noticed that in order to speak about spiritual things at all we have to use metaphor. Thus when God speaks to us, metaphor has to be at the heart of much of the communication. Seeing God as a father, a ruler, a designer, all these are words given meaning by more concrete human experiences, and then extended to God. We refer to God speaking, thinking, having anger, love; all words given meaning through human experiences, and applied to God because we believe we are in God's image. This is not to say that God does not “really” have such emotions, but that our understanding of something of what they mean comes through analogy.

We also find that Jesus, like his Father, continually uses metaphor to speak to us. One of the most obvious instances of this is in John 3. A central theme in John's gospel is the signs of the Kingdom – and that Jesus was the Messiah. Nicodemus, rarely amongst contemporary Jewish teachers – could *see* the signs. He began his prepared speech:

“Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

But Jesus cut him short. Only if you are born again can you actually see the signs:

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

Now I am well aware that many people think Jesus was mistaken, and that Nicodemus could see the signs of the kingdom without being born again, but it is noticeable that Jesus never told him to repent, he only gently ribbed him for lack of understanding. Anyway, at the very least, Nick was a seeker after truth who saw the signs. But in spite of this he does not grasp what Jesus means. Like so many well meaning God-seeking, bible believing people today, he tried to take Jesus literally when Jesus was speaking symbolically. So Jesus has to explain it to him, the term “born again” is not literal, it represents the spiritual experience of renewal in physical language. But note also what Jesus says later:

You are Israel's teacher and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

The picture of rebirth speaks of a human spiritual experience on earth. If Nicodemus, teacher as he is (and Jesus does not proclaim him a false teacher) cannot even understand this, how can he understand apocalyptic things, things about what is happening in heavenly realms, which can be expressed *only* in metaphor? “Literalism”, in regard to the words of Jesus and his Father, means inability to understand such things. What Jesus says is obviously true. The book of Revelation is apocalyptic; it has the symbols of the beast and the lamb, the bride and the harlot, the cities of Babylon and Jerusalem. It has horsemen, bowls of woes, glassy seas. It has a tree of life and that old serpent the Devil. These speak of profound truths about spiritual conflict in the heavenly places, but literalists simply cannot understand what it is about – they think it is about beasts and dragons and cities and whatnot.

Sadly, too often our evangelical churches have lost sight of this basic truth. In wanting to stop liberals from allegorizing away the resurrection, we have failed to emphasize to people that Jesus and his Father all the time use symbolic language. We have failed to note that the most common mistake made both by Jesus friends and his critics was to take him literally when he was speaking spiritually and metaphorically. Sometimes he spoke parables, but often he simply spoke metaphorically without any pre-warning that he would do so – and was misunderstood. He spoke of destroying the Temple, of giving living water, of coming down as bread, of having food they knew not of, and he said “take, eat, this is my body.” Yet today so many think that they are honouring Jesus and Scripture in being supposedly literalists. We should be far more teaching the truths of God-communication, and also teaching the need to interpret the word.

This is a major theme in my own 2007 (prototypes available!) *Understanding the Biblical Creation Passages*. It begins with Jesus’ use of language, and asks “What did Jesus say?” in regard to interpreting the Biblical creation passages.

Interpreting the Bible

If spiritual truth is usually conveyed by metaphor, then this makes it the more essential for Christians to study hermeneutics or biblical interpretive methods. We can define:

- “exegesis” is to “find out what was the *original intent of the words of the Bible*”
- “hermeneutics” includes (i) setting it in the messianic-plan context of Scripture and also (ii) “seeking the *contemporary* relevance of ancient texts”.³

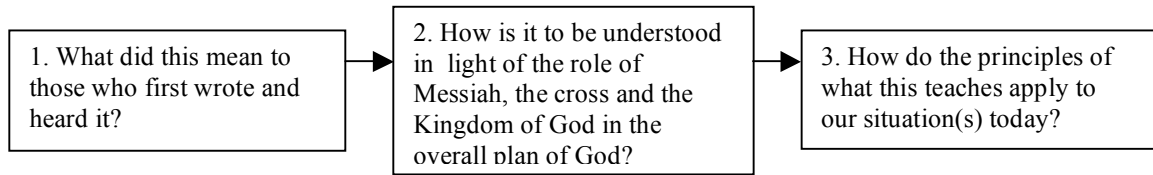
The terminology is not standard; thus, eg, what we call “exegesis” Klein et al (1993) p.133 call “definition of textual meaning” which they define as:

...that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intention of its author/editor and the possible understanding of that text by its intended readers.

Whatever we call them, there are two or three distinct activities.

³ Fee & Stuart (1993) pp.23-25 see also Achtemeier (1969) pp.13-14.

All this means that, in understanding any biblical passage there is often a threefold process.

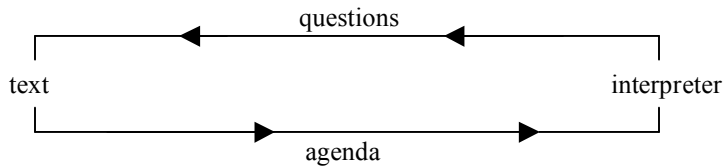


The first task is “exegesis”: to determine what the actual words meant to those who heard them in their linguistic and cultural context. Whilst, however, this may be the *primary* focus for an academic,⁴ the Christian disciple is interested in it only as a step towards a wider understanding and application.

The second task, then, is a hermeneutical one: to place this meaning within a wider “Christocentric” framework of the cross, resurrection and Kingdom of God.

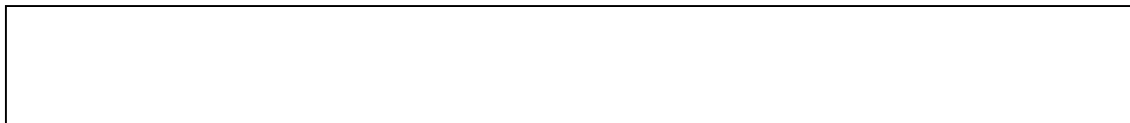
The third task is another and rather different hermeneutical one: to reapply any principles that emerge from this to our own times and cultural situation.

The process is complex. Some writers speak of a “hermeneutical spiral”, the title of a book by Osborne. He sees this process as a spiral:



The text itself sets the agenda and continually reforms the questions that the observer asks of it. The means by which this is accomplished is twofold: grammatical-syntactical exegesis and historical-cultural background. These interact to reshape the interpreter's pre-understanding and help to fuse the two horizons.

The following box contains the teaching on this whole exegetical-hermeneutical process received by the overwhelming majority of lay people:



It is not surprising, then, that Henry Morris, whose joint book *The Genesis Flood* in 1961 first spread young-earthism to the general evangelical public, could write:

the Scriptures, in fact, do not need to be “interpreted” at all, for God is well able to say exactly what he means.⁵

Nor is it surprising that the conditional readiness, the range of mental states available for processing information or cognitive state of the potential evangelical recipients of this message, was ripe for the propaganda success it achieved. Just for the record, the following box contains the amount of the philosophy of science received by most science students (apparently including Henry Morris and perhaps Richard Dawkins as a lad):

⁴ Eg Bird in Balch (2000) pp.165ff.

⁵ Morris (1984) p. 47. John Mackay, in debate with me, said that we should take the words of Scripture literally unless absolutely forced not to. The debate is available on DVD from Lifesway.

The young-earth materials tend to push various cultural buttons:

1. The “too clever by half theologian” button – a suspicion of experts
2. The “Word of God under attack” button – where anything less than a “plain meaning” is seen as attack
3. The “slippery slope” button – where any “concession” means that the battle can be lost
4. The “simple issue” button – which rejects anything that might actually require any serious thought

Yet the “plain meaning” approach is both incoherent and heretical. It is heretical because on the Road to Emmaus we read of Jesus

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he *interpreted* to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Much of the OT Scriptures are about “things concerning himself”. The account in Genesis 2-3 is not about trees and legless snakes. The tree of life which appears in Revelation too is a picture of life in Christ, and the prophesy in Gen 3:15 is about the brood of vipers who would oppose Christ and the old Serpent, the Devil, who was a liar from the beginning whose head Jesus crushed on the cross. These are “things concerning himself” not about biology, any more than Genesis 1 is about cosmology, John 3 is about gynecology, nor John 4 about hydrostatics! Christians need to come out openly about such things. If people cannot even understand the metaphorical language which is used to describe spiritual earthly things of Genesis 1-3, how will they understand heavenly things?

It is equally silly to say “God said it, that settles it!” – another catch phrase. Supposing that when the woman at the well arrived home she proclaimed to everyone that Jesus had promised her water that would remove the need for buckets ever again. Questioned as to the rationality of this by the Samaritan elders she pronounced triumphantly: “Jesus said it that I would never thirst again – so that settles it!” Or imagine the conversation between a protestant YEC and a Catholic, as to whether Jesus was physically present in the communion elements. “Jesus said it, so that settles it!” the Catholic could proclaim. This is again absurd. No one is denying that God, or Jesus, *said it*; the question is what he *meant by it*,

So how will they understand?

Paul, in his day, faced problems of communication to very different groups. Paul was a part of three worlds.

Jews: Paul’s fellow Jews were profoundly religious, and had an absolute belief in one God. This is the kind of thing he says before them:

Acts 24:14 However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will

be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Belief in the Law and the prophets. Belief in the Pharisaic hope of resurrection and judgement (cf also Acts 23:6). In his systematic Romans treatise Paul tries to show that his emphasis on FAITH and on the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah as the basis of relationship with God, follows what always has been. So, in Romans 4, he turns to the Torah and to the experience of the one all Jews regarded as seminal: Abraham. In the end, however, the crunch point is when he says God also accepts Gentiles on this basis (eg Acts 22:21). It is the crunch because to Jews their whole national identity was at stake, a radical reordering of thinking would be needed to go with this.

Greek Intellectuals: The Athenian philosophers were very logical and cerebral, and Paul totally alters his approach. In Acts 17 Paul notes their religiosity, and quotes Cleanthes and Epimenides the Cretan (who taught the Athenians to sacrifice and set up altars to the “Unknown God”). He leads them from the universal world-governing of God, to us as his offspring and the foolishness of idols. Then he introduces the day of judgement – and finally (the crunchpoint) the resurrection. This was the crunch because to Greeks the spiritual was imprisoned in the physical, and to resurrect the physical would be both absurd and impossible. So some laughed (and the Roman Festus in Acts 26:24 likewise thought Paul crazy!). But at least four people there radically reorientated their thinking and became Christians. Ben Witherington has also discussed how elements of structure of formal rhetoric can be found in parts of Paul’s writings.

Gentile General Public Finally, in Acts 14:14 Paul speaks to the ordinary Gentile in the street. Here he starts with everyday inference from creation to creator and tried to lead them on to encourage them to reject idols in favour of this God.

Our Targets

We also face various different groups eg:

1. The evangelicals common pew sitter, strong in belief in the Bible as the Word of God but often confused as to how to go about interpreting it
2. The intellectuals, the atheists producing crude arguments against God like Dawkins, and the Christians giving learned papers on top-down physicalism or the problems of psychological determinism in the compatibilist vie of freewill in regard to theodicy.
3. The non-intellectual public (including most students) who are post-modern, mostly believe in a God (and even in the resurrection of Jesus) but do nothing about it, and bring God out for special occasions like weddings and funerals.
4. The muslims who are as mixed up and divided as we are!

So how do we address these groups?

Like Paul, we need to be chameleons. – not in our beliefs but in our presentation.

Evangelical atheists – duty bound to ‘spread the word’

- ▶ Highly motivated – simplistic
- ▶ often avoid real debate
- ▶ sometimes media conscious
- ▶ Often reinforce popular myths
- ▶ Assume expertise well outside their actual range – last-chapter-itus.
- ▶ pouring in resources (someone may even be able to buy a chair for someone to spend all his time attaching religion when he is supposed to be enhancing public understanding of science).

Approach:

- Don’t underestimate the underlying emotional issues.
- Expose the general lack of understanding of metaphysics and religion.
- Can challenge rationality of holding any meaning, based on enlightenment logic.

General scientists – sometimes jaded, often just too busy

- ▶ Most active scientists today are on an RAE treadmill – Professors drive flocks of wage slaves (otherwise known as PhD students) to produce volumes of highly specialist papers. (Academic life is now best suited to those in monastic orders!).
- ▶ Christian ones may need support in their church situations.
- ▶ Non-Christians may be open to discussion if they have time.

Approach:

- Keep on with Faraday and CiS type activity. CiS can help with learned books (eg Frances Collins *Language of God, I* or Denis Alexander *Rebuilding the Matrix*)
- Challenges on meaning etc.

Older modernists – more enlightenment based

- ▶ Maybe harder to convince than younger people.
- ▶ May never have really thought about things.
- ▶ May look at books as ways to learn about things.
- ▶ Increasingly moving to become more like the younger people.

Approach:

- Need to try to counteract the TV negative propaganda – though this is difficult.
- The science issue may not be a leading issue anyway.

Younger experientialists – the ‘MTV’ generation

- ▶ They are easier to change – younger people can more easily change their minds
- ▶ They probably never thought – often have never really thought about science and faith
- ▶ Probably don’t read – unless it’s *More*, *Cosmo* or about cars/sports
- ▶ Pseudo-post modern – hold conflicting views in tension
- ▶ Empowered – can increasingly broadcast their own views – more than ever before the internet gives access to young for young communication
- ▶ Attention deficit – TV with 1000 channels, the internet, computer games – no wonder they don’t read

Approach:

- **For non-Christians** – challenge on issues of a finely tuned universe and issues of meaning and purpose.
- **For young Christians** - need to secure them on two fronts – both of which present evolution and/or ancient earth as incompatible with Scripture:
 - i. From atheistic attack if they are doing biology or psychology
 - ii. From young-earth corruption into unsound views of hermeneutics
 Most churches do neither. Pastors are less well informed now than 100 years ago, and more frightened of “being controversial”.
- We need to convey hermeneutics as a primary issue, and scientific harmony with theology as a second one. Student understanding on such issues is generally very primitive.

Intelligent design-ists – championed by US conservatives

- ▶ The core idea here is “irreducible complexity”. A mousetrap, eg, needs all of its parts in order to function at all. Behe etc claim that there are biological/biochemical structures like this, eg the bacteria flagella.
- ▶ This is not science driven – few scientists believe it for purely scientific reasons
- ▶ It is **not** a god of the gaps – though may look like it.
- ▶ It is philosophically problematic – confuses the metaphysical term “design” for a scientific term. If we accepted “design” as a scientific term then it could be used to explain anything at all.
- ▶ It may be YEC linked – some correlation between ID and YEC (though not eg for Behe)

Approach:

- Emphasize the differences between ID and young-earth. The ID people can accept much of science – the YEC reject huge swathes of it.
- Remain open to possible “gaps”, though insist that the existence of any such is a meta-physical conclusion. Whether there are any irreducible mousetraps is an empirical issue
- It is *right* that science always seeks to fill such gaps – this is not an irreligious quest but part of the whole purpose of science. Science seeks to explain everything by regular causal sequences – that is its job even though we recognise that sometimes (eg when Jesus walked on the water or changed it into wine) it may fail.

Young earth creationists – US centred, but growing in UK**Features are as follows:**

- ▶ This is definitely religiously motivated, and it rejects large swathes of science and the approach to science-faith taken during the whole history of the church.
- ▶ It developed out of a fringe group of legalists, the Seventh Day Adventists (which is not to say there are not Christians amongst them).
- ▶ The YEC has no idea of hermeneutics, and their arguments are often simplistic sound bytes.
- ▶ They are passionate – for YECs, it’s a question of the honour of God, the meaning of existence and the integrity of Scripture.

- ▶ They emphasize slippery slopes and plain meanings – their arguments appeal to very basic fears not necessarily to the intellect. People who commit to them and invest in their ideas thereby increase their own conviction (a normal psychological response). Jesus is seen as reverting to plain meanings of Scripture in contrast to the Pharisees (which is odd since legalism and plain meaning are often associated).
- ▶ As noted in Coleman & Carlin (2004) p. 48 “(YECs) present their version as given by reality and evolution as the outcome of various psychological and/or social factors affecting the way reality is viewed or presented.” Mainstream science is therefore suspect because it was developed by biased people. In his debate with me Mackay effectively claimed that people who support mainstream science do so because they care for the opinions of men and their positions in society – the faithful YEC in contrast, cares only for what God thinks.
- ▶ Associated with this is often a reconstructed mythical history of science (Mackay has his version on geology which ignores about 90% of the main developers of empirical stratigraphic geology), in which wicked atheists developed theories to attack the Bible or compromising Christians who cared too much for men’s opinions went along with unbiblical ideas. As any attempt to see Biblical passages non-literally is seen as “an attack on Scripture”, even the most devout can be seen in this light (though the YEC are inconsistent for in one place someone can be a “creationist” and in other places a “compromiser”).

Approach:

- Emphasizing science is largely counter productive. The real evidence for evolution is in gene sequencing and an overall coherence – it cannot be easily sound-bayed (any more than the motion of the earth in the days of Copernicus or Kepler). In any case, mainstream science is assumed to be atheistically motivated.
- If we do emphasize science we have to be careful – most of the quick-fixes have well constructed YEC answers. Often practising scientists effectively “can’t be bothered” to “gen up” on what they see as silly ideas – and they get slaughtered in debate by YEC’s who spend all their time finding useful misquotes from science.
- The primary issue should be presented as the integrity of Scripture to speak for itself and the centrality of Jesus as a guide to our understanding. No evangelical can argue with this – and few YEC’s have ever really thought about it. We should pronounce that the YEC’s are biblically unsound rather than unscientific (even though they are both).
- We need to address the underlying fears that weld people to YEC: the slippery slopes (there isn’t one); the problem of pain (the YEC position has at least as many moral issues) ; the authority of Scripture (the Christian theologians and Jewish teachers throughout history all accepted biblical authority, but not a YEC approach)
- We should educate churches on the history – both of theology and science.
- We need to catch and inoculate young Christians early against the corrupting influence of the YEC view, by teaching proper principles of hermeneutics in churches (and in the UCCF materials).

General Christians – many have never thought about it

- ▶ General fear of complexity or controversy, and increasing concentration on feelings and experiences (correlating with the post-modern society).

- ▶ Often an apologetics desert.

Approach:

- Need to focus on the need for proper principles of biblical interpretation.
- Reassurance of fears (as for YEC) and easy resources.

Primary Communication Issues

Language matters:

We are creationists. We need to be very careful with words because words have associations. Phrases like “creationist versus evolutionists” bring out deep seated fears and loyalties.

So eg I would say:

- ⇒ “I am a creationist” [*I am an evolutionary creationist*]
- ⇒ I am a “traditionalist” [*My understanding on science-Scripture issues is that held by leading bible-believing teaches throughout history*]
- ⇒ “I have similar views on science-faith to the leading founders of fundamentalism”
- ⇒ “I most certainly believe in Adam and Eve” [*these terms are used in Scripture – the issue is what it means by them*]
- ⇒ “I believe in the seven days of creation” [*I also believe in the one day of creation mentioned in Gen 2:4. The question is what it means by it*].

We should never ever say we don’t believe in a concept that Scripture uses!

Presentation Matters:

- Imagery is important. This is why Jesus used images (think of the “Good Samaritan” or the “Prodigal Son”.)
- Education vs entertainment. We need to engage the young.

Mechanisms of Communication in the 21st Century

Books

- Limited effect for young – they don’t read much other than Harry Potter or a course text book. They never did read much, but it has got worse.

Radio

- Difficult to get access to.
- Audience is limited unless on music or sport.

Television/DVD

- Costly to shoot well enough, though cost is reducing. Small DVD cameras now shooting high definition – probably good enough for eg the God channel.
- Much more can now be done post shooting, so the initial shot is less important than it once was.
- DVD is now cheap to produce and distribute (cost about 18p per disk, copyable on a stacked system (mine does seven in about 3.5 minutes).

- Also a rise of YouTube etc empowering ordinary people to create content.
- The difficulty we have is that it is easy to create a lecture – but this is not fast enough to get an audience.

Internet

- Most students now start research for any essay on the internet.
- There is very little peer review of content – a site has to have open badges of credibility. For the evangelical audience it needs evangelical street cred.
- Blogs can have real impact on public opinion.
- MySpace social networking has extended web communities.
- Broadband changes the type of content available.
- Creating and managing effective websites is time consuming – but on-costs are virtually zero.
- Increasingly books will be online – and any research done for essays will be exclusively on the internet – physical libraries will become obsolete eventually.

Convergence

- IP – all devices will end up with internet connectivity
- Accessibility** – TV is now available over cable, the internet and even mobile phones
- On demand** – empowering the user to decide when to view.
- Search** – content overload is making search critical.

How are others doing it?

Richard Dawkins

- ▶ Foundation – yes, there really is a Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science
- ▶ MySpace – is Richard part of your network?
- ▶ Video – he’s already on YouTube and Google Video
- ▶ Blog – he’s got one of those too.
- ▶ TV & radio – all part of the ongoing campaign
- ▶ Deconverting – his online “Convert’s Corner” has hundreds of ex-Christians explain how Richard changed their lives

Answers in Genesis

- ▶ It is well known – AiG has been featured in BBC documentaries, CNN etc
- ▶ Multi-channel – use radio, internet, TV, conferences, magazines, journals ... has a glossy journal and a glossy technical journal
- ▶ Museum – has its own Creation Museum
- ▶ Well funded – AiG has a \$5m annual budget
- ▶ Turn-key – AiG has church and school courses with all the materials needed, even more so than Scripture Union

Scibel's Approach

Issues of Credibility and "Entitlement"

- ❖ **Street-Cred:** Getting this from eg
 1. Gospelcom (this gives high google juice).
 2. Supporter organisations
- ❖ **Science-Cred:** Individuals (Frances Collins, Anthony Hewish – other big Professors)
- ❖ **Evangelical-Cred:** Individuals (Lynn Green, Gordon Wenham etc)

Content and Cognitive Approach

- ❖ The general youth – emphasizing meaning and fine tuning
- ❖ Dawkins – attacking the philosophy, not the science
- ❖ YEC – beginning from Jesus – attacking the theology not the psedo-science
- ❖ ID – entering debate (Michael Behe will be in a clip on our site) and distinguishing them from the YEC

Media

- ❖ Internet-centric – setting the internet at the heart of its marketing and distribution.\
- ❖ Youth appearance new website – most of them are boring
- ❖ Use of online books (Microsoft, Google) and downloadable sheets and papers
- ❖ Two layer approach – simple sheet answers backed up by detailed papers for those who want these.
- ❖ Turn-key – Windows on Reality, we are in process of producing a turn-key course similar to Alpha that combines video, booklets and interactivity.
- ❖ Fast moving entertaining material – the Windows on Reality DVDs will each be 20 minutes of fast moving interview clips, cartoons, voice-pop youth anchors etc This will combine high content with street-cred. appearance.

Dissemination

- ❖ Always the tricky bit! Having the international head of YWAM on it may help – and we would seek other key players. However, if you look at it and like it then recommend it!

Financial Support

- ❖ For past projects we have had some grants from large trusts. We wanted to do the Windows on Reality project eight years ago, but at that time it proved totally impossible in terms of expense and resources available. Large amounts of materials are now available off the peg, and so it is now more feasible.
- ❖ We have been, however, dependent on some largish amounts given by individuals – and a few faithful monthly supporters. Like CiS itself we are underfunded.
- ❖ How can CiS and Scibel get the same financial commitment from people who take our views on mainstream science as those who support the YEC position? Well if you find out let me know!

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- The debate in 2006 between Paul Marston and John Mackay on Gen 1-3 is available on DVD from Lifesway.*