

*Sin,
Science
and
Salvation.*

By Mike Viccary

Dedication & acknowledgements.

I dedicate this work to the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is worthy of praise for he alone has done all things well.

I would like to acknowledge a number of very key people who have helped me in my efforts over the years. First I want to say a huge “thank you” to my lovely wife Helen. Without her love and great friendship none of my writing and study would have been possible. Then I would like to thank all my five children, their spouses and their children who have been the most wonderful delight and joy for which I thank and praise God. Finally my thanks go out to all who have challenged me and who have made me think, and then think again.

All of this work is the product of my thought but it owes much to that which I have read and interacted with. I have sought to acknowledge those who I have considered throughout this work. All errors and faults are entirely mine. I hope and pray that none would be lead astray but that all would indeed come to see the great goodness of the Saviour and having seen it would embrace him for all they are worth.

All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise stated.

Picture details (taken by the author).

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Burgh Castle (Roman fort) near Great Yarmouth.

Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland.

Part 2: Science (page 42).

Fossils from Robin Hood's Bay.

Lulworth Cove – the “Lulworth Crumple.”

Part 3: Salvation (page 126).

Fountains Abbey near Ripon North Yorkshire

Salisbury Cathedral.

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By way of introduction.

I wonder if, like me, you feel awkward at a social gathering where you hardly know anyone? I recently attended a farewell/engagement do where there were only three people (apart from the main person) whom I knew. Thankfully it was a great occasion and I got to chat to someone whom I had not seen in some time which was very refreshing. But we were also introduced to a variety of new people whom I hope to meet again when the wedding is finally planned. Hopefully I will remember some of these folk! Well, introductions are tricky. You start by identifying who you are and listen to some information about who the other person is. Then you proceed to find connections such as mutual friends or interests. When that dries up it becomes a little awkward again and you move onto the reason for being in the gathering. Then if you haven't found a connection that sustains your conversation and interest, and the silence becomes unbearable, you make your excuses and move on. I know this is all typically “English” and it indicates immense insecurity on my part, but I have always found social gatherings difficult because I want to get down to the great questions and deep issues which such gatherings don't sit well with. Who wants to engage in a discussion of depth at a party where the main point is to enjoy company and share food and so on? Well this introduction is a little like this except I am at a disadvantage because I do not have the privilege of hearing about you the reader and your life and interests. Every life is amazing. That ought to go without saying, but I mention it here because sadly many think that their lives are just “ordinary” or “boring” and that is not true. Of course, much of life is regular and routine, and few have the ability to do whatever they want. But that does not mean that life is any the less amazing! The fact that we are conscious, that we can think, that we can communicate and that we can live in this world and experience its wonders – all of this is amazing don't you think? Consequently, I want to outline some of my life's journey before we leap into our deep discussion because I want you to be clear whom is writing this work. You need to know something about me because it will help you to understand some of the reasons for what I am writing. So here goes!

My brief testimony.

Born in 1958 I grew up in a Catholic family of three sisters and one brother, and attended a public school in southern England run by Josephite priests.¹ My early experience of Roman

¹ I had always thought that they were Jesuit priests but recent research has shown that I was wrong. Whatever

Catholicism served to establish two features that have been influential in my life. The first of these is an intense distrust and dislike of ritual, whilst the second is an insatiable and compulsive curiosity. Roman Catholicism is a religion that operates by ritual. The mass, confession, benediction and so on, all operate to a set pattern. If you know the order and the right words to say then you can get through it all without too much trouble. Roman Catholicism is mainly about *doing* things, and not about *understanding* things. Only the priests and bishops need to know things. The people in the pews just follow the rules. Now this was the pattern of life at the school and church where I grew up. The trouble with this pattern was that I did not see the need to obey the rules, and in fact couldn't obey them because I did not understand what they were all about. What was the purpose of these ceremonies? Why did we have to say *these* words, make *these* signs, sing *these* hymns and listen to *these* priests chant? Well the answer in the main was because we were told to do so, but that was never enough for me.

Life growing up in such a situation was perplexing. I cannot say that my life was extreme or hard or even very difficult. My parents were loving and kind. The school was trying hard to discipline and educate me. But there was a great problem. There was a serious disconnect between what we did, (i.e. how we lived and interacted), and what we were meant to understand. Ritualism does this. It prevents people from asking questions and making challenges. To a great extent the priests were quite brutal. Ridicule and mockery were considered to be the tools of choice for teaching in this environment. Penalties for failure were also harsh. The idea behind this was that if you were made to look a fool it would harden you up for life's harsh realities. This may have worked for some, but I suspect that generating hard-hearted brutes who could cope with the vicious world was not really the idea that Christ came with! The only teachers who were not priests were the science teachers. This had a profound effect on me. I began to love science and hate all other subjects, or at least those taught by priests. As a consequence, by the age of fourteen I had come to a conscious decision that God did not exist. I made this decision because of the ritualism and harshness of the priests contrasting with the great wonder and "success" of science. Science satisfied my curious bent, and it also seemed to provide some answers with understanding. The priests and the ritualism just made me angry and bitter because they seemed pointless and were harsh.

Now I have to say that despite my atheism, my distrust of ritual, my dislike of priests and so on, the school did manage to get me through some qualifications for which I am very grateful. Without these I would never have been able to do much at all. But because of my rebellion against the system, which included a deal of apathy and laziness on my part, I did not really distinguish order they came from, they were a very rigid and hard bunch of men!

myself. I managed to scrape into QEC London to read “Physics with Astrophysics,” but after just one term of continuous struggle I decided that I wasn't up to the maths involved and so left in early 1977. Now although it was I who made this decision (no one suggested it or made me take it) it was nevertheless a tremendously devastating one to make. At eighteen you are not fully aware of all the implications of what you are doing, and when I arrived back home in February 1977 I fell into a very low state of mind. I came to realise that my curious nature, my desire to know and to understand, was in fact beyond me. I was not really up to doing a science degree and consequently my continued love for science was unrequited and never going to be fulfilled. It really was as though I had fallen for something I delighted in, but that thing had laughed in my face. I was not up to its standard, I couldn't fit its requirements. What was I going to do? After a time of illness (glandular fever) and a few jobs that came to nothing I finally got a position in London as a trainee accountant.

It is always amazing to me when you look back at how things turn out. 1977 was, of course, the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. In celebration of this event we had two bank holidays, Monday 6th June and Tuesday 7th June. There were “street” parties and other events all over the country. I was invited to a celebration picnic on the Tuesday organised by my mother's best friend's son. All my friends were at university in different parts of the country and I was working in a new place where most of my colleagues were ten and more years older than me, so I accepted the invitation thinking I may meet some new friends. I can honestly say that I went half-heartedly expecting nothing much at all. It is true that I was a little *down* at this time as, having dropped out of university, getting glandular fever, and now struggling in a job I didn't care for, I did not see much hope for the future. However in going along to the event I never expected what I received. I just thought it might be fun with a few nice things to eat. As I approached the area set aside beside Wisley lake where the picnic was to be held, I saw something I could never have imagined. There were a group of twenty or so young people from my age to mid twenties sitting beside some trees all with Bibles and a few with guitars, and they were singing. My heart did not know whether to sink or jump or what to do. I joined them a little uneasily and within a few seconds felt one hundred percent at home. I cannot remember much else of that day. All I can say in retrospect was that it marked a dramatic change in my life. The day before, Monday 6th June 1977 there was not one thought of God in my skull. He did not exist. Then the next day, Tuesday June 7th 1977 I was no longer an atheist! These young people were talking as though Jesus, a man I knew to be featured in history, was much more than a man and was actually alive and with them now. It blew my mind! From that day onwards I spent my time with this group (known as “Thursday club” as they usually

met on Thursdays)! It was not very long after this initial event that I found myself in one meeting pouring out my heart to the Lord in repentance and wanting to be His forever. It has always been in my mind that that day was Thursday 7th July 1977 just over three weeks from my first meeting. I cannot be 100 percent sure about that, but it was certainly around that time. I remember this date as it is one of those unique ones: 7/7/77. One other thing is clear about that time too, although I cannot be certain just exactly when the event happened, and that was I had the very strong and deep conviction that God actually spoke to me. I do not mean that an audible voice came booming through the heavens so that all and sundry would turn their heads in my direction! No, it was a voice I heard distinctly and clearly and this is what I heard: “Michael, I am the one you are looking for!” I was puzzled about this because I wasn't actually looking for anyone! I had been seeking answers to questions all through my short life to this point but I had not been seeking a *person*.

Very shortly after my conversion I was confronted in a wonderful way with the opportunity of going back to University. A second chance. This time to read “Materials Science” at Bradford University. Thus in September 1977 I began a new life in West Yorkshire. This time rather than just turn up and expect to cruise through as I had thought on going up to QEC London, I determined to be different. I was eager not to waste this opportunity, and so I determined that I would do all that was required of me by the course *as though the Lord Jesus* was my course tutor.² I was prepared to fail, but what I was not prepared to do, was to not try. I wanted to work my best for the Lord, as He had given me this second chance. Now I have to admit that at this time it is safe to say that I probably still had a great deal of respect and trust for science, and I had not yet worked out any of the implications that my faith in Christ would imply.

It was to be through a close fellow student studying “Applied Biology” and who acted as a catalyst to thinking, that my journey in understanding science and its relationship to faith was to begin and then develop. In the first term this man was sitting in some lectures on “Chemical Evolution” – the origin of life (chemical to biochemicals). He used to tell me all about these and what he'd learnt. To say that the ideas were utter nonsense is to give them more value than they really had. To be truthful my friend and I used to sit and laugh our heads off! But here was the great problem. How should we treat this whole thing about evolution given what the Bible said in Genesis 1 and following? The Bible did not say anything about evolution. In fact quite the contrary. So I decided that if Christ be God and died for me, of which fact I was certain, then if He could be believed in the gospels, then why not believe Him on page one of His word? The issue was settled then and there for me. I accepted what the Bible said wholeheartedly on all subjects even though at that point I did not know what it actually said on many things. Not long after this I bought a book

2 1Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17,23.

originally published in 1961 which was to prove very influential not only for me but for many others too. It was titled, *The Genesis Flood* by John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris.³ This book cemented my own ideas about what the Bible had to say on geology. Although rather technical in nature, it took the Genesis flood as an historical event that was the main cause for the shape and structure of the land surface of our world today. I was enthralled. But this was not the end of the matter for me as a young and growing Christian. I had settled one issue: the Bible was completely true on all things, and evolution was wrong. However I had many more personal intellectual battles to fight through. It is often considered unspiritual in these days to talk about intellectual battles, but for me the realm of the mind is where the great battle rages.

Throughout my undergraduate years (1977 – 1981) the Lord not only helped me with my studies, he also taught me many important lessons concerning science along the way. I had to attend some lectures outside of my subject area. One of these was a series of lectures on biological evolution. I remember turning up to these lectures with my colleagues feeling very annoyed mainly because these lectures were not examined so I couldn't see the point in them. Besides that fact, I was also totally disinterested in the subject having discarded the idea in favour of what the Bible had said about how things came to be. Now it was God's wonderful sovereign control forcing me to these lectures, which made me think *deeper* on the subject. He wasn't going to let me just accept what he had said on page one of his book. He wanted me to consider *why* what mankind had come up with was so wrong. Well I endured those lectures and it arose a passion in me to produce counter arguments. The Bible was clear. We had not evolved from apes and we were not related to any other creature. We may have been designed with similar or coincidental plans, but Genesis one taught me that evolution was a non-starter. This series of lectures ignited a process of learning for me which was not on my university curriculum. It was on the Lord's curriculum however, and he was teaching me vital lessons in how to view modern science for what it really was. The Lord was helping me break down the “pillars of trust” I had erected for science in my early years. My conversion had settled my destiny and my stance as far as God was concerned, but now he wanted to train me in how to think properly from a godly perspective.

These lectures were not at all memorable save for one in which the lecturer discussed the brain sizes of apes and supposed early humanoids. The graph he flashed up on the overhead projector showed a jump in brain size from some kind of supposed distantly-related ape to humanoid.⁴ He went on to say that maybe it was at such a point in evolutionary history that God

3 John C. Whitcomb & Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961). I have had the pleasure of meeting both these men on different occasions at an annual conference held in London (The Metropolitan Tabernacle's “School of Theology”).

4 Bradford was a fully equipped university with up to the minute educational facilities!

implanted the soul! I thought about that for one second as a possibility, and then remembered what Genesis actually said, and found myself laughing almost out loud. How absurd! Why would the Lord have to wait until the brain reached a critical size before putting a soul in! It did not make any sense at all. Perhaps the man was a believer of sorts, but what struck me was the *unthinking* nature of such an idea. Surely the God who saved sinners by the death of his dearly beloved Son would have a better way of making mankind? Evolution required death to create new life and this doesn't seem to fit in at all with what Genesis records.⁵ Such lectures made me start to actually think out for myself what was right and what was wrong as far as science was concerned. No longer would I uncritically accept things just because they had the label “science.” My colleagues who attended this lecture were near to laughing as well, but for a very different reason. They thought the concept of a soul was old-fashioned, outmoded and irrelevant!

In my second year I met my wonderful wife who had come to Bradford to study “Psychology.” This was to be another learning tool that I believe the Lord had planned for me. As my wife was studying it became clear to both of us that the subject was fraught with problems from a Christian point of view. The whole subject became something of a worrying area for me because so very many Christians have been hoodwinked into thinking that we must baptise the findings of this discipline into the Christian faith. Rather than trust that emotional and mental issues can be solved by good preaching and good application of the Scriptures, people defer those who struggle with such problems to the world of secular psychology, or so-called “Christian” psychology which is the same dressed up with a veneer of Christian garb.

Yet another learning curve came for me when I was given the opportunity to do a PhD. It was whilst I was doing this higher research degree that I really began to work out how to “study.” Undergraduate work as a scientist is pretty full on. You move from one set of practical assignments to another and you amass a load of information you have to make sense of, but it is all pretty much given to you. You do have to go and self-study of course but when you do a PhD you are left pretty much to your own devices. There are constraints to be sure, but no one chivvies you along, and no one lectures you. I loved that time and it taught me how to set up a research project and do all I could to work things out. The skills I learned at that time, even though they were directed towards a very narrow field within science, were invaluable. Actually they are skills and techniques not peculiar to a scientific research degree. They can be acquired by any who have truly sought the

5 Just in case you are not sure that this statement is true think about what evolution requires. For any species to change there first has to be variation in the population. The environment prevailing at any given time will 'select' those best fitted to it to survive. Those that do survive go on to reproduce. These new generations carry the genes inherited as their parents die out. Then a new cycle of variation in a population, followed by environmental selection and reproduction ensues. That is a brief definition of Darwinian evolution. Neo-Darwinian evolution adds mutations into the mix.

Lord. The thing is that when you have a question, you need to be able to state the question as fully as you can. That takes some doing. You also have to realise that you are constrained by those things you can bring to bear on the question. In science that means the type of apparatus you have available. We were very fortunate to get a new electron microscope in my second year which yielded much greater resolution. Unfortunately my supervisor moved to another university so I never got to use it very much!

When I had finished my PhD research I was given the opportunity to do a postdoctoral fellowship doing the same type of research at the Gorlaeus Laboratories, University of Leiden in Holland. This was a very difficult time for a number of reasons but chiefly because I faced a great crisis of confidence with regard to my chosen career. Two things caught my attention. First I realised that although I loved what I was doing, it was a very self-indulgent existence. Research scientists work on their own pet projects which they have lovingly cared for, and they centre all their efforts on that enterprise. I had not met many scientists by this time, (just my supervisor, those in the department alongside him, and those I was working with now), but it was abundantly clear that family life took rather a back-seat in their considerations. For me that was a non-starter as my wife and I wanted to have a family and bring our children up *together*. The second thing that caused me great anxiety was that I could not bring the Lord into my research. I could and did bring the Lord into the lab and witnessed to my fellow scientists. But although I had opportunity to witness, what I found really frustrating was that I couldn't bring the Lord Jesus into what I was researching. It was as though as I entered the lab and set about my work, I had to say to the Lord, "see you at 5 PM." These two factors worked into my thinking and caused me much angst. The Lord was leading, but the decision I was about to make was extremely hard. After much prayer, my wife and I concluded that it was time for us to see out the one year fellowship and return to the UK where our local church impressed upon us the idea of going to Bible College.

I finally gained my PhD whilst we were studying for a year at Lebanon Missionary Bible College in Berwick-upon-Tweed.⁶ It was here that I learned another significant lesson. After a brief "honeymoon" period basking amongst Christian company, I soon realised that I needed to do the lion's share of thinking, for it would not be given simply by means of lectures. No, I was going to have to seek out the Lord by digging deep into his word for myself. After this year at Bible College we settled down in Berwick and I spent some ten years engaged in bringing up our family with my wife, coupled with researching the relationship between modern science and the Christian faith. The years 1987 – 1997 were a decade of study and writing which formulated much of my thinking on

⁶ The college started in 1947 but after changing its name to Northumbria Bible College in the 1980s, it sadly closed down by the end of the twentieth century

the subject. In 1998 I gained a PGCE in secondary science and after two years teaching in the state sector I became the science teacher in a small Christian School in Bradford (2003 – 2011). Here I put into practise the work I had done whilst at Berwick. I was given a free hand to develop a “Christian” science curriculum. I thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity as it gave me the chance to show forth some of the ideas I had been working on. Coupled with this was the immense privilege of working with other Christian teachers and the most wonderful set of young people you could ever imagine. This was also an especial time for me because it helped me to develop not only as a teacher and preacher (I was regularly preaching in our local church during these years), but also it helped me develop the ability to listen to where people were coming from. It has always been something of an alarm to me when I hear people consistently give up thinking whenever science is in the mix of conversation. The number of times I have come across people who shrug their shoulders when science is mentioned as if to say “well I am not a scientist so what can I say?” I taught my pupils that this attitude was unacceptable. Why people simply hang their hands and then accept blithely whatever science dictates is utterly baffling. Following two years study at Wales Evangelical School of Theology (2012-2014) where I gained a Graduate Diploma in theology and an MA in Christian Leadership I find myself yielded to the Lord's direction as I seek to teach, preach and declare the great goodness of the gospel of God, namely Christ Jesus crucified, raised, ascended and soon to return!

So why this book?

The rationale for this book is to dispel the myth that science has scuppered belief in the Bible. Much of the problem for disbelief can be lain at the pride of modern man. We are so prone to think that we are the masters of our lot! Science is certainly the new religion of our day, only we are not really allowed to call it that! Sadly the Christian church has missed its vocation. It has been on the back foot for far too long. Like a routed and defeated army it scurries further and further away from the front line of battle. You may think that that is rather a general and sweeping statement. However the decline in the church and its effectiveness has been a matter of fact for about a couple of hundred years or so. After giving up with regard to geology, then the natural world, the church has yielded to secularism in the realm of the mind and all other scholarly pursuits. The idea that theology should under-gird all endeavour is not only largely forgotten as a concept, but sadly when voiced it is roundly ridiculed. Well now it is time to turn and to take our stand. The Bible is true. It is sufficient. It gives reason and rationale for all of life. It is the foundation for all pursuits whether intellectual or not. It doesn't pander to man's pride, so if you are looking for answers to your

questions, well, be prepared to come to a realisation that your questions may not be legitimate!

The book is organised in three sections. In the first part I consider the reason why this world of ours is fundamentally wrong. The words of this last sentence were chosen carefully. The world that God made (and therefore owns) is wrong because we have made it so. Many have a problem with the Bible and with Christianity precisely because they have forgotten these truths and as a result they have no concept of sin. Historically this loss of an awareness of sin is because science has dispelled it by retelling the story of origins. In the second part of the book I address the whole nature of science and what it is really like. It is here we begin to show that far from its grandiose image as a stable and magnificent institution, science is very human and therefore weak and mutable. I have not spent any time here developing a *Christian* response to science – that is another project – but I do want to emphasise at this point that there is an alternative way, a truly *Christian* science.⁷ Nevertheless the modern science of today operates like a priesthood to which all should bow. This should not be. In the last section of the book I address the only answer to modern life's dilemmas which is the same answer that all eras have needed, namely the *person* (and therefore also the work) of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ.

It is with a heartfelt prayer that I offer this book so that the reader would come to meet with this wonderful person who is the one in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁸

Mike Viccary

March 2017.

7 Please note that I am not advocating the sect known as “Christian Science.” I am suggesting that there ought to be a Christian expression of how “science” ought to be done.

8 Colossians 2:2,3.



Part 1: Sin.



Chapter 1

What has gone wrong?

Imagine that a general election is looming. Whom shall you vote for? Why should you vote for one person rather than any other? Why, indeed, should you vote at all? When indifference and lethargy are put to one side and you take the time to listen to what each candidate has to say, what principles guide your choice? Is it altruistic – for the greater good of the nation? Or is it personal advantage and gain? It is easy to be cynical and perhaps unfair, but the average person wants to know how a change of government will affect their pockets and lifestyle, as well perhaps as one or two issues which gnaws at their conscience (global warming, environmental concerns, people trafficking, wars abroad, famines and so on). Whatever the particular issues of the day we always seem to be focusing on “the problem.” Think of it, how does each party present their manifesto? Surely they appeal to a better way of life and solutions to problems currently faced? It is the problems we face that need dealing with. Turn your attention to the news. What is read and displayed most often? Is it not the problems of the world? War, famine, disaster, crisis, exploitation, greed, murder, rebellion ... the list is endless and desperate. It needs hardly saying perhaps, but still worth declaring nonetheless, that “there is something wrong with the world.”

Then take a look at the way in which we try and deal with these problems. Escapism. Films (and books) portray a better way, or they depict the reality of a harsh life and its consequences. The first type depict ideals and false values which we seek to aspire to. Take “Star Trek” for example. The assumptions underlying this great franchise is the inherent goodness of man and that things will get better in the future. Tomorrow is always going to be better. There are many films like these. Then there are the films that depict life in all its harshness. These are the ones where we offload our angst, frustrations and despair. Life isn't *really* that bad is it? Even those that depict the horrors of life in history are presented with an eye to hope and something better. Life is problem based.

Perhaps you are not convinced that this is so. But a little reflection on how life is structured will dispel any doubts. We live in a country governed by law. Parliament dictates what is right and what is wrong. But this is not a static and fixed thing. Each year the government enacts new laws to cope with new problems. Laws are usually enacted only when something terrible has occurred. We

have laws for all eventualities. Take traffic laws. These have changed dramatically over the years. This is the age of the car. Unlike our fathers' fathers', we are free to roam wherever we like, far and wide. Such a wonderful freedom comes with a price. You cannot drive without your car being taxed, having an MOT and insurance. All of these are legal necessities. The tax (supposedly) is to pay for the roads, the MOT to keep the car safe and the insurance to protect others. Why is all this necessary? It is because things never go smoothly. Who would pay for a road to be made out of their pocket if they could get away with not doing so? Maybe some look after their cars religiously but the government have seen fit to ensure we do so by law. Cars that break down too easily would litter the roads. Do we always pay attention when driving? What of recklessness and stupidity? How are we to deal with these? You see then, that even something as simple as driving indicates that we live in a world where things are not right.

Then consider our children and their upbringing. Most people send their children to the local schools. But how they are taught has changed considerably over the years. The government have passed numerous laws dealing with the right way of training our young. If this was done correctly why should there be any need to change it year on year? What new issues are being faced? Drugs are more available and prevalent today than they ever were in the past. This has to be factored in. Then there is the issue of sexuality and the rise of teenage pregnancy. How must we deal with this issue? What responsibilities must a child be allowed to have and what must they be shielded from? What should children be taught and why, and for what purpose? One government recognises differences amongst people which must be catered for, whilst another despises the elitism that such a view produces. We deny difference by making "one size fits all" and we deny equality and fairness by allowing differences to be celebrated. These two basic tensions surface and cause problems when we consider the education of the young. On top of this, time and decay bring other problems (such as drugs and youth pregnancy) never faced in former eras. Finally, how we actually view children and their upbringing differs amongst us.

Life is not straightforward. It is problematic. There is something wrong with the world. The inevitable clash of opinions is seen more starkly when we consider aspects of life not just within one culture, but when cultures mix. Can we celebrate the differences between cultures by tolerating anything goes, or do we insist that one way is best? It is alright to see the difference and enjoy it when we travel abroad and see it in a far distant land, but what happens when it is operating in our town or city? What, for example, is woman? Is she a co-equal with man created to be a helper? Is she a chattel and possession who must do her husband's bidding? Or is she an evolved ape with a slightly different anatomy to man? Is she the product of enslavement to a particular ideal or view?

Or is she her own being set on course for full emancipation? Whom decides? Listing these several options clearly indicates that things are awry. They are not what they should be. What also of how society should operate? Should religion rule life? Should the state be secular? Is democracy the only way? Or do other forms of government work in some situations? I suspect, but cannot prove, that all forms of government have weaknesses even if some *seem* to operate better than others at certain times in history. Has there ever been a true democracy? Does this really work for everyone? Has communism always failed? The only point I want to push here is that humans have tried many different forms of government and none are universally successful. There is something wrong with the world.

Take the issue of trust. Can we trust anyone? I mention only in passing the increasing fear of strangers that has arisen over the last fifty years. But look, for example, at the experience of travel on public transport. There is no trust that a person will purchase a seat on a train at the right price unless they are issued with a document or ticket which indicates what they are paying for. We cannot take it on trust that a person has paid. They must produce evidence that they have paid. But suppose they use that document or ticket to ride not just once but twice on the train? Well we have thought of that! The ticket must be ripped in two or clipped or given up to an attendant once you finish your journey. And what if someone tries to buck the system? Well we have thought of that too! We have transport police with CCTV to watch our every step! Just thinking about ordinary travel indicates that there is a problem with us. We cannot trust ourselves to be honest and fair. We have to have systems in place to ensure that we pay for what we use. The same is true in many other situations of life. There are regulations governing banking and insurance. There are regulations governing building and buying and selling, and there are rules ensuring fairness in sport and games! Or consider industrial relations. How have worker-employer relationships fared over history? Slave labour is surely still with us or we would not have a law setting a “minimum wage.” The rise and fall of the trades unions is an history full of lessons declaring the imperfections of humanity. Why, if things were right and true, would there be any need of trades unions?

In short, there is something wrong with the world and there is something wrong with man. Our very lives and the way we conduct ourselves indicates that things are not right. But this is not the end of the story. We could be content with this fact that things are never right and are *out of kilter* were it not for the fact that we have a deep inner conviction nagging at our souls that things ought to be different. They ought to be better. Isn't that why many pursue the great dream of escape, or of improvement, or of release? This time next year we'll be millionaires! So repeats Del Boy every now and then.⁹ The advert screams at you to buy a lottery ticket to fulfil your personal

9 “Del Boy” was the famed street trader in the TV sitcom “Only Fools and Horses” shown in the 1980s.

dreams. The course you are embarking on promises an increase in salary, promotion, or access to a new level of living, and the lifestyle programmes or magazines massage your mind and heart with “soma” to soothe away the aches and pains of life. Some turn to drink and drugs to escape the disparity between reality and ruin. Others turn to crime or even suicide to blot out the aches of the mismatch between expectation and life's daily grind. Still others become fractured in mind and heart and are then labelled by society as unstable, mentally ill or a danger to themselves. We hide away the awkward pointers to this terrible problem that life is not what it should be, for each and every one of us. What has gone wrong? Perhaps you are yet to be convinced. Perhaps your view of life governed by evolution, by pragmatism or by tolerance and other ideals, allows you to explain away the things we have mentioned. Well let me suggest that a better way of viewing what has gone wrong is to reconsider the word “sin.”

Chapter 2

The four D's: *Decay, Disaster, Disease and Death.*

We can easily see the problem(s) of life by considering it under four headings – the four D's. But before we do this we need to consider a word we don't like to use. It is a word used by Oppenheimer, the atom-bomb maker, in a statement he made after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima:

“In some sort of crude sense, which no vulgarity, no humour, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin, and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose.”¹⁰

Sadly, his use doesn't quite catch the explosive depth of meaning!

A brief look in the mirror.

“Whatever you do, don't use words they won't understand!” This was some advice given to me as a newly qualified teacher. I thought on this for one minute and then came to the conclusion almost immediately that it was wrong-headed. If I did not use new terms and words how would the children learn? If I stuck only to those words they already knew, then surely they would stagnate as learners. Typically for me, I decided to do the exact opposite! I made it almost a matter of policy to use new, difficult, and technical terms whenever I had the opportunity – but always with the aim of teaching the children precisely what they meant. The word “sin” is, perhaps, such a word today and as thus it requires a little explanation. There are actually two other words that we use alongside this word “sin,” (“iniquity” and “transgression”), and each has a slightly differing meaning. Perhaps “transgression” is one term many immediately recognise and know something about! To transgress is to commit a misdemeanour or to trespass, or more simply to break the law. Iniquity has the connotation of evil or wickedness, whilst sin means to “miss the mark.” This, breaking the law,

10 Robert Oppenheimer. A quote made by the atomic bomb maker after Hiroshima. Cited: March 2nd 2015. Online at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bomb/peopleevents/pandeAMEX65.html>

(rebellion), doing evil and doing what is not right, or which is less than the best, are all the elements of sin.

But there's more to it than actions, for sin is actually a state of being, a condition. We are all, everyone of us, (without exception), tainted by this characteristic of sin. We are all sinners. Not sure of this? Well have you ever lied to someone, or thought a harmful or evil thought? Have you ever driven faster than the speed limit or claimed too much for your expenses, or been slightly unclear about a claim for benefits or insurance retrieval? Have you ever passed by someone in need where you could have helped, or made an unkind remark to someone who is different to you? All of us fall short of what we know is right, and all of us transgress. All of us do evil and act wickedly too. If you don't think that is you, then think again. Evil is the opposite of good, and can we (honestly) say that we always do good? I think not. It is time to take a good look in the mirror. You may not be Adolf Hitler, but you are a sinner.

Now the reason for detailing the sorry condition that we all find ourselves in as sinners is to explain why the world is the way it is. You see mankind (men, women and children) reaps the fruit of what they sow. This is a principle that hardly needs explaining. If you play with fire you are going to get burned. I have laboured our state and condition because it fits and connects with the world around us. Just as we are sinful and, consequently, broken, or *out of kilter*, so equally the world we inhabit is also disordered and not the paradise we dream of. Why is this the case? Is there a connection? Lets first look at the world as it is.

Decay.

The brother of a close friend of mine started losing his hair in his early twenties. As a result his nickname was changed from “smog” (do not ask!), to “smogless.” I write with very fond memories of these brothers whom I have not seen for some years but I can tell you they look very much the same as they did thirty years ago. I, on the other hand, have undergone some dramatic changes. I started wearing glasses permanently from the age of 27 when my hairline started to withdraw. What remains of my hair is now grey, whilst my moustache, which was once a dark brown, has passed through the “salt and pepper” shade, and is now thoroughly grey. Strangely, my eyebrows are still dark! Last year I weighed in at nearly 18 stone, whilst in my early twenties I maxed 12 stone at best. I was once six foot tall, but I am now about five foot eleven and a bit! I recently went dancing with my wife and although I thoroughly enjoyed this experience, my knees and hips protested loudly.

In 2009 I bought a brand new car! Today there are 90,000 miles on the clock and it shows

signs of wear and tear. Actually after only one week someone dented the boot door and it has acquired some interesting scratches over the last five years. You arrive home tired from work, only to find the washing up has not been done, the bedclothes are beginning to smell and the carpet looks decidedly different both in pattern and texture from when it was new! As you climb the stairs the light switch is faulty and the bulb on the landing pops. You want a bath (the shower stopped working a while back) but the boiler is playing up and the pilot light needs relighting. You suddenly become aware that your teeth ache – have you been clenching them? At that moment a filling falls out and you nearly swallow what feels like a piece of grit! This is life. More could be said, but enough I think to show that *naturally* things break down.

Decay is all around. Unless we keep tidying up, unless we keep to some system of cleaning, (both of our bodies and our homes), and unless we maintain repairs to our cars and houses, we will end up with a disaster! Think of the time and effort we put in to reverse the signs and drift towards decay! Think of the vast number of schemes, businesses, organisations and manufacturing companies that rely on this process of decay. Washing machines, car washes, steam cleaners, dry cleaners, window cleaners, teeth whiteners, hairdressers, shoe polishers, manicurists, water companies, sewage works, road sweepers, and well the list could go on and on! But not only is there the need to keep things clean, think of the many companies which offer repairs! Garages, watch repairers, building services and maintenance, hair restorers, furniture upholsterers, antique restorers and again the list in large. Many industries rely on decay to launch new products. I am writing this on a computer. It is about the tenth computer I have owned since 1988. That's pretty good going! I do not tend to buy the latest model but merely replace one that is broken or irreparable! When I was in my late twenties I went back to the dentist having not attended for some years. I had to have five crowns! I was told that despite the decay in my teeth I had pretty strong teeth. I should have looked after them better. Decay is the invisible friend of us all. More so, it is the backdrop against which we play out our lives. But why do things break down?

Disaster.

Films seem to go in fads and fashions don't they? In the 1970s there seems to have been a fashion for disaster movies. There was "Airport" in 1970 with Burt Lancaster, (followed by a number of sequels), "The Poseidon Adventure" in 1972 with Gene Hackman, "The Towering Inferno" in 1974 with Steve McQueen, "Earthquake" in 1974 with Charlton Heston, "Flood!" in 1976 with Robert Culp, "The Swarm" in 1978 with Michael Caine, and "Meteor" in 1979 with Sean Connery. There have been many more since then! One thing is certain, though, these films are not

fanciful imagination. Along with the fictional tales we love to watch, come the tragic realities of disasters the world over. For those of us who were old enough at the time, whoever will forget the loss of nearly a quarter of a million lives from the boxing day tsunami resulting from an underwater earthquake in the Indian ocean in 2004? Coming nowhere near in comparison, but certainly nearer at home, and more recent, we have been, literally, inundated with flooding in the UK in recent years. Then of course we have the man-made disasters including loss of life through plane crashes (terrorist caused and malfunction), building collapses, drug use and abuse, fire and explosion, oil spills and ecological disasters. Wherever man has placed the sole of his foot, disaster follows swiftly. We like to think that many tragedies are “acts of God” or so our old insurance companies would have us believe. Is that fair? Why build houses close by to an area where earthquakes happen or volcanoes erupt? Even though there are disasters which seem to be accidental, and could never have been avoided (the tsunami of 2004 is a case in point), many are avoidable and have man at root and base as cause. You only have to think of the numerous oil spills, factory fires, explosions and manufacturing disasters to see the truth of this. Disaster seems to be built into the fabric of our world. The awkward youth who seems to attract trouble as he walks by and knocks over a paint pot, bumps into an old lady and drops his hot coffee on a passing dog may be a bit of a caricature, but when you view the history of mankind, that description seems to be a “walk in the park.” Some may be labelled “clumsy,” but many are downright negligent.

Disease.

Who hasn't suffered with illness of some kind? Even newborn babies get colds and sniffles some time in their early lives, whilst toddlers have to endure a steady course of jabs to ward off certain common diseases. Who does not know someone who has suffered with some terrible disease? Today the great scare word is “cancer.” In the middle ages it was “The Plague.” In the early twentieth century “Influenza” and “Tuberculosis” were the scourges of the day. In many places around the world the worry is “AIDS” or “Malaria,” and the list of such illnesses which ruin our ease is immense. Pathogens come in a variety of types, including bacterial, viral, fungal, parasitic, and even chemical, but all alike do destruction. Decay is one thing, disease is quite another. Things fall to pieces and break down as a matter of course and through time – that is decay. Disease is a wholesale invasion of the body bent on destruction. If we had no defences against invading particles we would succumb to the fourth “D” much quicker. It is to the glory of God who designed us that we have in place systems and mechanisms which seek to remove or destroy invading microbes. It may be argued that if the Lord created all things good in the beginning why

then do we have these defences? What need was there for them in a perfect world? Well the problem here is that we cannot go back to the original creation to see how such pathogens were once related to us in *beneficial* ways. These creatures may well have had other good functions which have been lost or distorted by the fall. The key point is that relationships in the created order in our current world are far from perfect. Attempts to “explain” disease from an evolutionary perspective run against serious difficulties in the balance between the increase of information and order as required by evolution, and its disruption brought about by disease. Evolution has an impossible job in trying to outline how simple organisms develop into more complex ones through an upward advance in order and information, not least when we examine the beauty and designed nature of the higher creatures. But attempting to describe how disease may have evolved alongside this upward march seems to make the whole process that much more impossible! Disease is indicative of things being wrong and out of the norm. It does not sit well with the description of original creation, and poses a big problem for an evolutionary world view.

Death.

I can still remember the terror and shock I felt when my best friend told me his dad had died in the night. It was a Sunday morning and we were due to play football at the local park in the afternoon. I rang him to check up on the details only to hear him in tears on the other end of the phone saying that his dad was found dead on the bathroom floor. This man was someone whom I loved dearly and I couldn't believe he was gone. I was distraught, but can you imagine how my fifteen year old friend felt? Neither of us had ever experienced death. There was to be a wake as my friend's mother was an Irish catholic. As I passed by the coffin I could see his face but it was so obvious that something was missing. Some short years later I lost my three grandparents (my father's father passed away before I was born). And since that time, a cousin, my mother, my father, a brother-in-law, my wife's aunt, her grandparents, one close friend, a number of our work colleagues, and a next-door neighbour and his son have all died. Some of these through old age, others through accidents and illness. Death is the one inevitable fact of life (you only pay taxes if you are lucky enough to earn!). We get somehow immune to it through the death and carnage we regularly consume on TV and in films. When you actually see a dead person it isn't very glamorous nor is it at all humorous. It is, quite simply, horrible. Why do people die? This is a question that needs facing.

Chapter 3

And the answer is ...

How then must we view these things? Somehow the world and its inhabitants (with humans the chief protagonists) have gone wrong. Where can an answer be found to explain this reality we like to hide from, and where can we find a remedy for the pain we all experience? I would like to suggest that the Bible has the answer. But before I do this I want to explain why I think this is so.

The Bible, a deposit of truth, a living testimony.

There are countless religions and many more personal ideas, not to mention our current preference for modern science as a sure way of knowing what is true. Why then should one ancient book be held in such great esteem? Why look to this book and not to others for wisdom? A good question which deserves a good answer! Before I do that we must ensure that the playing field is level. We could ask this same question of any proposed solution to the problem of why things are *out of kilter* in the first place. But one thing must be stated at the outset. Any solution must be comprehensive. It cannot just explain a part of the problem, or merely give a suggested way out. It must explain why we are here, what we are about, what is significant, what the problem is and then suggest an answer. The Bible does all of this and more. It satisfies. I will endeavour to explain these statements later. For now I want you to think of any other system or route to truth and ask this question: does this system explain life in such a way as to bring satisfaction? Take modern science as an example. It surely gives us a *story* as to how life may have come about but there it stops. Can it tell us what the future may hold? No it can only suggest possible options. Is it a final and absolute truth which will never be altered? No it is tentative and partial. It may at any moment be overthrown. As Charles Singer the historian of science once wrote “the science of one age becomes the nonsense of the next.”¹¹ Can science explain life and resolve this great mismatch between what we expect and what we find? Well it does have some theories but these may hardly be called explanations. They may at best be termed *descriptions*. The trouble with modern science (in the

11 Charles Singer, *A Short History of Scientific Ideas to 1900* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), 1.

main) is that it invokes only material (matter-energy-space) as the basis for explanation. Why do we feel the pain of death and why do we worry about disease? Science will tell you about certain chemical reactions in the brain or some form of natural selective advantage that such a feeling produces to advance the gene-pool. It cannot really *explain* or tell us what lies behind these feelings.

But the Bible does have the power to explain. Simply put we are here because we have been created. We have personality because we were made in the image of God. Since God is personal, we, who are made in his likeness, also have personality. That one little fact alone is sufficient to beat science at the game of being best in explaining things! But there is more, for the Bible explains why things went wrong, and what the great remedy is to make things right again. From cover to cover it tells one message, and brings one story to bear on all points of life. It is sufficient for all of life no matter what *life* may throw at us. Perhaps the reader will learn more if I point to one of my favourite verses. In a stream of instruction to Christians who lived in a town by the name of Colossae, the apostle Paul wrote these wonderful words:

“... Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”¹²

The Bible directs us straight away to the central character in its plot, namely, Jesus Christ. He is the sum and substance not just of the Bible but of your life and mine. Indeed he is the central feature of all creation. Why do I say this? Well from the point of view of individual lives it is because of what he has done, and this, in turn, rests on whom he is. You see there is no one like this person. Maybe you have yet to hear of what he has done. Maybe you have not yet heard that this one came to bring life to dying souls, that he lived amongst men and that he healed people of all kinds of incurable diseases, that he raised people from the dead and that he taught the people truth such as to bring life and light to a dark and dismal world. You **must** read the gospel accounts to find the events of Jesus Christ. He is to be believed because only this perfect man, who is equally God, lived a perfect life in the place of sinful human beings, and then offered up his life as a sacrifice in the place of those same sinful beings. We shall return to this theme later and will explain its significance in more detail in part 3. However, for now, it is imperative to realise that there is only one person in the whole of history who has lived an exemplary human life, who claimed to be God and demonstrated this fact by signs and wonders and miracles, and whose death was sufficient to deal with our great problem in all its ramifications. In this one person are hid **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The Bible is God's record of significant events throughout time which are given for our

12 Colossians 2:2,3.

instruction in life. It tells us of Jesus Christ. It tells us of life on earth. And, it tells us what will happen in the future both personally and for the whole world. It is believable because of the central figure whose life did not end ignominiously in death, but triumphed in resurrection life because it was not possible that such a life could be thwarted by death. Do not take my word for this alone. Read the Bible. This book has been the testimony of countless people the world over for millennia. It is consistent and, what is more, it satisfies.

There is much we could say about the superiority of the Bible over every other claim to truth but one feature needs trumpeting. All other pretenders to truth are man-made. The Bible is God-given. Consider this one point in depth. Surely everything man invents or comes up with will partake of the great problem he suffers? Further, since we are a part of this world, encapsulated within this creation (and thereby unable to view it from an external point of view), our vision is limited if not skewed. If we are ever going to see things properly we need a view from *outside*. Think of a person who has been kidnapped, knocked unconscious, bound and blindfolded and then awakens in a dark room seated on a chair. They have no idea where they are, or what lies beyond their bound experience. If released from their bonds they may venture to explore a bit, but since it is dark they may well fear going very far, certain only of the chair they awoke on. What they need is some information from outside. Of course this brief analogy is weak because our situation is far worse. We look up and out at the skies knowing full well that the nearest stars are far beyond our reach. What lies beyond the furthest stars? What is creation like from outside of creation? Only God can tell us! Such a God has made our situation very plain. The Bible is the revelation from God to man. Man seeks solace in his discoveries. His attempts are futile and faltering, but God has shown us precisely what our situation is like and he has done this chiefly in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This One shows us our sin and our state, and he shows us what we ought to be and then says that we shall be like this too!

The story of the Bible from start to finish is true and sure. We know this because it is endorsed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He acknowledged that the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi was “written” and so was the final word spoken by God. The New Testament is equally divine, written in the “language” of the Son of God (Jesus Christ).¹³ The whole Bible, therefore, is trustworthy, faithful and true. It is what God wants you to know. What does it say concerning the great problem that everything is out of true and awry? Well it has much to say, unlike other world views. Science tends to deny that there is any problem. It simply includes it in its story of life. This will not do. The Bible alone gives us the answer.

13 See, for example, Matthew 4:4,7,10; Hebrews 1:1f.

The question of creation.

Try as we might we cannot sidestep the initial questions everyone asks. Where did I come from? How did everything get to be the way it is? Whom is responsible? At this point we have to acknowledge that the general consensus view held today is vastly different from that which appears in the opening chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-3). What do we do with this conflict? It isn't good enough to try and paper over the cracks as many try to do and say there is no problem at all. Genesis 1-3 describes how everything came to be, and the rest of the Bible is based on this foundation. Take, for example, the repeated appeal to God as "Creator" by the prophets. If God has created heaven and earth (past tense note) what can he not do?¹⁴

Many turn to some form of compromise. Theistic evolution is the position held by many in which the Genesis text is taken as *mythological* rather than historical. However this is wholly unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. In the first place it fails to take the text the way it was written and, for that matter, how it was viewed by the Lord Jesus Christ and other Biblical writers. The Lord Jesus refers to all the events of the Old Testament from wherever he draws them, as real and part of history.¹⁵ There can be no doubt about the historical basis of the early chapters of the Bible which pictures creation as a finished event entirely organised and produced by the Trinity. The Hebrew writing is in narrative historical form, and not poetry.¹⁶ The Lord God in writing the ten commandments restates that the world was made as Genesis 1-3 describes, (i.e. in six days).¹⁷ There is no room for any view that suggests creation is on-going or evolving. Neither is there any truth in the universe being older than about 6,000 years. Time and space do not permit a justification of this.¹⁸ The Bible attests to a young earth through the genealogical records in Genesis and elsewhere, and although modern science demands vast time for the universe, it cannot produce any convincing evidence to this effect. All its *evidence* is theory-laden. By this is meant that the data used to support an ancient universe must be interpreted with presuppositions tending towards giving an ancient age.¹⁹

On the other hand, taking evolution as a fact leads to a destruction of the gospel. How so?

14 See, for example, Isaiah 42:5; 43:1; 44:2; 45:12 or Jeremiah 32:17.

15 Christ made clear reference, for example, to marriage from Genesis 2, (Matthew 19:4,5), to Abel of Genesis 4, (Matthew 23:35), and to Noah and the flood of Genesis 6f, (Matthew 24:37) as relating true historical data. Paul is equally accepting of the historical nature of Genesis. He reckons Adam to have been a real man and Eve as a real woman. See Romans 5:12f; 1Corinthians 15:45-49; 1Timothy 2:13-15.

16 This is evidenced by the fact that the Hebrew construction uses what is called "waw consecutive" which typifies narrative and historical writing.

17 Exodus 20:8-11.

18 See, for example, M. W. Viccary, "Biblical Chronology – our times are in His hands" *Journal of Creation* 21(1) 2007.

19 For example, red shift data from stellar and galactic spectra are used by scientists to indicate an expanding universe, but this phenomena can be interpreted in other ways which doesn't require or lead to the idea of expansion.

Well evolution demands death as the *engine* of creation. What do I mean? Evolution cannot proceed at all without four key things. These are: population with variations of some kind (height, eye colour, etc.), reproductive ability, an environmental factor, and death. Evolution only works if a particular variation in a population is selected by the environmental conditions, passed onto the next generation through reproduction, with other variations weeded out by the death of the older generation. You cannot get change or development except by minute changes from one generation to another. Therefore, according to evolution, mankind cannot have come about (or be “created”) except through many generations of alteration, change and selection which requires the deaths of countless ancestors in prior ages. How does the gospel fair with this scenario? The Bible states very clearly that death came as a result of sin and disobedience, that death is a terror and an enemy and that death has been conquered by Christ's work on the cross.²⁰ There is, therefore, an antagonism between the gospel and evolution. Try as they might those who hold to theistic evolution have great trouble with including the gospel in their view of history. Of course the great sticking point is the nature and status of modern science but we shall consider this in part 2.

The genre debate.

The Bible is made up of a great variety of types of writing (genres). There are songs, poems, letters, apocalyptic, prophetic, historical, legal... It is essential to ensure that the right genre of writing is assigned to portions of Scripture in an aid to interpretation. For example, it would be the height of folly to take in a literal sense such statements as found in the description of the beloved in Song of Solomon 5v10f. However one way in which the idea of genre identification is often abused is to claim an exclusivity to certain types. For example, if a piece of writing is clearly poetic then it is often assumed that it does not have to be defended as history. This is why many assign the category of poetic literature to Genesis 1-3, so they can sidestep any discussion of the relation between the details of Genesis 1-3 and science. This is a grave mistake. For one thing writing that is correctly identified as poetry may well be full of history and accurate history at that!²¹

Then also we find that many make another serious mistake concerning the origin and source of the Bible as we have it. We ought to start from the perspective that the Bible is indeed what *God* wanted to give us, not what man has made up.²² The Bible is very much God's book. Understanding it, therefore, requires us to take the perspective that God wants us to take. In the history of interpretation theologians have come up with a method known as the “grammatical-historical”

20 See Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12; Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 25:8; 1Corinthians 15:54-56.

21 Many of the Psalms are classic examples of this.

22 I am well aware of the human element in Scripture's origin but my point here is to recognise that the “Author” of Scripture is God not man.

method. The idea behind this is to take the words first in a grammatical sense. We look at the genre and style of writing first. Then we attend to the context and its history and setting. Now when it comes to Genesis 1-3 we come across a great problem as far as the grammatical-historical method of interpretation is concerned. This method requires that we have some information as to when the text was written, for whom and under what circumstances. Of course, in some sections of the Bible this information is given to us in the text. For example in the case of Exodus through to Deuteronomy we have no real problem because Moses was the main writer.²³ However in many places it is not. Genesis 1-3 is a case in point. If we follow a grammatical-historical interpretation method slavishly we will attempt to locate the original circumstances for the production of the text. When people want to know the circumstances of the writing of Genesis 1-3 they turn to archaeology for help. It is here where the problems arise. The Bible does not need supplementing by secular knowledge. Archaeology is structured on a secular footing for it rejects the historical chronology of the Bible and favours one built from Egypt and an evolutionary world view.²⁴ If we accept the archaeological information, we will be guided by what the scholars *currently* accept. Notice that scholarship changes with time because it depends on the vagaries of man and his ideas, and the newly found discoveries. The Bible gives us God's view of the history of the world as well as his description of what he did in creating the world. Many may say "it isn't that simple"! They may retort that God has given us minds and archaeology and scholarship too! Here is the great question. What can we really accept as authoritative? What is 100% true? Only the Bible has this character. Only what God reveals is perfect and pure.

To understand Genesis 1-3 many are forced by their submission to scholarship to locate the text in a circumstance which, to them, gives a background to its contents. Thus the cultures of the ancient Near East are appealed to.²⁵ In the early part of the twentieth century it was fashionable to assume that Genesis 1-11 was mythological. But then an amazing discovery was made amongst some ancient tablets that were excavated from a library in Nineveh. Suddenly the Gilgamesh epic with its record of a great flood seemed to give a lot more credence to the story of Noah's flood. It was then (wrongly) assumed that the Biblical account was derived from the Babylonian story because archaeology assigned a much earlier date to the Babylonian text! Consequently, along with other discoveries in the ANE, it is now accepted by the scholarly world that the Biblical accounts were *polemical* in intent.²⁶ That is, they were written much later than the earlier stories of creation,

23 Exodus 17:14; 24:3,4; Numbers 33:1,2; Deuteronomy 31:9,24-26. The phrase "by the hand of Moses" implying writing, occurs at: Leviticus 8v36; 10v11; 26v46; Numbers 4v37,45,49; 9v23; 10v13; 15v23; 16v40; 27v23; 36v13

24 See my unpublished work on Genesis 1-11, Chapter 26: Archaeology – an historical science?

25 Hereafter referred to as "ANE."

26 Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science: The Bampton Lectures, 1978* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

fall and flood in an attempt to show the better world view of God! When this line of reasoning is taken it is a simple matter to interpret the texts as just stories with a purpose – to show that God is superior to the gods of the ANE! We don't have to argue about historicity and so on. But there is a major problem with all of this. How can we be certain that the archaeological scholarly world is right about the ANE texts and that the Biblical accounts are written to counter these? It seems much better, and more consistent with a Biblical view, if we suggest that the Biblical stories are primary and the much later ANE accounts are derived corruptions. This makes far more sense. What God reveals must be true and accurate historically. What the ANE cultures provide is clearly man-made, and whilst they take from reality, they nevertheless include a great deal of man-made embellishments. It would seem that the stories of the flood and so on, handed down in their cultures through time accreted these embellishments and additions.

What then of a slavish adherence to the grammatical-historical method? Well we could argue that the structure of Genesis gives us a clue to the original penmen. P. J. Wiseman for one has argued that the human authors of the Genesis account were Adam, Noah's sons, and so on.²⁷ But in truth it does not really matter who wrote Genesis because the primary author is God himself. When the Lord sees fit to reveal the human penman and the circumstances in which the initial revelation took part then that is part of the revelation we need. If, on the other hand, such details are lacking, why should we struggle to seek them when the end result is speculative, tentative and argumentative? Since God has not seen it necessary to tell us these details they cannot be important nor a requirement. This, I know, runs counter to the idea that we can only really understand the message of the Bible if we first understand it as it was received by the original hearers. This is wrong thinking. The Bible has been given not just for an original grouping, from which we must work hard to discover its meaning in our culture and time. No! The Bible was written by the Lord God so that people of every culture and time could access it.²⁸ In some cases it is necessary to have the particular circumstances and details of the original setting, and these are given by the Lord. In other cases these details are irrelevant.

1979), 81,82,285; Arthur Peacocke, *God and the New Biology* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1986), 93; John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1991), 72; John Polkinghorne, *Encountering Scripture: A Scientist explores the Bible* (London: SPCK, 2010), 15,16,22,23,24,28; Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Volume 1: Nature* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 153; Alister E. McGrath, *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science & Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 41,42; Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 296.

27 P. J. Wiseman, *Clues to Creation in Genesis* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1977), 36.

28 Psalm 33:11; 100:5; 111:7,8; 117:2; 119: 151,152,160; 146:6; Isaiah 40:8; 51:8; Matthew 5:1.

The Augustine game!

Sometimes people turn to history and historical theology to bolster their arguments. A favourite game used by many writers is to claim agreement from the early church fathers for a particular doctrine. The famed bishop of Hippo, Augustine (354 – 430), who wrote extensively is often wheeled out in support of one argument or another. Frequently Augustine is used to promote the idea that the days of Genesis 1 were not literal days.²⁹ Writers using this line of reasoning then move on to suggest a long age for the earth. It is interesting to note, however, that Augustine had no time for anyone who considered that the earth was older than a few thousand years! He wrote:

They are deceived, too, by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousand years, though, reckoning by the sacred writings, we find that not 6000 years have yet passed. ... the true account of the duration of the world as it is given by our documents, which are truly sacred.³⁰

Another favourite quote taken from Augustine concerns how science ought to be considered. It is foolish, says Augustine, for a Christian to teach contrary to what every pagan knows from common observations. Here is the quote:

Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and the seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience. Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn. The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that people outside the household of faith think our sacred writers held such opinions, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men. If they find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think their pages are full of falsehoods on facts which they themselves have learnt from experience and the light of reason?³¹

Well, of course anyone who contradicts what is plainly true from common experience cannot be

29 How was the Genesis account of creation interpreted before Darwin? Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://biologos.org/blog/pre-modern-readings-of-genesis-1-part-2>

30 St. Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine. Chapter 10.—Of the Falseness of the History Which Allots Many Thousand Years to the World's Past. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.XII.10.html>

31 Saint Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis: Volume 1, Books 1-6* (Trans. John Hammond Taylor, New York: Newman Press, 1982), Book One, Chapters 19, paragraph 39.

true to Scripture, let alone gain any hearing amongst the general populace. Things fall when dropped, people grow old, things break down and decay, and these occur irrespective of persons or beliefs whether we like it or not. However, the implied idea that consequently we must take on board all that science dictates is wrong. Whether Augustine would have said this given current modern science is an open question, but since modern science flatly contradicts Genesis it cannot be that we must modify the Scripture to accommodate science. The clue here is to consider the difference between what may actually be known (such as measurements of star or planet motion, or sequences of rock layers and fossil contents), and the interpretations given to such observations. If, for example, we say that there are no such things as dinosaurs we will be laughed to scorn and rightly so. If we claim that the dinosaurs were created on day 6, lived amongst humans before the flood, and did not survive the post-flood climate and became extinct, we are not going against any physical evidence and, what-is-more, we actually explain more because we have included what God has revealed! Given that the Bible **is** the word of God (truly, historically) and that it contains accurate information about how things came to be the way they are (created by God as good – Genesis 1-2, ruined by sin and then cursed – Genesis 3-5, destroyed by judgement in a global flood – Genesis 6-9, reformed and repopulated by man – Genesis 10-11), we must consider carefully the world in which we find ourselves. It is no longer the world created *good* by the Lord but one in which sin and judgement are to be found. It is to this world that we now turn.

Cursed be the ground because of you.

Now once God had finished creating the world he rested from such work.³² The world continues to exist though his providential power, but there has been a change. It is to be noted that when God made the world the single adjective he used to describe it was “*good*.”³³ This is, of course, in keeping with his nature and character. He is good! Here is a principle to hold to. The Lord is good. Whatever else you may hear, whatever situation you may face, whatever else you come across know this for sure, the Lord is good and he does only good.³⁴ All artists and creative people make and do according to their nature. In the same way God made all things and they were good.

But then why is there this great problem? Things are not good. We have demonstrated clearly (I hope) that whatever else may be true or not, we all agree that the world, and especially mankind, is not good. So what has gone wrong? Well the Bible, as I have said, tells us quite plainly what went wrong, and it does this immediately and consistently throughout its pages. I want to look in a little more detail at just three passages that describe what has happened.

32 Genesis 2:1-4.

33 Genesis 1:10,12,18,21,25,31.

34 Psalm 119:68; 136:1.

Genesis 3.

The text of Genesis 3 is reproduced here for the reader in full:

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "where are you?" 10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." 11 And He said, "who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" 12 Then the man said, "the woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." 13 And the Lord God said to the woman, "what is this you have done?" The woman said, "the serpent deceived me, and I ate." 14 So the Lord God said to the serpent: "because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." 16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." 17 Then to Adam He said, "because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'you shall not eat of it': "cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." 20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. 22 Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Apart from Genesis 1 and 2 there can be no more controversial passage of Scripture than Genesis 3. It is customary amongst modern commentators to treat this passage as a mythological account constructed around the time of the Jewish exile to counter Babylonian and other pagan myths

concerning our origins.³⁵ I maintain that quite the contrary is the truth. God who has informed us that he was not slow to reveal, has in fact revealed from the dawn of time.³⁶ In fact Genesis 3 records God's revelation as an historical account which bears all the hallmarks of ancient history. From this original (written at the time of the events), other pagan mythologies may be derived. I do not want to go into this here suffice to say that whatever position is taken depends ultimately on whether you accept the Bible as the revealed inspired word of God, which is true and accurate on every subject, or whether you believe that to understand the Bible we need modern science and modern scholarship as “handmaidens” or helps.³⁷

If we take a look at Genesis 3 we find that there is no change in style of writing. The historical account of Genesis 2 moves seamlessly into the events of Genesis 3. We are introduced to a creature who can speak. This is alarming to modern ears. Serpents (or snakes) do not speak. So what are we to make of this? Is the Bible at fault here? Can we, out of our knowledge, judge the Bible and say that it is in error? Well, if this is so, what of other unusual events? What of the story of the crossing of the Red Sea? What of other miracles? What of Christ's miracles? Should we say these equally cannot be true because they are unusual and one-off events never to be repeated? Two things must be borne in mind here. First, to be able to say that something is untrue because *we* have never experienced it ourselves is surely the height of arrogance. The thing is that we have only a limited amount of experience, (perhaps 80 or 90 years), and limited knowledge, (whatever we have learned and whomever we have conversed with), so to claim that something cannot be true is a very tall order. Think of this carefully. What I may know is limited to what we actually have access to. Modern man may think he has access to far more than at any other time, but what we do know merely scratches the surface. Second, and far more importantly, we are making judgements about what *God* has revealed. When Christ himself said that the Scripture cannot be broken, and he appealed to the Scriptures as a final authority using the phrase “*it is written*,” then surely we must follow his lead?³⁸ Paul, the apostle commissioned by Christ, made direct appeal to this story of Genesis 3 in his first letter to Timothy when he was teaching on authority.³⁹ If Christ be God and if he is true and deserves our attention, then what the Lord has revealed to us in Genesis 3 has equal validity and true status as any other part of the Bible. Of course, we must interpret each part of the Bible according to its style. Here we have an historical narrative and so, even though it is alarming to our ears, we must interpret it as an actual event. The serpent spoke.

35 Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the bible does and doesn't say about human origins* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), 39,41.

36 See, for example, Isaiah 40:21; 41:4; 46:10; 48:3,16; 64:4.

37 McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Volume 1*, 7,11,19.

38 John 10:35; Matthew 4:4,7,10.

39 1Timothy 2:14.

Behind this animal lay the author of rebellion, Satan the accuser. The modern mind may have such a jaded view of this being that some correction is required. Satan is no mere devil of human construction. He is very real and evil but he is simply a creature. This does raise a problem, of course, for we must ask if he was created by the good God, how did he come to be so evil? But the problem is one we can never answer and it isn't really necessary to answer it. This is because we have enough information to know that God is good – always – and that there exists an evil opponent bent on destruction. Further we must recognise that (despite modern science and modern man's insistence) we are severely limited. There are things we just will not be able to understand. That may be a hard pill to swallow for some. It is a truth which every true research scientist worth his salt will accept, but we have become accustomed to the idea that to ask a question means that an answer must be had. Nevertheless, coupled with the revelation of the goodness of God (displayed supremely in Christ Jesus coming to earth to die for sinners), such a limit is rather satisfying. A good father will tell his child that there are some things he does not need to know. It is the same with the heavenly Father. The serpent (Satan) strikes directly at the good God who gave Adam and Eve an abundance of provision in the garden of Eden. The serpent of old sought to deflect Eve from this central truth – that God is good – to develop in her the idea of self deification which amounts in effect to nothing more nor less than serpent worship, since she has accepted the serpent's word against God's. Once Eve is duped into disobeying God's command, which had been given with a clear warning of the consequences, the game is over.⁴⁰ Adam, following his wife's lead, transgressed openly. Things could have been left at that, but God is good. He does not want things to be left in such an awful state. At this point some may say, “why did God allow this to happen so?” The answer to this is that before even God had created anything he had planned to come into the world to save sinners.⁴¹

And now comes the gospel! In the story of Genesis 3 the Lord does not ask questions of Adam and Eve because he needs to know the answer, but because he is drawing the truth out for their benefit. The blame shifting and accusations from Adam to Eve, and then to the serpent serve to highlight how deep the fall was. No one wanted to own up to what they had done. But the key point for our discussion here is what happened as a result of such sin and disobedience. Relationships between man and woman, between mankind and creation, and between mankind and God were all drastically altered. This was a direct outcome, but more was to follow, for God pronounced one curse on the serpent and another on the ground.⁴² This later point is often overlooked or explained

40 Genesis 2:17.

41 Ephesians 1:4; 1Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8.

42 Genesis 3:14,17.

away. It is described in a limited way with reference to plant life: “Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.”⁴³ However the curse affects the *ground*, the “*Adamah*” or the very stuff of which Adam was made. It is usual to limit this to the earth or soil, but far more is intended. It is the very stuff of which mankind is made. In modern terms, we may point to the fundamental particles and forces that make up everything. This has been cursed.

Isaiah 24.

The text of Isaiah 24 is reproduced here for the reader in full:

1 Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. 2 And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. 3 The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the Lord has spoken this word. 4 The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish. 5 The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. 7 The new wine fails, the vine languishes, all the merry hearted sigh. 8 The mirth of the tambourine ceases, the noise of the jubilant ends, the joy of the harp ceases. 9 They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it. 10 The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up, so that none may go in. 11 There is a cry for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. 12 In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction. 13 When it shall be thus in the midst of the land among the people, it shall be like the shaking of an olive tree, like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done. 14 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing; for the majesty of the Lord they shall cry aloud from the sea. 15 Therefore glorify the Lord in the dawning light, the name of the Lord God of Israel in the coastlands of the sea. 16 From the ends of the earth we have heard songs: “glory to the righteous!” But I said, “I am ruined, ruined! Woe to me! The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously, Indeed, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.” 17 Fear and the pit and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth. 18 And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken. 19 The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. 20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again. 21 It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth. 22 They will be gathered together; as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison; after many days they will be punished. 23 Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously.

With this prophecy we move into a deeper picture of the implications of the fall into sin and the

curse. First we find that the earth will return to a pre-formed state: empty and waste.⁴⁴ The words used here are not the same as those found in Genesis 1v2, but the onomatopoeic sound of both words is meant to give the impression of a bottle emptying. Just as in the flood, so again all people will be removed from the surface of the earth. Then we read that not only the “land” but also the “earth” and the whole “world” will fade and languish, literally 'droop' and 'wear out.'⁴⁵ Also we read that the earth is defiled by its inhabitants because of their rebellion. This refers back not only to Adam and Eve's transgression but equally points to our continued poor and sinful treatment of our habitat.⁴⁶ Next we have reference to burning which points forward to the events of the second coming.⁴⁷ After a long poetic description of how it will be terrible for all people, we find again a graphic depiction of what is happening to the earth. The earth is broken and shaken and is like a drunken man tottering and will eventually fall never to get up again.⁴⁸ Here we find that the curse has affected the entire earth, both concerning the world of people and the world as a physical object. The world that was once created “good” is now fallen into degradation, despair and (ultimately) destruction.

Romans 8:18-25.

The text of Romans 8:18-25 is reproduced here for the reader:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

In this text we find Paul ascribing the curse not just to the earth but to the *whole of creation*. The creation was subjected to futility – that which is devoid of truth or appropriateness. It has been subjected to corruption – decay and failing/fading.⁴⁹ Thus when the Lord cursed the “ground” it affected everything including the earth, the world and the whole universe.

44 Isaiah 24:1.

45 Isaiah 24:4.

46 Isaiah 24:5.

47 Isaiah 24:6; 2Peter 3:10-13.

48 Isaiah 24:19,20.

49 Romans 8:20-22.

From these three texts we can see that the entirety of creation as we observe it has been subjected to the fall. Not just our will and disposition, but our bodies too. Not just the relationship between man and God, but between man and man and between the two genders as well as between man and the rest of creation. The whole fabric and interrelations within the whole universe are out of true and distorted. This includes everything, and so whatever we study has this taint of sin's curse. Thus when a scientist is studying some aspect of the world he ought to recognise two important facts. First that it was created by God initially as "good." It is still created and sustained by God. But second, the object of his study has been subjected to a curse and is in a "fallen" state. It is now no longer "good." This latter fact is often completely overlooked.

Pictures of you.

I hope we have said enough to demonstrate that the entire creation has fallen, not just man and his will. The extent and depth of this fall is not always easy to discern. Furthermore the direct link between the fall and sin is not easily understood. Of course, Adam's sin resulted in death and the curse which God pronounced, but what of the exact connection between personal sin and suffered disease? This is not straightforward. Take, for example, the man born blind as found in John 9. The disciples and the authorities had made the erroneous assumption that the man or his parents had sinned to cause the man's blindness. But Christ tells us that neither were the *direct* cause. This poor man's condition was allowed by God in order that the Lord would be able to show his glory.⁵⁰ More could be said on this with reference to the Old Testament saint Job. Again there is no evidence that Job was sick because of sin. Rather, God allowed Satan to afflict him.⁵¹ However if we conclude from these incidents that personal sin does not have a hand in our well-being we must think again. David indicates in his penitential Psalms that sin and the anguish of sin can lead to suffering.⁵² Paul also teaches that on some occasions illness is caused directly by personal sin, (for example, taking the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner). Writing to the Corinthians Paul states that:

*"For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep."*⁵³

The Lord Jesus also teaches the same thing. After healing the sick man at the pool of Bethesda we find Jesus rebuking the man later on after he had spoken to the authorities:

50 John 9:2,3.

51 Job 2:4-8.

52 Psalm 6:2; 31:9,10; 32:1f; 38:3; 51:8.

53 1Corinthians 11:30.

“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.””⁵⁴

Thus, we might have deduced that there was some connection when we remember the words of Solomon *“for as he [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he”* and similar ideas from the Lord Jesus.⁵⁵ If the heart (mind) is wrong it should not surprise us that there might be an effect on the body. However, to make the conclusion that a person who sins will inevitably suffer from some disease is hopelessly wrong, for we all know many who sin but don't suffer, and many who suffer without any clear sin as a cause. Even though sin is the ultimate cause of disease and sickness, there is no straightforward and easy connection between sin and sickness on a personal level.

Even though sin is universal it is clear that everything is not as completely and utterly bad and as ruined as can be imagined. For one thing, if this were so we could not rely on creation at all. The fact that creation still operates reliably is down to God's good and wise governance. All of creation has fallen and is wearing out like an old garment.⁵⁶ However things are not totally bad.

Clearly part of the fall most definitely includes us as humans. It is not just that we are subject to disease and sickness, our very nature is characterised by this fall. This feature is one that it is difficult to grasp in one sense, but in essence it is quite straightforward. We might start by noting that all of us are strangers with God. We are alienated from him. Given that he has created us to be in relationship with him, the fact that we are alienated is a clear indication that something is wrong. We shall look again at this whole issue of the fallen mind when we come to consider science and thinking in chapter 7. For now I just want to point the reader to a trio of Biblical texts which give some painful descriptions of man's mind:

“The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.”⁵⁷

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”⁵⁸

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.”⁵⁹

54 John 5:14.

55 Proverbs 23:7 – see also, Matthew 12:34; 15:18; Luke 6:45.

56 Psalm 102:26; Hebrews 1:11.

57 Psalm 94:11.

58 Ephesians 4:17,18.

59 Romans 1:18.

The mind of man is futile (vain and empty), dark and debased. There are very many descriptions like this throughout God's revealed word. The Lord has taken great pains to show us exactly how things are. He is a loving heavenly Father and a great physician of souls. Apart from giving things to us straight by telling us how we were created, what happened next and how we have become as in Genesis and elsewhere, the Lord has also given us two illustrative pictures to drive home the importance of a right understanding. These two illustrative pictures are found as real events in the first three gospel accounts. First we have the occasion of the healing of a leper, then immediately after this we are told of the event depicting the restoration of a paralysed man.

Leprosy represented a disease that went deep into the skin and covered the whole body. Lepers were outcasts and considered infectious. In the Bible we are introduced to leprosy in the book of Leviticus where the main point is to seek cleansing.⁶⁰ The same idea is uppermost when we meet lepers in the New Testament.⁶¹ As such, leprosy is a graphic picture or illustration of sin. Perhaps we may use the illustration of cancer to represent sin today. Nevertheless we learn a lot about our Saviour's attitude to lepers who came to him. Here is Mark's account:

“Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.”⁶²

It is noteworthy that Christ responded to the leper who implored Jesus and knelt down before the Saviour in a humble attitude. This is the only way we can come to Christ, humbly. But notice also how wonderful the Lord's response was. The leper asks for help if Christ was willing but Jesus “*moved with compassion*” immediately touched him and cleansed him! This is the same for any who recognise the leprosy of their sin and who kneel before the Lord humbly asking for forgiveness. Here the illustration focuses on our need to be cleansed from the ruinous effects of sin.

We also read about the healing of a paralysed man in the first three gospels.⁶³ The very interesting thing about this story is that four men bring their paralysed friend to Christ for *healing*, carrying him on a mat. Because there were so many crowding the Lord, they had to take him up

60 Leviticus 13:45; 14:1f.

61 Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16.

62 Mark 1:40-45.

63 Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26.

onto the flat roof of the house, open the tiles and let him down on ropes to be beside Christ. It is clear that they (and the sick man) were expecting a miracle of healing.⁶⁴ However, what actually happened was that:

*“When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.””*⁶⁵

Thus rather than seeing their faith and healing their friend, Jesus forgives the man his sins! The Pharisees object in their hearts and the Lord then goes on to teach them that as Son of Man he has power on earth to forgive sins because he has power to heal – he is the Creator.⁶⁶ Here we find an illustration of sin in the paralysed man. He is unable to do anything about his condition, so it is as though he was half-dead. He requires others to bring him to the Lord, and the Lord forgives him. This is what we need as those who are dead in trespasses and sins.⁶⁷ We are brought to the Lord by others (whether literally or through a book or tract or some other intermediary), and what we need more than anything else is to be forgiven.

64 Luke 5:17.

65 Matthew 9:2.

66 Luke 5:22-24.

67 Ephesians 2:1f.

Chapter 4

And the consequence is ...

How does this affect us?

Quite frequently those who discuss the story of Genesis 3 limit the effect of the fall to man's will. However the New Testament indicates quite clearly that man's mind has been affected too. Paul, for example, talks about the mind being “*darkened*.”⁶⁸ Thus mankind and his very way of thinking has been affected by this curse and fall. As we noted earlier the curse of the fall has also affected the very dust of the universe, so that everything is completely *out of kilter* and distorted. It has been subjected to this curse for our benefit. This is because left in perfection we would never turn and seek God. At least with the decay, disaster, disease and death that we see as a result of the fall, we are moved to at least admit we are not right and things are wrong. But imagine if in our sin and rebellion against God, with dark and devious minds and wills, we were left in a paradise? It does not bear thinking about because we would be confirmed in our rebellion, and this would consign us to a perpetual existence which would be far less than satisfactory. We were made to know God and relate to Him positively. All of us have rebelled against him and have turned from what is good for us. In the absence of the true God we invent gods to fill the gap left behind. Whether these be physical idols like money or whether they be ideals like reputation, we all create a god to which we devote our lives. How often have you heard it said that the master becomes like the dog he owns? Such an action of ours of focusing on idols leads to greater failure and despair because what happens is we become like the gods we esteem. If money is our god, we begin to live, breathe, eat and dream of it. If reputation then the same. In short we become monstrous.

The trouble is that we are still made in the image of God. This means we are not brute beasts who live by instinct. We still have elements within which crave for satisfaction and answers. God has indeed set eternity in our hearts so that we have a connection, however tenuous it may be, with the divine.⁶⁹ This link with eternity rears its head from time to time. We attempt desperately to paper over this and to blank it out with distractions and addictions, but when things get *real* we

68 Ephesians 4:18.

69 Ecclesiastes 3:11.

acknowledge that whatever we have, wherever we are, and whatever we are doing, still something is wrong. There is something lacking. Not until we have peace with God does this gnawing and nagging brokenness get broken!

Given that we are made by God, with faculties which reflect God's very character, it isn't surprising that sometimes man does produce good things. Further, given that the world was indeed created by God, cursed though it is today, it isn't surprising that man in reflecting on creation comes up with some of the truths of God. The difficulty is, how do we know which is really true and which is just the man-made element devised to push God out? Take for example, the incredible amount of information and data that has been discovered in astronomy. Who can but wonder in awe at the amazing sights shown to us by the telescopes and machines man has made? These are not given to us, however, as raw pieces of data. You may be surprised to learn that the colour photos we see are in fact constructed and the idea of an expanding universe first put forward by Irwin Hubble is in fact an interpretation of the spectral information.

World view.

Arguments between those who hold to a Biblical world-view and those who favour an evolutionary explanation of life are bound to run up against misunderstandings. It is not uncommon for one party with a particular understanding of one aspect under discussion to assume that the other party views it in the same light. Take, for example, the concept of "nature." A Christian who accepts the Bible literally will have a God-centred view, whilst those who think of creation merely in terms of physical existence will have a very different perspective. Leaving aside those who muddy the waters by trying to hold to both evolution and Biblical views, the grounds for discussion never really succeed if it is the details that are in view. What has to take centre stage in the discussion is the basic parameters that establish and under-gird each world view.

It is at this point that we come to realise that our world views are not really pure. The Christian having been translated from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of the Son of God, will be a new creation in a new world, but will still have to restructure many of his thought patterns which have been grounded in this world's ways.⁷⁰ In short it is imperative that we ground our re-programming entirely from the Scriptures. Now some take issue with this line of reasoning. They argue that we must take Scripture, not as an all-encompassing source of revelation, but in a limited sense which, although it has full authority, must not be pushed past its remit or purpose. It is not a textbook of science since it is pre-science these people say, and so cannot arbitrate on matters pertinent to science. The question is: does the Bible provide the basis for *all thinking*, or does it

70 Colossians 1:13; 2Corinthians 5:17; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23.

need supplementing with other sources of truth? There can be no doubt, I believe, that the Bible as God's word stands as the very fount of truth for all things, all subjects, all schemes and all endeavours whatsoever they may be. Take, for example, the statement of Colossians 2:2,3 to which we must make frequent reference. If Christ is indeed the sole source of all wisdom and knowledge, and the Scriptures are the sole source of our knowledge of Christ (as he himself indicated after the resurrection), then what right do we have to say that the Scriptures need supplementing?⁷¹ Couple this with the negative appraisal of man's abilities to discover or to think truly, and we are left with the inescapable conclusion that the Scriptures **must be** the ground for all thinking and intellectual pursuits including physics, chemistry, art, music, archaeology, and so on.⁷²

Thus since the Scriptures are the starting point for all endeavours of thought we must therefore begin to re-examine all areas of life from this point of view.

What are the implications for doing science?

We shall consider science in detail in the next four chapters, but for the moment we must recognise that since the fall and the curse imposed by God, all of creation has been affected, and this has dramatic implications for doing science. What scientists are examining is not creation as originally made and created “good” as described in Genesis 1, but creation fallen and distorted. Of course, the heavens still declare the glory of God but what we see is a world subjected to the curse.⁷³ This doctrine of the fall must therefore be taken into account. Hence when Darwin saw “nature” as a horrendous tale of death and destruction, he was not being dishonest. However attributing this *reality* to the God of the Bible was a mistake. It ought rather to have been attributed to man and his rebellion. Creation from the hand of God was perfect, fully so. Creation as we observe it today is distorted and ruined because God has subjected it to such a curse in order that we might recognise our own sinful natures. The sad thing is that man is so proud that he will not own up to what he has done wrong, and now instead of seeing the effect of our rebellion in the distortion of the whole universe, we have concocted a new story (evolution) to do away with the real and true picture. No longer do we see the earth subjected to futility, destroyed by a global flood. Instead we are taught that this world is continually being made through a process that requires death as a principle of creation. How terribly sad!

Then also we find that since the fall has affected everything, this means that man himself, and especially his mind, has not escaped corruption. As we have already pointed out, the mind is

71 See Luke 24.

72 This is not the time to discuss the great work of Solomon – Ecclesiastes – suffice to point out that all of man's attempts at “discovery” always end in failure. See, for example, Ecclesiastes 7:23,24: 8:16,17.

73 Psalm 19:1.

darkened and bent on looking in the wrong way. Jeremiah described the heart as desperately wicked.⁷⁴ There have been arguments and debates a-plenty concerning the extent of this corruption. However when you read Scripture you find clearly that unless a person is born again, and unless that person is seeking the Lord with a whole heart, their mind will be given to futility. Perhaps you may want to hide behind a screen of neutrality. “Not me” you claim, but there are no neutral positions. If we do not gather with the Lord we scatter.⁷⁵ Those who are not wholeheartedly working for the Lord will be undermining his ways. Those who find the concept of Christian things abhorrent will be working doubly hard against the Lord. The point is that all things, whatever they are, are in his hands, guided by his plan, and governed by his rule. Things have been made the way God wants them for his great purposes and if we think otherwise then woe betide us! We are such puny objects! What right has the clay to tell the potter how things should be?

Having shown that there is something wrong with the world and with us in particular, and having demonstrated that the Bible gives us the best explanation of how things are the way they are, we must now consider perhaps the most vocal alternative to this Biblical world view, namely that produced by modern science.

74 Jeremiah 17:9.

75 Matthew 12:30.



Part 2: Science.



Chapter 5

Science, some history and modern science.

I wonder what the reader makes of the following two assessments of science? Both were made by historians of science. The first by Charles Singer in 1959, and the second by Steven Shapin in 2007.

“It is evident that, in the last two generations, there has been a basic change in the status of science. This has affected the whole spiritual climate in which we live. Until the twentieth century the main inner life of civilised societies had been supported, for thousands of years, by activities quite outside the realm of scientific ideas. It is true that for the last few hundred years, and notably since the mid-eighteenth century, science has sometimes come to the aid of industry or agriculture by raising production or otherwise bettering the human lot. But on the spiritual side, save among isolated groups, science did little to exercise the intellect or satisfy the hunger for knowledge, and even less to appeal to the sense of beauty.

In England, until the later nineteenth century, science hardly penetrated the educational system and is still not integrated with it. Science seldom attracted general public interest until the beginning of the twentieth century. The place of science in the older universities remained at best secondary, at worst precarious. Since then the immense and accelerating increase in scientific activity and the resulting mass of real and applicable knowledge has changed every side of life. Having come to control and direct industry, it is now rapidly and manifestly transforming the very face of the earth and the lot of its living inhabitants, whether human, animal, or plant. A true history of science should end by discussing these latter-day metamorphoses. That last chapter must be a very long one and difficult to write. I am incapable of dealing with it and must perforce leave it to others.”⁷⁶

“Science Made the Modern World, and it's science that shapes modern culture. That's a sentiment that gained currency in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century – a sentiment that seemed almost too obvious to articulate then and whose obviousness has, if anything, become even more pronounced over time. Science continues to Make the Modern World. Whatever names we want to give to the leading edges of change – globalization, the networked society, the knowledge economy – it's science that's understood to be their motive force. It's science that drives the economy and, more pervasively, it's science that shapes our culture. We think in scientific terms. To think any other way is to think inadequately, illegitimately, nonsensically. In 1959, C. P. snow's *Two Cultures and The Scientific Revolution* complained about the low standing of science in official culture, but he was presiding not at a funeral but at a christening. In just that very broad sense, the “science

76 Singer, *A Short History*, 1.

wars” have long been over and science is the winner.”⁷⁷

You may or may not agree with these academics. But in my estimation their assessment is right for there has been a dramatic displacement in modern man's thinking, (his “inner life”), away from what Singer refers to as the “spiritual” towards a scientific mindset.

The status of science.

In 1859 Darwin published his most influential work “On the Origin of Species” detailing the evolution of the natural world. From around this time the railways and motorised transport grew at a phenomenal rate along with other mechanical and electrical technology. Last century there have been two world wars fuelling not only weapons development, but also the space race of the 1960s and 1970s between Russia and USA. In the latter half of the twentieth century genetic research and the silicon revolution have been major developments along with environmental concern and climate change. Given these facts, there is no doubt but that science is an extremely important influence on modern society. Writing in 1949, Herbert Butterfield, a political historian, suggested that the rise of science has eclipsed all other developments:

“[the scientific revolution] outshines everything [in history] since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom. Since it changes the character of men's habitual mental operations even in the conduct of the non-material sciences, while transforming the whole diagram of the physical universe and the very texture of human life itself, it looms large as the real origin of the modern world and of the modern mentality.....”⁷⁸

I cannot accept Butterfield's assessment of the Reformation, of course, but his comment on the way we view the universe and how we think about it must be taken seriously. Butterfield's view was echoed in 1986 by another historian of science, Richard Westfall:

“For good and for ill, science stands at the centre of every dimension of modern life. It has shaped most of the categories in terms of which we think.”⁷⁹

These older assessments may have been true in their day, but what of the twenty-first

77 Steven Shapin, “Science and the modern world.” In *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*, 3rd Edition. (Edited by E. Hackett, O. Amsterdamska, M. Lynch, and J. Wajcman. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 433-448. 2007), 433.

78 Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300–1800* (London: G. Bell, 1949), viii.

79 Richard Westfall, “The Scientific Revolution,” *History of Science Society Newsletter* 15(3). 1986. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/ufhatch/pages/03-Sci-Rev/SCI-REV-Home/05-RSW-Sci-Rev.htm>

century? Well consider the fact that in the UK all children at school must study science to GCSE level by law. The media continually defer to scientists on all matters in relation to “nature” or the physical universe. You can hardly watch a TV programme or documentary that mentions the physical world without the views of science being expressed as revealed truth. You only have to consider the status of such people as, David Attenborough, Stephen Hawking, Chris Packham and Brian Cox.⁸⁰ The pronouncements of these people stemming from mainstream modern science gets all the air-time whilst dissenting views are considered crack-pot merely because they are not mainstream. In contrast how many well known Christian leaders can be named who have equal status? I am hard pushed to name even one! Perhaps the archbishop and Cliff Richard may be two, but these are not really popular statesmen of our culture. Modern American evangelists are soundly ridiculed and the stereotypical vicar is simply a figure of fun in the modern eye. Politicians bow the knee to the science of the day when a crisis looms. So how did we come to this situation where science seems to be the basis of understanding modern life?

It would seem obvious that any reading of the history of the western world (and also of the east in recent times for that matter) leads to the conclusion that “to think” is to do so scientifically. What I find shocking about all of this is that there has been virtually no response from the Christian world. We have let science usurp the place of authority. The Christian faith won a victory from earliest days following Christ's ascension and the day of Pentecost. It challenged the way people thought. Chiefly it brought in God's perspective on matters. This is so opposed to any form of *scientific* thinking because it takes into account that which is not visible and that which can only be known by “revelation.” Science knows nothing of these realms. It can only accept the sense-based data on which it works. If science had remained content to be merely an arm of technology and to accept the limitations that such sense-based “knowledge” is bound by, then maybe it could survive within a Christian world.⁸¹ But science was not content with such a small domain and has, over the centuries, forged a path to being universally accepted, universally applied and, as a consequence, universally worshipped. The victories gained by Christians in earliest days have now been lost to the world of science. In our day to think means to think scientifically. Surely as Christians we ought to at least challenge this idea that legitimate thinking is scientific thinking? Of course the term “scientific” can mean any number of things but at least one thing it does not mean to many modern writers is “Christian.” The notion that revelation can play a part in guiding policy is utterly ridiculed

80 David Attenborough is especially famous for several series of “natural history” programmes aired by the BBC. Stephen Hawking is a world-renowned physicist and cosmologist. Chris Packham is an up and coming natural scientist and presenter on TV. Brian Cox is a physicist and TV presenter.

81 I severely doubt this because the Christian faith – Biblical revelation – governs all and especially how we see the world that God has created.

today. But this is what we as Christians ought to be claiming! The Bible ought to inform our government, our judiciary, our education and so on.

Factors indicating influence.

The historian of science, S. Shapin, has observed a number of factors which serve to show the current high status of science in society. Having usurped “authority” from the Christian basis of society, Shapin notes how science also dominates the academic and university world. The humanities, “look on in envy and, sometimes, resentment” at the position of the natural sciences in the academy.⁸² The natural sciences attract far more funding than any other discipline or groups of subjects.⁸³ It would be very interesting to chart and attempt reasons why science took over pride of place in the world of academia. The early universities placed emphasis on languages, grammar, logic and mathematics, and although astronomy did have its place too, theology was queen above all. Now in modern times, without any doubt, science in all its realms and guises is central in most tertiary establishments today, and theology, which was first emaciated by a scientific approach, has all but disappeared.⁸⁴ How did this come about? What is the Christian response? I would affirm that theology must be first and everything else can only be drawn from that stream. This mere beginning of thought must be worked out at a later date.⁸⁵ Here I am merely establishing the current sad pre-eminence not of Christ but of science.

Modern science is still seen as the driving force for power and wealth.⁸⁶ Modern science affects ordinary life. From the jobs and careers it has generated, to the things it has produced, and to the means by which we communicate, all have stemmed from a scientific mentality, or so it is claimed.⁸⁷ However the correspondence between modern science and its ideas, and modern technology is not clear nor direct. Apparently science and the scientific quest has been on the increase at an exponential rate since the 1960s.⁸⁸ The title “science” has great legitimacy in our day. To label something “scientific” means often, that it cannot be challenged.⁸⁹ Finally the elevated status of science is demonstrated by the popularity and prominence of its personnel. Many can recount several famous scientists (Galileo, Darwin, Newton, Einstein, Hawking ...) but who can name a famous philosopher?⁹⁰ For that matter who can name a prominent academic Christian

82 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 435.

83 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 435.

84 The rise of “Higher Criticism” in the nineteenth century was chiefly a scientific approach to theology.

85 I have already begun thinking (and some work) on the idea of a truly Christian University. In the years 2009-2011 I began a series of lectures under the banner of “Kingdom Christian University.”

86 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 436.

87 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 436.

88 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 436.

89 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 439.

90 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 441.

theologian? It was not always this way. Think of Greek culture. Think, for that matter, of Hebrew culture. Only since just after 1600 AD in the world of the intellectual, and from perhaps 1950 AD onwards in the realm of the populous, has science wielded so much power and influence. Thus for good or ill modern science wields an immense influence and acts as an authority in the modern world. It is not just a European or a Western thing, for India and China are relentlessly advancing in science and technology in our day. Given the high status of science today we must ask, from where has this authority come? We shall look first at some history. Then, after considering the difficulty of defining science, we shall consider the idea that due to its high status in the UK and America, science has taken on the position of being a “priesthood.”

Some history.

There have been a variety of different histories of science, each promoted with a different end in view.⁹¹ To some, science is as old as man himself. Wherever man has been, there science has been produced. The difficulty for this view comes when we seek to know just when man came to be. For others, science stems from the fount of the reformation in Europe. A strong argument has been made for this idea, which states that science could only come about in Europe where the reformation brought about a fundamental change in the attitude to the world around us. For example, a belief in the ordered and rational world enabling science to proceed was only promulgated when the doctrine of creation was fully revealed. Still other historians hold that although science has occurred wherever man has been, each culture or age has a very different science. Finally there are those who follow evolution who say that science began with the first writing and has progressed as man has evolved. The Christian Biblical view would hold that science (true science) has been engaged in since Adam named the animals in Genesis chapter two. However we need to add an important qualification to this statement for the term “science” as we have noted means different things to different people.

Whatever view that may be taken, it is vital to consider the importance of the renaissance period during which there was an influx of Greek manuscripts into Europe from around the 14th century AD. Coupled with a dramatic change in authority structures, from a reliance on church hierarchy to a faith in the revealed word of God, burgeoning scientists began to distrust the old authorities.⁹² There was a new impetus on experimentation, so that as well as theoretical

91 For what follows I have used the following works: Singer, *A Short History*; Colin A. Ronan, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the World's Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Newness Books, 1983); David Knight, *The Nature of Science: The History of Science in Western Culture since 1600* (Andre Deutsch, 1976); John Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science: A Historical Interpretation* (London: Collins, 1961).

92 These early scientists were not known by this title but were more frequently called “natural philosophers.”

considerations, these new scientists could make greater advances than the Greeks. Such a view of the rise of science has been championed by Christians (and others too) who have pointed out a number of salient facts. First, many of the earliest scientists were true Christians. Good examples include Robert Boyle and Johannes Kepler.⁹³ Second, a distinctly Christian approach to creation was required. A mechanical approach began to take shape as early scientists recognised that creation was regular, ordered, and patterned like a well designed machine. This new idea in which the world was considered to be ordered and capable of being investigated by experiment, freed thinkers from the organic view of reality formed by Aquinas who melded Aristotelian thought with church doctrine.⁹⁴ Third, the protestant work ethic encouraged the development of a hands-on approach to science rather than a mental/theoretical approach of men in ivory towers. Now this type of history of science has been taken on board, restructured and re-written by evolution-based historians who can readily appreciate the developmental approach. However more recently other historians of science have highlighted two important facts. First, the oldest civilisations all had their own technology which (although we have little record of it) must have developed from a science of some kind. These would include, Babylon, Egypt, ancient megalithic cultures etc. Hence science must predate the reformation period. Second, there has been a gradual recognition of advances in China and elsewhere not previously considered in traditional histories of science. This latter point highlights the fact that we are always in the position of not having all the knowledge available – a new fact which comes to light may throw out any ideas we once had. Of course the great question that needs to be considered is, what is actually meant by the term “science” in each history of science? Most histories are welded to an evolutionary approach. Some take a paradigmatic approach, following Thomas Kuhn's idea that science is much more a communal and human thing than an objective truth seeking machine.⁹⁵

I want to draw two main points from all of the above thoughts. First, despite, the insistence on evolution, most historians recognise that man is generally the same in all cultures and at all times. Man's ingenuity and propensity to discover is universal. It would seem that even though there is a tacit acceptance of the idea of evolution, historians cannot but help view the evidence of different cultures as pointing to the *sameness* of the human spirit. Man is a curious creature and he wants to know! Second, since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the advance of technology (practical, experimental) has been a main driver to the flourishing of modern science. It seems as though the ancient Greeks felt that experimentation was beneath them. They did it, but it was not

93 Robert Boyle (1627-1691) is known for his law relating pressure and volume at constant temperature ($PV = \text{constant}$). Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) is known for working out that planetary orbits are elliptical.

94 Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

95 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

considered to be vital. To them contemplation or beholding (the literal meaning of “theory” was all important). In Britain the great revival of learning emphasised the place of experiment rather than the statements of ancient authorities like Aristotle and Plato, (see for example Francis Bacon).⁹⁶ Indeed the concept of demonstrating the truth of your discoveries to all was of paramount importance.⁹⁷ The basic idea here was that science was considered to be in the *public domain*. Anyone could see, hear or experience the truth being proclaimed. People could easily reproduce the experiments themselves.

As science grew, the public demonstrations turned into papers not just read at a society but published as well. Then as the number of experimenters grew, papers were just published without any public demonstrations. From this “demonstration-based” mentality has developed a published one, where journals report the findings of accepted experiments. Originally a paper submitted for publication was meant to be refereed. This meant that the referee actually checked the work by performing the experiments himself. However this soon became impossible and nowadays papers are merely reviewed by peers who work in the same field but who do not necessarily repeat the work cited. It is thus clear that much has changed over the last two hundred years or so! With the rapid expansion of scientific research the number of journals has increased exponentially, and the old idea of demonstrations has fallen well out of favour. What has emerged in place is a new elite of those with recognised qualifications who are the authorities, and as a result the public have become distanced, even divorced, from the public workings of science. To some extent museums were a counter to this, but generally the displays put on show were what *men of science* determined. In time other evidences have been admitted apart from experiment. Observations, theory and even historical evidence (for evolution) are now accorded the same status as the original experimental demonstrations. In our day the place of the scientific community has become of paramount importance. It has taken on the status of a priesthood and it has become the authority rather like the position held by the medieval Roman Catholic church of the middle ages.

The difficulty of defining science.

How then should we define science? The easy option that many take is to say that it is just what scientists do and leave it at that. But this is not enough. We need a good view of what science is perceived to be, and how it is viewed by scientists. Many have attempted a definition but it would seem that the various attempts emphasise only one aspect or another. For example Stephen

96 Francis Bacon, (1561-1626), *The Advancement of Learning* 1605; *The New Organon* 1620.

97 Michael Faraday (1791-1867), for example, made public displays of his findings the legacy of which is seen in the Royal Institution Christmas lectures.

Hawking in his book *A Brief History of Time* points to the aim and goal of science.⁹⁸ Erwin Schrödinger does the same.⁹⁹ P. W. Bridgman makes the mind the central feature in his assessment.¹⁰⁰ Others highlight the subject matter, “nature,” whilst still others point to discovery or talk about theory and data. Historians of science, as we have already observed, debate when science began. Whilst some focus exclusively on the sixteenth century, others go back to earliest times. In short all these attempts at describing man and his attempts at knowing suffer from the same problem – bias and prejudice. Mankind simply cannot give a true reflection of what man is doing!

I can hear howls of protest from the reader, for surely what could be more simple than identifying and describing science? After all, since 1988 every schoolchild in the UK has had to study science to GCSE level according to the National Curriculum. If the government decree it as a separate discipline required by all students then surely there must be a clear-cut definition? Isn't it what those boffins in the white coats do? Isn't it what we see on TV when David Attenborough tells us about *nature*? Isn't it simply what Einstein, Hawking, Newton and Darwin did? Unfortunately it turns out that to define science requires rather more than a few words will provide.

Perhaps the first thing we may want to say is that science is study concerning the *physical* world in distinction to those subjects designated as the arts and the humanities. However here we begin to run into our first problem, for to define science properly we must really define the object of its study, namely, the physical world. The arts and the humanities also engage this same world so how then can we distinguish between science and the arts? Perhaps we may progress by saying that science engages the physical world using mathematics. A little reflection soon puts the spoiler to this neat separation, for mathematical precision is part and parcel of the world of the artist (perspective, scale, geometry), and also that of the musician too. Now I suspect that some readers may protest and simply suggest that the subject is easily defined by the many divisions and subdivisions we have for science. Physics, chemistry and biology are the three main ones. These have been subdivided through increasing knowledge and specialisation. We talk of solid state physics, semiconductor physics, electronics, mechanics, optics and so on. A similar set of divisions can be made for the other main fields, chemistry and biology. However these clear-cut delineations may identify certain areas of study but they do not really help us define what this term *science* really means. They are simply a form of classification or description.

Looking at this from another angle – that of philosophy – we may want to home in on the

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- 98 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam Press, 1988), 10,169.
 - 99 Erwin Schrodinger, *Science and Humanism: Physics in our time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 51.
 - 100 P. W. Bridgman, *Reflections of a Physicist* (Philosophical Library Inc. 1950), 351.

“scientific method.” Surely science can be defined by way of its method? Scientists make observations, they do experiments, then they form a theory to fit the data they have. Next they do further experiments to test their theory and finally they refine their theory and look for further confirmation in new data. These are the elements of such a cyclical process called the “scientific method.” This sounds exactly like that which is taught to our schoolchildren but there is a big problem with this. It turns out that this process is not actually unique to science. It is the process by which humans engage with the world. Some refer to it merely as the “method of intelligence” or even simply “common sense” – although this latter phrase is perhaps open to debate.¹⁰¹

A more recent characterisation of modern science comes from a consideration of it as an essentially *human* and communal enterprise. This aspect of science is often missing when it comes to talking about the subject and it is certainly absent from school curricula. Whilst we may recognise that science concerns observing reality (physical reality) and understanding reality, we must nevertheless recognise that science is done by human beings just like any other activity. In passing, it is very interesting to observe that the public have respect for certain professions but not others. There seems to be a sense that scientists are trustworthy whilst politicians and journalists (for example) are not. Why is this the case? Are journalists and politicians a separate class of humans different from scientists? Although such prejudices exist I think we would be hard pressed to prove that one class of professionals are more trustworthy than others. There have been just as many tricksters and frauds in the scientific world as there have been embezzlers and con-men in the world of finance and politics. With the rise of science both numerically in terms of scientists and influentially in terms of its reach and appeal, a new phase of understanding has come to the fore. Science, that is modern science, has been described in religious terms.

Modern science - Science as a new priesthood.

It is perhaps forgivable and possibly understandable given the array of technological machines in use, to miss the obvious fact that science is a very *human* affair, and not just the relentless product of machines. But this aspect needs stating loudly, and just so that you don't take my word for it, here is a statement by a twentieth century physicist, writer and dean of an American university:

“Far from being machine-like, science is a characteristically human enterprise that is

101 Bridgman, *Reflections*, 370; Charles E. Raven, *Christianity and Science* (Lutterworth Press, World Christian Book Series number 4, 1955), 20. See also: Harold K. Schilling, *Science and Religion: An Interpretation of Two Communities* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), 37,38; Charles E. Raven, *Natural Religion and Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 10.

intensely personal, as well as social and communal, with all the strengths and weaknesses this implies.¹⁰²

The last part of this quote is very telling indeed. It is a curious feature of the public perception of science and of scientists that they and their pursuits are considered to be squeaky clean. Occasionally you hear of a case when scientists have cooked their results or faked experiments but on the whole it is always assumed that science is pristine, perfect, almost holy. That this is not the case is clear when we consider other professions. We hardly think that politicians and journalists are pure and spotless! The spotlight of scrutiny is ever on the teachers as they are inspected to the point of exhaustion. Of course scientists are every bit as human and weak as any other professional grouping. They are guilty of the same flaws, faults and failings as anyone else in their work.

The historian of science, David M. Knight also highlighted the human and *communal* side of science:

“..... trying to answer the question 'What is science?' by looking at science as a process of thinking about nature, of talking about nature, and of interrogating and using nature. That is, we shall describe science as an intellectual, a social, and a practical activity. The intellectual and practical aspects of science have a very long history indeed, but the growth of scientific community is a more recent phenomenon which characterises modern science, and began with the scientific societies and academies of the mid-seventeenth century - such as the Royal Society in London, and the Academy of Sciences in Paris.”¹⁰³

In any community, certain rules and customs are generally followed. Sometimes these are not stated in any overt sense, they are learned as you become familiar with the group. However in recent times the community of science has taken on a very distinct and somewhat surprising persona – that of being a priesthood.

This idea of science as a priesthood has been expounded by a number of scientists from different disciplines. One young aspiring scientist complained about this communal aspect as he was climbing the ladder to recognition in his field. Writing in a piece entitled “Confessions of a Deserter” he stated:

“The essence of the modern problem is that the scientist has claimed the role of a priest, having unique access to truth and power, without accepting the obligations of a minister, having the responsibilities for justice and compassion.”¹⁰⁴

102 Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 34.

103 Knight, *The Nature of Science*, 11,12.

104 Jeffrey Lockwood, *Grasshopper Dreaming: Reflections on Killing and Loving* (Skinner House Books: Boston, 2002), 128.

Rather more explicitly, one former editor of New Scientist likened the scientific establishment to aspects of the Roman Catholic institutions of dread!

"The scientific establishment bears a grisly resemblance to the Spanish Inquisition. Either you accept the rules and attitudes and beliefs promulgated by the 'papacy' (for which read, perhaps, the Royal Society or the Royal College of Physicians), or face a dreadful retribution. We will not actually burn you at the stake, because that sanction, unhappily, is now no longer available under our milksop laws. But we will make damned sure that you are a dead duck in our trade."¹⁰⁵

In this next piece we find the remarkable claim by a practising scientist, that science has actually taken the place of God:

"I rubbed my eyes in amazement. We are back in the days of Galileo, I thought, when a totalitarian Church prescribed to scientists what could be said and what not. Only the roles seem to have been reversed. Theologians keep their mouth shut by their own free will, scared to death to utter anything that could possibly displease scientists. Ironically enough, science does not forbid at all anybody to walk on the water or to rise from the dead. The situation is perhaps well summarized by the philosopher Paul Feyerabend, who wrote: 'Science is the most aggressive religious dogmatic institution of our time.'..... If it is true, and I think it is, that science played an important part in destroying the relation between modern man and God by taking God's place itself, then a scientist who tries to be a believer at the same time, has something to do. It is his duty to demonstrate that this is a blind road. That the roused expectations on salvation by science are false. That they are based on arrogance. He must not belittle science, but show to science its due place: the position of servant of mankind instead of its idol."¹⁰⁶

One astronomer, who found that he was the object of ridicule and reproach when his observations kept getting in the way of the accepted ideas of an expanding universe, has also identified this new priesthood nature in science:

"Big Science as the Medieval Church.

This is far from the first time this parallel has been noted. The church, still in Galileo's time, was the ultimate authority on most important matters. The church hierarchy was handsomely supported by princes and working people, and the life style of the cardinals depended on having people believe that their pronouncements were important and profound. Due to a complex of political, economic and internal events, the church gradually lost power to those who protested. After the ideals of the enlightenment and the heady rise of astronomy and physics, however, we have the present day situation where all authority on natural law has passed to science. In return for important and profound pronouncements on the nature of the

105 Donald Gould, [Former editor of New Scientist], "Letting poetry loose in the laboratory," (New Scientist, 29 August 1992), 51.

106 Lecture given at Dayton University by Prof. Emeritus Arie van den Beukel, Delft University, The Netherlands. "Salvation through science?"

universe the academics are supported with high salaries, expensive facilities, travel, prestige and life time security. They also bestow the power of this institution onto successors of their own choosing.”¹⁰⁷

Others suggest that the link with religious associations is misguided. Shapin, the historian of science, writes against the idea pointing out the many protests that scientists have made over the years.¹⁰⁸ Shapin's argument is based on the change of status of science in the twentieth century from the heady heights of being considered philosophical and “truth” seeking, to that of being merely pragmatic and technological. It is suggested that since hardly any ordinary folk know, let alone understand, the details of science then how can the scientists operate as priests? Further, scientists operating as technologists have no inside track to the ethics or meaning of what they study, so again how can they operate as priests? This line of reasoning is flawed. The medieval church period was that time in history when the religious priesthood exercised its greatest powers. It is very doubtful that the average peasant or parishioner knew or understood the doctrines they regularly celebrated. The connection between this medieval period and the current one is simply that only those who are accepted into designated offices and positions have the right and power to determine what may or may not be believed. No one is likening the two periods any more than that the dominant groups (religious priests in medieval time and scientists today) determine what we must believe.

To err is human.

So now truth is out that the community of science is a veritable priesthood. To gain entry you must doff your cap to Darwin and evolution, to the Big Bang and uniformitarianism. Oh and by the way make sure you limit your statements to what you are expert in!

We have come to see that science is operated by a community of people with definite beliefs and credentials. Whilst God's creation is real and the men and women who study it are equally real, this is no guarantee that what these folk declare is true. It is now time to move a little deeper in our understanding of science and consider first the idea that it is concerned with “knowledge” (chapter 6), and then secondly its preoccupation with the realm of thought and mind (chapter 7).

107 Halton Arp, *Seeing Red: Redshifts, Cosmology and Academic Science* (Apeiron: Montreal, 1998), 259.

108 Shapin, “Science and the modern world,” 442,443.

Chapter 6

Science – to know.

Times change and so do the prevailing philosophies. We have witnessed significant changes through the last fifty years in our ways of thinking. Gone are the moral standards and absolute values of old. In their place are the relative and consensual mores that seem right for today. However fashions change and it won't be long before what is acceptable today is considered unforgivable in the future. Despite all of these changes, we still cannot escape science in the modern age. It would appear to be the “go-to” subject for “knowing.” When there is a serious problem that governments must deal with, often they refer to getting the “science” right before taking action. Having considered the status, influence and history of science in the last chapter, we must now attend to describing exactly what we mean by the term “science” and what the important components of this are.

Definitions.

I wonder what images are conjured up in your mind when you hear the word “science”? Perhaps you recall a particular episode of one of David Attenborough's great programmes on some aspect of natural history? Or maybe, if you are older, you remember the programme “Tomorrow's World”? Perhaps it is memories of school science classes or maybe it is just an image of men in white coats? What do scientists do, how should their profession be viewed, and what place should they and their occupation have in our lives?

The word “science” is derived from the Latin word “scientia” which is usually translated as “knowledge.” Thus science concerns *what is known*, and this thought leads us immediately into two realms, the realm of reality (the “known”), and the realm of consciousness (the “knower”). Consequently all of us will thus have an interest in science since we are all (I hope) conscious inhabitants of this world! We can split reality up into two main *things*, namely, objects and events about which we can describe “facts” or “data.” These last two words are very interesting, and it turns out that they have derivations that imply the *given-ness* of existence. Arnold Toynbee, an historian, defines these words as follows:

“Facts are, in truth, exactly what is meant by the Latin word **facta** from which the English word is derived. They are “things that have been made” – that is to say “fictitious” things rather than “factual” things – and this truth about them cannot be evaded by calling them “data” (“gifts”) instead. Gifts imply the existence of a giver, as inescapably as manufactures imply the existence of a maker.”¹⁰⁹

A “fact” then, is something that has been made, and “data” are simply gifts. Thus just in our initial consideration of the basic definitions connected with science, we have come to the realisation that the universe is something given to us and it is that which has been made. Thus all of us, whether we like it or not, have to take for granted that reality exists.

However, if we want to prove that things are real, that the keyboard I am using to write with at this moment, for example, is actually a real thing, then we will run into problems. Even if we were to spend our entire lives seeking for the proof that something is real, we would never find it. To prove that “reality” is *real* and that existence is not just an illusion or a dream is impossible. We would all fail in this pursuit. This is because we have no means by which to step outside of reality and communicate perfectly and objectively the nature of that reality to another distinct entity. Reality must be accepted by faith. Indeed, all of us start by believing that we are real, and that “things” in general are “real” things. We start then with an assumption, or a pre-supposition. It is the assumption of “common sense” something that we all experience. Reality is impossible to prove, but we all believe that it exists. Our common sense tells us that we must accept that there is a real universe within which we live and move and exist. We all experience this reality, and our agreement on things (like the nature of keyboards – that they have keys set out in a set pattern and are used to form documents) satisfies us so that we can accept and take for granted that there is a real existence of “things,” that we are all a part of. The universe simply exists, and we can demonstrate no proof, or even disproof for that matter, of its existence. We must simply believe that existence or reality exists! The facts of reality and the data of existence are given.

These thoughts may lend a certain credence to the notion of science promoted by T. H. Huxley, who considered that the scientist should:

“.... sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every pre-conceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses Nature leads....”¹¹⁰

The famous scientist Isaac Newton also held a similar view. Werner Heisenberg has quoted him as

109 Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The New One Volume Edition Illustrated* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 486.

110 T. H. Huxley as quoted by R. A. Gregory, *Discover: Or the Spirit and Service of Science* (MacMillan and Co., 1916) 45. See also T. Hawthorne, *Windows on Science and Faith* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), 15.

having said:

“I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of undiscovered truth lay all undiscovered before me.”¹¹¹

Amazingly, these views of science are still widely held today! The facts or truths of “nature” are simply considered as pebbles, or shells, that can be picked up from the beach of existence and analysed by anyone with a care to do so. It is assumed that all we have to do is to receive the “gifts” of existence and unwrap them. Knowledge will be the sure result. Others have viewed science in terms of “reading the book of nature,” or of “lifting the veil from the secrets of nature” – notions that also imply that nature delivers facts in objective packets. Although we may believe that reality exists, it does not provide us with objective facts. To sum up, then, all facts are accepted through belief. As James E. Nelson put it:

“... everything we call “factual” “truthful” or “proven” has its foundation in unproven belief. We call these presuppositions.”¹¹²

But we are not really satisfied as humans with merely describing what is and can be observed. We need to go further. By nature, all of us try and make connections between things we observe. Coming to some kind of understanding concerning events or assigning significance and meaning to objects is part and parcel of what it means to be a human being. In short we devise a scheme or narrative which connects and makes sense of all the information we have at our disposal.

Scientists have given this idea of composing a narrative or story another fancy name, namely, “theory” from the Greek word “theoreo” which means to perceive or behold indicating a coherent understanding of phenomena. Of course modern scientists have gone on to invest much more into their understanding of theory. However it is important to see that the whole edifice of modern science is nothing more nor less than taking observations and making them fit into some form of coherent story. We will consider this aspect of science in chapter 7. Going on from understanding leads us to the idea of making use of what we have learned. Technology is the application of knowledge understood in certain ways. In a human sense we talk of wisdom or the right use of knowledge gained.

111 Werner Heisenberg, *The Physicist's Conception of Nature* (London: Hutchison Scientific and Technical, 1958), 9. See also: Gale Christianson, *In the Presence of the Creator* (The Free Press (MacMillan, 1984), 574.

112 James E. Nelson, “Reason/Faith.” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*. Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation. Volume 42. Number 4. 1990. 250-252.

Reality, (the “known”).

We sometimes hear talk of science as a “body of knowledge.” Take for example the accumulated facts that under-gird any major discipline, those things you must know in order to progress in expertise. For example, an electronics engineer must have knowledge of circuits, circuit symbols, the rules of electricity and so on. These constitute the basic information of which the individual elements in the world of observable events and objects (facts and data) are the ground or foundation. For example, a filament light bulb connected by means of some copper wire to a 1.5V battery in a closed circuit will glow with a dim light. This sentence is made up of a number of pieces of data or facts. But the electronics engineer will not stop here. He will want to understand this connection between the different components. So he goes on to seek some form of explanation for these observations. This leads down the track of delving deeply into what we mean by each component in the circuit. What really is going on in the copper wire, the battery and the filament? Such is the nature of enquiry. But there is something else which we must consider. It is one thing to take the individual components of the circuit and break each down further to analyse them to see what is going on but is there more to all of this? From the human perspective we receive information from this circuit arrangement via the five senses. For any set of observations, what we receive comes via these five portals. We see the colour of the wire, feel its hardness, detect the smell and taste associated with it (if there is any) and hear the sounds emitted (if any).

How amazing that we can detect the observable and make some sense of it all! In our example of the circuit we know, for example, that for the bulb to light we must have a “closed” circuit, the filament must be unbroken, and the battery must be new or not used much. How is this basic understanding possible? Why, in fact, are there “given” data and “observable” facts? The fact that we can describe things and communicate these to others with some degree of agreement gives us cause to think that we are not individuals isolated from one another in a realm of disconnected knowing. We are not solipsists – holding that we can only be really sure of our own selves. However this does not satisfy. We must continue to ask, why are there facts of which we can be cognizant? The Christian has a wholly satisfactory answer which the atheist (or humanist) cannot really refute nor attain to. The only credible answer to this question is that God, the Creator, has made us in such a way that we can experience this world and make basic sense of what we observe. Thus it is because God created us to be his people in a creation made for our habitation, that we can accept and recognise the facts and data all around.

Difficulties arise when we consider deeper meanings and explanations. The facts and data of reality, whilst being part of the universal reality the observer also inhabits, are external to the

observer and they cannot be perceived without some connection with theoretical understanding. Take for example the reading of a voltmeter across some part of a circuit. The reading on the meter, say 1.5V, is not actually a raw piece of data but a measurement drawn from the motion of a needle across a dial or the display of certain characters on a screen derived from an understanding of how circuits work, the concept of voltage and so on. Or, to take another example, consider the finding of a piece of pottery discovered in a burial mound in Palestine at a certain depth and associated with other objects. The mere description of the find with photographs and notes are not information without some bias of the one describing them. None of these seemingly raw pieces of data are given independent of our understanding of things. Nevertheless whatever caused the dial on the voltmeter to move to the reading of 1.5V, or the act of uncovering the piece of pottery from the mound, both of these events must be taken as pieces of knowledge. The data and facts of reality whilst “given” are never perceived by us without some “understanding” or theoretical presuppositions. So whilst reality is a given, our perception of that reality is modified by our understanding of it.

The universe exists. We can observe it. We can communicate at basic levels to one another about what we observe in common. All of this is only explainable by understanding that God has created us in his image. But we run into problems when we try and make deeper sense of things using mental constructs and theories. However there is one factor we have overlooked in our deliberations thus far. Is this reality that we observe and detect by our five senses all there is? We can only see, hear, taste, touch, and smell reality around us. What if there were things or events for which we have no sense detectors?

Reality sends out information about itself such as colour, sound, smell and so on. This information can be both passive and active in nature. Some of this information is in a form that we can receive (via the 5 senses – sound, taste, light, smell, heat). Other information sent out cannot be detected by us. This is both because our receptors are too insensitive, and also because we do not have the right type of receptors (receivers) to pick up such information. We cannot limit creation to sending out only that information for which we have receptors. Indeed we must assert that in fact creation is composed of structures and information for which either our receptors are inadequate, or for which we have no apparatus to receive it. I can see no objections to this line of thought. If we assume that reality only consists of that for which we have the apparatus to receive it we are making an assumption that we cannot justify. As Christians we can say why it is that we can understand reality to a degree, because of God's purpose in creation. However to claim that such information we receive is all there is, is a claim to omniscience. In order for us to make such a claim we need a universal knowledge we don't possess.

Taking a very different perspective on this subject we note that the facts and data we receive are not only real, but they are also *true*. Now scientists are fond of claiming the title “realists” in their work. They really believe that what they are actually studying and uncovering is a “reality” which is “out there.”¹¹³ The connection between what is given (the facts and data) and what is presented as reality is not exact. Try telling a friend about something you observed and you will know what I mean. We often say things like “you had to experience it” or “its better felt than tell't.” But no one really questions whether things really and faithfully observed are true. When a scientist reports the reading of 1.5V we accept this as “true.” Why is this? Why, for example, are we so angry when a scientist's findings are found to be false? Why do we care so much that the data is “true” and faithful? Knowledge thus has this quality of truth. If we know something and later found that it is false and untrue then it loses that quality of being knowledge. Again the Christian alone has the grounds for this intuition. Christ himself claimed that he was “*the truth*” and that what God has spoken was “*the truth*.”¹¹⁴ This quality derives from the very nature of God who cannot lie.¹¹⁵ Thus God who created all things and placed us within his creation for our dwelling has made it so that what we receive, the data and facts, are both knowable and true. What else would a God who cannot lie do? Atheism and other human systems of thought have no grounds for believing that what we receive and detect is what we may expect (i.e. knowable), nor do they have reason to believe that what we know is in fact true. If there is nothing to give you confidence that what you observe is in fact what is real, why do people (and scientists in particular) continue to believe that what they observe and study is in fact true? Well the only answer to this is again the fact that it is God who is Creator. He made all of us, irrespective of our belief system, upbringing and environment, in his image. Consequently we have in-built knowledge and an in-built capacity for recognising and receiving reality as truth. What then about the conflicts between science and the Bible? We will come to these thoughts in more detail later. For now we must recognise that whilst our image-bearing created nature means that we connect directly with creation and accept the world around us as being truly there, there are some obstacles and barriers. One of these is an in-built limitation to knowing. Another concerns our enmity against God consequent on the fall.

It will be apparent by now that the reality that is composed of data and facts is that which is “given.” Consequently, we need to consider the nature of reality, how it is as it is and how it has come to be. At this point we run up against a difficulty. Modern culture is satisfied with saying that

113 Arthur Peacocke, *Intimations of Reality: Critical Realism in Science and Religion* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 17,18,21,22,25; Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality*, 41,42; Alister McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Volume 2: Reality* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 123.

114 John 7:28; 14:6; 16:13; 17:17.

115 Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18.

everything comes from nothing by a process called “evolution” (from nothing to “Big Bang,” to stars, to earth history, to life on earth, and thence through natural selection to the flora and fauna we have today). The Christian world view is very different. In the beginning God created all things. Creation was of things which previously were simply not. Before time and creation there was God. Creation once made is continually sustained by God but has also suffered a “fall” on account of man's sin and rebellion. These two alternatives are not in agreement and do not lead us down the same paths when it comes to understanding things. In short our understanding of the nature of science, its interaction with Scripture, its place in modern life and so on, depends ultimately on our doctrine and teaching concerning creation. Do we think of all that is all around us as “creation” as we described above? Or do we rather picture reality as “nature,” as that which has developed with a history that can only be described by the laws of science or nature? Our prior concept of reality will colour and govern our grasp of it.

Nature or creation?

Our consideration of a basic definition of “science” has lead us into the two realms of man (individual conscious persons) and the universe (reality composed of facts and data). Rene Descartes split reality up into these two realms – *res cogitans* (the realm of the mind) and *res extensa* (the realm of things in space), but ever since Gilbert Ryle consigned the Cartesian concept of the mind to being merely a “ghost in the machine” materialistic views have predominated.¹¹⁶ To be sure mental states are described by researchers but these amount to nothing more than elaborate descriptions of “mind” from a materialist perspective. Of course Descartes view was not original because Scripture declares that mankind is physical (“*dust of the ground*”) and spiritual (“*breath of life*”) so the dualism *a la Descartes* lives on in spite of the modern obsession with a reductionistic materialism.¹¹⁷

The realm of physical existence of which modern science speaks, is a poor approximation to what is really around us. “Nature” is a bad name for this. It rather gives the idea that what exists in the universe is autonomous and independent. In scientific terms the only thing “governing” the universe is the laws of science. However such a designation was not accepted without some objectors along the way. To his credit Alister McGrath has made some objections to the notion in recent times.¹¹⁸ However, the seventeenth century founder of chemistry, Robert Boyle, wrote a book on the subject entitled *A Free Inquiry Into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature* and published in

116 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

117 See Genesis 2:7.

118 McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Volume 1*, 3,4,82,87,88,113.

1686. Here is how he writes concerning the newly developed idea of “nature”:

“I have sometimes seriously question'd, whether the vulgar notion of nature, has not been both injurious to the glory God, and a great impediment to the solid and useful discovery of his works. For, it seems to detract from the honour of the great author and governor of the world; that men should ascribe most of the admirable things to be met with in it, not to him, but to a certain nature, which themselves do not well know what to make of. 'Tis true, many confess that this nature is a thing of his establishing, and subordinate to him; but tho' they own it, when they are ask'd the question, yet there are several, who seldom or never regarded any higher cause. And whoever takes notice of their way of ascribing things to nature, may easily discern, that, whatever their words sometimes are, the agency of God is little in their thoughts. Doubtless, it shews the wisdom of God, to have so fram'd things at first, that there can seldom or never need any extraordinary interposition of his power; or the employing, from time to time, an intelligent overseer, to regulate, assist, and control the motions of matter.”¹¹⁹

Boyle's point here is that in seeking to describe the “natural” order of things in physical terms we run into the danger of separating it all from the God who not only created it in the beginning, but who also actively sustains and upholds it now and throughout time. Having a separate entity called “nature” rather runs the risk of detachment from the Creator. It is pertinent here to remind ourselves that God forbids any representation in the physical world of his nature. Such a process of depicting deity leads to idolatry. Since God has created all things we run a similar risk of idolatry by detaching what he has made from his person, because we behold such things as being existent in themselves. Only God is self-existent. All other things are dependent or contingent.

Notice also that such a concept of “nature” leads to poor understanding of God's works. In other words, that which science seeks to do – to understand reality – fails because of this detachment from the originator of these works. In modern times we have become so used to thinking that “things” are isolated, separate, and even autonomous that a return to the understanding that all things have the origin and focus in God is a difficult thing to grasp. Boyle goes on to show that the concept of “nature” leads not only to idolatrous worship of nature as a goddess, but also the removal of the clear evidence in creation of a deity who provides:

“Since many naturalists are christians, it may not be improper to add, that another thing, for which I dislike the vulgar notion of nature, is, its being dangerous to religion, in general, and, consequently, to the christian.

For this erroneous conceit defrauds the true God of several acts of veneration and gratitude, that are due to him from men, upon account of the visible world; and diverts them

119 Philosophical Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle Esq edited by Peter Shaw London 1725. Pages 1, 2. Cited: 4th March. Online at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/philosophicalwo01boylgoog#page/n128/mode/2up/search/%22vulgar+notion+of+nature%22>.

to that imaginary being they call nature, which has no title to them: for, whilst nature is suppos'd to be an intelligent thing, that wisely and kindly administers all that is done among bodies 'tis no wonder that the generality of men should admire and praise her, for the wonderful and useful things they observe in the world. And, in effect, tho' nature, in our perfect sense of the word, be never found in the sacred writings; yet, nothing is more frequently met with in the books of philosophers, than nature and her effects. And, whatever has been said by some, in excuse of Aristotle, yet the generality of the Peripatetics, from whom the vulgar notion of nature is chiefly received, make the world eternal; and refer all the transactions among the bodies it contains, to what they call nature. Whence 'twill not be difficult to perceive, that, if they do not quite exclude God; yet, as they leave him no interest in the first formation of the universe, so they leave him but very little in the administration of the parts it consists of, especially in such as are sublunary. Instead, therefore, of the true God, they have substituted, for us, a kind of goddess, with the title of nature; upon whom they look as the immediate agent and director in all excellent productions, and ascribe to her the praise and glory of them.

This great error, in a point of such importance, seems to undermine the foundation of religion. For since the most general and effectual argument which has persuaded men that there is a God and a providence, is afforded by the consideration of the visible world, wherein so many operations and other things are observ'd to be managed with such conduct and benignity, as cannot justly be ascribed but to the wisdom and goodness of a deity; they who ascribe these things to mere nature, much weaken the force of the agreement, if they do not quite take away the necessity of acknowledging a deity; by shewing, that, without having recourse to him, an account may be given of the administration of the world, and of what is perform'd among things corporeal. Indeed, when men are put upon considering the matter, and press'd to declare themselves more clearly; they fear to affirm, that God, and nature are the same thing, and will confess, that she is but his viceregent; yet, in practice, their admiration, and their praises, are frequently given to nature, not to God.

In short, as nature is so frequently recurr'd to, and so magnify'd in the writings of philosophers, that the excessive veneration men have for her, caused some (as the Epicureans) to deny God; so, 'tis to be fear'd that it makes many forget him. And, perhaps, a suspicious person would add, that, were it not for other principles, this erroneous idea of nature would, too often, have a strong tendency to shake, if not to subvert, the very foundations of all religion; by misleading those who are inclined to be its enemies, from overlooking the necessity of a God, to the denial of his existence.”¹²⁰

In stark contrast, Boyle advocates that we accept God not only as Creator, but equally as Sustainer. He alone gives us the universe. It is all from his hand. We live and we move and we have our being in the creation which is from his hand and under his continued and perpetual divine control and governance. Because of his great love, perfection and kindness, the world we inhabit is not subject to violent and unpredictable change. Gravity – the human description of the observation that all things fall – is constant (or nearly so) on the earth's surface so we can walk and build and carry out day-to-day activities without worrying that some day we will all “fall” in a different way. It is because God is so faithful that seed-time and harvest, gravity and the process of digestion, light and

120 Philosophical Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle Esq edited by Peter Shaw London 1725. Pages 13, 14. Cited: 4th March. Online at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/philosophicalwo01boylgoog#page/n128/mode/2up/search/%22vulgar+notion+of+nature%22>.

heat, and many other things besides all operate in regular and predictable ways. Further, it is also because God is so faithful and loving that from time to time these regularities are suspended for a greater purpose. No one likes to think of God as a magician who deceives us. That is a false and ugly picture. However the God who created all things and who sustains them by means of his regular governance is free also to operate works according to his perfect purposes. In the natural (God-governed) way of things human bodies decay and eventually die. We shall consider the reason for this in the third part of the book. But for a greater purpose God raised some from the dead. Science may object that such things are “not natural” or contrary to “scientific law” but such objections stem from an insistence that only the regular laws of science (or laws of “nature”) are true and acceptable. In short the god of science is nature, the natural order.

The link between the “known” and the “knower.”

Having looked at reality as something to be partially known, we must consider how the data and facts of reality become knowledge for the knower. To do this it will be necessary to consider that part of reality which makes this connecting link between known and knower, or, in other words, the means by which the “known” becomes part of the “knower.” Here we consider the information that actually makes it through the portals to the centre of our being. Data, facts, even truth exists. We have not proved this, and neither can we (or anyone else for that matter). What we have said thus far is that everyone assumes that data or gifts are existent. Knowledge is not simply facts, although it starts with facts, but it is the receiving of these facts or gifts into the mind of the knower. Knowledge is the possession within the mind of something gained by experience. It is the translation of a fact or datum of experience into the knower's mind. As such it must travel exclusively by way of the five senses possessed by the human inquirer. In making this journey, the “facts” of reality become the “observations” of reality. In using the term “observations” here, I am simply drawing attention to the senses, so that the original “fact” is now limited by the observing power of the knower. As people we can receive sense impressions via the five senses. These five senses split up the “fact” or “gift” into five parts, the information from which is received in the brain. The information we receive can be enhanced (to some degree) by probes we have invented (e.g. x-ray crystallography, microscopes, radio telescopes etc.). Information from a reality source is thus “selected” by our sensory apparatus, and is therefore by nature not comprehensive. Furthermore, as it is received into us, it is “filtered” or passed through our world view “screen” before it reaches our cognitive faculty (mind/spirit). We then try and remodel or remake what we have perceived into a comprehensive picture of reality.

We must also consider that what we do when we process sense data is in fact “analysis.” No one receives a part of reality wholemeal or as a single piece. We get sounds, sights, smells, feelings, and tastes from an event and these are taken in by us through different portals before being assembled into a composite picture in our minds. Hence, as Hendry has observed, “the principal activity of knowledge is analysis, taking things apart.”¹²¹ Hendry also suggests that: “analysis is an activity of the intelligence, which seeks to know things by breaking them up into their component parts.”¹²² Such considerations give the reason for the division and sub-division of science into the various specialisms, (hence chemistry is one of the physical sciences, and this can be divided into organic and inorganic, which can be further sub-divided and so on).

Now science has sought to push the frontiers of knowledge further and further by the use of probes. Thus science is merely an extension of man's use of his five senses to make *sense* of the world around him. Science is then founded upon the sense experience of man. Now science's probes and machines analyse reality to greater degrees of sensitivity but they are of the same basic type as man's five senses.¹²³ This may be obvious to you because man invents things which he can use, not things for which he has no sense! We are all familiar with the visible light part of the electromagnetic spectrum because we have eyes (in particular rod and cone cells in the retina at the backs of our eyes) which can process visible light information, but scientists have discovered that there are a whole range of electromagnetic waves which we can only detect indirectly. Thus x-rays cannot be viewed by us but they can be “made visible” by a second process, for example, by affecting a photosensitive sheet or device. Radio waves equally pass us by but we can receive them and process them into audible and visual information by electronic gadgetry. In extending the senses of man by use of machines a sophisticated sequence of assumptions is required. These assumptions will severely limit the applicability of the information in terms of their “truth” content. We will have less confidence in the truth content of information gained from scientific probes than on data gained directly through our own senses.

We have already mentioned the great conundrum as to whether there are any things existent for which man has no sensory apparatus. Why should we imagine that our five senses can deal with all existent things? On top of this, our five senses get only a small flavour of part of an existent thing, and not the whole of that thing. There may also be many types of information given out by reality that we have no means of detecting, and much information from reality which is impossible to detect by any means. It is of course impossible to know how many kinds of information may be

121 George S. Hendry, *Theology of Nature* (Philadelphia Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1980), 42. See also: B. H. Streeter, *Reality: A new correlation of science and religion* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1927), 80.

122 Hendry, *Theology of Nature*, 40.

123 Probes include: telescopes, microscopes, X-ray, HRTEM, CAT, PET, MRI.

sent by reality for which we have no receptors, or indeed whether there are in fact any types of information of this kind at all. However we cannot make the assumption that there is none of this type of information emitted by reality. To make the assertion, as many modern-day scientists do, that all reality is receivable by us is tantamount to claiming omniscience. It is to be remembered that many science-fiction works rely on such extra-human senses for their appeal.

One further thought which requires our attention, it that research has shown that the sense organs of different people are stimulated differently by the same data. On top of this, we have no way of verifying whether what we actually “see” is identical to what everyone else observes. So although our senses may be sufficient for our needs, they are not sufficient to discover the complete picture of reality. To repeat the point made earlier, there may well be existent things for which our bodies have no apparatus to deal with. We are limited beings with limited capabilities not unlimited beings with infinite capabilities.

The "knower" – man and his mind.

The fact that reality is knowable to a degree by anyone with any belief is remarkable. It owes everything to God who created all things, man included. For an atheist the fact that reality is knowable is a puzzle. Why is this so? Einstein once stated that: “the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.”¹²⁴ But to the Christian this state of affairs derives directly from God our Creator. He has not only given us a place to inhabit and dwell that we can know and experience, but further he has given us truly to “know” in the sense of understand the world around us. But note here that we must observe that the understanding of men is not the same as that given, for example, by Scripture. This is because of man's enmity against God as well as due to in-built limitations. We can know but, as Paul states, only “*in part*.”¹²⁵ It will be pertinent at this point to consider why this is so. To do this we need to understand something concerning the nature of man. Whom and what is he? Here we come to a great difficulty. Is man the product of evolution by natural selection and so material only? Or is he the product of creation by God created in his image? There are some things concerning man which all will accept. Our physical make-up which undoubtedly bears similarities to other animate creatures and which is derived from ordinary matter (which we have labelled, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and so on) is one feature we all agree on. But what about the mind or the spirit? The Bible has quite a number of statements concerning man which modern thinking does not seem to acknowledge. For most modern thinkers problems arising

124 Albert Einstein, "Physics and Reality," in *Ideas and Opinions*, (Translated by Sonja Bargmann. New York: Bonanza, 1954), 292.

125 1Corinthians 13:12.

in life have a physical cause, so that depression, for example, is most commonly treated with drugs. I am well aware that there are behavioural and cognitive therapies offered but these all seem to assume a physical origin or base for faults and fractures of the mind. The Bible is alone in declaring that man is more than just a physical entity sharing similar structures to animals. Man alone is created in the image of God and has a *spiritual* component which the animals do not share.¹²⁶ We shall return to this aspect of mind or spirit in chapter 7 when we come to look at theory. For now we must make it clear that man is created with certain definite capacities (in-built components or faculties) and also with distinct requirements (these faculties must be used correctly). For one thing man is made to be in right relationship with God. Everyone has a relationship with God – either of friendship or of enmity. But since man and woman were made to reflect the nature of the wonderful Trinity, we are therefore meant to be close to God. When this is not the case then something is wrong.

We must also say that man is supposed to have a close link with eternity since God has placed eternity in the heart of man.¹²⁷ It teaches us that we are not just physical beings. Further, we are created to be in relationships with other humans and also with creation as a careful steward. When these relationships are “out of sorts” then we will not be right ourselves. Then also we find that when the Lord created us he did not just create us generically as a whole species, for the Scriptures teach us that we are created as individuals: “*He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.*”¹²⁸ We are unlike a range or make of car, for although we share identical body plans, we are all created differently in some respects. Consequently we cannot fulfil our lives properly without God's fatherly lordship over us. We have the capacity to love and the ability to know, but if we are out of place or *out of kilter* these capacities will be abused and will yield false results.

The "knower" – man and his world view.

Now apart from the limitation of the knower's probes in knowing a fact, (limited by his five senses and his extended inventions), the knower also brings into the situation his own interpretation. As H. K. Schilling writing on the relationship between science and religion has observed:

“.... significant statements of fact always have an interpretive component Always a fact, or a group of them, is viewed through an interpretive screen...”¹²⁹

126 Genesis 1:20-25, 26f; 2:7.

127 Ecclesiastes 3:11.

128 Psalm 33:15.

129 Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 8.

“All facts are in part interpretation. None is a bare, raw datum.”¹³⁰

A. D. Ritchie (an historian of science) has also made the same assessment. He commented that:

“There are no hard, atomic, pure or mere facts. Everything factual is such because it belongs to a system bound together by theory.”¹³¹

Thus the experience of reality is, on being received into the mind, filtered through an in-built interpretive screen, or world view, (which may be capable of change). This world view will “colour” everything the “knower” observes. The observations he makes do, to be sure, contain something of the original nature of the data of reality, but they are significantly altered by his interpretation, his world view, his presuppositions or beliefs.

Up to this point we have been talking in a general sense about knowing, although most of what we have said would probably be assumed to be referring to only one aspect of things known, namely, objects. In general, however, things “known” can either be events or objects. In seeking to understand science from a Christian point of view. B. Ramm used the following definition:

“We, therefore, in speaking of science mean to emphasise that body of knowledge dealing with the *structure* and *causal* or *functional relationships* of the *physical* and *space-time* aspects of the universe.”¹³²

According to this definition, then, science is knowledge of the structure of the physical universe (the nature of things within it) and knowledge of the causal or functional relationships and space-time aspects of the physical universe (the events within it). So that the facts of reality, those things that are given in human experience, are dissected by us into objects and events. All that we have said about knowing something, having to pass via the senses into the mind, applies equally well to both objects and events. But for this, the knowing of an event might well have appeared to be knowledge of an absolute type, if we considered, for example, the dropping of an object from a table. However it must be remembered that events are never observed or reported in the same way by different observers. No two people can occupy the same point in space at the same time, so that their view of a particular event will always be different.¹³³ Each person produces a relative perspective, an account differing by their differing positions. In this way, no one's knowledge of an event can be considered to be absolute. On top of this, of course, the knowledge of an event is also

130 Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 127.

131 A. D. Ritchie, *Studies in the History and Methods of the Sciences* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), 6.

132 Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 34.

133 This is true for objects too but the object occupies the same space for all observers, each of whom occupies a distinct and separate space.

limited by man's inner interpretive screen, and his ability to observe using five distinct senses. Who is to say, for example, whether an event may or may not produce data that cannot be sensed by man using his five senses? It was Albert Einstein who rightly said in regard to knowledge of the nature of things:

“We know nothing about it all. Our knowledge is but the knowledge of school children We shall know a little more than we do now. But the real nature of things – that we shall never know, never.”¹³⁴

Having said all of this, however, the knowledge of reality that we do receive via our five senses, and filtered through our interpretive screens, is, of course, valid knowledge. We can only assert this because of the nature of God and of His revelation. He has made all things and He has given this world for our habitation. It follows that we were made to comprehend things, for we are made in the image of Him who communicates and creates. Without this revelatory knowledge we have no assurance that what we receive and take in is valid or not. What we need to remember is that our knowledge gained simply via the senses is *extremely* limited and certainly not absolute. That it is valid we must accept but that it is comprehensive we can never believe. Communication with other people who can think and sense just like us leads to the development of, if not certainties, things we feel comfortable in asserting to be true. The fact that reality can be known is not something the humanist can be sure of from his presuppositions. However, from the Christian point of view, reality is intelligible because it has been created by the One God who is rational and ordered. But the validity of a person's knowledge hangs partly on the given-ness of the universe and partly on his world view or interpretive screen. As Christians we accept that God does not lie to us when we observe reality but in part it depends on how we approach and view the things we observe. The Lord repeatedly called out these words *"he who has ears to hear let him hear"* indicating that the reception of his audible words was not enough.¹³⁵ People had to really understand what was being said with the right heart and attitude. Such requirement to have the right interpretive screen or world view is necessary whether we hear a sermon or whether we look at a rock formation.

Knowledge in relation to God.

Knowledge constitutes that which people have within themselves that corresponds truly to that which is external to them. True knowledge consists of that which is not just received from

134 Albert Einstein. Quoted by Chaim Tschernowitz in a conversation concerning the ultimate nature of reality. In Readers Digest. August 1972, p28. Quote also taken from Gordon Clark, "The Limits and Uses of Science." In "Horizons of Science. Christian Scholars Speak out." (Edited by C. F. Henry; Harper and Row, 1977), 268.

135 Matthew 11:15; 13:9; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8; 14:35.

external reality but that which is *correctly* apprehended or understood. Our knowledge is therefore dependent on creation and how it operates, and also upon our minds and thoughts and how we interpret the world around us. These two factors, creation and our minds, are the twin poles of reference for all discussion concerning knowledge and therefore “science.” At the heart of all debate it really does matter what you think concerning creation, and in particular the creation and make-up of man.

Considering the opening sentence of this section, one aspect of knowledge that is quite missing from modern society is the knowledge of God. Of course even though people do not acknowledge God, nevertheless there is such knowledge to be had.¹³⁶ For some reason, which we shall consider in part 3, people cannot see or hear or observe the very God who is everywhere at once. The Bible is quite open about what constitutes true knowledge. It covers all that we have been saying concerning that which our senses detect, but it also covers much more. Startling as it may seem the very first route into knowledge is the fear of God.¹³⁷ Without a fear of God, that is a reverence for Him, we cannot hope to know anything correctly at all. The Bible gives us a number of principles which are necessary when talking of knowledge.

In the first place knowledge is expected of us and indeed is something we cannot avoid simply because we have continual experience of the world around us. But this situation we find ourselves in has arisen only because God is Creator. He is the initiator of knowledge. He wants us to know so that our knowledge is a gift from God and not something we have made up for ourselves. Of course we are talking here only of the facts of reality all around us. How we interpret these is dependent on how we think. Central to all knowledge must be the source of all knowledge, namely Christ. Christ alone is the one who holds the key and treasure of all knowledge.¹³⁸ But this focus on Christ who is God in the flesh leads us to realise that our knowledge is limited. We have seen this by considering the nature of reality and our capacity to interact with it. But we note this also with reference to the God who knows all things. Our knowledge is partial – severely so – because of the way we have been made. Knowledge initiated by man – discovery – always ends in failure and disaster, because it is not originated from God and does not have God as centrepiece. The acquisition of knowledge is conditional. For true knowledge to be acquired the person needs to be able to see and hear. Without spiritual faculties there can be no knowledge of spiritual realities. In such a case of ignorance where spiritual faculties are lacking, the knowledge a person does have, (limited to physical reality) is, in effect, darkness. Unless a person has a right relationship to God,

136 Romans 1:18f.

137 Proverbs 1:7.

138 Colossians 2:3.

and is made new by the Holy Spirit, there can be no real knowledge.

The Bible leads us to understand that there are three ways of knowing. The first of these is by means of our physical senses. But these must be tuned in a spiritual manner. Two people who observe the same event, say the crucifixion, do not necessarily see the same things. For example, one of the thieves crucified with Jesus sought forgiveness and a place in paradise and was given this, whilst the other continued in his mockery of the Lord.¹³⁹ They both observed the physical events of Christ's suffering, but only one saw the reality of it all. Sense-based knowledge comes to us through seven different means. First we have the work of God in creation. Creation is God's doing and through it we receive all the sense-based information that God has given. Second we have the work of God in providence. The stream of events recorded through time are all from the hand of God. This means that history is an important aspect of knowledge the Christian must respect. Third we have the work of God in miracles. Those extraordinary or supernatural events which override God's normal work in sustaining the created order are deemed miraculous. The Christian faith is based on several key miracles which form an essential foundation to knowledge. Fourth we have object lessons, or life experiences. The Scriptures often use not just statements and instructions, but the examples of lives well lived or not well lived. Fifth we have knowledge acquired through testimony. This highlights the great need of fellowship. We can see this in the scientific community where collaboration is key. Without the testimony of others our knowledge is really non-existent. Sixth we have knowledge by love. This is not usually associated with knowledge but a moments thought will serve to show the indispensability of this attribute. Where there is love – true love mind you not mere sentimentality – there exists real knowledge. Fear causes distrust and scepticism. Love encourages trust and acceptance. With love comes truth, for love cannot accept or recognise error or lies. How vital is this for knowledge! Seventhly, and finally, we have special revelation – the Bible. The word and will of God is made known to us by means of revelation from God to us through the written message in Scripture.

Apart from that which we receive via our senses, a second way of knowing comes as a consequence that we have some in-built knowledge. This comes as a result of the fact that God has created us. We have noted already the truth that we have eternity in our constitution.¹⁴⁰ The fact that we are made in the image of God teaches that there are aspects of our make-up which are pre-programmed.¹⁴¹ We also have an in-built knowledge of God's very existence. Then further, we must note that a little child does not need to be taught certain things. It is uncanny how without any

139 Luke 23: 39,40.

140 Ecclesiastes 3:11.

141 Genesis 1:27.

instruction, a child knows how to sin. This appears an in-built thing but it cannot be attributed to God nor to his creation.

Finally and thirdly, as a separate category of how we are to know, we must think of special revelation – the Bible – again. This comes to us through means of sense impressions as we have already noted, but the fact of the matter is that it brings to us things we could never know apart from it. The things it contains are those things which we could never have come to a knowledge of except they be revealed by God. Although we noted that special revelation comes by means of the senses, we must add that unless the Holy Spirit aids a person, the mere receiving of the sense impressions from the Bible (the words read) will mean little.

Chapter 7

Science – to behold.

We have begun to examine the nature of science as knowledge. Now we must home in on the main feature that makes science so appealing, its ability to tell a story that captures the human imagination.

Understanding and theory.

The subject of “understanding” brings us back firmly within the realm of the human subject engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. Science is not simply “knowledge” because knowledge simply exists – if we believe that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the facts of existence (making up knowledge) and existence itself. In talking of understanding, however, we are considering knowledge *within* humankind, and in particular within their minds. Consequently we must consider the mind of man if we want to understand science, thinking and so on. This inevitably poses a great problem. How can we use our minds to investigate our minds? Is such a thing possible? We will come back to consider the “mind” a little later but for now we shall examine a little more closely the who idea of theory.

Once a scientist starts to collect facts (guided by his own ideas, choices, presuppositions and so on), he is not content with simply storing them in his laboratory note book, or arranging them just as he finds them. Instead he starts to classify them into some sort of intelligible order. It is all about “making connections,”¹⁴² finding patterns,¹⁴³ or identifying “logical correlations”¹⁴⁴ between the variety of gathered facts and data. This is an operation of the mind. However there is more to a theory than mere pattern recognition. The conceptual story that is used to correlate facts must be something that has the power to satisfy human curiosity. Theories thus tell a story.

There are two illustrations often used to describe how theories are used in science, the

142 Hendry, *Theology of Nature*, 102.

143 Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 42.

144 Ronan, *The Cambridge Illustrated*, 10.

jigsaw puzzle, and the detection of crime. Puzzle pieces are not randomly arranged but assembled according to the picture that is shown on each piece. In the same way the scientist assembles his data according to his theory, although, unlike the puzzle, the picture does not readily emerge from the data and is often very hazy. We may have in our minds at this point a two-dimensional representation of the puzzle. The situation is, of course, far more problematic for reality is three dimensional in space and four dimensional with time added as well. Further we need to realise that far from being objective viewers of this reality, we are in fact part of the jigsaw puzzle itself! The connections between parts of reality are much more complex than in a jigsaw puzzle. Further, removing sections for objective analysis is not really possible because what we are in fact doing is to merely move them from one space to another! This simplistic view of the nature of science is an easy one to grasp initially, but a poor view when analysed to any depth. We can summarise these difficulties with the jigsaw puzzle analogy as follows. To start with we do not have the picture to complete the puzzle, so we must suggest one (a guess). The data we have is often very selective and we don't have all the data anyway. Then we remind ourselves that the picture we are investigating is four dimensional not two dimensional. Finally, to add insult to injury, we ourselves are also a part of the puzzle. Without doubt, though, the greatest problem is the picture we are trying to reconstruct using the data we have collected. It is often assumed that the data will organise itself into the picture, or that by looking carefully at the *pieces* of data the picture will be suggested. This is the type of claim made by Dawkins, for example, when he states that evolution is supported by mountains of evidence.¹⁴⁵ However when it comes to trying to understand observations made or data gathered, what actually happens is that scientists use a pre-constructed picture. Usually they use the currently accepted picture. It is referred to as a paradigm or world-view. More enterprising scientists attempt to construct their own pictures but they often get marginalised or ignored.

In a crime scene, the clues gathered are not classified according to the time they were first found, or by the nature of the policemen that found them, but according to a theory formulated by the detective to explain them. In the same way the scientist uses his theory to make sense of the data he has extracted from his research. Theory thus guides scientific research. It is the scientist's preconceived notion of what he believes is happening in whatever it is that he is studying, that guides his choice of experiment and therefore selection of observations. Observations do, of course, play some part in theory formation independent of the observer but the scientist's own preconceived ideas contribute just as much (if not more) to this process of understanding. Indeed that the scientist's own belief system undeniably enters into his research means that the theories of science (and of man in general for that matter) are heavily dependent on what beliefs are held *before* any

145 Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Bantam Press, 2006), 282.

research is done. The problems with the detection model for science are also numerous. It sits quite well with experimental science which is always an “after the event” analysis, but when historical science (evolution, geology, cosmology) is considered then we run into more serious problems. It is one thing to formulate a theory for experiments which can be repeated, but quite another to do so for events which occurred before we existed.

The nature of theory.

The first attempts at trying to tell a story around a body of data is usually called an “hypothesis,” a word which is derived from the Greek meaning “foundation” or “that which is placed under.”¹⁴⁶ When an hypothesis seems to be successful it takes on the status of a theory. As we have noted elsewhere, our English word “theory” is derived from the Greek verb “thereo”, which means “to behold” or “to perceive.”¹⁴⁷ A theory that has withstood the test of time is sometimes known as a law (the law of gravitation for example) so that there is a progression from hypothesis or first guess, to theory, to law. None of these constitute knowledge of an absolute kind, however, although a law is considered more reliable than a theory or an hypothesis. Many hypotheses are often suggested in the course of research and most never see the light of day, whilst laws are much fewer in number. Thus, there is a progression from the guesswork of an hypothesis to the reliability of a regular law. This is one way of looking at the nature of scientific theory.

How theories themselves are perceived depends on one's world view. Most scientists assume not only that the world of sense impressions is real, but also they believe passionately that their theorising – their mental constructions – is equally realistic.¹⁴⁸ But philosophers and historians of science have identified other ways of viewing theoretical constructs. Barbour, for example, suggests the four ways shown in table 7.1.¹⁴⁹

Barbour's analysis of theory does serve to show two important points. In the first place theories are never generated independently of observation. This is true no matter what view of theory may be held. Even the purest idealist must admit that it is impossible to shut off and shut out all sense impressions. However loudly he may protest he will always start with some observations (however impregnated with theory they may be). There is an interaction between theory and observation that can never be dissected. Observations are never collected without a theory of some

146 Liddell and Scott, “An intermediate Greek-English lexicon.” Founded upon the 7th edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon. (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1889), 842.

147 See page 57. W. E. Vine, “Expository Dictionary of Bible Words.” (Four volumes in one). (Basingstoke, Hants: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981), 114.

148 Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), 171, 172; Anthony O'Hear, “Popper and the Philosophy of Science” *New Scientist* 22 August 1985. 43-45. 45.

149 Barbour, *Issues in Science*, 162.

kind and they always contain a theory element within them. Theories are never made without reference to observation.

Table 7.1: Four ways of viewing theory.

Type of theory	Features/aspects of theory
POSITIVISM [theories as summaries of data]	➤ Theories are labour-saving mental devices for classifying or summarising observations. ➤ Theories do not designate anything capable of direct observation, and are not to be considered real. ➤ Theoretical concepts must be reduced to observables. ➤ Positivism emphasises observation and is also known by the term 'EMPIRICISM'.
INSTRUMENTALISM [theories as useful tools]	➤ Theories are useful for making predictions, to stimulate further research, and for technical control. ➤ Concepts within theories are functionally related to observables, but not necessarily reducible to them. ➤ Theories do not have to be eliminated or reduced to observables (as in positivism) and need not be considered real (as realists believe). ➤ Theories are not isolated from observations but are inventions of the scientist's mind. They are not discoverable. ➤ Instrumentalism tends to make theories arbitrary and is also known as PRAGMATISM.
IDEALISM [theories as mental structures]	➤ Theories are imposed by the mind on the chaos of sense data. ➤ The contribution from the “knower's” mind is greater than in instrumentalism. ➤ Theories can be developed from a priori considerations, with no experimental data. ➤ Theories are not useful fictions, but real, although capable of change and so not absolute. ➤ Idealism neglects observation and emphasises the mental side of science. ➤ The Greeks were idealists and this is also called RATIONALISM.
REALISM [theories as representations of the world]	➤ The real is not the observable only. ➤ Valid concepts are true as well as useful and represent the structure of events in the world. ➤ The object, not the subject, makes the most contribution to knowledge. ➤ Theories are real and 'true' reflecting reality. ➤ Theories are derived from a combination of observations and the power of the human mind. ➤ This view is that held by the SCIENTIFIC community in general.

The two, although separate in nature (observations stem from real existence within reality, theories are only generated in the minds of men), are so co-mingled that human analysis of the situation can never really be achieved. The second important point to note from Barbour's assessment is the diversity of belief amongst philosophers on the nature of scientific theory formation. Science is very difficult to pin down. It seems in fact that despite scientists preference for realism, all four play their part in modern science. It is perhaps understandable that scientists opt for realism. If scientists did not believe that their minds were capable of understanding, and they did not believe that their ideas were true, then they would not bother doing science at all.¹⁵⁰ As Smethurst puts it:

“If we are to study the universe by means of our mind or reason, we must have some degree of faith in our capacity to distinguish truth from error and to make theoretical constructions which bear some measure of relationship to reality. If we thought that our minds were incapable of leading us into reliable knowledge, we should hardly consider it worth while to attempt to get information about the universe by the use of our minds, which is precisely what we do in science.”¹⁵¹

How are theories made?

So much for the nature of theories, but how are they actually generated? Physicist and writer on science and religion H. K. Schilling suggests that the process owes more to an intuitive and creative element in human thinking than to logical processes:

“How then are hypothesis born? It is a complex process that may in any given case involve a large variety of mental processes; guesses and hunches, “cutting and trying”, thinking by analogies, creation of pictures and models, statistical analysis and curve-fitting, closely reasoned criticism, tentative intuitive acceptance or rejection, deductive exploration of possible consequences, comparison with existing explanations, and still others. At every stage the scientist employs reason. But, and this is the point to be emphasised here, there is a creative, imaginative component of the process that is neither determined nor limited by formal logic.”¹⁵²

Schilling mentions the role of guesswork, hunches, mental activity, the use of comparison and analogy, the knower's world-view or interpretive screen, and mathematical techniques, but he stresses and emphasises the importance of the *creative imagination*, rather than formal logic, in the process of theory formation. To make things abundantly clear, Schilling quotes Philip Frank:

“The main activity of science consists in the invention of symbols from which our

150 Arthur F. Smethurst, *Modern Science and Christian Beliefs* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1956), 11,12.

151 Smethurst, *Modern Science*, 11,12.

152 Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 41.

experience can be logically derived. This system is the work of the creative imagination which acts on the basis of our experience. The work of the scientist is probably not fundamentally different from the work of the poet.”¹⁵³

Theory formation is not something generated from the objects under study, it is a product of men's minds – their creative, imaginative minds.¹⁵⁴ There may be truth within the experience, but the theories devised to surround the data are only inventions of men. However much they may accord with apparent observational evidence, theories are constructed and not discovered. Another physicist and writer on science and religion, Ian Barbour, agrees that ideas and concepts do not come out of reality but are in fact “constructed by the scientist *as creative thinker*.”¹⁵⁵ He goes even further to highlight that theory formation includes a “leap of *creative imagination*” since there are “no recipes for making original discoveries.”¹⁵⁶ Thus concepts such as the atom, the electron and other sub-atomic particles are in fact hypothetical models and constructions, not discoveries of parts of reality. There may be truth content in these models and concepts, but they are not real.¹⁵⁷

Surprisingly the initial idea often comes about through a moment of revelation or a flash of inspiration.¹⁵⁸ A number of scientists have confessed to this inspirational origin for ideas. One example is the co-inventor of evolution, Alfred Russel Wallace. It was whilst he was under an attack of Malarial fever that he had his 'great' idea, reporting that: “there suddenly flashed upon me the *idea* of the survival of the fittest.”¹⁵⁹ Schilling concludes:

“There can be little doubt that most of the truly great and revolutionary ideas of science came into being intuitively during periods of revelatory insight, rather than by syllogistic or inductive logic.”¹⁶⁰

The question which arises though is, where do all these *insights* come from? Of course if you take a materialist/humanist position the response to this would be that it is the mind making connections with things previously seen but not yet comprehended. If you take a spiritual view of life then other sources for inspiration come to mind! Whatever the case it becomes of paramount importance to know the state of the scientist making such new discoveries. There are other ways in which it is thought that theories are formed, and Barbour highlights a few of these but the centrality of the

153 Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 42.

154 Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought*, 285,286.

155 Barbour, *Issues in Science*, 183. Emphasis in original.

156 Barbour, *Issues in Science*, 142,143.

157 Barbour, *Issues in Science*, 144,157,171; Streeter, *Reality: A new correlation*, 17.

158 Barbour, *Issues in Science*, 143.

159 Ian T. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men: Darwin and the new world order* (Toronto: TFE Publishing, 1987), 78.

160 Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 42. See also Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and Eastern mysticism* (Fontana Paperbacks – Flamingo, 1983), 39.

imagination in theory formation is stressed over and over again so much that I have pinpointed it here as of singular importance.¹⁶¹

How are theories evaluated?

First, any theory will only be accepted if it agrees with the known observations. However this criterion is not as straightforward as it may seem. A set of observations is capable of being *explained* by an almost infinite number of theoretical constructions.¹⁶² Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous characters Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson express this situation well:

“.... “Give me another theory that would fit the facts.” “I could very easily give you half a dozen” said Holmes. “Here, for example, is a very possible and even probable one. I make you a free present of it””¹⁶³

The fact that a theory fits the observations is not good enough alone, because an infinite number of theories are possible for any selected amount of data.

A second criterion for evaluation is simplicity. Humans prefer simple solutions. Furthermore simple solutions are invariably seen as true ones by scientists. Those theories that require the fewest independent assumptions are assumed to be better than those that need auxiliary hypotheses. Simple solutions, however, are not necessarily true ones, they just appeal to humans. It may be that a “Big Bang” is much simpler in some ways than the idea that God created all things. However the more complex explanation involving God as Creator is far more satisfying and comprehensive for it includes, amongst many other things, the idea of personality.

The criterion of consistency is also used to test a theory. If a theory is saying two things that contradict one another, it should be a theory that ought not to survive. At least we should be able to say that it is not true, for, after all, how can we hold two conflicting opinions? One theory that ignores this requirement of internal consistency is the theory of light. Light is described sometimes as particulate (i.e. being made of small particles), and at other times in terms of waves. Both cannot be true you would imagine, but today both are accepted as reflecting the true situation. Some have even suggested that light is actually particulate waves (or packets of waves) in an attempt to remove the inconsistency. Old theories never actually die, they are usually just altered.¹⁶⁴

Yet another yardstick for evaluation is comprehensiveness. If one theory explains more data

161 Barbour, *Issues in Science*, 141-144.

162 Gordon Clark, “The Limits and Uses of Science “ in “Horizons of Science. Christian Scholars Speak out.” Edited by C. F. Henry. (Harper and Row, 1977), 269.

163 Arthur Conan Doyle, “Treasury of World Masterpieces. The Celebrated Cases of Sherlock Holmes.” in “The Return of Sherlock Holmes – The Norwood Builder.” (Octopus Books Ltd., 1981), 371.

164 Hawking, *A Brief History*, 10.

than a second, the first is seen as more accurate or truthful. The reverse would be true, however, if the second was simpler or more beautiful and appealing. The predictiveness of a theory is also a means of testing. Theories that make more predictions are seen as ones that are more useful and accurate than those that make few predictions.

Perhaps one of the most surprising ways of testing theories (and probably the most important) is by means of their aesthetic sense. The beauty, elegance or wonder evoked by a theory is often of prime importance to scientists.¹⁶⁵ Thus a theory could conceivably have been chosen not because it is right, but because it appeals to the minds of men in some aesthetic sense. Their ideas of how a theory should come out, of how it should look will influence the sort of theory that they build. In short, world view determines theory choice. This is no more clear than in the choice between the two alternative theories for our origins. The choice between evolution or creation is not made on the basis of agreement with observations, but on the basis of world view and presuppositions. For the evolutionists the use of God as an hypothesis is an anathema. To them, all explanations must be discovered within the natural realm. Appeal to supernatural explanations is not science as far as they are concerned. For the Christian, however, any explanation for our origins without including God is utterly impossible. This is why battles between creationists and evolutionists concerning the evidence achieves little. Nevertheless they are battles which must be fought because the Christian is commissioned to declaring the whole counsel of God.

It is generally believed amongst philosophers of a certain type, that the evidence does not speak for itself, and that it is always capable of being explained in a multitude, if not infinite, number of ways. Aubrey Moore, in discussing science, stated that the ground of dispute is in the presuppositions :

“It is thus in their presuppositions that those who assert and those who deny design in nature really differ. And it is on the ground of presuppositions that the battle must be fought out.”¹⁶⁶

That being said there is a very good case for saying openly to one and all that only the creation view of origins is correct, and that for two reasons. First God has revealed and He cannot lie or deceive. If Genesis one says anything it says that God created all things in six days. Second the Lord states in His word that “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*”¹⁶⁷ Creation (as Paul also notes in Romans chapter one) gives clear *evidence* of a Creator. Presuppositionalism is the *sole* ground for debate and argument for humanists but as

165 Barbour, *Issues in Science*, 127,145.

166 Aubrey Moore, “Science and the Faith: Essays on Apologetic Subjects with an Introduction.” (K. Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1893), 148.

167 Psalm 19:1.

Christians we must never be shy of also pointing out that all evidence is evidence for God.

Other theories are chosen equally arbitrarily by an appeal to their fit with pre-conceived notions. Indeed, a final criterion for evaluating a theory is its external consistency, or the agreement in principle with other widely accepted theories. If a new theory has similarities to theories in other fields, it is more likely to be accepted than if it is of a completely different nature. This supports the validity of Kuhn's description of the activity of science.¹⁶⁸ There is a paradigm operating today to which all “normal” science must adhere. Theories that fit within the paradigm are accepted, those that do not are generally rejected. In this age the governing paradigm is clearly an evolutionary one, and so any creationist theory is rejected, usually on the grounds that it involves religious or, more accurately, supernatural ideas. The rejection of creation science on the basis of its being religious is a fraud. What about atheists? They have just as much religion! In actual fact it is rejected because it doesn't accord with generally held *belief patterns* amongst the scientific community, which are evolutionary and God-rejecting in nature. Thus creation science is rejected for religious reasons, although the religious convictions lie within those rejecting creation theories rather than in those presenting them.

The criteria of comprehensiveness and external consistency, or conform to the current paradigm, lead to a general aim of science, namely, the convergence towards one all-encompassing universal theory of everything. TOEs (Theory Of Everything) were being postulated in the 1980s and 1990s as being achievable by the end of the twentieth century.¹⁶⁹ This highlights the synthetic nature of science as understanding. In talking of science as knowledge we noted that science was analytical. It breaks reality up into digestible pieces. This sort of analytical examination of reality is carried out by humans because of the nature of their senses. Each of the five senses receives different information about the same object. Our knowledge, then, is of isolated and split-up parts of reality. In seeking to understand the analytical knowledge received, scientists build theories to explain facts. They attempt a synthesis, or re-building, of what their senses have split up. It is this synthesis of knowledge that constitutes man's theoretical understanding. And in seeking one universal theory of everything, man is attempting to create the universe in his own image. In short, he wants to “know the mind of God” to quote Stephen Hawking.¹⁷⁰ Since no theory that blatantly disregards evidence is ever really accepted, theories are generally evaluated on the basis of subjective view. Whether a new theory fits in with other theories, and does not contest the present paradigm. Whether it appeals to man's aesthetic sense of beauty or not, and whether it is simple! We

168 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1970).

169 Stephen Hawking, “The edge of spacetime.” *New Scientist* 16th August 1984. 10-14. 14; Simon Anthony, “Superstrings: a theory of everything?” *New Scientists*. 29th August 1985. 34-36. 34.

170 Hawking, *A Brief History*, 175.

have seen that the data of reality cannot give us an unbiased explanation of existence, and we have found that man himself uses pre-conceived notions or presuppositions, to search for data. Now we have come to realise that man's explanation of the universe is an invention made to satisfy himself and to appeal to his own views. Science, therefore, is a kind of creating but in man's image.

What value do theories have?

Scientists have come to realise that their work cannot be described as a search for truth in any absolute or philosophical sense. Their task is a lot more humble, that of a tentative advance towards better and more accurate descriptions of reality. Nevertheless this tentative nature is a Dickensian humility, for they still assert that science is the best way of knowing, and it is (they believe) advancing in a positive direction.

It may come as quite a shock to the reader, but the first thing we must point out with regard to any theory is that it can never be proved or, for that matter, disproved. This is the assessment of philosophers such as A. F. Chalmers and also of A. D. Ritchie. Chalmers made this assessment:

“There is just no method that enables scientific theories to be proven true or even probably true. Later in the book, I will argue that attempts to give a simple and straightforward logical reconstruction of the “scientific method” encounter further difficulties when it is realised that there is no method that enables scientific theories to be conclusively disproved either.”¹⁷¹

Whilst Ritchie points out that the reason we can never be sure of any particular theory is that we can always supplement it:

“Moreover no generalisation is strictly verifiable or even falsifiable, because any hypothesis can be upheld by introducing sufficient subsidiary hypotheses or by taking a sufficiently narrow view of the facts.”¹⁷²

Since most scientists hold to a form of realism in which science is viewed as advancing towards better and better, or more accurate descriptions of what is, such damning views of the verification of theory are not generally accepted. Most scientists say that they hold to Karl Popper's falsificationism, (a theory can only be falsified), but they mix this with an optimistic view of realism. Stephen Hawking illustrates the modern scientist's view admirably. He acknowledges deference to Popper's falsificationism:

171 A. F. Chalmers, *What is this thing called Science?* (Second edition. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1982), xvi.

172 A. D. Ritchie, *Studies in the History and Methods of the Sciences* (Edinburgh University Press, 1958), 8.

“Any physical theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it. No matter how many times the results of experiments agree with some theory you can never be sure that the next time the result will not contradict the theory. On the other hand, you can disprove a theory by finding even a single observation that disagrees with the predictions of the theory. As philosopher of science Karl Popper has emphasised, a good theory is characterised by the fact that it makes a number of predictions that could in principle be disproved or falsified by observation.”¹⁷³

However he modifies this rather negative philosophy in which we can only really know if a theory is wrong, by asserting that what the scientist hopes for is greater confidence that his ideas are true.

“Each time new experiments are observed to agree with the predictions the theory survives, and our confidence in it is increased; but if ever a new observation is found to disagree, we have to abandon or modify the theory.”¹⁷⁴

In speaking on the theory that will bring everything together in one grand unified scheme he proclaims that if it was not falsified, then this would raise our confidence in it to such an extent that:

“it would bring to an end a long and glorious chapter in the history of humanity's intellectual struggle to understand the universe.”¹⁷⁵

However in a candid admission he also says that a scientist whose theory has been falsified could call into question the competency of the experiment or experimenter and scientific practice is often dogmatically opposed to change:

“At least that is what is supposed to happen, but you can always question the competence of the person who carried out the observation.

In practice, what often happens is that a new theory is devised that is really an extension of the previous theory.”¹⁷⁶

Often new evidence conflicting with a widely held and highly cherished theory is either ignored or assumed to be in error. Sometimes it is simply explained away by an ad hoc hypothesis. As the philosopher A. O'Hear noted:

“Study of the history of science shows that scientists do not reject theories just because they fail observational tests. They will often seek to explain away the counter-evidence by hypothesising that it was due to some as yet unsuspected feature of the environment, and not

173 Hawking, *A Brief History*, 10.

174 Hawking, *A Brief History*, 10.

175 Hawking, *A Brief History*, 167.

176 Hawking, *A Brief History*, 10.

the failure of the theory.”¹⁷⁷

O'Hear believes that Popperian falsificationism is actually disregarded by scientists. He points out that the central tenets of Popperian thought:

“.... run counter both to common sense and to scientific practice.”¹⁷⁸

The impermanence of theory.

Since new evidence is always being unearthed, there is a continual need to evaluate any theory in the light of this new evidence. This fact highlights the temporary nature and relative status of man's theories.¹⁷⁹ However, more usually theories are modified rather than abandoned. This is because man's pride will not let him allow that which he has built and made to be knocked down. If new evidence comes to light ruining a cherished theory, the temptation to put up a fight to save the old theory is strong, especially if much of a person's life has been spent on it. If the pressure for change is so great, the devotee to the old theory will at least ensure that the superstructure, or perhaps the terminology, remains intact, even if the new theory is completely different in form.

Since theories are not permanent, the scientific community has an intense dislike of dogma.¹⁸⁰ This attitude pervades our society today. No one is allowed to be **absolutely** sure and certain. This is because so much of our thinking is under-girded by science which can never be dogmatic. Those that are sure and certain are labelled as “bigots” and “narrow-minded.” I suppose that we should be grateful that scientists actually agree that theories can never be absolute, and that they are always only tentative and temporary. Their insistence that no one should be allowed to be dogmatic, is ironically dogmatic to say the least!

There is a divergence of opinion, however, between what philosophers mean by the temporal nature of science, and what practising scientists mean by it. For philosophers like Kuhn, no one theory is better than another. Each new theory reflects different facets of truth, perhaps, but new theories are not closer to the truth than older ones. Scientists, however, believe that there is a steady progression towards truth. They believe that they are “pushing back the frontiers” in their search for truth. Newton did better than Copernicus and Kepler, whilst Einstein's theory is closer than Newton's. But this view, I suspect, is promoted for evolutionary reasons rather than by any real evidence. In the end all we can say is that theories are not true or false, but they may be more or less useful, or more or less appealing. It all depends on what you believe in the first place. Theories stem

177 Anthony O'Hear, “Popper and the Philosophy of science” New Scientist 22 August 1985 43-45. 44.

178 Anthony O'Hear, “Popper and the Philosophy of science” New Scientist 22 August 1985 43-45. 43.

179 Hawking, *A Brief History*, 10; Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 97.

180 Anthony O'Hear, “Popper and the Philosophy of science” New Scientist 22 August 1985 43-45. 45.

from belief systems held, and are therefore heavily dependent on the veracity of the belief system (or world view) held. Hold an erroneous world view, and all your theories are based on a lie.

Application, explanation and wisdom.

Many scientists take the view that science has superseded religious or revelatory ideas. They see science advancing as it “pushes back the frontiers” and God being used merely as a “gap-filler” removed to the areas where science has not yet reached. As the years progress and science advances so the gaps that God as an explanation fill, shrink further and further. However such a representation is satisfactory only to one who sees God and science on a par with each other. It comes from a man-centred approach based on the idea that man is the measure of all things. All intellectual pursuits are tentative, and can be falsified. So, to the modern scientist at least, the concept of “God” as an explanation is outmoded and childish even.

However, a better representation is revealed by looking at the whole enterprise of seeking for explanations in a different way. So far we have viewed the world in a naïve realist way. However scientific explanations are really just models of reality and not one-to-one correspondences to reality itself. The history of science repeatedly shows that scientific explanations vary with time. It is a false assessment that states that science advances nearer and nearer the “truth” as time progresses. The reason for this is that man has no reference point with which to measure truth. In stark contrast, Christians make the claim that the Bible is God’s revealed word. Since God is the Author of all things, his word of necessity must be “The Truth.” This means that Christians have an inside knowledge that man, starting from man’s point of view alone, cannot share.

These views of reality and our conceptions of it are all open to debate, but the ground of that debate is not the evidence. Rather it is the way we think. What makes one person believe that there is nothing but matter and molecules and another that God created all things? We do not come to the evidence that we all share dispassionately and objectively. We come to it with pre-conceived ideas. Therefore it is disingenuous to make the claim that evidence leads to the truth.

Scientific explanations are not to be considered truth in the same way that the Bible is “The Truth.” We have noted that even scientists accept that their theories are tentative and open to change. What they cannot accept is that anyone has access to the real truth – they demand that all enquiry be of the same limited nature as science. The cyclic nature of science (and indeed of all intellectual enquiry) is often ignored. When it comes to explanation the tendency is to assume that the types of ideas being expressed are self-evidently true. However, the scientist who comes up with

the paradigm or world view in the first place has not come to it by virtue of the evidence, but by virtue of his own thinking or of his thinking influenced by others. The starting point is not evidence but ideas. The scientist observes the data and suggests some explanation which is then tested to see if it fits new data yet to be discovered. Yet his own thinking has governed how he looked at the data in the first place. Darwin did not stumble on the idea of natural selection as a result of his observations. He already had the idea of evolution in his head to start with, and so this idea governed his research so that he was looking in a way that would lead to support the idea.

The nature of the human mind.

Any understanding of science must take into account the operation of mind. What is mind, where did it come from and how does it work? Before we get into any detail it is important to note here the quite startling and at once humbling fact that we are attempting to analyse something which we are using for that analysis. This is similar to using a microscope to investigate a microscope! Now of course we could proceed with ignorance and just assume that what we think and produce as understanding is all legitimate. But to a scientist this is a wholly unsatisfactory arrangement. Barrett, for example, writes:

“How we interpret the human mind and its power is central to our understanding of ourselves as human beings and our places in the cosmos.”¹⁸¹

Why can we think and understand the world around us? What is it about the mind that allows us to do this? In view of the fact that theories are formed in the *imaginings* of man's minds, an understanding of the nature of mind would seem to be both necessary and important. Accordingly scientists and philosophers have come up with theories and models for the mind. But where to begin?

A reading of any history of science or philosophy will inform you that there have been two main streams of thought on the mind, namely, monism and dualism.¹⁸² Of course reference to the Bible is missing in this history but we shall consider the evidence from Scripture after we have considered what man has come up with. Dembski has highlighted the origin of these divergent views as coming from the seventeenth century philosophers, Descartes (1596-1650) and Spinoza (1632-1677). Dembski explains that there were:

181 William Barrett, *Death of the Soul: Philosophical thought from Descartes to the computer* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 107.

182 Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, society and the rising culture* (Fontana Paperbacks – Flamingo, 1982), 322,323; Jerry A. Fodor, *The Mind-Body Problem* Scientific American January 1981 Volume 244 Number 1 124-132. 124.

“...only two possible resolutions of the mind body problem: (1) The substance dualism of Descartes, i.e. the human body is a machine controlled by an immaterial spirit, much as a pilot drives his vehicle; (2) The monism of Spinoza, i.e. the human body is the whole human.”¹⁸³

In fact Descartes suggested that there were two basic substances of which mind (*res cogitans*) was one and matter (*res extensa*) the other. Spinoza preferred a single substance for all things which led, as Stuart Hampshire observed to a form of pantheism:

“.....Spinoza is in opposition to Descartes, who considered that there were two sorts of substance, thinking and extended substance. In Spinoza's system God comes to be *equated* with Nature, as the totality of things...”¹⁸⁴

But it would seem from the history of science and thought that Spinoza's single substance (monistic) view has won the day. A mechanical description of the universe developed from the same period which eventually led Gilbert Ryle (1900 – 1976) in 1949 to declare that dualism, which he referred to as “the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine,” was “entirely false ... not in detail but in principle” since it was “one big mistake” namely, “a category-mistake.”¹⁸⁵ To illustrate the idea of a category-mistake, Ryle tells a series of stories. The first of these concerns a visitor to Oxford University who on being shown the various buildings, museums, playing fields, colleges and departments then asks his host “but where is the university?” Of course the visitor has made a mistake in thinking that the university was a *separate* thing, for the university is really just the collection of things already seen and how they are organised. Ryle contended that the mind is to be conceived in a similar manner. It is not a separate entity, (the ghost in the machine), but merely the system of organisation of which the body and the person are alternative ways of construing the same thing.

One of the main arguments against Descartes' substance dualism was the difficulty of understanding or explaining how an immaterial substance (mind) operated and controlled the material world (the body) which was being increasingly viewed as controlled by law, scientific law. If the mind was immaterial and thence not subject to the laws of nature, how could it operate bodies which appeared to be subject to such laws?

Of course such a monistic (single substance) view of man in which the mind is merely part

183 William Dembski, *Converting Matter into Mind: Alchemy and the philosopher's stone in cognitive science Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* Volume 43 Number 4 December 1990. 202-226. 205.

184 Stuart Hampshire, *The Age of reason: The seventeenth century philosophers* (A Mentor Book. The New American Library, 1956), 105.

185 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 5,6.

of the body, sits very favourably for the theory of evolution. It is far more difficult to imagine how two separate substances (mind and body) could have evolved. Those who try to hold to both evolution and some form of substance dualism inevitably have to assert that the universe comprises two basic fundamental substances of which one is that which we can investigate, and the other is beyond our reach. Consequently history favours monistic views of man. The mind is just some form or part of the body. For many, mind is equated with the brain. For others mind *emerges* in some mysterious way as we move up the hierarchical levels in the human form, from molecules to cells, from collections of cells in tissues to organs, then from organs to systems and so on. Mind is supposed to be a kind of “added extra” which comes about as we reach the highest level of the hierarchical scheme.

So how is the mind viewed in our day? It will come as no surprise to say that almost without exception modern expressions of the mind are exclusively monistic. The assumption of a material base and (usually) of an evolved origin are the starting points when considering the mind. In 1988 BBC2 screened a series of programmes presented by Professor Colin Blakemore entitled, “The Mind Machine.” The Radio Times article previewing the series opened with Blakemore's own words:

“The brain is a wonderfully, breathtakingly impressive machine. It's a computer, but infinitely more sophisticated than any computer made by man.”¹⁸⁶

The writer of the article continued with an introduction of Blakemore and stated why the series was called “The Mind Machine”:

“It's called **The Mind Machine** because Professor Blakemore makes no sharp distinction between the mind and the brain, as traditional thinkers have done.”¹⁸⁷

I suspect the “traditional thinkers” cover those who have taken a religious view. Writing at the end of the twentieth century, the scientist and psychologist Silvia Helena Cardoso noted that:

“Few neuroscientists, such as the Nobel Prize recipient Sir John Eccles, asserted that the mind is distinct from the body, but most of them now believe that all aspects of mind, which are often equated with consciousness, are likely to be explained in a more materialistic way as the behaviour of neuronal cells. In the opinion of the famous neurophysiologist José Maria Delgado "it is preferable to consider the mind as a functional entity devoid of

186 Radio Times article. “Know your own mind?” 10-16th September 1988. p8. Review of Colin Blakemore's programme on the mind.

187 Radio Times article. “Know your own mind?” 10-16th September 1988. p8. Review of Colin Blakemore's programme on the mind.

metaphysical or religious implications *per se* and related only to the existence of a brain and to the reception of sensory inputs.”¹⁸⁸

John Eccles (1903 – 1997) and an earlier neuroscientist and Nobel Laureate Charles Sherrington (1857 – 1952) both held to a form of dualism. These men were exceptions. Eccles seems to have been motivated by his religious convictions (Roman Catholic) but neither man countered an evolutionary view of man's origins. Here, however, is how a neurologist described the mind as human brain in 2003:

“The human brain, the most complex object in the universe, comprises a hundred billion neurons linked in networks that give rise to intelligence, emotion, consciousness, memory and creativity. Emerging from the collective activity of all brain regions is the most fascinating neurological phenomenon of all—the mind.”¹⁸⁹

Today the prevailing view of mind is undoubtedly monistic, materialistic and evolutionary. It is thought of in this way because the alternative of a non-material or “spiritual” component is unacceptable:

“If brains are but collections of clod-like atoms slavishly moving under the action of blind and purposeless physical forces, then we are all machines. Most scientists and philosophers seem content to accept this, being unwilling to countenance the idea of occult mental forces....”¹⁹⁰

But how do such materialistic scientists explain the phenomenon we call “mind”? Surprisingly many writers talk in almost mystical terms when it comes to understanding the mind:

“Thus it is an intriguing observation that an organ (brain) made from the same material ingredients (nucleated, mitochondria-filled cells) as the liver or kidneys is able to generate the magical, composite function that we call mind.”¹⁹¹

188 Brain & Mind. Electronic Magazine on Neuroscience. Founder and Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Silvia Helena Cardoso. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: http://www.cerebromente.org.br/home_i.htm Issue Number 4. What is Mind? http://www.cerebromente.org.br/n04/editori4_i.htm

189 Phiroze Hansotia, History of Medicine. A Neurologist Looks at Mind and Brain: "The Enchanted Loom". [Emeritus Physician, Department of Neurology, Marshfield Clinic, Marshfield, Wisconsin. Email: hansotia@tznet.com.] Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.clinmedres.org/cgi/content/full/1/4/327>. See also: Fischbach GD. Mind and brain. Scientific American 1992. 267 48–57. CM&R 2003 : 1 (October) Clinical Medicine & Research Volume 1, Number 4: 327-332 ©2003. Clinical Medicine & Research. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.mfldclin.edu/clinmedres>.

190 Paul Davies, Review article in the Sunday Times. 12th November 1989. pG8.

191 Phiroze Hansotia, History of Medicine. A Neurologist Looks at Mind and Brain: "The Enchanted Loom". [Emeritus Physician, Department of Neurology, Marshfield Clinic, Marshfield, Wisconsin. Email: hansotia@tznet.com.] Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.clinmedres.org/cgi/content/full/1/4/327>. See also: Fischbach GD. Mind and brain. Scientific American 1992. 267 48–57. CM&R 2003 : 1 (October) Clinical Medicine & Research Volume 1, Number 4: 327-332 ©2003. Clinical

The brain contains between $10^{10} - 10^{14}$ nerve cells, each making as many as 5000 connections with neighbouring nerve cells.¹⁹² No wonder, then, that the brain is often viewed as just a massive computer or telephone exchange. But it is one thing to identify the organ in our heads (our brain) with the mind, but how exactly are the two connected or related? Well of course for a materialist the nuts and bolts, the hormones, biochemicals and synapses, are all that is needed! To furnish some kind of explanation, many appeal to the mere *complexity* of the whole system as though complexity itself was sufficient explanation! Dembski, for example, wrote that:

“The brain is considered an adequate explanation for mind and intelligence because of its vast complexity and intricate organisation. By being complicated enough, by comprising billions of interrelated components, the brain is supposed to render thought possible.”¹⁹³

So, then, complexity and intricateness of material substance (those “little grey cells”) are used as an adequate explanation for mind. How, then, in a materialistic paradigm, is the mind to be understood? How does it work? Dembski, whilst not arguing for the materialist's position, explains on their behalf:

“And here we come to a rub. Precisely because of its vast complexity, no one really knows what is going on in the brain. More precisely, the connection between brain states and intelligence is a matter of ignorance cognitive scientists abandon hope of understanding this higher level through the lower neurological level.

Thus while the commitment to materialism persists, the hope of explaining human intelligence at the neural level, which for the materialist is the logical level, is not a serious consideration.”¹⁹⁴

Thus complexity and intricateness are suggested as adequate explanations of mind, but no serious materialistic understanding of mind at the material level is ever expected, precisely because the brain is too complicated! Ignorance is bliss! There are still some who expect the complexity of the brain to be the main generator of explanations for such things as mental illness, religious belief and cultural views:

“In conclusion, more and more we are realizing what so many influential philosophers and theologians of past centuries could not understand: that the brain is complex enough to

Medicine & Research. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.mfldclin.edu/clinmedres>.

192 D. G. Jones, *Our Fragile Brains: A Christian perspective on brain research* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1981), 38,39.

193 William Dembski, *Converting Matter into Mind: Alchemy and the philosopher's stone in Cognitive Science Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* Volume 43 Number 4 December 1990 202-226. 206.

194 Dembski, *Converting Matter into Mind*, 206,207.

account for the mysteries of learning, memory, emotion, creativity, consciousness, mystical-religious experience and madness. If we agree to think about the mind as it were a set of mental functions rather than a spirit, soul or immaterial substance, it will become easier to get on with the necessary empirical studies and thus substantial progress could be made not only in the search for the nature of man as a cognitive individual, but also in the alleviation of mental ills and in a better understanding of cultural and religious beliefs, which, along so many centuries have brought great pleasures - and afflictions - to Humankind.”¹⁹⁵

So much for the prevailing view. At this point we must note that there are serious problems with a monistic view of mind, of which the complexity problem is just one. Recent studies on the brain utilising such sophisticated techniques as fMRI, PET, CT and so on have shown a worrying problem for the identification of mind with brain.¹⁹⁶ These techniques have come about due to the rapid development of computing power. MRI uses strong magnetic fields and radio frequency waves to “image” the brain, whereas PET uses radioactive tracing techniques and CT/CAT uses X-rays. With the increase in technological ability there have been extravagant claims that we are on the verge of being able to detect what a person thinks through such techniques!¹⁹⁷ Thankfully, such claims have been recognised as wholly fallacious:

“The fallacy is the assumption that a brain image--as in functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)--is a photograph of the mind at work. ... There seems to be a growing recognition in the scientific community about the serious ramifications of this brain imaging fallacy.”¹⁹⁸

In fact these new techniques have thrown up some further problems. In the first place we find that far from being uniform and the same from person to person, brains are anything but, as Dembski has observed:

“Brain complexity is not the only problem facing the neurologist, who seeks to connect brain with intelligence. Brains are not uniform. One brain is not isomorphic to the next. While general morphology and structures coincide, brains from one individual to the next differ so much at the neurological qua synaptic level, that a search for common higher-

195 Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: http://www.cerebromente.org.br/n04/ediori4_i.htm

196 fMRI = functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging; PET = Positron Emission Tomography; CT (also CAT) = Computer Tomography.

197 “The brain scan that tells you exactly what's on your mind.” David Derbyshire. Mail Online. 19th Feb. 2009 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1149224/The-brain-scan-tells-exactly-whats-mind.html>
 “Scientists able to read people's minds.” Steve Connor. The Independent. 13th March 2009. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/scientists-able-to-read-peoples-minds-1643968.html>
 “Mind reading by MRI scan raises 'mental privacy' issue”. Roger Highfield/ Telegraph. 9th June 2008. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/scienceandtechnology/science/sciencenews/3343929/Mind-reading-by-MRI-scan-raises-mental-privacy-issue.html>

198 Brain Imaging Is Not Mind. Reading posted by Larry Arnhart @ Sunday, June 22, 2008. <http://darwinianconservatism.blogspot.com/2008/06/brain-imaging-is-not-mind-reading.html>

level cognitive correlates holding across brains becomes a task so daunting as to seem hopeless.”¹⁹⁹

The mistake in identifying scans with mental activity arises because fMRI is not actually a direct measure of neuronal activity. It is a measure only of *indirect* surrogates, particularly, the flow of oxygenated blood. Thus the interpretation of these brain scans depends on elaborate theoretical assumptions about the relationships between blood flow and neural activity. Alarming it has been found that many different kinds of brain activity can produce the same fMRI signal. Such studies have also confirmed the undeniable fact that no two brains are alike in their structure or functioning. This in turn has meant that brain scans require an averaging procedure. Interpreting these brain scans assumes that mental activity can be decomposed into distinct parts corresponding to separate parts of the brain, although the interconnectedness of brain activity make this unlikely to be completely true. Although the sensory and motor activities of the brain do seem to be clearly localized in identifiable parts of the brain, it is much more speculative to assign the higher cognitive activities to particular parts of the brain.

Another problem with neuroscience is that the connection between brain scan images and mental activity is taken as causative in one direction only. It is assumed, essentially, that the blood flow and neuronal activity has given rise to the mental events (i.e. thoughts). But why not assume that the mental activity of the mind as non-material substance has rather given rise to the information detected by fMRI or PET? The connection between brain scans and mental activity also needs a clear interpretive scheme but such an understanding is impossible. Since the mind is considered to be an emergent property of the brain by many materialists, the mind depends on, but is not simply reducible to the brain. Consequently there is an unbridgeable gap between mind and brain. This is most evident in the contrast between our subjective experience of consciousness and the objective study of the brain in neuroscience. There will always be a gap between our scientific observation of brains at work and our introspective knowledge that comes from our first-hand experience.

There are, however, other major objections to the materialistic view of equating mind with matter. For example, large parts of the brain (avoiding some critical areas) can be destroyed leaving the mind unimpaired.²⁰⁰ Indeed the famous nineteenth century scientist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) was said to have done much of his work with only half a brain!

“A brain may largely be deteriorated and still function in an outstanding way a famous

199 Dembski, *Converting Matter into Mind*, 207.

200 Smethurst, *Modern Science*, 162.

case is that of Pasteur, who at the height of his career suffered a cerebral accident, and yet for many years afterwards did research requiring a high level of abstraction and remained in full possession of everything he learned during his first forty some years. Only the autopsy following his death revealed that he had lived and worked for years with literally one half of his brain, the other half being completely atrophied.”²⁰¹

A rather more startling case that completely defies a materialistic understanding of mind was reported in Science magazine in 1980. A case study of the British neurologist and professor at Sheffield University, John Lorber, was reported by Lewin in an article entitled: “Is your brain really necessary?” Lewin reported that:

““There's a young student at this university”, says Lorber, “who has an IQ of 126, has gained a first-class honours degree in mathematics, and is socially completely normal. And yet the boy has virtually no brain”. The student's physician at the university noticed that the youth had a slightly larger than normal head, and so referred him to Lorber, simply out of interest. “When we did a brain scan on him”, Lorber recalls, “we saw that instead of the normal 4.5 centimetre thickness of brain tissue between the ventricles and the cortical surface, there was just a thin layer of mantle measuring a millimetre or so. His cranium is filled mainly with cerebrospinal fluid.””²⁰²

Of course these instances are rare and so are not considered by materialists to be compelling evidence for the overthrow of their pictures of the mind. So much for falsificationism! This one instance should rule out a materialist view of mind! These anomalies are generally ignored and research is focused towards “normal” brains which are assumed to be the organ of the mind. One other piece of evidence that seems to go against the materialist's view is, that whilst a person can be made to perform certain automatic reactions whilst fully conscious by stimulating the brain cortex with mild electrical currents, they report that the action was never *willed* by them. Thus Penfield, for example, commented that:

“When a patient is asked about the movement which he carried out as the result of cortical stimulation, he never is in any doubt about it. He knows he did not will the action. He knows there is a difference between automatic action and voluntary action. He would agree that something else finds its dwelling place between the sensory complex and the motor mechanism, that there is a switchboard operator as well as a switchboard.”²⁰³

201 S. L. Jaki, “Brain, mind and computers.” Gateway editions. South Bend. 1969. 115,116; Quoted also in Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith. Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation. Volume 42. Number 4. December 1990. 224.

202 R. Lewin, “Is your brain really necessary?” Science 210. 12th December. 1232-1234. 1232. Quoted also in Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith. Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation. Volume 42. Number 4. December 1990. 223.

203 W. Penfield, “The Cerebral Cortex and the Mind of Man” in “The Physical Basis of Mind” Edited by P. Laslett, Blackwell, 1951. 64. Smethurst, *Modern Science*, 160f.

Penfield clearly indicates that a belief in dualism is to be preferred, if what the patient is recording is accurate and true. A switchboard operator (or computer programmer) is clearly independent of the switchboard (or computer system and software) that he or she operates. A refutation of materialism as a philosophy is not the main aim of this piece but the mathematician Kurt Gödel (1906-1978) has shown that two independent and distinct levels of explanation are required if there is to be a full and complete explanation of anything in particular.²⁰⁴ The explanation of mind simply as matter in motion, clearly fails at this point. Mind cannot be matter alone. It must be something else as well if Gödel's theorem is correct.

Well how then are our theories of mind coming along? Despite centuries of philosophical speculation, and decades of sophisticated brain scan research, it seems that we are no clearer about mind at all. Here is what psychologist Silvia Cardoso says on the matter:

“It is amazing to verify that even after several centuries of philosophical ponderations, hard dedication to brain research and remarkable advances in the field of neuroscience, the concept of mind still remains obscure, controversial and impossible to define within the limits of our language.”²⁰⁵

Thus despite a persistent insistence by evolution soaked materialistic scientists that brain and mind are synonymous (albeit with some pretty hefty stuff wedged in between the two) no one can really tell us what “mind” is and how it operates. There are significant problems with a monistic view and enough evidence it would appear to force us to the conclusion that man is in fact dual in nature, and that mind is non-material. It is time now to consider what the Bible has to say on the human mind.

Biblical data on the mind.

It is usual for academics and scholars to trot out at this point the oft repeated mantra that the Bible is pre-scientific and must not be considered as a text-book of science (or neuroscience). Such a statement would seem to lead to the conclusion that the Bible cannot therefore be appealed to when it comes to considering the mind and its composition and functioning. Now I for one would like to state openly, loudly and clearly that such reasoning is utter hogwash. It really indicates modern man's foolish pride. We, with our fMRI's, our philosophical minds, and our advanced scientific brains have come so far that to appeal to an ancient book is considered akin to referencing

204 Gödel's “incompleteness theorem” is a mathematical 'proof' that assumptions have to be made first before a set of 'proofs' for a given idea can be performed. It amounts to saying that we have to know something first before we can embark on a process of discovery. Essentially two distinct viewpoints are required to 'see' anything. See Smethurst, *Modern Science*, 29.

205 Silvia Helena Cardoso, "What is Mind?" Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: http://www.cerebromente.org.br/n04/editori4_i.htm..

the Beano for a final year piece on a literary degree. Well I must disagree and I do so with all the power and strength I can muster. Why so? Well it all boils down to how the Bible ought to be viewed. The Bible is not merely a book written by primitive men in ancient times. It is God's book given through men who have all the faculties and abilities that modern man possess. It is foolish to compare Biblical writers with the likes of modern scientists, of course. How can you compare a Moses with Einstein, or a Solomon with Hawking? The modern counterparts would have to be given considerable concessions or handicap allowance! But when you add the fact that the Lord God who created all things governed precisely the very words and phrases these writers used, we must thence have full assurance that the God who would be known, is the One who knows what is what. Surely his instruction and teaching on the nature of man, how he was made, and how he functions is essential? We only have to consider the gospel to appreciate this. The incarnate Christ who gave himself on the cross in the place of sinners and who rose from the dead in victory over sin and death are deep truths which cut across the modern views of man and his make-up. We shall have occasion to develop these ideas in the third part of this work, but for now just ponder the immense wonder of the Son of God taking on human flesh! Can this be thought of in material terms only? Perish the thought! Or what of the death and subsequent resurrection of our Saviour? Are these the actions and events of a mere collection of chemicals? Nonsense! How then should we consider the mind of man?

To look at the Biblical data it is important to recognise that a variety of terms are used to represent the “inner” being. Thus terms such as “mind,” “heart,” “soul,” “spirit,” and even “bowels” are words used to represent the inner person. So far we have not indicated that any of these terms may have a non-material existence, but when we consider how these terms are used it defies belief to conclude that mind is merely some aspect or emergence of the body.

Let us begin by considering the word “mind.” First of all we find that God (who is spirit and who has no body) is described as having a mind.²⁰⁶ If God has a mind but has no body, why should we assume that our minds are material? The natural conclusion surely is that since we are made in God's image, the minds we possess must be equally non-material.²⁰⁷ Next we note that the mind can be “*determined*,” that is fixed in a certain way.²⁰⁸ It can also be “*set*.”²⁰⁹ It is hard to imagine a system of biochemicals and signals determining or setting themselves! Then also we note the curious feature that ideas and thoughts sometimes enter our minds from an *external* source.

206 Leviticus 24:12; 1Samuel 2:35; Romans 8:27; 11:34; 1Corinthians 2:16.

207 See Ephesians 4:23.

208 Ruth 1:18; 2Chronicles 24:4; Ezra 7:13; Nehemiah 4:6; 9:17; Job 23:13; Matthew 1:19.

209 1Samuel 9:20; Ezekiel 24:25.

Thoughts come from outside into our minds.²¹⁰ For example when we are focusing on something intensely, we suddenly become aware of a startling or disconnected thought! Where did it come from? This feature of thinking surely indicates a non-material basis for mental activity. Finally who has not had the experience of having two contradictory thoughts, of being double-minded, or of changing one's mind?²¹¹

Next we shall consider the word “soul.” Just as with the word “mind” we find that God too has a “soul.”²¹² How then can a soul be material? Further it is God who made the soul of man, which therefore belongs to him.²¹³ God holds the soul, and he can take it away, so that when it departs the body this is referred to as death.²¹⁴ The soul can therefore survive death.²¹⁵

Where man is described as having a spirit surely we are on very clear grounds? After all since God is spirit and is by no means material, wouldn't this indicate that the spirit of man must equally be non-material?²¹⁶ Christ Jesus taught us that a spirit does not have flesh or blood.²¹⁷ A body which is separated from its spirit is said to be dead.²¹⁸ The spirit so separated from its body returns to God who created it.²¹⁹

Another word for the inner being of man is “heart.” Like the mind the heart can be directed.²²⁰ It can be set.²²¹ It can also be purposed.²²² One amazing feature of the heart which we have referred to already, is that “*eternity*” has been set within it.²²³ This feature of the heart alone must mean that its composition cannot be simply matter. Going further, we find that the heart of man can be filled by God or occupied by Satan.²²⁴ Surely these are indications of a spiritual non-material nature for the heart?

The Bible does not establish how each of these terms connects with the others. Further we find that capacities of one are shared by another. Sometimes two terms are used in conjunction. For example, the terms “heart” and “soul” often appear together.²²⁵ The terms “spirit” and “heart” can

210 Ezekiel 11:5; 20:32; 38:10; Daniel 2:29.

211 Romans 8:6; James 4:8; Habakkuk 1:11; Acts 28:6.

212 Leviticus 26:11,30; Isaiah 1:14.

213 Genesis 2:7; Isaiah 57:16; Jeremiah 38:16; Ezekiel 18:4.

214 Job 12:10; Psalm 66:9; 97v10; Job 27:8; Genesis 35:18; 1Kings 17:22.

215 Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27,31; Revelation 6:9.

216 Genesis 1:2; 6:3; John 4:24.

217 Luke 23:46; 24:39; Ecclesiastes 12:7.

218 James 2:26.

219 Ecclesiastes 12:7.

220 Proverbs 23:19; 2Thessalonians 3:5.

221 Exodus 7:23; Deuteronomy 32:46; 2Chronicles 11:16; Joshua 24:23; Jeremiah 24:23; 31:21; Ezekiel 40:4; Daniel 10:12; Hosea 4:8.

222 Daniel 1:8; Acts 11:23; 2Corinthians 9:7.

223 Ecclesiastes 3:11.

224 Exodus 35:34,35; 1Kings 10:24; Acts 5:3.

225 Deuteronomy 4:9,29; Psalm 84:2; Proverbs 24:12; Matthew 22:37; 1Peter 1:22.

also be found linked.²²⁶ Then also the terms “soul” and “spirit” are found connected.²²⁷ Sometimes the terms are used synonymously overlapping in meaning, whilst at others they must be referring to different things or perhaps different aspects of the same non-material inner being. Attributes attributable to one term, such as will, or cognition, hatred or love are attributable to others. It would seem, then, that all of these terms refer to the inner non-material part of our make-up, but each refers to it in different ways which can only really be discerned by careful reading and taking into account the context.

Hendriksen made a similar statement on the interchangeable uses of the Greek terms “soul” and “spirit.” In this he concludes that it is impossible to draw a sharp distinction between the two words in the New testament, (with the exception of “spirit” for reference to the Holy Spirit). He writes:

“Since there are these distinctions but also many areas of overlapping, it is impossible to lay down rigid rules. One can perhaps say that in general πνεμα stresses mental activity, ψυχη emotional. ... Often, *but by no means always*, πνεμα indicates the human spirit in its relation to God, man’s self-consciousness or personality viewed as the subject in acts of worship or in acts related to worship, such as praying, bearing witness etc. But again, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Every occurrence of either word will have to be interpreted in the light of the origin of the particular passage in which it occurs, and in the light of its specific context and of parallel passages.”²²⁸

In view of the fact that we do not have all the information concerning our inner non-material being and given that we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*,” and further that man cannot really know his own heart, it would seem the height of folly to attempt to tease out the exact meanings and functions of all these terms.²²⁹ There is more than enough evidence in Scripture (apart from that gathered by modern science) for us to state categorically that we are not just a bunch of chemicals. The incorporeal nature of man is clearly evident. We are physical body and immaterial soul/spirit. The immaterial parts of which we are made interact and overlap in a variety of ways that defy analysis. This means that how we handle our mental and spiritual selves must be done with the utmost care and attention, with particular reference being made to the God who created us.

226 Exodus 35:4; Deuteronomy 2:30; Psalm 78:8; Proverbs 15:13; Ezekiel 36:26; Matthew 2:8; Romans 2:29.

227 Job 7:11; Isaiah 26:9; 1Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12.

228 William Hendriksen, Luke (New Testament Commentary) Banner of Truth 1979. Commenting on Luke 1v46 – 48 Hendriksen suggests that soul and spirit here are synonymous and points to an unpublished study referenced in his commentary on Mark 8v12 footnote 370 (315,6).

229 Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 139:14; Jeremiah 17:9.

The inclination or attitude of mind.

Given this immaterial and non-physical nature of mind we must stress that there is a serious problem to be considered in reference to doing science. The Bible is quite clear that not only are we spiritual as well as physical, but further that our spiritual part is separate from God. This fact has some drastic consequences for how we think and what we devise by way of theoretical constructs.

Not to put too fine a point on things the Bible pulls no punches with regard to the nature of the human mind alienated from God. There is an inevitable law of consequence to things. If we reject God and his ways then are we likely to discover the truth? Hardly! Paul in his letter to the Romans shows the connection between a disposition which rejects the Lord and the resulting fruit of minds that are debased and going astray. Here is what he says:

“For the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened, Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another; men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgement of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”²³⁰

We find, from this text, that much is self-evident in creation concerning God but man has “suppressed” this truth and has not felt it important to “retain” the knowledge of God. Consequently such people are given over to darkness and debased minds and their behaviour becomes unnatural and, as a direct consequence, they reap the sorry rewards such rejection deserves.

The great king Solomon made things even clearer with respect to the great quest of

230 Romans 1:18-32.

discovery. If we are bent on pursuing answers “under the sun” (i.e. without reference to God) then we are doomed to a life of never ending seeking which yields no satisfaction:

“When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labours to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.”²³¹

Such a conclusion is hard to swallow if you make the mistake of seeing modern science as successful, and therefore correct and true, simply because of technology. However there is a world of difference between *utilising* the world God has made according to its normal working and *understanding* the world in an explanatory way. The latter sense is what is continually pushed upon us by a repeated insistence that this world has evolved, that we are descended from the animal world, and that all things are merely material.

Elsewhere in Scripture we read that our unsaved minds are darkened and that the thoughts of unrighteous man are futile.²³² In amazing contrast the Lord promises that his children will have the truth – and comprehensively so.²³³

Specific sciences.

Given the great difference between current thinking on modern science and how as Christians we view the Scriptures and the mind of man, it is not surprising that a number of specific disciplines will cause major problems. These centre chiefly around those subjects that impact on the two major Christian doctrines, namely man and his make-up, and, creation as a whole. Thus evolution, geology and cosmology will all be at odds with how we ought to think. Then also psychology and the sciences affecting the mind along with sociology will all be counter to a Biblical world view. It really is no good trying to redeem these sciences as if they had any value. Their whole aim and direction stems from the wrong source. In effect they amount to the broken cisterns the Lord lamented that Israel were deferring to in opposition to the fountain of living waters.²³⁴

I do not want to deliberate on the historical sciences (geology, cosmology etc.), here as these have received treatment elsewhere.²³⁵ I do, however, want to consider the sciences of the mind, and

231 Ecclesiastes 8:16,17.

232 Ephesians 4:18,19; Psalm 94:11.

233 John 16:13; Jeremiah 33:3 Psalm 25:4,5,9,12,14; Colossians 2v2,3.

234 Jeremiah 2:13.

235 See for example the many publications produced by Answers in Genesis, Creation Ministries International and

in particular the science of psychology. It seems to me that the Christian church has fallen into a trap through the last one hundred and fifty years or so. Having capitulated to an evolutionary world view, and in taking a preference for accepting “scientific” knowledge over against Biblical, there has been a dramatic loss of confidence in the Scriptures as the *balm of Gilead* and as a pastoral aid to life's problems. Of course the plethora of books on “How to ...” and “Three steps to ...” may be thought of as giving the lie to such a sweeping statement, but these owe more to psychology than to Scripture. I am aware of the great re-publication of Puritan authors whose works are a great help in dealing with the thorny issues of the soul.²³⁶ That being said, Christians seem to throw up their hands in despair when certain mental conditions are presented. Top of the list is “depression.” As soon as someone claims to be suffering from this we find Christians suggesting a visit to the doctor as the first option. I do not want to give the impression here that medicine is anti-Christian. Far from it. Much of the history of medicine is inter-twinned with the history of the church. However there is a distinction between physical ailments and mental problems. It is because the modern world has come to the conclusion that the mind and the brain are one and the same thing, that mental problems are dealt with in the same way that physical ones are – you go to a doctor.

What I am insisting on, is that the mind is much, much more than our brains. In fact I am not at all sure that the soul of man (his spiritual part) is located anywhere precisely in his body. The brain does of course act as the centre of reception of sense impressions, but then again there are a great number of sensory nerves in the stomach and bowel areas such that sometimes this collection of nerves is referred to as our “second brain.”²³⁷ It is not possible, neither is it important, to seek the location of the soul, or the connections between soul and body. What I want to emphasise is the fact that the mind, soul and heart are not body or physical. They are spiritual. How then can we treat the mind as something like an organ? I believe that it is barbaric to do so. But, more importantly, do you not think that the Lord, our Saviour, in his infinite wisdom knew that we, because of our sin, have not only physical problems but mental, or spiritual ones too? People may point to research which shows how depressed people are *cured* by a cocktail of drugs, but these drugs merely act as suppressors of chemical or electrical activity. This is no cure. It is merely papering over the problems.

I have made the case for saying that the mind or soul of man is not only spiritual, but extremely complicated. The variety of terms used in the Bible to speak of man's inner being is

other creationist organisations.

236 For example, William Gurnall's *A Christian in Complete Armour* republished by Banner-of-Truth.

237 See for example Michael D. Gershon, *The Second Brain: A Groundbreaking New Understanding of Nervous Disorders of the Stomach and Intestine* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999); Michael D. Gershon, *The Second Brain: The Scientific Basis of Gut Instinct and a Groundbreaking New Understanding of Nervous Disorders of the Stomach and Intestine* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

testament to this fact. I have also established the fact that man is separated from God and that his thoughts are futile and dark, that is, they are not of the truth as revealed by God. In short, man is a sinful creature. Given these facts it worries me greatly that the Christian church is not declaring openly that its mission is the same as that of Christ who came to “*heal the brokenhearted,*” and to “*proclaim liberty to the captives,*” as well as preaching the gospel to the poor.²³⁸ I can hear all sorts of objections rising at this point. Chief amongst them is the horror that I could dare to link “sin” with mental problems. Enough has already been said to show that the connection between personal sin and its consequences is very complicated. However it is pertinent to remind the reader of the fact that we all bear the consequences of sin through the curse on the world following Adam and Eve's fall, and further, that personal sin whilst reaping definite consequences, does not always show itself directly. Many wicked people seem to live the “life of Riley,” whilst others whose lives seem to be good have a hard path to follow.²³⁹ Whatever our personal circumstances, whether we suffer depression terribly through no fault of our own, or whether we suffer depression directly because of wrongdoing, our condition is not really one which can be corrected by medicine. This is true whether we are prescribed drugs or offered some form of therapy. Drugs will never solve spiritual problems, although they may alleviate physical symptoms. Therapies offered by the medical profession will have come from a source other than a Biblical one and will be based on wrong thinking as a result. They may offer limited help for a time, but they can never resolve the essential problem we all face – alienation from our Maker and Redeemer. It was the Lord who spoke through Isaiah and who said these very important and helpful words:

*You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.
(Isaiah 26:3).*

Ultimately, what we need is peace with God. This is the starting point, and our peace can only be found in Christ.²⁴⁰

Sadly a depressed person is often told today that their condition isn't their fault, that they are, in fact, “sick” and need medical help. This is not the best way to begin a diagnosis. Calling depressed people “sick” or “ill” will not really help them. When a doctor says that you have a sickness or disease, this statement *almost* absolves a person from responsibility.²⁴¹ Their suffering is

238 Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:17-19.

239 This phrase is of uncertain origin (possibly Irish) but is used to speak of those whose life is easy and untroubled by life's difficulties.

240 Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14.

241 They may have been foolish and exposed themselves to pathogens needlessly. However because we are talking about disease in a bodily sense – an agent that has infected the body for example – we can talk of treatment at a physical *only* level.

not brought about by anything they may have done, but because (sadly) they have contracted or caught some bug or parasite. Now that they have been told what is wrong, they look to the doctor (the professional) for help in trying to remove the harmful agent and recover their health. But because the mind and the heart are not physical, and because the medical profession (largely) rejects this, the “professional” help of a doctor is severely compromised and will certainly be at fault.

Depression may come about as a result of one person's harsh treatment of another. In this case the sin that causes the depression is not the sin of the depressed person. The one doing the harm is obviously to blame. But then what of the person being harmed? The Lord Jesus faced extremely harsh treatment and yet he gave back only good and walked in peace. Often we respond badly to harsh treatment and this is not because of the injustice we face. It is simply because we are sinful by nature. We do not know how to respond to harsh treatment well and with grace, and so we lash out and consequently spiral into bleak and black thoughts.

What of the person who is depressed and yet has everything “going for them” in an earthly way? How is their depression caused by sin? There may, of course, be a bodily cause for this to be sure, because our minds and hearts are indeed *connected* to our bodies. If our bodies are not looked after we may slump in mood and this could lead to bleak thoughts and so on. However I think that one area which is often overlooked in discussing depression, is how the person themselves thinks. You see if we have wrong thoughts, if we harbour pet views or petty hatreds, or if we will not comply with the law of God, what will be the result? Will our minds be at peace? Will we be enabled to continue a “normal” life – one not dogged by desperately, debilitating, despair? Some people can shrug things off. Others are superficial and do not let things get to the point where they are affected too deeply. Still others are very sensitive and see into the depths of things. When they cannot rationalise things, or when things seem all wrong and hopeless, then they fall into despair. But their problem is not that they are ill. In fact such sensitive people show the depth of human feeling. No, these folk are not ill but their thinking is wrong. This could be for all manner of reasons. Perhaps they have been trained in harsh or erroneous ways. Perhaps they refuse to accept the way of God and prefer to continue in pride and independence, but cannot cope with the influx of information which causes them pain of mind. Whatever the case it comes down essentially to how a person prepares their own heart, even when there may be bodily causes that add to the mix.

How a person conducts their thought life is extremely important. The Psalmist who displays what could be described as “depression” closest, holds the key for us.²⁴² His feelings of being downcast are quite evident. However he is still in charge, and he then takes command of himself by

242 Psalms 42 & 43.

instructing his own soul to hope and consider the future.²⁴³ Fuelling this are clear and correct thoughts about the Lord and his way.²⁴⁴ Does depression come down to an issue of just telling yourself to “get on with it”? Well clearly no. There is more to it than that. Like most people I have gone through dark days. This one thing, of telling your own soul that there is hope with God, is just one of the many pastoral aids for those who suffer with such dark thoughts. You see, as we mentioned earlier, the whole point is that Christ came to heal the broken hearted and the downcast.²⁴⁵ Why has the church neglected this area? What has gone wrong with our preaching? We ought to be able to minister to those who struggle with their thoughts to such an extent that they cannot do ordinary tasks. I am not advocating the neglect of the body, nor am I suggesting that sometimes medication is never appropriate. This is a very complex issue but to rely merely on doctors and the medical world to deal with an essentially spiritual problem is, to say the least, folly.²⁴⁶

Of course the Christian way is not just about teaching, preaching and thinking aright, although I rejoice greatly when I read of the Lord casting out a legion of demons from one man who ended up healed and in his “*right mind*.”²⁴⁷ It is also about “fellowship” as well. Much of the problems the Christian church faces today result from poor fellowship. We are so disconnected and so busy. Parents struggle to spend “quality time” with their children let alone time with other believers. I think that the main fault is that Christians have bought into the world's way of life. We think that career and work and so on, are the normal way of doing things. However even unbelievers recognise the failure of the modern way as they rush to try alternative lifestyles. I am aware that a large number of Christian folk can live the modern life with their Christian faith intact. But this isn't the case for a significant number who are either so deeply affected by the harshness of the modern way or who abandon faith, (as expressed by the modern church), simply to cope. Then there are those who do not want to abandon their faith like this but who cannot cope with the modern rush and tumble. Either they do not have the capacity to fit in and shrug off the filth of this world, or they inwardly implode in an effort to survive. But of course the Christian way is not to look at ourselves, our feelings, our wants and so on, neither is it to consider the injustices of the world and how unfair it all is. No! The Christian way is one of self-denial and of focusing on Christ and on others. If my mind is dedicated to Christ, and to his desires, then even when I am hurt

243 Psalm 42:5,11; Psalm 43:5.

244 Psalm 42:5,6,8,9; 43:2,3.

245 Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18.

246 This is a very complex issue. We must recognise not only the spiritual aspect but how the body influences the mind. Who has not felt downcast when there is little daylight or when they have had little sleep or little food? However to rely solely on medical help for mental problems is asking for trouble.

247 Mark 5:15. See also: Luke 8:26-39.

because of my sensitivity, or because of my sinful nature, I will be kept and guided because of the love of Christ. Is it possible for a Christian to be depressed? Yes it is, but it may indicate that their focus is not centred on Christ. Of course, there is a great difference between being sorrowful and being depressed. Walking with Christ and living for him doesn't stop sadness and sorrow. You would be a hard person if in your expression of Christian life you did not shed a tear now and then or got upset by the injustices around you. Depression is deeper than mere sorrow or sadness because the focus is inward rather than outward.

As a direct result of this idea that the mind is the brain – a physical organ – there have arisen a plethora of conditions and so-called maladies which owe their existence to nothing but modern science gone mad. Classifications of mind have arisen based on behaviours. Some have schizophrenia – now called “multiple personality disorder” – whilst others are manic depressives – now called “bipolar” – and there are many others. But what really are we talking about here? Why would someone's behaviour indicate a variety of personalities? Expectations in society are varied and legion. Get amongst a bunch of men and certain behaviours are the norm which change depending where you are in the country. The same is true for women. Social functions have their set rules, and then there is school behaviour and home life and so on. Some people may have difficulty with integrity and consequently operate in more than a two-faced way. The heart is desperately wicked and deceitful.²⁴⁸ Small wonder then that someone who cannot cope with the variety of expectations decides to be different in different settings. When this becomes so hard to keep up, confusion may result and then there are major consequences. Or take the “bipolar” person. Perhaps they are the life and soul of the party on occasion with a ready wit which everyone enjoys. But to keep this level of personality going all the time requires such an enormous amount of energy. The consequence? Crash! They go introspective and deeply self-centred. These are not mental illnesses that can be treated like bodily ailments. What is required is the gospel! Christ came to save and to heal the broken hearted. These people need the training and care of the gospel and its detailed application. Only what Christ can offer will suffice. Now you may object and say that therapy has “cured” many cases, or that counselling has helped many cope. I concur and agree, but only up to a point. It is because these “treatments” owe much to what the Bible speaks of, and operate some of the principles it contains. Christ is the only one in whom all the treasures of wisdom (right application of knowledge) and knowledge (what is true and real) can be found.²⁴⁹ Unless the church recognises this great reservoir and deposit we will continue to be irrelevant. Meanwhile the world stumbles on in pride. Science seeks new ways of treating such people and many suffer needlessly.

248 Jeremiah 17:9.

249 Colossians 2v2,3.

Chapter 8

Science and Scripture.

Thus far we have made progress on understanding the nature of science and scripture and it is now time to consider *how* these two streams of thought connect and interact. Before we consider possible models we must briefly review some aspects of each.

A brief recap.

Science, that is modern science, is that means of knowing and seeking in nature (creation) that is based upon certain materialistic presuppositions. It lays claim to understand the universe in exclusively physical terms without reference to any spiritual existence. Scripture is the revealed will of God. As such it is 100% pure and true. Given that the main message is about Christ we must assert that it partakes of the same purity as Christ who was sinless. Further, since the message must necessarily be conveyed via means, the means also must be true. For example, the message of Christ is brought to us through the history of Israel. Consequently, for the message to be true, the history used as the vehicle must also be true. It is unthinkable that God who cannot lie would use a false history to convey a true message. Thus when we think of Scripture we must assert that whatever is revealed, it is all equally true. Whether it speaks on literature, history, geography, science or whatever, it must be speaking truth. This in turn means that the Scripture must take precedence in all discussions. It is the foundation for all of life. It must be the basis for all subjects engaged in. This is understandable from the perspective of an absolute truth. If we have no sure *standard* by which to measure things then we will always be “at sea.” If we have no plumb line by which to gauge the true line we will build our structures out of true.

Possible models.

With these thoughts in mind it is now time to consider the possible models which have been used when discussing the relationship between science and Scripture. Because both systems lay claim to exclusivity and comprehensiveness, the first model often used is that of “warfare.” In this model the two systems are diametrically opposed to one another. Modern science attempts to base

all of our lives on a physical and evolutionary ground. This does not mean that we are not allowed to talk of spiritual things, or of beauty and wonder. However all of these categories of thought are subsumed under the ground of materialism. There is a materialistic and evolutionary explanation for the way we come up with spiritual thoughts. Scripture too lays claim to exclusivity. Christ, the main subject of Scripture, has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Bible tells us the history of the world from start to finish. It gives us the ground, purpose and reason for life. It informs us how to behave, how we should relate to one another and the world and where things are headed. These two systems are not singing from the same page!

A second model takes the view that since the main subjects are so different (science speaks of nature, Scripture speaks of salvation), then a more appropriate model is the “divorce” model. In this scheme the two systems do not occupy the same house. They live in different environments. Perhaps one key argument against such a system is that it leads to a dichotomy or dualism in thought which few can keep up. Nevertheless it does serve to highlight the very different ways in which the two main protagonists serve up the debate. Science is always appealing to matter and energy and scientific law. Personality, a rainbow, music and all manner of things are described in purely physical ways. There may be several layers or strata to these scientific explanations. Thus personality is not often reduced to molecules and atoms, but sophisticated systems such as functionalism or behaviourism have been devised. However all of these systems have a matter/energy base which allows no extra or outside agency a foothold. The church seems always to be focused on the religious presentation of life as though services and ritual really make any difference. The tragedy here is that the church has often fallen woefully short of her commission which is to teach all that Christ has spoken on.

The third model is one which is extremely popular because it seems to deal with many of the objections people have with the first two. No one really likes to be at war! Few can separate or compartmentalise life so neatly. Hence a “complementary” approach is taken. The two systems speak on the same subject but each adds to the other. Here those favouring such a view highlight the limitations of each discipline. Science may well be able to describe systems in great and exact mathematical detail but they cannot give us reasons for them or deliver purposes. Many scientists who favour the warfare model conclude that because purpose cannot be found in nature this means that it is an illusion. Others baulk at such statements because purpose seems to be at the very heart of life motivation and health. Scripture too must be limited. Where does it tell us in Scripture how chemicals interact or what governs an object's fall to earth? Thus if we want to really know things we need both disciplines. In this way a complementary approach appeals to people because we can

allow science its room to manoeuvre and have room for what Scripture claims. However there is a problem. Both disciplines are very vocal on origins, the nature and composition of man, and how we ought to deal with man and his problems. Both speak a very different language!

The fourth model for relating science and Scripture is taken by few. By taking the truths from each discipline those who favour this fourth model construct a hybrid. We could call this the “syncretism” model. Few favour this because it is the creation of an entirely new entity. It changes both disciplines completely. It is very interesting to note at this point that these models have a close connection in thought with the great debate about the person of Christ. A syncretic view of Christ's person was formed by those who suggested that when the Son of God came from heaven to become man, an entirely new nature was formed by the combination of divinity and humanity. This is the Eutychian heresy condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD.²⁵⁰ Nestorianism claims that Christ existed as two persons, one divine (the Son of God) and one human (Jesus Christ). This heresy, which is rather like the divorce model, was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.²⁵¹ Apollinarianism is the idea that Christ comprised a human body with a divine soul. This heresy was condemned by the Second General Council at Constantinople in 381 AD.²⁵² This sounds a little like the view taken by complementarians who take parts from each. The warfare model, of course, would be represented by an opposition between humanity and divinity, suggesting that there could never be any interaction! With regard to Christ we are speaking of the miracle of the incarnation, for the human and divine are wonderfully united in the one person of Christ. But note that in our discussions here we are not talking of general revelation (what God has created) in connection with special revelation (Scripture), but, rather, science – i.e. man's thinking with respect to general revelation – in connection with Scripture.

Some examples.

Rather than discuss these ways of interaction in the abstract it will be helpful to look at some examples. Taking the first model – warfare – there are two main camps exhibiting this form of how to view the relationship between science and Scripture. Remember we are talking about “modern science” or the way in which modern man *thinks* concerning how things are and work, not just about how God has created. The “new atheists” such as Richard Dawkins and Jerry Coyne are adamant that science is exclusive and all religion (of whatever flavour) must be rooted out! On the opposite side to these folk is “creationism” and the creationist organisations like “Answers in

250 Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.theopedia.com/Eutychianism>.

251 Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.theopedia.com/Nestorianism>.

252 Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <https://carm.org/apollinarianism>. <http://www.theopedia.com/Apollinarianism>

Genesis,” “Creation Ministries International,” and “Institute for Creation Research.”²⁵³ These groups are insistent that Scripture is correct even as a basis for investigating the world, and that science must be done with God's word as a foundation. For these groups science is split into “observational” versus “historic” to highlight the need to discuss the underlying assumptions made in each discipline. At this stage I want to show my hand. I am of the firm opinion that these creationist organisations have the right view.

One person advocating the divorce model is the American palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould. He wrote about what he termed “non-overlapping magisteria,” or NOMA. Each domain of inquiry must operate according to its own rules and systems without interference from any other domain. Thus science must not pronounce upon meaning, purpose and morals, whilst “religion” or Scripture cannot dictate on how inquiry into nature must proceed. There are few who favour Gould's approach. It is not difficult to see why, for both modern science and Scripture lay claim to the whole domain of existence.

The complementary view has a large contingent of supporters. Two of these happen to be British scientist-theologians who have written extensively on the subject, and so have a wide following. John Polkinghorne was a physicist who turned Anglican priest and has pursued a career since then as a writer on the subject of science and religion (with over thirty books to his name). Alister McGrath is a noted theologian who began his university life in science before switching to theology and studied for the Anglican priesthood at the same time as Polkinghorne.

For Polkinghorne, science is an ever advancing process of discovery which deals with reality.²⁵⁴ His favourite word is “verisimilitude” by which he means that what scientists discover “rings true” and gives all the appearance of being true.²⁵⁵ Although it isn't absolute truth, it is always being refined.²⁵⁶ Science makes better and better maps of reality so that we are “gaining a tightening grasp of an actual reality.”²⁵⁷ Given this great success Polkinghorne takes issue with philosophers and historians who do not accept the realist picture believed in by scientists. However

253 I am well aware that the term “creationism” was originally used by those wishing to hold that each individual soul was created by God in contrast to those who believed that souls were inherited from parents (traducianism). However it is difficult to find another term that could be used. Words and terms change over time and the more usual use of the word “creationism” is in reference to those who believe in a literal view of Genesis.

254 John Polkinghorne, *Serious Talk: Science and Religion in Dialogue* (Harrisburg Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995), 36; John Polkinghorne, *Exploring Reality: The Intertwining of Science and Religion* (London: SPCK, 2005), 4.

255 John Polkinghorne, *Beyond Science: The Wider Human Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8,14,20; John Polkinghorne, *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2007), 22; John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth* (London: SPCK, 2011), 8.

256 Polkinghorne, *Beyond Science*, 19; Polkinghorne, *Quarks, Chaos & Christianity* (London: Triangle, 1994), 19.

257 Polkinghorne, *One World*, 22,24,27,30.

notwithstanding the great success of science, it is limited to asking only “How?” questions.²⁵⁸ The “Why?” questions are those asked by theology. Polkinghorne thus has a truly complementary view of science and theology. He suggests that science and theology are like the two halves of a pair of binoculars. However for Polkinghorne the theologians must accept what science says concerning reality. This means that evolution, the quantum world and many other “truths” which are inaccessible save only to an elite few must be taken on faith.²⁵⁹ Polkinghorne tries desperately to hold the science at bay from the theology. He does not succeed in this but he is reluctant to allow science to take such a central stage as to obliterate the theological quest. That being said, both theology and science are a *man*-centred quest for him. Both science and theology are the efforts of man to understand God the universe and life itself. There is a clear dislike and repudiation of revelation seen as God directed.

Polkinghorne is fond of quoting a phrase he coined to describe the scientific quest – “epistemology models ontology.”²⁶⁰ Or, to put this in more plain English, “what we know is what exists.” In other words if we know something by experiment or observation (or, more precisely, if we “think” we know something), then that must be truly what is. Polkinghorne does not think that the universe throws us a “curve-ball” or leads us astray. This is in spite of the fact that man in his own mind is devious and impure. Furthermore he suggests that whatever we know (whether it be scientific or theological) we must start from experience. He describes this using the phrase “a bottom-up approach.”²⁶¹ We must not start from any “authority” such as divine revelation or church confession but from what we know by experience.²⁶² It must be said here that this is the characteristic approach of science and it is not surprising Polkinghorne suggests such a route given his early career as a physicist. Scripture, for Polkinghorne, is not the result of divine “dictation,” nor is it “infallible propositions” that we must submit to.²⁶³ Rather they are a library not a single unit, and they are like “a laboratory notebook” that contains records of “critical historical experiences.”²⁶⁴ As such we must submit them to critical scrutiny and scholarship and we must analyse them using the best intellectual tools we have at our disposal.²⁶⁵ It is down to the believer to determine what in

258 Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion*, 3,21; John Polkinghorne, *Scientists as Theologians: A comparison of the writings of Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne* (London: SPCK, 1996), 20.

259 Polkinghorne, *Scientists as Theologians*, 44; John Polkinghorne, *The Way The World Is: The Christian perspective of a scientist* (London: Triangle, 1983), 7.

260 Polkinghorne, *Serious Talk*, 81,82.

261 John Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding* (London: SPCK, 2000), 29,30. See also John Polkinghorne, *Theology in the Context of Science*, (London: SPCK, 2008), 19.

262 Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science*, 29,30.

263 Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science*, 37,53; John Polkinghorne, *Encountering Scripture: A Scientist explores the Bible* (London: SPCK, 2010), ix,1,2,22.

264 Polkinghorne, *Encountering Scripture*, 2,22.

265 Polkinghorne, *Encountering Scripture*, 9; Polkinghorne, *One World*, 38; John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1991), 63.

Scripture has authority and what must be passed over as culturally superseded.²⁶⁶

Polkinghorne's predilection for science and his preference for scholarship's discoveries lead him to a form of "open theism."²⁶⁷ Polkinghorne is convinced that modern discoveries in chaos theory and the quantum world mean that the future is open for God as well as for us. He declares that: "God wills neither the act of a murderer nor the incidence of cancer, but allows both to happen in a world to which he has granted the freedom to be itself."²⁶⁸ Polkinghorne recognises that his is a drastic revision but he holds to it tenaciously because of his scientific views. The classic theological view of God must yield "to the picture of the God who interacts within creaturely history but does not overrule the acts of creatures."²⁶⁹

Taking a monistic view of man (man is not an incarnated soul but a psychosomatic unity) Polkinghorne tries to discuss heaven and salvation with the classic Christian doctrines intact. The soul is not a separate entity but merely the "pattern of atoms" that form us, which God will somehow remember when the time comes for future redemption.²⁷⁰ However given that Polkinghorne also accepts the scientific picture of the future as described by physics (a big crunch or a big yawn many millions of years in the future), such attempts at understanding classic Christian doctrines with modern physical eyes lacks coherence and credibility. What *hope* does physics give? Not much at all! If God cannot know the future because of chaos and quantum uncertainty how certain can we be that he will remember the pattern of our atoms? Is that really all the soul is? Polkinghorne's position is highly favoured chiefly because of his status as a physicist and Anglican priest and his prolific writing. However his position is wholly unacceptable mainly because, although he claims equal jurisdiction for both science and Scripture, he puts all the emphasis on mankind and his quest. Consequently science is by far the more dominant tool. Such a preference for science leads him into extreme by-ways such as open theism.

Another significant person holding to a complementary view is Alister McGrath, whose personal project is to reclaim natural theology from the doldrums and to build a true scientific theology. He rightly highlights the great problem of "nature" (which we considered earlier).²⁷¹ The Bible knows nothing of nature and such a term is described in a multiplicity of ways throughout history making it, at best, a confusing idea. McGrath suggests that we rescue the term by upholding

266 Polkinghorne, *Encountering Scripture*, 3; Polkinghorne, *Scientists as Theologians*, 65.

267 John Polkinghorne, *Science and The Trinity: The Christian Encounter with Reality* (London: SPCK, 2004), 79,80.

268 Polkinghorne, *Serious Talk*, 74.

269 Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science*, 127.

270 John Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (London: SPCK, 2002), 107,108; John Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World* (Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2005), 102; John Polkinghorne, *Theology in the Context of Science* (London: SPCK, 2008), 106.

271 Alister McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Volume 1: Nature* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 49; Alister E. McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 9.

a Christian doctrine of creation.²⁷² McGrath's method of taking revelation first and of centring first on the doctrine of creation is to be applauded. He holds that nature is an “open secret.” *Open* because it is accessible to all, but *secret* because a true access to it demands a Christian world view.²⁷³ Whilst the latter idea has great merit – indeed it is not often recognised that whoever looks at “nature” only does so through a set of presuppositions – the former is far too naïve. Whilst it is true that all of us inhabit this one world, it is just not true that we all have the same access to it. Some never set foot outside their own towns and whilst they have access to media, we have to say that their consumption of the *real* world is heavily mediated. Only the elite scientific fraternity have access to deeper realities but few have access to all that is deemed real.

Like Polkinghorne, McGrath is similarly upbeat about the natural sciences and what they have to say. Scientists believe that they are uncovering real truths “because of the force of evidence.”²⁷⁴ He gives whole-hearted assent to the theory of evolution (biological, geological and cosmological).²⁷⁵ He writes: “There are few today who would regard Darwin's theory of natural selection as a working tool; it is now widely seen as a view of reality.”²⁷⁶ Interestingly McGrath wants to set the physical theory apart from any spiritual views. He attempts to drive a wedge between the physical history of evolution and the ideology that may be derived from such a story as provided, for example, by new atheists like Richard Dawkins.²⁷⁷ The story of evolution is merely “description” whilst any ideology formulated is seen as an attempt at “explanation.”²⁷⁸ He writes: “there is no direct, unambiguous and unproblematic transition from the affirmation of an evolutionary world-view to a specific metaphysic, allegedly based upon that world-view.”²⁷⁹

McGrath takes his direction from Augustine and Calvin in their views of interpretation of Scripture. Augustine taught that it was folly to explain Scriptures in direct opposition to known and accepted facts.²⁸⁰ However, it is important to allow only that “which could reasonably be regarded as established facts” from the natural sciences to aid in this process.²⁸¹ The question arising from this is: How can facts be established *reasonably*? McGrath develops the doctrine of accommodation

272 McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: 1*, 87.

273 McGrath, *The Open Secret*, 16.

274 McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: 1*, 73.

275 Alister E. McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology: The 2009 Gifford Lectures* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 79,114,126,135; A. E. McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2011), xiii,33.

276 Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: 2 Reality* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), 145.

277 McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine*, 34,39.

278 McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine*, 34.

279 Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: 3 Theory* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2003), 273,274; McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine*, 36,37.

280 Saint Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis: Volume 1, Books 1-6* (Trans. John Hammond Taylor, New York: Newman Press, 1982), Book One, Chapters 19,20,21.

281 McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: 1*, 82,86,88.

from Calvin and Augustine.²⁸² Calvin's teaching on accommodation, McGrath believes, has removed "a simplistic form of Biblical literalism" which posed as "a major obstacle to the development of the natural sciences."²⁸³ McGrath suggests that Calvin limited the subject-matter of Scripture to "God's self-revelation and redemption, as concentrated in Jesus Christ," and, further, that "the structure of the world" was not included.²⁸⁴ Thus McGrath appears to suggest that the natural sciences, including evolution, must be heeded. Such discussion really focuses on what is primary. It is one thing to devise fanciful interpretations in opposition to what is plainly obvious to all, but quite another to oppose ideas which counter what is obvious from Scripture. For McGrath, if science clearly says something is so, a Christian is duty bound to accept it is true. Of course in Augustine and Calvin's day this amounted to accepting truths that were commonly universally observed. For example to claim that things did not fall to the earth would be considered folly by all. This was something readily observable by everyone. The trouble is that today science is largely not observable or accessible to any but a few elite specialists. The majority of science the general public receive is given to them by the high priesthood of science via the media and must be accepted by faith! Most scientists accept an evolutionary view of the world. Thus we are duty bound – so says McGrath – to accept evolution as a scientific fact. Now in my reading of the doctrine of accommodation this ought to be applied for things which are clearly and obviously true and observable by all. Evolution cannot be observed. It must be taken by faith. Actually nearly all of modern science is in this category. For much of modern science it does not matter that we cannot access it. Whether the theory of semiconductors or of electronics is something we believe or understand is immaterial to our observation of the working of our computers and other electronic gadgets.²⁸⁵ However since the science of evolution and of cosmology is not just inaccessible to us but also influential on how we view the world, this principle of accommodation cannot really be applied. We ought rather to be applying the principle that what God reveals governs what we think about how things are, and then apply this to the science being promoted. Thus, contrary to McGrath, we should assert that if Scripture clearly says something is so, a scientist is duty bound to accept it as true.

McGrath's position turns out to be as unacceptable as Polkinghorne's but for different reasons. Trying, for example, to separate the physical theory of evolution from its spiritual

282 Alister E. McGrath, *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science & Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 122, 123.

283 McGrath, *The Foundations*, 124.

284 McGrath, *The Foundations*, 124. See also: McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Volume I*, 22f.

285 Incidentally the oft quoted idea that modern technology such as computers and so on prove the validity for modern science including evolution is hopelessly wrong. Consider, for example, the technological advances made by the Egyptians in building the pyramids. Does this great advance give their world view credence? Should we all start worshipping the variety of triads they had then?

interpretation is impossible. McGrath has a similar view of science as Polkinghorne but his grasp of Scripture leans more towards an evangelical stance. The trouble arises when he accepts theologically developed ideas from former eras without scrutinising them for modern use. In particular the doctrine of accommodation is hopelessly applied. There seems to be in both Polkinghorne and McGrath an inbuilt distrust and dislike of creationist or Biblical literalism and the need to bow the knee to modern scholarship.

The syncretistic approach is explored by one British scientist-theologian from the Anglican tradition, namely Arthur Peacocke. Peacocke (1924-2006) was a biochemist who devised a scheme he terms “emergent, naturalistic panentheism.”²⁸⁶ For Peacocke modern science (limited to the natural sciences) gives to us the world we inhabit and is therefore “the most reliable intellectual tool man has devised for understanding the structure and nature of the cosmos into which he is born.”²⁸⁷ Peacocke is aware that science has lost some of its lustre, but nevertheless it is still the best means of acquiring knowledge.²⁸⁸ He is also aware of the dissent by philosophers like Thomas Kuhn, who suggested that science is really defined by the community of scientists, and so must be seen in a sociological and historical setting rather than in any absolute and progressive way. Peacocke dismisses these views because scientists themselves believe that what they are doing is really discovering reality.²⁸⁹ He admits a degree of tentativeness because we are limited and are part of the *reality* we seek to know.²⁹⁰ Like many scientists, Peacocke believes that science progresses and is self-correcting. It does make some mistakes but these are weeded out in time.²⁹¹ Given the great success of science, Christians must reckon with its truths, amongst which the “fact” of evolution is key.²⁹² The limitations of science demand that a theological approach must also be taken so that we get a fuller picture of life and its meaning. However the theological enterprise must be embarked upon from an evolutionary perspective alone.

Peacocke's ENP approach requires us to consider Christ not as the God who came down from heaven to assume human flesh, but as a man who was so open towards the presence of God in creation that *divinity* was incarnated in him.²⁹³ The incarnation is no longer the “Word made flesh”

286 Hereafter referred to as ENP.

287 Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science: The Bampton Lectures, 1978* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 76.

288 Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming – Natural, Divine, and Human* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 9.

289 Arthur Peacocke, *Intimations of Reality: Critical Realism in Science and Religion* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 17,18,21,22,25.

290 Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 12,14.

291 Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 12,28.

292 Peacocke, *Intimations of Reality*, 21; Peacocke, *Creation and the World*, 40,41; Arthur Peacocke, *God and the New Biology*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1986), 36,39.

293 Peacocke, *Creation and the World*, 223; Peacocke, *God and the New*, 83.

but Christ as a new emerging reality in evolution.²⁹⁴ For Peacocke, the universe is only matter and energy, but more sophisticated arrangements of materials have emergent properties. Thus Christ is The Emergent one who seemed to get closer to God than any before him. Peacocke's view is that Christianity must *evolve*. With such devotion to evolution, Peacocke even goes to the extent of suggesting that Christ was a spiritual mutation! Neo-Darwinism requires mutations as a mechanism of change to produce new biological features. The simple fact that such mutations are nearly always detrimental means that such reliance is misguided. But Peacocke suggests that in the same way Christ arose by some form of spiritual mutation enabling him to be more open to the immanence of God in creation so that he could acquire a higher level of reality.²⁹⁵

Peacocke is driven by a continued insistence that the natural sciences are correct.²⁹⁶ Since the virgin birth has little evidence in support and since modern science repudiates such an occurrence we must rule it out.²⁹⁷ The resurrection appears to have weightier evidence behind it but to understand what actually happened we must use the science of psychology. Peacocke suggests that the disciples had some form of collective psychological experience that Christ was raised from the dead.²⁹⁸ Again science knows nothing of resurrection, and since at death our constituent parts are absorbed into the earth, we ought not to accept the classic view of the resurrection of the body because our parts can never be recovered in any meaningful sense.²⁹⁹ Peacocke states that following his ENP approach does away with the classic idea of a “fall” and the doctrine of original sin.³⁰⁰ Those brought up on traditional doctrines may be forgiven for holding to them in private, but must not promote them openly for new ways of thinking must be developed in keeping with evolution.³⁰¹

Whatever else may be said about Peacocke, we have to admit that his belief in evolution is applied consistently throughout his ideas. He is not content to take the standard theistic evolutionary stance of accepting the science of evolution and holding to classic theology. Such a position is the one both Polkinghorne and McGrath sign up to. Peacocke wants none of this subterfuge! Theology must evolve. Obviously, though, this inevitably means that Christianity cannot be a static fixed

294 Peacocke, *Creation and the World*, 230,231,240-242; Arthur Peacocke, *All That Is: A Naturalistic Faith for the TwentyFirst Century* (Edited by Philip Clayton, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 36-38; Arthur Peacocke, *God and Science: A Quest for Christian Credibility* (London: SCM press, 1996), 81,82; Arthur Peacocke, *From DNA to Dean: Reflections and Explorations of a Priest-Scientist* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1996), 29,104.

295 Arthur Peacocke, *Paths from Science towards God: The End of all our Exploring* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001), 148; Peacocke, *God and Science*, 88.

296 Peacocke, *Creation and the World*, 243.

297 Peacocke, *From DNA*, 184,185; Peacocke, *All That Is*, 30,31; Peacocke, *God and Science*, 75.

298 Peacocke, *From DNA*, 185; Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 332; Peacocke, *All That Is*, 34; Peacocke, *God and Science*, 77.

299 Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 332.

300 Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 331.

301 Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 331,335.

faith. What takes the place of Christ and devotion to the Word of God is devotion to the god of evolution. In this we must be aware of a grave danger. Those who hold to some form of accepting modern science with evolution and the Christian faith will inevitably do what Peacocke actively set out to do. They will devise a new religion. Those who want to believe in the gospel of God with Christ as the second and last Adam, and at the same time deny the first Adam's existence will pave the way for those who will radically alter the nature of the gospel because of their belief in evolution. Theistic evolutionists who deny Adam's literal existence will give way to those who say that Paul was mistaken in identifying Christ as the second and last Adam.³⁰²

Well so much for the attempt at various ways of amalgamating modern science with Christianity. The syncretism of Peacocke, the complementary view espoused by Polkinghorne, and the scientific approach of McGrath's fail because of an insistence on evolution and a misunderstanding of the nature of the Scriptures. It is to be noted here that all three men take the fall of man as a mythical story since evolution has ruled out the link between sin and death. Since evolution only works through death as the principle of life, the claim that death is as a result of sin is rejected. Such a re-writing of the Bible and its plain meaning must be withstood.

Science as usurper.

A favourite retort by those who favour science over revelation is to point out that Scripture is non-scientific and pre-scientific. Of course the Scriptures do not give us “an infallible repository of astronomical and medical information” but this a far cry from saying that Scripture has no right to judge a scientific theory.³⁰³ For McGrath, “the Biblical stories of the creation (Genesis 1-2) are accommodated to the abilities and horizons of a relatively simple and unsophisticated people, they are not intended to be taken as literal representations of reality.”³⁰⁴ Such a statement indicates where McGrath's loyalties lie. He assumes that going back in time the writer and readers of Genesis were simple and far less intelligent than we are today. It also indicates his reliance on an evolutionary world view. Further it assumes that a literal view was not possible in the times of Genesis and that a preoccupation with such is a mere modern obsession.

One other point to make here before we move on. It is rather disingenuous of modern science to lay exclusive claim to the realm of physical reality. The world is first and foremost God's. It is then ours by virtue of the fact that we are God's creation made in his image. It therefore follows that the realms that science claims is not exclusive to it, but is open to all who lay true claim to the

302 See: Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the bible does and doesn't say about human origins* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), 39,41.

303 McGrath, *The Foundations*, 125.

304 McGrath, *The Foundations*, 125.

name “Christian.” Thus the only *true* scientist is a Christian who starts from the Bible as the fully revealed will and word from God.

Reclaiming science.

Many other views of Genesis and of the relation between science and Scripture have been proffered. Perhaps by far the most popular today take Genesis in some form of poetic or literary way in order to sidestep problems with science.³⁰⁵ Vern Poythress is a case in point and I want to examine his book *Reclaiming Science* to show several features that are fault with modern evangelical thinking. Poythress's angle is that scientists, even if they claim to be atheists, are in fact *believers* in God. Not, of course, believers in any overt or obvious way, but merely because they operate and live in God's world and therefore cannot help but take “truth” from the very hand of God. However his claim is made on the basis of prior assumption concerning the nature of truth. Poythress's intentions are good. He wants to reclaim science for the Christian faith. However his approach is flawed, and flawed in a way which is characteristic of much modern thinking amongst evangelical bible-believing people.

First we need to note Poythress's basic assumptions on how God reveals truth to us. Poythress doesn't really like the word “revelation” because it is too wide in his opinion, so he talks more about how God *speaks*. He looks at Psalm 19 and suggests that the laws governing this world, the scientific laws, must be considered to be “the word of God.”³⁰⁶ For Poythress there are two sources of truth, the Bible and science.³⁰⁷ Although he never mentions it he seems to be advocating the old “two book” idea of revelation. This idea has been around since at least the sixteenth century, and has proponents in ancient times. God has spoken through the Bible and in creation. This, of course, is a clear inference from Psalm 19 where David talks first about God's creation, which is represented as the voice of God going out to all places on earth so that there is no language or speech where this word through creation does not reach.³⁰⁸ In the next part of the Psalm David speaks of the Bible.³⁰⁹ Here there is a step up in status. Whilst the heaven declares the glory of God so that Paul can argue in Romans 1 that people are without excuse because of creation, the Bible is characterised by words such as “*perfect*,” “*sure*,” “*right*,” “*pure*,” “*clean*,” and “*true*.” These thoughts lead naturally to the idea that general revelation (God's word in and through creation) must

305 Note the NIV bible sets Genesis 1 in indented text indicating the translators' belief that it is poetic in genre.

306 Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-centred Approach* (Wheaton ILL: Crossway Books, 2006), 25.

307 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 33.

308 Psalm 19:1-6.

309 Psalm 19:7-10. I am well aware of the difference between the terms “Bible” “Scripture” and other words for part of the written revelation but if we accept that each represents what God has revealed in written form infallibly and inerrantly, then all may be effectively be referred to as the Bible.

be subordinated to special revelation (God's word the Bible), since the latter is clearer than the former.³¹⁰

From the seventeenth century and the scientific revolution it became fashionable to claim that reading the “book of nature” (general revelation) was far easier than reading Scripture. This was in part due to the fact that there was much debate and confusion concerning how Scripture was to be applied during those times. It was also due to the fact that “science” was in its earliest stages so that *simple* observations of phenomena could be explained in *simple* terms, and anyone with the time to do so could check what was being *read* in this way from the world. However a moments reflection will show that Scripture is always easier to *read* compared to creation. First we must recognise that Scripture was *written* for man and his understanding. God has taken immense pains to reveal all that we need to know so that we can be made right and restored. There are difficult things in Scripture, of course, but most of what is found in the Bible is straightforward and readily discerned. In contrast without help and some guidance how do we *read* what we find in creation? Take for example the record of rock formations. Do these “speak” to us? Of course not! In order to read the record of the rocks we have to come to them with some form of understanding. We have to apply our thoughts and views to what we observe. Creation speaks in a low level way. According to Paul in Romans 1, creation speaks to us of God's great attributes, his eternal nature and greatness and so on, but their voice, whilst plain and available to all, nevertheless is sorely limited.

A second major assumption Poythress makes is that we must come to these two sources of truth with the same essential attitude. We must “endeavour to understand” both what God says in the Bible and what he says in creation.³¹¹ In each case, as we come our understanding is both partial and subject to correction. Where there is a vital difference between the two sources we must be ready to reconsider our understanding of both:

“In the case of apparent discrepancies between the Bible and science, we must therefore be ready to reexamine both our thinking about the Bible and our thinking about science.”³¹²

Now on the surface all of this sounds good, humble, and just what any Christian may lay claim to, but there is a serious problem here. I think Poythress has forgotten something very important. Now I do not want to be misunderstood here because we are all sinners, we all fail and make mistakes, and we all only know things partially. However the Christian has a serious advantage over the unbeliever. We must be very careful of not vaunting this truth, this position of superiority, and we

310 Westminster Confession of Faith. Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scripture. Point 1.

311 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 42.

312 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 43.

must be careful never to display spiritual pride, but the fact of the matter remains that the Christian holds all of the trump cards. Why so? Well the thing is that the Bible is from God's very mouth and therefore cannot be trumped. God wanted us to know things, including where we are from, what our nature is like, and where we are going. The Psalmist wrote that he knew not only more than his teachers, but more than the ancients.³¹³ Paul wrote that in the Lord can be found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that we have the mind of Christ, and that all the world's philosophy and knowledge is mere rubbish.³¹⁴ The way in which we view general revelation and its relation to special revelation is vital.

Going further we must remember that the Christian has many privileges that an unbeliever knows absolutely nothing of. For a start, think of how the Lord Jesus spoke to the crowds, and contrast this with how he spoke to the twelve. To the multitudes he spoke in parables, in obscurity! To the twelve he expounds and explains the parables so that they would understand things.³¹⁵ However such knowledge requires not just proximity to the word of God (either Christ in the case of the disciples, or the Bible in our day), it requires access to God. The Lord Jesus pointed out to Peter when he made his confession of who Christ really was, that this was revealed to him by the Father.³¹⁶ This brings us to another vital point. The believer is born again of the Spirit of God and has the truth, the very word of God engrafted within.³¹⁷ Thus we have an access to knowledge which the ordinary unbeliever does not. The truth is plain and observable to all through the Scriptures, but unbelievers do not “see” it. They need to be turned around in order that in seeing what is plain and obvious they may truly comprehend it.

When it comes to interpretation of Scripture Poythress has taken a very modern line of reasoning. This is demonstrated by his insistence that we must look at Scripture and creation for ourselves and we must recognise that we may be wrong. It would appear that Poythress is advocating that we stand as arbiters of truth. I am not sure that he is definitely claiming this, but his writing leads to this way of thinking. We come to Scripture and creation and we seek to understand it. This is not the way the Bible tells us how we ought to approach things. We must recognise that the Christian has the Holy Spirit within, and it is this fact that is missing in Poythress's treatment. What do I mean? I mean that because we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of his love, we are not neutrals standing over the two making up our minds

313 Psalm 119:99,100.

314 Colossians 2:8,18; Philippians 3:8.

315 Matthew 13:34.

316 Matthew 16:17.

317 James 1:18,21.

in some independent manner.³¹⁸ No! The Holy Spirit will lead his people into all truth.³¹⁹ On the other hand given our position in God's kingdom, we must also note that the Bible teaches clearly that we should reject the world's philosophy and versions of truth.³²⁰

When it comes to understanding Genesis, Poythress again takes a very modern view. Genesis was written according to Poythress in an ANE background.³²¹ The early chapters of Genesis do not deal with modern questions relating to science or history.³²² Two extreme views of Genesis 1-3 must be rejected. The first holds that it is merely a “hopelessly primitive” account, whilst the other takes Genesis 1-3 as “a scientific description of events.”³²³ Thus to understand Genesis 1-3 we must take note that it was written for an ancient people whose outlook on life is not the same as ours. Considering Genesis 6-9 Poythress concludes that it does not say clearly that the flood covered the entire globe because the ancient mind could not think of the world in terms of a globe or sphere.³²⁴ These are all very modern critical ways of viewing the text. It is almost a sacrosanct dictum that to understand what the Bible says we must first understand what it meant to the original hearers.³²⁵ However a moment's reflection will show this idea to be at fault. I am not saying we can ignore the culture of what is written, but the modern obsession with seeking first to locate the meaning that would be conveyed to the original readers before any understanding could be had is patent nonsense. In the first place how can we be sure of the setting for the text we are considering? There may be indications of the setting, the culture and the influences on the people in the text itself. This is all important to bear in mind. What Poythress and many modern critics are doing however, is to make the claim that the ANE is the cultural location for Genesis 1-3. Having done this they then take the cultural setting as the reason, or at least the basis and purpose for the text that has been written. Thus in the case of Genesis 1-3, it was written, according to these ideas as expressed by Poythress, to counter the ANE stories of creation. Genesis 1-3 is a polemical text. It was written to go against the gross inadequacies of polytheistic idolatry. Now this view is quite wrong. I am not saying that Genesis 1-3 does not serve a good apologetic cause, for it definitely does do this. What I am saying is that the motivation for its being written cannot be derived from the cultural setting assigned to it. By suggesting that Genesis 1-3 was written to argue against the

318 Colossians 1:13.

319 John 16:13.

320 Colossians 2:8,18; 3:1,2; 1John 2:15-17.

321 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 72,91,92,128,162. The reader is reminded that “ANE” stands for “ancient Near East.”

322 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 73,98,225.

323 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 87,88.

324 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 127-129.

325 See, for example, I. Howard Marshall, “How Do We Interpret the Bible Today?” *Themelios* 5.2 (January 1980): 4-12; Robert H. Stein, “Is our reading the Bible the same as the original audience's hearing it? A case study in the gospel of Mark” *JETS* 46/1 (March 2003) 63-78.

earlier Babylonian and Egyptian creation accounts, Poythress and others have fallen into a subtle trap. I contend rather that Genesis 1-3 is the original and much earlier account, and that the Babylonian and Egyptian accounts are in fact poor derivatives, formed through an admixture of legendary tales passed through the ages, and perhaps in objection to the original Genesis account. If we believe that Genesis 1-3 was written *after* the Babylonian and Egyptian accounts we lose much force. If this were so then the Bible's account of creation is thence a latecomer, desperately catching up with the world's pioneering charge! What nonsense! As if the Lord God needs to follow suit! God is clear in the book of Isaiah that he did not reveal as a latecomer. In fact the Lord charges the idolatrous world with being hopelessly failing and desperately lacking in comparison to his openness and eagerness to make truth known.³²⁶ Further, such an obsession with locating the culture of the writing means that we become beholden to the extra-Biblical data. If we must learn all about the ANE and its world view before we can come to Genesis 1-3 to understand what it says, then our understanding rests more on the extra-Biblical information than on the text. In short, an interpretive screen or barrier that stands between us and the text has been constructed. Understanding the text requires an understanding of the cultural setting first. This is why Poythress can dismiss any “scientific” content to Genesis 1-3 because, of course, the ANE cultures knew nothing of modern science so how can they have addressed such things? Now I think that there is a serious mistake in this way of interpreting Scripture. What do we need to interpret the Bible? We need several things (all of which the Bible talks about) but we do not need extra-Biblical information. If we did need such information then the Bible loses its authority. It fails to be the standard by which everything else must be measured. This is because to understand the Bible you need first the cultural setting, the extra-Biblical data, the interpretive screen which is all provided by the world of academia. These become the standard, or at least hand-maidens, without which the Bible is lost! In sharp contrast, I would want to emphasise the divine authorship of Scripture. I am not neglecting or denying the human component, but the Authorship of Scripture is most definitely the Lord God. The Scriptures teach that what God has revealed and his salvation are freely and readily available for all generations.³²⁷ When the Lord God superintended Genesis 1-3 he had in mind not only the original hearers but also us in this day of science as well as all those in between! This does not excuse careful handling of the text, an understanding of the culture as revealed in Scripture, and connections with other Scripture. What I am advocating is that the text does not need to go through some decoding mechanism which modern critical scholars have devised.

Poythress (and many other well meaning writers) go on to conclude that Genesis 1-3, as a

326 See: Isaiah 41:21-24; 43:9; 45:21. Compare: Isaiah 40:21; 41:4; 46:10; 48:3,16; 64:4.

327 See, for example: Psalm 68:20; 100:5; 117:2.

consequence of being written against the ANE background, does not speak about either science or history, because the ANE reader would not understand such themes. There are two major things wrong with this line of reasoning. The first is to misunderstand the nature of man. The second is to give an undue elevated status to modern thought. Poythress misunderstands the nature of man because it is assumed that the ANE cultures had no category of truth. Further he misunderstands man because he seems to suggest that former peoples were not as sophisticated as modern man is today. We have our science and history which is far above the reasoning powers of ancient man. But what do we mean by “science” and “history”? Well, in short, we are talking about truth here. Observations of objects and events and some connections linking them in time and space is all that science and history are concerned with. Somehow we have given to our modern versions of “science” and “history” a status and designation far above what they really deserve. The Scriptures are the truth. As such they must, *of necessity*, be correct whatever they speak on, whatever they touch, whether it be science, history, geography or whatever. In modern times we have set apart certain things such as “science” as though only modern man could attain to such knowledge. It seems to be a new form of gnostic heresy!

When it comes to specific teaching on the major themes in Genesis, Poythress does his utmost to appease all people. For example, taking the view that Genesis was written against the ANE as a background, he concludes that the flood may have been global but does not need to have been. The text, he tells us, gives us no clear view because the ancient mind had no idea that the world was a globe or a sphere hanging in space.³²⁸ To discover whether it was local or universal we need to go to the extra-Biblical data.³²⁹ Poythress does not speak much about the fall, but what he does say is based not on an interpretation of Genesis, but a consideration of Psalm 104. From his reading of Psalm 104 Poythress concludes that it “does not suggest that lions' carnivorous eating habits are a “bad” thing” and that consequently “we do not have any firm basis for saying that animal death started only after the fall of man.”³³⁰ With regard to Genesis 1 and his view of creation, Poythress is very clear after detailing all the other possible views, that he favours the analogical day view.³³¹ Poythress suggests that the six days of Genesis 1 are effectively God's working days which are analogous *but not identical* to our working days. He uses the apparent identity in Exodus 20:8-11 to develop this idea. For Poythress there is no evidence in Genesis 1 of what he refers to as “clock-time” measurement for time.³³² The phrase “evening and morning” does not count as a

328 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 129.

329 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 129.

330 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 122.

331 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 131,146,256.

332 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 142,143,147,256.

“clock-time” measurement but is merely a reference to events. Such reasoning is contorted to say the least. As a variant of the framework hypothesis, and very much like its cousin, Poythress's analogical day theory stretches credulity. It is evidently natural to take the phrase “evening and morning” to refer to what we may call “clock-time” and meaning a literal 24 hour period. The description of days in Genesis 1 are clear. The same types of designation (i.e. reference to “evening and morning” or a numeral connected with the Hebrew word “*yom*”) are found throughout Scripture, and in no other case are they taken as meaning anything other than a literal 24 hour day.

But Poythress is clearly a little unhappy with his conclusions because he seems to want to have his cake and eat it. He concludes that the Genesis 1 text does indicate creation in 6 days, but then again the duration is equally 14 billion years:

“God really did create the world in six days. That is to say, when we speak in everyday human terms, and think in terms of the human rhythms of work and rest, we are right to say that God created the world in six days, because we are thinking of days within an interactive orientation. Only within the technical sphere of consistent clock orientation and calculation do we develop another, complementary perspective on time. Within that sphere, where we define “time” in an unusual, precise way that separates it from human rhythms, we obtain a figure of 14 billion years.”³³³

Thus two time-frames are operating, the six days of God's creation, and 14 billion years of real time. What does this mean? Well it can only mean that the six days are not really literal 24 hour periods. What Poythress is claiming is similar to what framework hypothesisers who hold that Genesis 1-3 is nothing but a literary framework and must be interpreted by literary means not by scientific or truth content means. Framework hypothesisers often refer to the six days as “days of God” and Poythress seems to share in this conviction. But let us ask what earthly good could there be in God revealing creation to us by means of days which refer not to our experience but to his? What exactly do we mean by “a day of God”? Certainly such a phrase has a meaning in other texts, meaning a time period in which God acts in and through history, (e.g. “*the day of the Lord*”).³³⁴ But what is meant by such an idea in the context of creation? To talk of a “day of God” in the history of the world is one thing, but it has no meaning at all for us when set in the context of creation. God is eternal. He has no need to refer to a day in *his* experience. Such a concept is meaningless. In connection with history and with events in this world, this created order, we can talk of “a day of God” but in creation the meaning falls into a vacuum. The analogical day theory fails to do justice to the text because it invents an idea which has no meaning. Everyone knows what is meant by the

333 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 220.

334 See, for example: Joel 2:11; Zephaniah 1:7; Malachi 3:2.

term “day” and the natural conclusion in reading Genesis 1 – which was given for our instruction not for God or the heavenly realms – is to understand the term in its normal usage. A day means a period of 24 hours.³³⁵ If we start advocating a “day” which has no earthly meaning and which only God can know, what earthly good does it for us? None whatsoever.

Poythress's understanding of creation is based on accepting science as a means to truth, and of interpreting Scripture alongside science. He does not like to make any definite conclusions, saying that creation harmonizes with fiat creation, progressive creation or theistic evolution.³³⁶ All three are possible as far as the text of Scripture is concerned and it requires us to use extra-Biblical data to settle the issue.³³⁷ Poythress's consistent appeal to extra-Biblical data, to “evidence outside Scripture, that is, evidence deriving from general revelation and the world that God rules” suggests clearly that he does not hold to the Biblical doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture.³³⁸ Scripture requires supplements. He asserts that we cannot settle the issue of origins using the Bible alone. Such a position is a dangerous one because whatever else we think we are doing by supplementing Scripture with some hand-maiden, what will inevitably happen is that that hand-maiden will become the mistress and will usurp authority.

The missing ingredient – the fall.

From a Biblical perspective it is difficult to ignore the doctrine of the fall and man's sin. Various ideas are suggested to explain this state of affairs but the central focus is more often than not on mankind and his relation to God. What is often totally overlooked is how the fall affected everything else besides the will and disposition of man. We have already discussed this universal effect of sin in chapter 3, but it is essential to point out here that any science that is engaged in which does not take account of the fall of the universe will seriously miss the mark. God created all things “good” but we do not now see the world and the universe in such a way. When naturalists look at the world of living things today they do not see the lion laying with the lamb as it was in the beginning of creation and will be when all things are restored.³³⁹ The fierce and harsh world in which parasites prey on their hosts and food chains with top predators can be formulated is not one which God initially created, although he certainly allowed for it in his sovereign plans. All animate life were created to eat fruit, nuts, seeds and vegetation to begin with, and the allowance for the

335 Let not the reader be hoodwinked and sidetracked by the meaningless discussion of some who like to point out that the word “day” can mean “daylight” for this adds nothing and takes nothing from the argument being pressed here. The time frame of Genesis 1 is one ordinary week.

336 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 255.

337 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 256.

338 Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 256.

339 Genesis 2:19; Isaiah 11:6; 65:25.

consumption of animal flesh only came about after the great flood when their original food would have been very scarce.³⁴⁰ We do not have all the details of what life was like on Noah's ark but after the flood the Lord declared that: *"the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea,"* so that there was need for care and hunting as the animal population increased.³⁴¹ The concepts of predation, hunting and meat-eating are all part of the fall, but where is consideration of these facts taken into account in modern biology? It is one thing to make accurate descriptions of the habitats and behaviour of animals we can observe today, but any description of the "natural history," (i.e. an extrapolation back in time), of these same animals must take this degeneration into account. What of the physical world of stars, planets, oceans and mountains? These too have suffered the degeneration of the curse. But exactly how? This we cannot really know, but that a "fall" – a downgrading and distortion – has occurred must feature somewhere in our discussions. Further, the restoration and redemption of all things to glory must feature equally in any presentation of the nature of things. Again we have sketchy details, but that this creation-fall-redemption schema must govern our thoughts in science is something we cannot deny.

The supremacy of Scripture.

It is with this discussion of the fall and of its future redemption that forces us back to view Scripture as supreme. The world of general revelation cannot give us such history nor the future we need to understand things. Man looks in vain for the details of creation and in particular of the fall, and of final glory. But in Scripture these are plain to see. It is for this reason, amongst many others, that supremacy must be given to Scripture when we discuss science (or any other subject for that matter). In interpreting Scripture we must ensure that we have no other arbiter or maiden determining what is or is not the case. Scripture is sufficient. When interpreting general revelation, creation and providence, we must look at it carefully but with *Scriptural* eyes. We cannot just look at Scripture to understand the world. That is a mistake made by medieval Christians. But to look at the world on its own terms, that is a mistake of modern Christians. The true way is to view all things through the Scriptures. We view Scripture as the standard by which everything else must be examined.

Up to this point I hope that the reader will have come to realise a number of salient points concerning science and also about the Christian faith. With regard to science it should be readily apparent that it operates only because the world is ordered and regular, which is only so because

340 Genesis 1:29; 9:1f.

341 Genesis 9:2; 10:9.

God has created it. Far from an independent mindset we ought to recognise our place in God's world. But then also I hope that the reader recognises the severe limitations modern science operates under. It is limited because of our finite nature. We have only five senses and we must *analyse* creation, (i.e. split it up according to sense), before we reconstruct it in our minds. All of this works very well in general, but again only because God is Creator. The moment we lose sight of God as Creator and originator of what we observe, we are lost in a fog of confusion. But even with an acceptance of God's creative and sustaining power, we are still limited as to what we can observe. Science is further limited by forgetting that our five senses are not comprehensive of creation. Whom is to say that there isn't information of a type for which we have no sense? In fact modern science's arrogance that it can operate only with its five senses and extended probes severely limits its progress. Science is also limited because of its refusal to accept the spiritual world. How this interacts with the physical is impossible to really discuss. Perhaps the starting point for discussion about this is the incarnation of Christ, where two natures, perfect human and divine were united in the one person. We have been given wonderful apparatus with which to observe this world and enjoy it. We ought to praise the giver and use them for his glory rather than seeking to use them to construct our own towers of Babel.

The Christian faith, as described in the Scriptures, has one main focus, namely Christ the incarnate one and his great work. It is his person and his great work which answers all needs. I hope to describe this in great detail in part 3, but for now I want just to point out that in the conflict between science and the Christian faith we are pitting the mere ideas and inventions of men against God. As Christians we offer Christ and him crucified, risen and exalted. This is far, far greater an object of worship, a source of life, a satisfaction of soul and a restorer of health than anything modern science offers. Do remember that this is God's world. The things within it that God has provided for our good are not owned by science, they are God's. So the wonderful natural remedies found in plants that drug companies try and mimic were manufactured by God. The minerals and precious metals mined by modern technology and processed into our numerous gadgets were all given by God's good hand. Science has usurped authority to itself which rightly belongs to God. In comparing science with Scripture the contest is a walkover – it is a “no contest”!



Part 3: Salvation.



Chapter 9

Salvation, the glory of God.

We have seen the great problem (or perhaps problems) that man has, and we have seen how science simply doesn't come anywhere near to providing satisfactory answers. What then does the Christian church have to offer in response? I must immediately qualify what I mean by the phrase "Christian church" lest there be any confusion in the reader's mind. By this I mean, more accurately, what does the Bible – God's word – have to say to us? How has God responded to this great problem? After all, the Bible has made the problem we all know and experience very plain to us where man has struggled to understand it, so what has it got to say in response? What is the Bible's answer to sin?

Personal.

Our need is great. We need deliverance and rescue. We do not just need an answer to why we are here – the intellectual quest. Nor do we just need an understanding of man's behavioural problems and heartaches. Nor is it sufficient just to resolve the inequality of the world. No, for all of these great problems (and the many not mentioned here), are problems affecting and touching every life. We need a solution which encompasses all of these great issues together. If we approach this from the perspective of science we may take a technological approach. Perhaps some great formula or method or procedure could be adopted to resolve the numerous difficulties? At once I hope you can see the folly and failure of such an approach. Modern science is sorely limited. Or maybe the answer should be amongst the world leaders in their coming together to sort out the problems in a rational humanistic way? I hope, again, you see that this is folly too. How many summits and congresses have there been over the centuries? How many organisations have been formed to address these great issues and we still have wars and famine and inequality and so on? What then do we require? Well I think the first thing for us to realise is that the problems are not all independent of each one of us. Why are there wars? Well, put simply, it is because men and women are selfish and greedy and do not consider one another properly. A misunderstanding becomes an argument. An

argument turns into a feud resulting in a vendetta, and if enough people are cajoled by the instigators it results not merely in a fight but a war. Isn't that what happens?³⁴² Thankfully every argument does not turn into a war, but it may do. Why are there famines and people dying from curable diseases? Again it is because of indifference and apathy and the lack of love on the part of those that have. Of course we see great strides in attempting to redress these inequalities by some but they are mere tokens – a drop in the ocean – fighting against the general tidal wave which protects, preserves, even promotes the inequalities. What about our attempts at healing the broken hearted and fractured of mind? It is not all that long ago that people who did not fit into society were separated out of it. It is easy perhaps to assume a normality for the majority with a clearly defined set of behaviours so that we can ignore or hide those whom we deem “abnormal.” Now we seek a different way which seems to redefine man to attempt to include varieties of behaviour and conditions many of which are mere masks for sinful behaviour. Instead we ought to realise that we are all the same, we are all sinners. Some have sins we do not like at all and would do anything to curb. Murder and paedophilia are examples of these. Other sins we may laud and esteem. Pride and self-reliance would sit in this category. Still others are so pervasive we do not even realise we exhibit them. Chief amongst this category is lack of faith in God. Thus there is no one who may be deemed *normal*. There is no person of whom it may be said: “look there is a perfect man/woman.” Without doubt there is always a respectable norm in society, but this changes in time. Attitudes to sexuality have changed. Attitudes to authority have changed. Attitudes to many things have altered, but the majority come to accept a set of unwritten norms so that most people are lulled into a false sense of security about their true status and being.

In reality all of us have a variety of problems which may not be the same in detail person to person. Although we are different in detail, we are all one and the same because we all exhibit the same basic nature which in essence can be defined as “sin.” Our personal sin yields a distinct cocktail and flavour of behaviours. However each one of us is broken, distorted and *out of kilter*, and, therefore, we need a Saviour. The answer to the problem of sin in us is the need for a deliverer – someone who can rescue us from our sinful nature. This person must have certain specific qualities. In the first place this one cannot be like us in our sin for if they were, they would just be a contributor to the great problem. No, this one must be sinless. To be a rescuer they must have great power and authority to remove the problem of sin ingrained. Who can fulfil these and other necessary criteria?

342 See James 4:1.

Jesus Christ – the answer.

The Bible gives us the answer to this question. Only the Lord Jesus Christ fulfils these requirements. But without doubt the first thing we need to realise is that the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the focus, the fulcrum, the object of wonder, the person of delight, and the answer to all conundrums. The Lord pointed this out to the disciples when he was raised from the dead. He told them that the Old Testament Scriptures were all about him.³⁴³ Modern science thinks (sadly) it has achieved great goals in understanding and wisdom. I do not doubt but that man has achieved many things, but the answers to the real questions have been woefully answered. The question of our origin and future is answered hopelessly by modern science. Other burning questions like, how do we repair man's brokenness? Or, what ought to be the way we govern our lives? Are equally badly answered. Philosophies are just as bad because no one but philosophers understand their convoluted explanations! They take the form of logical arguments and systems. Whereas science brings us mathematical and equation-based answers, philosophies build systems of thought based on logic. How do these help? Well they may help some for a time in a limited way (although I doubt this) but they cannot answer the young person who sits alone wondering why they must suffer the scourge of cancer or face the brutality of life in a slum with no parents.

But you may be wondering at this point why is the answer to all life's myriad questions found in a person? Why not in an equation or in a philosophy? Well I think the answer to that question is quite easily resolved. I suppose to a great extent it depends on the way the question is posed. If you ask, for example, how did the physical universe come to be? You might be tempted to limit your answer to a physical one, looking for the mechanisms of how things are inter-related in time. You would not *have* to limit yourself in this way, but you might. Or perhaps you ask this question, what will happen to my body when I die? Again you may be driven by circumstance and the environment you currently inhabit to answer this with physical parameters only. The trouble is we really do not know how to ask the questions properly. I am contending that Christ Jesus is the answer to every question. My Biblical authority for this is varied. First, as we have had occasion to reference several times, the apostle Paul wrote that in Christ: "*are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*"³⁴⁴ This makes complete sense because not only is he a perfect man, he is the person in whom dwells "*all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*"³⁴⁵ Being God he knows all things and can make perfect use of all things. He is omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (able to do all things). For further confirmation of my assertion that he is the answer to all questions,

343 Luke 24v27,44-47.

344 Colossians 2:3.

345 Colossians 2:9.

consider these words of Paul to the Ephesians:

*“which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*³⁴⁶

You see Christ has been elevated to the very highest place above all other things whatsoever may exist, and all things are subject to him. This means that whatever question may be posed (considering this as an aspect of current existence) is subject to Christ. He is the one who owns all questions and therefore has all the answers! Incidentally, another remarkable thing about this verse, is that the church is his body and as such has the deposit of all that Christ has! You see the church is the sole body on earth which can indeed answer the questions of life because it is connected to the head, namely Christ, who is “*all in all*.” How does this work? Well, we are connected to the head by means of the Spirit of God and the Word of God (Scripture). The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures never conflict and so as the body of Christ we ought to be the repository of truth, wisdom and knowledge! Never mind Oxford or Cambridge universities, or Harvard, Yale and so on. The church is The University of life! Christ alone has all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge!

Jesus Christ – the Saviour.

Quite apart from the fact that Christ satisfies our intellect and understanding, he alone is the only person who can satisfy our other great needs. Beyond question our greatest need is cleansing from sin. We do not like to be sinners really. I know this may sound odd, for if it were true, why do we continue in sin? But when we are redeemed and have our eyes opened to see our state and the offer of cleansing we rush at it. No one really likes to be filthy in body. Don't you just love it when you have had a good hot bath and put on some fresh clean clothes? When your life is corrected it feels better. Now only Christ can correct us and address the great problem of our filth. This is because he alone has the power and ability to do such a work and he alone is sinless (pure and clean).

We must also realise that the problem of sin is not just our problem. There is another who is affected by our sin. Of course God is not really altered or tarnished in any way by our distortions. However his reputation is affected. In short God is offended by our sinful state. Remember – he is our Creator. Think how horrified a parent might be when their child covered in filth and mud seeks

346 Ephesians 1:20-23.

to enter their house! God made man perfect but man in his rebellion has sought out second-rate and hopeless avenues.³⁴⁷ How offended would you be if you were asked for some advice and the person asking it laughs it to scorn and does something foolish with pride? Well God is offended by our rebellion and hatred of him. So how can our filth be cleansed?

If we seek one who could cleanse us from amongst men we would be wasting our time. All of us are in the same predicament – we are all filthy and unable to cleanse ourselves. What then is the answer? Well it is only possible if someone who was clean and pure came from heaven's glory and entered our world to effect a cleansing programme. Clearly no one from the world can effect such a scheme so it must be from outside of this cursed universe. Christ wonderfully fits this requirement. If he were sinful then he could not address the problem we have. He would be just like us and would be part of the problem. But he is not sinful and we can demonstrate this easily from Scripture.³⁴⁸ There are numerous statements and arguments to show Christ's sinless nature, but I think one of the most telling places we find it is in the words of the one who bears the responsibility for Christ's execution. It was Pilate who declared on three separate occasions that he could find “*no fault*” in the Lord Jesus at all.³⁴⁹ This is remarkable. The Jewish leaders and authorities wanted Jesus to be put to death. They could find no charge with which to accuse him.³⁵⁰ Not until he agreed that he was truly the Son of God.³⁵¹ His claim was correct, of course, but the Jewish leaders did not believe him. Now they were not allowed to execute anyone, and had to present the Lord Jesus before the Roman governor, Pilate, for him to pass sentence. Imagine the situation. The Jewish leaders present the Lord Jesus to the Roman governor so that the sentence of execution could be passed. But Pilate needed to know what the charges were. If ever there was an opportunity to demonstrate the sinful state of the Lord surely this was it. However the Jewish authorities just could not bring anything which could be deemed wrong or against the law, and three times Pilate stated he found no fault in the Lord! Pilate's great error was to acquiesce to the Jews' demands. He ought to have released Jesus, but he feared the crowds whom the Jewish authorities had whipped up to a frenzy, and so Christ was led away to be crucified.

This wonderful sinless one was condemned and crucified, but he wasn't just an unwilling victim of injustice. Christ was not only a sinless man, he was also the incarnate Son of God. Just as there is abundant witness in the Scriptures to his sinlessness, so also is there to his deity. For example, he claimed to be God by taking the very name that God declared of himself to Moses, (“I

347 Ecclesiastes 7:29.

348 See, for example, Luke 1v35; John 8v48; 2Corinthians 5v21; Hebrews 4v15; 7v26; 9v14; 1Peter 2v22; 1John 3v5.

349 John 18v38; 19v4,5.

350 Matthew 26v59,60; Mark 14v55.

351 Matthew 26v63-65; Mark 14v60-64; Luke 22v66-71.

Am”).³⁵² Further, he accepted worship as God from Thomas.³⁵³ His deity was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets, has been declared by Paul and the other New Testament writers, and is displayed by the four gospel writers too.³⁵⁴ Christ demonstrated his deity by performing miracles which served to show that he had the power of the Creator – making water into wine and multiplying bread and fish for a multitude.³⁵⁵ Perhaps nowhere more powerfully demonstrates Christ's deity than the opening chapter of John in which we are introduced to the “*Word*” who existed before the beginning of time and creation, and who was God.³⁵⁶ Thus the sinless one, who was perfect man and fully God, has the right and the power to deal with our problem. The way in which he dealt with this needs separate consideration. Having considered the need for a personal sinless divine Saviour we must turn our attention to one vital theme that is found throughout the New Testament and helps us greatly to understand what salvation or rescue really is. That theme is “union” or being “in” Christ.

Union.

Being “in” Christ or united to him is the main or the most important thing. What do we mean by this idea? Perhaps one way of understanding this is to consider the idea of being a member of one of the armed forces. To be “in” this company demands responsibilities and obedience. If you are in the army you live amongst others who are “in” the same company. Your life is governed by the army and its rules and ways. Where the army is there you are. What the army does is what you as part of the army must do. We might indeed say that your very identity is defined by being “in the army.” You are an army-man/woman. Our created identity is formally “in” Adam – we are all born as descendants of Adam. But salvation brings in a new identity. Rather than being “in” Adam, we are now “in” Christ.

In John 15 the Lord uses the Old Testament illustration of the vine to explain how true believers relate to the Trinity. A believer is pictured as a branch, Christ is the vine stock and the Father is the vine dresser who prunes or cleans the branches so that they produce fruit. In John 15 there is no clear indication of the role of the Holy Spirit but the apostle Paul takes the image on by noting that fruit is from the Holy Spirit.³⁵⁷ By this we may suggest that the sap in the vine represents the Holy Spirit. Since the vine (Christ) is full of the Holy Spirit without measure, the branches that

352 Exodus 3:14; John 8:58.

353 John 20v28.

354 See for example, 2Samuel 7:14; Psalm 45:6,7; 110:1; Romans 1:4; 1Timothy 3:16; Revelation 1:8,11,17,18; John 1:1-18.

355 John 2:1f; Matthew 14:15f

356 John 1:1f.

357 Galatians 5:22.

produce fruit will be full of the Holy Spirit too. Whilst we must not neglect or forget the person and work of the Holy Spirit, nor forget the Father and his work, the main thing we need to consider is being “in” the vine or connected to Christ. The same idea is expressed with two other pictures that speak of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are members of his body connected to Him who is the head.³⁵⁸ We are living stones built upon the foundation and corner stone, Christ.³⁵⁹ But in practical terms what does being “in” Christ really mean?

It will be helpful to consider those things we find in Scripture that are to be found “in” Christ. Even though we have spent time thinking of Christ and his nature, we must start with the very person of Christ first. Thus in him, in his very person, we find that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form.³⁶⁰ In Christ all things consist or are upheld.³⁶¹ Further, the very glory of God dwells in Christ.³⁶² The incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity greatly pleased the Father who expressed his delight in Christ on two occasions during his earthly life. First at his baptism.³⁶³ Then secondly at his transfiguration.³⁶⁴ Finally, Christ the Son of Man was without fault or blemish so that in him no sin could be found.³⁶⁵

But wonderfully we find that in Christ the God-Man are to be found all things needful for us! First, we must note that the purposes and plans of God established before time and creation are only to be found fully and completely in Christ.³⁶⁶ This means that nowhere else, and in no one else can the purpose of God be found. We are brought immediately to the exclusivity of Christ. By saying “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” and then also that “*no one comes to the Father except through Me,*” he thus made clear that salvation can only be found in him.³⁶⁷ Consequently in him we have not only life, or life in all its fullness, but eternal life.³⁶⁸ The very entrance into eternal life comes through the same Creator that life itself initially came to be. Christ is Creator, and it is through him that our new birth is brought about. We are in Christ through the very purpose of God and we are begotten again into Christ by means of the gospel.³⁶⁹ Our being created in Christ is for a purpose – for good works pre-prepared by the Lord.³⁷⁰ We have the blessings promised to Abraham

358 Colossians 1:18; 2:19.

359 1Peter 2:4-7.

360 Colossians 1:9; 2:9.

361 Colossians 1:17.

362 John 13:32.

363 Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11.

364 Matthew 17:5; 2Peter 1:17.

365 John 18:38; 19:4,6; 1John 1:5; 3:5.

366 Ephesians 3:11; 2Timothy 1:9.

367 John 14:6.

368 John 1:4; 5:26; 10:10; Romans 6:23; 2Timothy 1:1.

369 1Corinthians 1:30; 4:15; 2Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10.

370 Ephesians 2:10.

which are found in Christ.³⁷¹ We are brought near to the family of God but only in Christ.³⁷² Through our union with Christ we have been “circumcised” meaning that our body of the sins of the flesh have been put off.³⁷³

Thinking objectively about our union with Christ, we have received the great kindness, mercy and grace of God.³⁷⁴ This kindness was expressed in the forgiveness of God which is only to be found in Christ.³⁷⁵ Salvation, rescue and deliverance are thus all only in Christ, including that which is on-going and needed now.³⁷⁶ Further, we know the love of God only in Christ.³⁷⁷ Our justification is found only in Christ, so that now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.³⁷⁸ Our redemption – the purchase of God – is only in Christ.³⁷⁹ Reconciliation, peace with God can only be found in Christ.³⁸⁰ Our being sanctified – being made holy – is only in Christ.³⁸¹ As a result of our salvation we are also sealed by the Holy Spirit but only in Christ, and we have our inheritance only in Christ.³⁸²

Thinking more practically, we must again refer to Colossians 2:2,3 for we find that in him are found hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This is a remarkable verse which teaches us that Christ who is the very source of life for men and women, is also the source of intelligence and application, for we are not automata. Note that this is not given to any but those who have the right of access and who take time to seek it properly because it is “*hidden*” in Christ. We have confidence and boldness to approach the Father, but only in Christ.³⁸³ All the promises of God are ours, but only in Christ.³⁸⁴ We are free in Christ, and we are led in the simplicity which is found in Christ.³⁸⁵ Remarkably, we have within us “*every good thing*” because we are in Christ!³⁸⁶ Indeed every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies are ours, but only in Christ.³⁸⁷ Further, we are complete – satisfied, whole, fulfilled – only in Christ.³⁸⁸ Our triumph, growth and being established can occur only in Christ.³⁸⁹ Paul makes mention of the ways he used to teach others in every church,

371 Galatians 3:14.

372 Ephesians 2:13.

373 Colossians 2:11.

374 Ephesians 2:7; 2Timothy 2:1.

375 Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 1:14.

376 2Timothy 2:10; 2Corinthians 1:10.

377 Romans 8:39.

378 Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 3:9; Romans 8:1.

379 Ephesians 1:7.

380 2Corinthians 5:19.

381 1Corinthians 1:2.

382 Ephesians 1:11,13.

383 Ephesians 3:12; 1John 5:14.

384 2Timothy 1:1; 2Corinthians 1:20.

385 Galatians 2:4; 2Corinthians 11:3.

386 Philemon 1:6.

387 Ephesians 1:3.

388 Colossians 2:10.

389 2Corinthians 1:21; 2Corinthians 2:14.

and these are only in Christ.³⁹⁰ If we claim the title “Christian” then we must continue our Christian lives by walking in Christ.³⁹¹ If we want to grow then we must be grounded and built up but only in Christ.³⁹²

Thus Christ is to be both the centre and also the orbit of all our experience. To be “in” Christ means that our whole life cannot be outside of his influence and his presence. This is why Paul could say “*reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin*” and then also to have our minds set “*on things above*” because our lives are “*hidden with Christ in God*.”³⁹³

Christ – the universal solution.

So far we have considered salvation from a personal point of view. We have identified that sinful people need a sinless Saviour who must have certain especial criteria, (purity, power). However there is a greater reference point than simply man in what the Saviour has come to do. We find this idea expressed in Paul's letter to the Romans:

*“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.”*³⁹⁴

Here we find that the creation itself will be delivered from its corruption and bondage. In his letter to the Colossians Paul writes that he will reconcile all things both in heaven and earth to himself:

*“and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”*³⁹⁵

Thus salvation is not just a matter of our well-being. It is much more than this. Christ Jesus is king over all. The whole purpose of Christ's entrance into this world (incarnation), his exit via the cross, the resurrection and the ascension, followed by the Holy Spirit's outpouring and then Christ's return is so that the glory of God will be over all the earth: “*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*”³⁹⁶ Elsewhere we find that all things

390 1Corinthians 4:17.

391 Colossians 2:6; 1John 2:6.

392 Colossians 2:7.

393 Romans 6:11; Colossians 3:2,3.

394 Romans 8:19-22.

395 Colossians 1:20.

396 Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14.

will be subjected to the Lord Jesus.³⁹⁷ The work of Christ in coming to earth and his death on the cross has thus a greater purpose than just individual salvation. It is a declaration of the goodness, mercy and the justice of God. It is a vindication before all creation that God is good, that God is holy, just and right.

But we learn more by asking the question: what does the incarnation reveal? When the Son of God entered our world by being made human flesh so that in two perfect but distinct natures, (human and divine), the One Person of the Son of God found expression, this was not just for our salvation. In the very act we find something truly remarkable. God is not distant from his creation. He is “Immanuel” – God with us, and that in a very special way. If the Son of God could take on human flesh, this means not only that the relationship between man and God could be restored, but much more. If we really want to know anything about human nature, we cannot and we must not ignore the incarnation, for it tells us that whatever we may think humanity is, one thing is sure, man was made to be *intimately* connected to God. Of course Christ the Son of God is unique. No one can ever be like him. Nevertheless man without the indwelling God is not really man at all. Blaise Pascal, the French writer put it like this:

There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.³⁹⁸

Solomon wrote many years before this that God had “*put eternity*” in the hearts of men.³⁹⁹ Thus without the Lord dwelling within us we are dissatisfied, unhappy and at odds with everything. The incarnation points us back to what we were meant to be. We can see this in our creation for it was God who fashioned the heart of each and every man, and when he created Adam he breathed into his nostrils the very breath of life.⁴⁰⁰ Although the primary reference is to man's constituted nature as a spiritual being, it does indicate also the capacity for God's indwelling of humanity.⁴⁰¹

But taking this idea of the significance and meaning of the incarnation further, we find also that to understand creation we really ought to look at it with God as the main reference point. We ought not to look at creation except through whom God is. And we cannot really look at creation through God, without seeing it all through Christ, for he alone is the “*express image*” of God, the one whom has explained who God is.⁴⁰² The Lord Jesus Christ who alone in his very person united

397 Ephesians 1:22,23.

398 Blaise Pascal. BrainyQuote.com, Xplore Inc, 2015. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at: <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/b/blaisepasc395508.html>.

399 Ecclesiastes 3:11.

400 Psalm 33:15.

401 Genesis 2:7.

402 Hebrews 1:3; John 1:18.

creation with the divine, must therefore be the main driving force and impetus for all pursuits, whether they be scientific, intellectual, practical or imaginative. How can “science” be done correctly? Only from the perspective of knowing Christ. Only from Christ as foundation and Christ as ultimate goal. To modern science this is, of course, all too much. But for the Christian, surely, this idea of Christ being the basis and foundation, the methodological approach, and the final goal ought to be exciting and glorious! It will require much careful thought and attention to detail to work out a “science” based on looking at creation with Christ as the sum and substance of all things. We will have to preserve careful distinctions to avoid errors like pantheism (everything is God) or panentheism (everything is God but God also exists beyond everything), for creation, whilst it bears the stamp and hallmarks of its Creator, is nevertheless distinct and separate from him. But this is not all, for a science – that is an inquiry into creation – must also be based on the triune God, for it is not really possible (nor is it desirable) to separate the three persons in the Godhead, for even though they are distinct persons, their work is always in concert and agreement. Whilst Christ is central, because we *know* God through Christ, we cannot ignore the Father nor the Spirit. After all, Father and Spirit were co-Creators.⁴⁰³ These initial thoughts are the beginning of work on a truly “Christian” science. Other factors to bear in mind are, the concept of mission and commission, and the purposes of God (new creation), but these thoughts must be deferred to another project!

403 Genesis 1.

Chapter 10

Mission continuing...

So salvation centres on the person of Jesus Christ in whom we must be united. We get all our knowledge of Christ exclusively from the Bible. Now you may have thought that the Bible is subdivided and broken up into many different themes which derive both from the time and culture it was written in, and the people with which it deals. However the amazing thing about the Bible is its unity of message. All along there has been a single mission, but how this is expressed varies according to whom is addressed. This mission carries on as part of the very salvation enjoyed by those who have been saved. To say that the mission involves the Lord Jesus Christ is the understatement of all time. However it will be helpful to consider the concept of God's purpose, "the mission" of God, and then to go on and discuss humanity's responsibility (or our mission).

The mission – to make known.

The Bible is not a library of books written by men. This is a common mistake. It is rather the single message of God revealed to mankind – all of mankind. The Bible is what God wants man to know about how to consider the realities he or she faces – all of them. How can I claim this? Well chiefly because of the way the Lord Jesus Christ came and lived in this world. He repeatedly pointed his disciples and hearers to the Old Testament Scriptures and then he also told his closest disciples that the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, would lead them into all truth.⁴⁰⁴ The writer to the Hebrews made this great statement about the difference between the Old and the New Testaments:

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more

404 John 16:13.

excellent name than they."⁴⁰⁵

It is God who is speaking. First God spoke perfectly but piecemeal through the many prophets. Second He spoke perfectly and completely by means of the Son of God. In this unified testimony to God's great kindness to us, we can see the mission plan of the Lord which centres on Christ's wonderful person and work. In this text we can also see that at least part of his mission was to declare and make widely known the truth. To amplify and prove this will of the Lord's to make known, we only have to consider the Lord's method of operation in the gospels. Looking at Matthew we find that he began ministering by preaching repentance and the Kingdom of God.⁴⁰⁶ Then we read that the Lord went all about the region of Galilee teaching and preaching and healing all manner of sicknesses.⁴⁰⁷ A little later in Matthew's account we read a similar thing:

*"Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."*⁴⁰⁸

Next we find the Lord commissioning his twelve disciples to do his work, and then when they had done what was asked we read:

*"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities."*⁴⁰⁹

The Lord then challenges those who had heard him preach the gospel, and towards the end of his time on earth he declares that the preaching of this good news must continue throughout the earth until the end.⁴¹⁰ Hence there is an emphasis on teaching people by declaring the good news. Christ acted as a great herald announcing the very word and wisdom of God. If we consider the apostle John we find that he begins his gospel by showing that the mission of the Lord Jesus included making God known. Here is how he puts it:

*"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."*⁴¹¹

The Lord Jesus in coming to earth has made known the invisible God! Right at the end of his time

405 Hebrews 1:1-4.

406 Matthew 4:17.

407 Matthew 4:23.

408 Matthew 9:35.

409 Matthew 10:7; 11:1.

410 Matthew 12:41; 24:14, 28:18-20.

411 John 1:18.

on earth the Lord Jesus in praying to the Father made it clear that he had indeed shown the “name,” or the very character of God, and would continue to do so:

*“And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*⁴¹²

He could say to his disciples: *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”*⁴¹³ He alone can claim to reveal truth for he alone is God in the flesh:

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*⁴¹⁴

Whilst Moses gave the people the law (truth) Christ brought both truth and grace:

*“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*⁴¹⁵

This concept of truth is very prominent in John's account.⁴¹⁶ The Lord Jesus was one who told the truth which he heard from God.⁴¹⁷ He was able to declare that he was “*The Truth*” who would send the disciples the “*Spirit of truth*” who having been sent of the Father would then lead them into “*all truth*.”⁴¹⁸ In his high priestly prayer he asks that the disciples would be made holy by the Father's truth which was his word.⁴¹⁹ Before Pilate he stated that he came into the world to “*bear witness to the truth*” and those who were “*of the truth*” would listen to him.⁴²⁰

This idea of revelation – of God making truth known – is ubiquitous in Scripture. As just one more example this time from the Old Testament consider the words of God in the prophet Isaiah:

*“Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?”*⁴²¹

“Who has performed and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the Lord,

412 John 17:26.

413 John 14:9.

414 John 1:14.

415 John 1:17.

416 See also John 3:21; 4:23,24; 5:33; 8:32.

417 John 8:40,45,46.

418 John 14:6; 16:13.

419 John 17:17.

420 John 18:37.

421 Isaiah 40:21.

*am the first; and with the last I am He. ’’’*⁴²²

*“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’”*⁴²³

*“I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.”*⁴²⁴

*“Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit Have sent Me.”*⁴²⁵

*“For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him.”*⁴²⁶

It is God who has spoken right from the very beginning of time and creation. He has not spoken in some secret place or in some mysterious way but openly for all who have ears to hear.

The main mission.

But making things known is not the only mission, nor really is it the main mission. The main mission is far more important, and everything else must be considered subordinate and even derivative. To find this mission is not difficult, except that our ears for hearing it are often times dull. What is God's purpose? The very purpose of God is that having chosen the elect before time and creation to be united with Christ, they should then be holy, his adopted sons, and enjoying the very love of God.⁴²⁷ God's eternal purpose is ultimately expressed through the church, Christ's body. His multifaceted wisdom is to be reflected through us who believe so that all principalities and powers will know that He is truly God.⁴²⁸ In short the purpose of God is the manifestation of, participation in, and enjoyment of the glory of God. How can I claim this? Well Paul instructed the Corinthians that whatever they did they ought to aim to glorify God.⁴²⁹ That is our great purpose – to give God the glory. What do we mean by this word “glory”? The word glory essentially refers to that which is substantial or “heavy” (i.e. has weight), good and perfectly beautiful. Where true glory is, there God can be found. When Ezekiel described the appearance of the Lord God by the river Chebar he concludes with these words:

422 Isaiah 41:4.

423 Isaiah 46:10.

424 Isaiah 48:3.

425 Isaiah 48:16.

426 Isaiah 64:4.

427 Ephesians 1:4,5.

428 Ephesians 3:10,11.

429 1Corinthians 10:31.

“Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.”⁴³⁰

It was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. Where the glory is, there is the Lord! When Moses requested to see the glory of God the Lord replied that it was impossible to see God's face and live, but then he told Moses that he could view his *goodness*:

“And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.” Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.””⁴³¹

The glory of God indicates the fact that God is perfect and beautiful in the fullest and most comprehensible way possible. By comparison everything else is failing, fading and futile. When we consider what is best, what is noble, what is good, what is right and helpful, what is healthy and just, what is true and needed, we can think of nothing better than God. It is this glory, this radiant beauty, that we are invited to become partakers of. Not that we in our own beings should be glorious, but that we as created redeemed beings may become partakers and delighters in the beauty and perfection of God.

Taking a different line of reasoning, we might ask “what does God require of us?” There are many instructions given for man throughout Scripture, but there are two places where answers are given to this great question. The first was given to Israel:

“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”⁴³²

Then some time later before Judah was finally exiled we find the Lord again reminding us what he requires:

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do

430 Ezekiel 1:28.

431 Exodus 33:18-23.

432 Deuteronomy 10:12.

justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”⁴³³

So what is the most vital thing for the Lord as far as people are concerned? In short both texts tell us that it is to *walk with God*. In the Deuteronomy text it explains this in terms of fearing God and wholeheartedly loving him. In the Micah text we find that walking with God is explained in terms of doing justice and exercising mercy. But the real essence is being with, and walking along with the Lord. We find this concept of walking with God a recurring feature in the Bible. Thus Enoch walked with God in such a wonderful way that the Lord God took him up into heaven without him needing to die.⁴³⁴ Then also we read of Noah walking with God. He is described as a “*just man, perfect in his generations*” and he received with godly fear the revelation of God, obeying what the Lord commanded.⁴³⁵ This theme is found all the way through the rest of the Old Testament.⁴³⁶ The New Testament continues this idea also. For example, we read of Paul exhorting the Colossians, who having received the Lord Jesus, to continue to “*walk in him*.”⁴³⁷ To the Galatians Paul taught that they must “*walk in the Spirit*.”⁴³⁸ To the Romans Paul taught that they should not walk in the flesh, but ought to walk properly in the steps of the faith of Abraham and in the newness of life.⁴³⁹ John reminds us that we ought to walk in “*the light*,” in “*truth*,” and “*just as he [Christ] walked*.”⁴⁴⁰ There is much teaching on what it means to walk correctly or worthy of the Lord.⁴⁴¹ But our walk is *with* the Lord. We follow him. This requires us to deny self and to take up the cross considering ourselves dead to this world and its affairs.⁴⁴²

Having considered the purpose of God from the point of view of glorifying him by enjoying a new relationship with him, there is yet another pivotal text for us to consider, namely, 2Peter 1:4. In this text we are told that we may be “*partakers of the divine nature*.” We must be very careful when discussing this idea because many false teachers have wrongly claimed that true believers become “*gods*” by which is implied *identity* with God in some way. To be a partaker of the divine nature, however, does not mean the loss of humanity. The Greek Orthodox church calls this idea, “*theosis*” in which there is “*a real and genuine union of the believer with God*.”⁴⁴³ Such a union

433 Micah 6:8.

434 Genesis 5:22-24; Hebrews 11:5.

435 Genesis 6:9,13f,22; 7:5; Hebrews 11:7.

436 See for example, Leviticus 18:4; 26:12; Joshua 22:5; 1Kings 2:3; 8:23; Psalm 119:1; Isaiah 2:3; Ezekiel 20:19.

437 Colossians 2:6.

438 Galatians 5:16,25.

439 Romans 4:12; 6:4; 8:1,4; 13:13.

440 1John 1:7; 2:6; 2John 1:4; 3John 1:3,4.

441 See, for example, Ephesians 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2,8,15; 1Thessalonians 2:12; 4:1,12.

442 Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23.

443 Daniel B. Clendenin, “Partakers of Divinity: The Orthodox Doctrine of Theosis” *JETS* 37/3 (September 1994) 365-379. 368. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at:

http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/37/37-3/JETS_37-3_365-379_Clendenin.pdf

does not compromise our human nature any more than it dilutes the divine. There is no confusion or fusion in our partaking of divinity. Amazingly, we are created to be in wonderful communion with the Triune God.⁴⁴⁴

That is why when God created humanity there was a significant difference in his action compared to the animal world. We read in Genesis 1:26-28:

*“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”*⁴⁴⁵

Mankind were to be made in the “image” and “likeness” of God so that there could be intimate and glorious fellowship between Creator and created. We get a small glimpse of this relationship in Genesis 2, which gives us the details of how God made man male and female on day 6. We can see this intimacy first in the very way in which God created mankind. It is not just a matter of speaking the word as in other acts of creation, (“let there be ... and it was”), for we find that the Lord made Adam from the dust of the ground as a potter fashions clay into a pot, and then he breathed into this formed clay the spirit or “breath of life” so that man became a “living being” or living soul.⁴⁴⁶ Next we can see this intimacy of relation in the provision the Lord made for man.⁴⁴⁷ Then further, we can see how this relationship is expressed through the conversations between the Lord and man. Having provided him with paradise and great provision (a multitude of trees for food), he issues a single command with a clear warning for disobedience.⁴⁴⁸ Here we see the order and connection between God and man established. God is sovereign ruler, man is servant and friend.

Going further we find that the Lord has involved man in the very process of his creation. Rather than make mankind male and female in an instant, it is done in two stages. First Adam is made from the dust. Then Adam is taught that he needs one comparable to him. Here we can see a reflection of what it means to be made in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-28 teaches us that mankind was made in the image and likeness of God by being made male and female. Hence it is the relationship between two who share the same basic essence (humanity) but are distinct in person (male and female). But note the patience and wisdom of how the Lord leads Adam to recognise that

444 John 14:23; 17:26.

445 Genesis 1:26-28.

446 Genesis 1:3,6,14; 2:7.

447 Genesis 2:8-15.

448 Genesis 2:16,17.

he needed Eve for completion. The animals were not sufficient for him! Then finally we must observe the immense privilege we find in the very way in which Eve was created. Why was it done in this way? There can be only one answer to this. It was done because the Lord does all things well and perfectly. It was the best way, and it was so because of what it teaches. You see even before sin and death came into the world, we have Adam being caused to go into a deep sleep. Eve was to be formed from a rib of Adam whilst he slept a deep sleep which signifies death.⁴⁴⁹ We can see here pictured the very means by which the Lord Jesus Christ would come and suffer death so that the church, would be born. Out of Christ's dead body, as the soldier pierced his side, flowed blood and water.⁴⁵⁰ Just as from a single grain of wheat comes many, so out of Christ's death comes much life, just as the Lord prophesied.⁴⁵¹ In this way the church – comprising true believers – was born. If you think all of this is fanciful then take a look at how Paul handles this text when he taught the Ephesians on marriage.⁴⁵² After quoting Genesis 2 he states: “*this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*”⁴⁵³ How amazing to think that the Lord was even instructing Adam about the very purpose of the Lord to come even as he is in the process of creation! Just this brief view of Genesis 2:24 teaches us that what the Lord is concerned with mainly is our fellowship and communion with him!

The scarlet thread of redemption.

From Genesis to Revelation we can see the outworking of the purposes of God. For a list of some of the prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament see table 10.1. Once Adam and Eve had sinned, then immediately this purpose of God is revealed as the Lord issues the curse to the serpent. We discover alongside this curse that there will come one described as the “*seed of the woman*” who although suffers the bruising of his heel, will nevertheless bruise the serpent's head.⁴⁵⁴ Eve mistakenly thinks her first-born son Cain may be this promised one.⁴⁵⁵ Then we find Noah is one through whom the promised rest will come.⁴⁵⁶ He served to bring salvation from the wickedness of the old world, and so is a graphic picture of the coming promised Saviour. Next we read of the promise given to Abraham.⁴⁵⁷ In his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. On and on throughout Scripture this promise of a Saviour is worked out. Abraham's descendants preserve the

449 Psalm 13:3; John 11:13.

450 John 19:34.

451 John 12:24.

452 Ephesians 5:25-33.

453 Ephesians 5:32.

454 Genesis 3:15.

455 Genesis 4:1f.

456 Genesis 5:29.

457 Genesis 12:1-7.

promise and then we find it narrowing down to be one amongst the tribe of Judah as Jacob prophesies at the end of the book of Genesis.⁴⁵⁸ In Numbers we get further indication through the

Table 10.1: Some of the many prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament.

Scripture	Key theme
Genesis 3:15	The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.
Genesis 12:1-7	In Abraham's seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
Genesis 22:8	God will provide for Himself the lamb.
Genesis 49:8-12	Out of Judah 'Shiloh' will come.
Numbers 24:17-19	A ruler will come forth from Jacob.
Deuteronomy 18:15-18	A Prophet will arise from amongst the people of God.
2Samuel 7:12-19	The promised seed (a long time off) will establish God's house and an eternal kingdom.
Job 19:25	I know that my Redeemer lives.
Psalms 2:6-12	The Son will be set as King on Zion's holy hill.
Psalms 16:10	The Holy One will not be left in the grave to decay.
Psalms 22	A graphic prophecy of the torments suffered on Calvary.
Psalms 110	The Lord as King and Priest after the order of Melchizedek.
Isaiah 7:14	A virgin shall conceive and bear a son.
Isaiah 9:6,7	Unto us a child is born – expressing the deity of the coming Christ.
Isaiah 11:1-5	The Branch of the Lord will minister in righteousness (c.f. Isaiah 4:2).
Isaiah 42:1-4	The Lord's 'servant' ministers to the Gentiles.
Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12	The Suffering Servant.
Jeremiah 23:5-8	The Branch of the Lord will be “The Lord our Righteousness” (c.f. Jeremiah 33:15 & Ezekiel 17:22-24).
Ezekiel 34:23-31	One Shepherd for the Lord's people, (David) (c.f. Ezekiel 37:24).
Daniel 9:24-27	The coming Messiah dated.
Micah 5:2	The place of the Messiah's birth.
Zechariah 6:12	The Branch shall build the temple of the Lord.
Zechariah 9:9	Triumphal entry predicted.
Zechariah 11:13	Thirty pieces of silver – Judas' payment for betrayal.
Zechariah 13:7	The sword against the Lord's chosen Shepherd.
Malachi 3:1	The messenger who prepares the way for the Lord to suddenly come (c.f. Malachi 4:5,6).

458 Genesis 49:10.

false prophet Balaam.⁴⁵⁹ The prophecies mount up further as we find that in Moses and in all the details of sacrifice, law and tabernacle there is prophetic indication of the Saviour's being and work.

Then in the prophets, both former and latter, clear indications of the nature of this great One are revealed. To David we find there will be a son who will build the eternal temple, which points to Christ.⁴⁶⁰ To him also were given other revelations about this great One as a wonderful shepherd and as one who would be forsaken by God.⁴⁶¹ In Isaiah we have the promise of the great Servant who must suffer for his brethren, whilst in other prophetic writings details of Christ's ministry and nature abound.⁴⁶² Then in the New Testament all is revealed openly and the disciples expound the Old Testament Scriptures with freshness and delight as, having been taught by the Lord Jesus, they unravel the hidden-yet-revealed mystery of Christ the Messiah who is the Word, the Son of God come in human flesh. Why did he come? The reasons are manifold when it comes to thinking of our lot, but the main purpose was to vindicate the Lord and declare His praise and glory.

Our mission.

What then is the mission and purpose of ordinary human beings? How do we fit into God's great plan? Given that God's mission is to share his glory, what does it mean to be human? I find that modern ideas about what it means to be human are woefully inadequate at best, and drastically awful in reality. For example, the evolutionary world view indicates that our only purpose is to pass on our genes to the next generation. Personal existence in this story is fleeting. Here today and gone in an instant. All we can do is pass on our genes and hope that they will survive for future fleeting lives. A lot of modern views are eclectic and based on consensus opinion. What is best for temporal life? How can we make life on earth better for the greater good, all the while ensuring we personally have the best of the best? Once again it is all very fleeting and temporary. What is more it is elitist and favours those who fall on their feet or who inherit wealth and position. What about the religious perspective? What can man do to make himself acceptable and at peace? Well there are numerous religions all seeking to make man better, higher in ability, closer to the divine, or elevated in status but they all demand effort beyond human capacity. Take the Buddhist view. The path these folk take is essentially towards *nirvana* which means an escape from the awful illusory reality we face. To get there requires various stages of knowledge and attainment. It is all very man-centred and requires hard work and effort on the part of the devotee. But the end result is rather unsatisfying

459 Numbers 23:7-10; 24:15-19.

460 2Samuel 7.

461 Psalm 23 & 22.

462 Isaiah 53, A few examples of these include: Jeremiah 23:5,6; Ezekiel 34; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 6:12; 9:9; 13:7; Malachi 3:1.

since it leads to nothingness. Despite the many arguments made by Buddhists that nirvana is merely cessation of suffering, the word itself leads us to emptiness and hopelessness. How is this satisfying? What about the Muslim world? The key here is submission, total obedience and subservience to their god. This life is a test. Have we attained to this submission? Like all works-religions the great problem is that, try as we might, no one can meet even the simplest demands made by the gods we have made. What then of humanism? This is a very broad range of beliefs, but chiefly it is a reaction against anything labelled “divine” or “supernatural” and a celebration of all that is human. Take the best of what man has achieved and build on that. Is this satisfying? Does this give meaning and purpose to life? Think of this. What has man achieved really? The Egyptians with their great and unsurpassed buildings have left us what? A system of truth? No! A way to follow? No! What of modern man with all his knowledge, science and technology? How do we fair? What can we say about man's achievements today? Have we settled issues, debates and disputes well in our day? Far from it. Have we succeeded in locating a way forward to make life better and happier? Is the American dream something we ought to promote? What of Hollywood (or Bollywood)? Are these the aspirations which make life worth living? I think not. No! Whatever system we look at, they all suffer from the same problem. They are all man-made. They suffer from the great limitations that we cannot think outside of what we know and discover in this world. What we need is an external, outside view. We need to look into our situation with an outsider's perspective, and only the Lord God who is over all and above all can do this. He alone has stepped into our world from outside of it and can give us the best and only perspective that is worth having. Consequently our mission is to seek this view and to make it known. The Lord Jesus Christ has made known the Father, he is God in the flesh and he is the revealer of truth.

So what then is mankind's mission? The first statement of man's mission is given in Genesis 1:28, where we read that after creating mankind in his own image, God declared to them:

*“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*⁴⁶³

Given that we are made in the image of God and that we each reflect a part of God's creative ability we are clearly meant to be in fellowship with God doing that which brings pleasure to him. Sadly many may have a very limited view of what is pleasing to the Lord. They perhaps have an idea that all we are meant to do is to sing and say how wonderful God is. This is not a bad start, but it is not all that we are meant to do. The very way in which we have been made indicates that we have a

463 Genesis 1:28.

function to perform which if we neglect means not only that we are not pleasing to God, but further that we are not actually functioning properly as human beings. The command given here is to be fruitful by producing offspring and by spreading throughout the world. Further we are to rule and have dominion over creation. In short we are called to be stewards of the things God has created. How do we fair in this responsibility? Not at all well I think you must agree. However it is still our responsibility, nay it is our privilege and delight, to look after this created world. Yes we must recognise that it is broken, distorted and out of true. Nevertheless God still cares for his creation and we too must see to it that we reflect his being by caring for it too. What does this mean practically? Well I would suggest that this really depends on each individual person and their talents and gifting. You see that the Lord created each person individually as the following texts show:

“Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet you would destroy me. Remember, I pray, that you have made me like clay. And will you turn me into dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews? You have granted me life and favour, and your care has preserved my spirit.”⁴⁶⁴

“He fashions their hearts individually; he considers all their works.”⁴⁶⁵

“For You formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother’s womb.”⁴⁶⁶

Such information is wonderful for it does not depend on whom our parents were, good, bad or absent, for it is God who is our Maker. Since he fashioned each of us, then each has been made with a distinct set of abilities. We all have the same capacities since we are all human. But each of us has talents and gifting differing according to the way the Lord has constructed us. Some of these do depend on our environment and upbringing, but then this is also under the Lord's hand. This all means that the whole range of legitimate activities that are found throughout the world are available to us. I say “legitimate” because, of course, there are numerous activities which are naturally unrighteous. But whether you are an economist, an artist, a technologist, a writer, a performer, a bricklayer, a shopkeeper or a hotelier – whatever you find yourself in – all of these are aspects in which we can fulfil what it means to be a human created in the image of God. Of course each of these valid activities may be done in an unrighteous way. It behoves us as created in the image of God to carry out our calling or vocation to the glory of God, or, in other words, to the very best of our ability in the most righteous way. This means that there is no clear division between what is often considered “sacred” from that which is termed “secular.” In actual fact the term “secular” is

464 Job 10:8-12.

465 Psalm 33:15.

466 Psalm 139:13.

rather misleading because all things are provided by God, and, because we are created in his image, whatever we do always has some connection and reference to our Creator. The concept of any category which is neutral or outside of the domain or influence of God is wholly wrong. In turn, this means that we must not think in terms of religious actions and other actions, for all actions are seen perfectly by God.

This stewardship of our God-given talents and abilities, and our stewardship over creation itself was given in the beginning and is something which all of us must give an account of. But it is not all that is expected of us. In the New Testament the Lord gave what is usually termed the “Great Commission,” an example of which is given at the end of Matthew's gospel:

*“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”*⁴⁶⁷

Often this command is limited by churches to giving converts “religious” instruction. We are often exhorted to teach the gospel, to lead people to come to Christ and to be good members of a local church. However this is not what the text tells us. The church must make disciples – followers of Christ (in whom is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge).⁴⁶⁸ To be sure, a follower of Christ must understand whom Christ is and what he is doing. This is central. However much more is meant by being followers of Christ. It means we must be universal in our approach to what is taught. We must teach *all* that Christ has commanded. This is not limited in extent, for the Scriptures have an unlimited scope.⁴⁶⁹ That is why the church ought to be in the forefront of trying to teach the foundations for all subjects – legitimate ones – whatsoever they are. Sadly the church has missed this task, so that most subjects studied by students have no Biblical basis or justification at all. Think how many young students brought up in church by godly parents then go to the secular universities to study a subject the basis of which has no connection to the Lord or his word. Consequently students must learn their profession from secular or un-Biblical sources and tutors, and as a result they struggle with their work and their faith. Usually what happens is the graduate compartmentalises their lives. They have a work life in which they behave well as a Christian ought but in which their faith and their knowledge of God has no relevance to the actual work they carry out. Then they have their “Christian” life in which they worship with others and engage in evangelism and so on. For many this lifestyle poses no problems. But for those who seek the Lord

467 Matthew 28:18-20.

468 Colossians 2:3

469 Psalm 119:96.

and want to grow in grace there are grave difficulties. Some manage against the odds and with the help of the Lord to forge ahead and change their profession, or their part of it, for the Lord. These folk need all the support they can get from believers. Others lose out and are skipped over for promotion, and even lose their jobs as a result of seeking to do their work from a Christian perspective. Still others have such a crisis in heart that they cannot cope with the profession. Sometimes this is because the whole edifice they are embedded in is so contrary to their walk in faith they have no option but to leave.

John records the words of the Saviour which gives us another perspective on the task set human beings.

*“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”*⁴⁷⁰

*“So Jesus said ... “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.””*⁴⁷¹

We are sent into the world in the same way that Christ was sent by the Father into the world. There must, of course, be some qualification in this mission on our part. This is because Christ came from heaven as the Son of God, took on human flesh, dwelt amongst men and did the unique work of salvation. However we are commissioned to continue his mission. Think about this for a moment. We are not talking about some religious instructor here. We are speaking of the Creator of all things. Do not limit your thinking to mere matters of how to sing a hymn, read a Christian book, or talk of holy living. All of these are important but if our mission does not affect all walks of life, all areas of work and all endeavours it cannot be the same mission. When Christ came he affected all people, from all statuses, in all regions.

The mission then is to be like Christ and to interact with the world in all areas, all avenues, all events, and at all times challenging each to realign itself with how God requires.

470 John 17:18.

471 John 20:21.

Chapter 11

Declaring the only gospel.

We have considered the wonderful story of God's great work in the last chapter but it remains to be shown clearly how this story connects with men and women today. Why should this story of redemption be relevant for you in the twenty-first century? What should be our response to the good news? How should we act now that we have heard the very gospel of salvation?

One gospel.

There is only one gospel. The gospel is literally “good news.” So what is this good news? In the opening words of Paul's letter to the Roman we find a very clear statement of the gospel:

“... the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”⁴⁷²

The gospel is described as “*the gospel of God*,” the gospel of the Father! It was promised in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and it has as its focus not a theme, nor an equation, nor a philosophy, but a person – the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel was the Father's idea, but it centres on the Son of God. Note also that the Holy Spirit is not excluded because it was the power of the Spirit of holiness which declared Christ as the Son of God through the resurrection from the dead. The gospel is thus the good news from God, from the Holy Trinity.

Since God is infinite and eternal, and since He created all things both visible and invisible, then surely his decision about the way of salvation ought to be correct? When we examine the Scriptures to look at what the Lord determined to do before time and creation, we find that it is the gospel that is his sole plan. We find clearly in Scripture that the Father had prepared a body for the

472 Romans 1:1b-4.

Saviour who was willing to come into this world to save sinners.⁴⁷³ Thus Christ “*was foreordained before the foundation of the world*” to come and effect salvation, since he was “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*.”⁴⁷⁴

That the gospel is one thing and not a variety of things is a theme that can be found throughout Scripture. For example we find that there is an exclusivity to Christ. It was only the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven and took upon himself human flesh.⁴⁷⁵ No one else has ever even seriously claimed such a thing, and if they have, they have failed to convince anyone of the truth of their claim. Christ, on the other hand, could say: “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”⁴⁷⁶ We often hear people say that there are many ways to God, but Christ made it plain that such thinking is wrong. Now it may be true that each individual journey in *detail* is different, so that what triggers faith in Christ for one person cannot be repeated for another. Nevertheless the essential parameters that govern the journey are always the same. The path is faith in Christ alone. It is essential that we do not separate the word “faith” here from the object. We are not talking about faith in any abstract way. We are concerned to talk about faith-in-Christ, for Christ is the only way.

Now the details of a particular person's faith differ according to circumstances. Perhaps a tragedy leads one person to consider the meaning of life and death, and they come across a person who knows Christ and this leads them to faith. Or perhaps another becomes so unhappy with their circumstances not making any sense and they happen across a Bible, and that leads them to faith. Or maybe some great kindness is shown to a person who is in need and they realise that it was all because of Christ. Whatever the journey in detail, faith-in-Christ and Christ alone are absolutely essential. So why is Christ the only way? After all there are many ways to scale a mountain. Do not all those routes reach the single summit? Well yes they do if this analogy refers only to the circumstances of how we come to the one summit which is Christ. More usually the mountain analogy is used to say that God is the summit and the routes are all the different religions and philosophies of the world. However this way of looking at things is hopelessly flawed because all of these different religions and philosophies are at odds, contradicting one another. It is simply not possible to hold that, subservient obedience to Allah, faith in Christ alone, and the adoration of a multitude of gods as in Hinduism are all paths to the same “God.” Nor will it do to distil all the world's religions and philosophies to seek the common ground because the different frameworks affect what may at first sight seem to be the common denominators. Take for example a simple

473 See Hebrews 10:5; Psalm 2:6; 40:6-8; 1 Timothy 1:5.

474 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8.

475 John 1:14.

476 John 14:6.

thing like “love.” How do Muslims view this? Well they categorise love in four ways. First there is love for Allah, then love for the prophet Muhammad, then love for humanity, and finally love between husband and wife.”⁴⁷⁷ What about Buddhists? One writer put it like this: “Love should be a force that helps you expand your life and bring forth your innate potential with fresh and dynamic vitality.”⁴⁷⁸ In the Bible we cannot conceive of love without reference to the Trinity and supremely without reference to what God has done in Christ. Just these examples serve to indicate that what appears to be a simple concept cannot really be isolated from the framework of beliefs held alongside.

There can only be one way – one gospel – because we are all united in humanity. The Bible makes plain that all humans are derived from Adam and Eve. We all have just one set of parents. That being the case we all share exactly the same problem, we bear the guilt and sin of Adam. Consequently there must be only one solution. This sin problem must be dealt with, however one modern failing is that we immediately want forgiveness – the removal of sin – but we don't often consider the need for justice. Despite this lack, we do acknowledge the need for justice but only in certain situations. When a person hatefully causes the harm and even death of some poor innocent, the call for justice in the news bulletins is often vocal and animated. But when it comes to our own personal wrongdoing we tend to forget the justice angle! However with God, who is pure and holy and who dwells in holiness, righteousness and purity, sin cannot be left unpunished. So the great problem is how do you forgive and remove the sin without neglecting justice? In human experience the punishments we impose for minor infringements can be paid perhaps, but what of major sins? When we come to consider God, even minor misdemeanours are punishable by death, for, as Paul, wrote: “*the wages of sin is death.*”⁴⁷⁹ Isn't this a bit harsh? Not at all! We should consider two things when thinking about sin in relation to God. First, all sin is in opposition to God. Whether it is a small or a great sin, all sin has this in common, it requires us to turn away from God and walk in direct opposition to him. This is why Paul says that the wages of sin is death, because it involves walking away from the very source of life. Thankfully, he then goes on to say “*but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”⁴⁸⁰ Thus what we do by nature leads to death, but what Christ does and gives brings life. Second we must recognise that to an utterly pure and holy being, all concept of error, evil, wrong and sin is impossible to behold let alone dwell with. Consequently anything that is sinful must be consumed or removed to preserve purity. One blotch on a clean

477 Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at:

http://www.irfi.org/articles2/articles_2851_2900/The%20meaning%20of%20love%20in%20Islam.HTM

478 Daisaku Ikeda. Cited: 4th March 2015. Online at:

<http://www.sgi.org/buddhism/applying-buddhism/relationships/what-is-love.html>

479 Romans 6:23.

480 Romans 6:23.

handkerchief makes the whole unclean. We should also consider the fact that all sin, even minor sins, are an affront and an offence to the infinitely holy God. If something is wrong, intrinsically, then no matter how minor it is in our eyes, in God's (who is far greater and more magnificent than we can ever imagine), it is just simply wrong.

So how can sin be dealt with? How can it be forgiven and how can it be judged and punished. If we sin and deserve death because of sin, then how can we be forgiven? It seems impossible. This is where the great gospel comes in. Christ became man so that he could be punished in our place. Since a man has sinned, a man must be punished. When a willing innocent agrees voluntarily to take the punishment due for another's sin, then justice is done. Of course we may think we have a free pass here. If Christ will pay for all my wrongdoing so that I can be forgiven, then I can continue on my merry way of sin and self-satisfaction. Not so! As Paul points out in Romans 6, when a person has their sins removed in this way there is another part to the bargain. In order to have our sins removed by him being judged, we must accept the righteousness that he freely gives. Paul puts this in terms of our being united *into* Christ. Into his very life, death and resurrection. He who lived a perfect and sinless life gave himself up in place of sinners and then paid for sin in full. Consequently a person who is saved is given forgiveness of sins by virtue of Jesus' payment by his death, and they receive the righteousness which comes through faith. It isn't possible to receive the forgiveness only. You must also receive the righteousness. Now only the Lord Jesus Christ fulfils the criteria required for our salvation. Only he lived a perfect sinless spotless life. Consequently only he can show forth a life in accordance with the requirements of God, with the requirements of the law. We are saved by Christ's fulfilment of the law. Then also, only Christ could take the punishment due for sin. A sinner who dies for his sin must be permanently cut off from God. The reason, of course, is that such a one has nothing with which to pay for his sin except the separation that is found in death. But Christ who had not only a sinless human nature, but a divine nature too, could endure all the wrath of God for sin. Somehow the Son of God endured the punishment due for sin in the hours on the cross of Calvary. Only one who is infinite can endure the eternal punishment required for sin.

It may be hard to accept that there is only one way for people to be saved from the wickedness they wallow in but it is true. One of the most astounding places we can find the necessity of Christ alone as our salvation can be found at what appears to be his weakest time. After the last supper, Jesus entered the garden of Gethsemane with his disciples to pray. Judas Iscariot had left earlier to fulfil his agreement to betray the Lord. When Jesus arrived in the garden of Gethsemane, he was sorrowful, troubled and deeply distressed.⁴⁸¹ In fact he said: "*My soul is*

481 Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:33.

exceedingly sorrowful, even to death."⁴⁸² Taking Peter, James and John a little further, he then withdrew and prayed saying these words: "*O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.*"⁴⁸³ Mark records that the Lord used the familiar term "*Abba*" and that he said: "*all things are possible for you.*"⁴⁸⁴ Luke records that after praying for the first time an angel came and strengthened him.⁴⁸⁵ Luke tells us that his prayers became so intense that he was in "*agony*" and that "*his sweat became like great drops of blood.*"⁴⁸⁶ After finding the disciples asleep and rousing them he withdrew again and prayed a second time like this: "*O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.*"⁴⁸⁷ When he found the disciples asleep again this time he left them and prayed for a third time using the same words.⁴⁸⁸ What is remarkable about this whole event is not just the depth of despair felt by the Lord, but the very words and phrases our Lord uses here. The Lord did not want to face the terrible ordeal of rejection by the Father. It was not so much the physical torture and death – that was horrible enough – but the utter forsaking by the Father. On the cross he cried out with the words of Psalm 22: "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*"⁴⁸⁹ It was this awful rejection by the Father as he poured out his wrath against sin that Jesus did not will to face. And so he asks the Father, since all things are possible for him, "*if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.*"⁴⁹⁰ Don't you think that if it were possible, if there were some other way, that the Father would have shown this to his Son? The fact that there is no response from the Father, and that angels came and strengthened him indicates that what Christ was about to endure was in fact the **only** possible means by which salvation could come. His second prayer seems to indicate this because he says "*if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.*"⁴⁹¹ The implication of these words is that the cup (of God's wrath against unrighteousness and sin) could not be removed except he drink it. We can do nothing other than praise and thank the Lord Jesus forever and ever, that in his perfection he came to this time and, although he did not want to go through such an awful and agonising ordeal, yet he ended his first prayer with these amazing words "*nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will,*" and he concluded his second with a more settled acceptance of the will of the Father.⁴⁹² After he had prayed three times with blood, sweat and tears, he returned, awoke the disciples and was ready to receive

482 Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34.

483 Matthew 26:39.

484 Mark 14:36.

485 Luke 22:43.

486 Luke 22:44.

487 Matthew 26:42.

488 Matthew 26:44.

489 Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

490 Matthew 26:39.

491 Matthew 26:42.

492 Matthew 26:39.

his betrayer.⁴⁹³

One faith – “The Faith.”

In any discussion about salvation we must inevitably spend some time on the personal aspect, namely, the need for faith. Now it is important that we clear up some common misunderstandings concerning faith. First, faith is not a “leap in the dark” or “blind” faith. Many like to fob off talk concerning faith because they (wrongly) believe that it is far more important to deal only in facts. The truth of the matter is that whoever we are, and whatever world view we have, we all exercise faith in some set of principles, or presuppositions. This is essentially what we are concerned with here. In the Bible faith itself is evidential and substantial.⁴⁹⁴ Faith is not just personal beliefs chosen by some individual set of likes. Faith in a Christian sense, is much more objective. In fact it would be more accurate to talk about faith-in-Christ, for the essence of true saving faith is the factual detail about the person and work of Christ. Of course the personal and individual aspects are uppermost in this word and so we must recognise the need for engagement and will in the decisions that result from exercising such faith. We are not merely advocating a set of truths which a personal adheres to rather like ticking off a checklist of agreed beliefs. We are concerned about a deeper level of trust which is connected with emotional responses such as love and joy. When a person turns to Christ in faith, their whole being is involved. There is a mental or intellectual acceptance of the truth about their condition, about Christ and his work and so on, but there is equally a great burst of delight, admiration, reverent fear and love for the Lord too. Thus faith can be described as that disposition of heart, mind and will which enables a person to see who Christ is, to see themselves in the light of Christ and to then call on him for rescue, running headlong with joy and peace into his arms.

If we stop and consider the intellectual aspect of this faith for a moment there are a number of features which we need to be emphasised. First, this faith can be referred to as “the faith” with the definite article. There are a number of Scriptures where faith is designated in this way.⁴⁹⁵ When used in such a way we can see that faith has definite and fixed *content*. Jude's use of the phrase “the faith” is particularly relevant here. Wanting initially to write of the common salvation Jude found that he had to contend and argue the case “*earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered*

493 Matthew 26:39,45,46.

494 Hebrews 11v1.

495 See, for example, Acts 3:16; 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; 24:24; Romans 1:5; 4:11,12,16; 14:1; 16:26; 1Corinthians 16:13; 2Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 1:23; 3:23; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:23; 2:7; 1Timothy 1:2,19; 3:9,13; 4:1; 5:8; 6:10,21; 2Timothy 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:1,13; 3:15; James 2:1; 1Peter 5:9; Jude 1:3; Revelation 13:10; 14:12.

to the saints.”⁴⁹⁶ It would not be possible to do this if the faith was varied and individual. Other places where the phrase “the faith” is used indicate that there is a unique body of truth all connected and related to Christ. It is these truths which a person exercises faith and trust in. Thus those who claim to be Christian will agree about these truths, the truths contained in “the faith.”

At this point some may raise an objection. Surely the Old Testament saints had a different set of beliefs than New Testament believers? After all the Old Testament saints did not have the knowledge we have today. However when Paul is seeking to convince the Jews to keep walking with Christ rather than turn back to former ways, he pointed back to Abraham to whom the promises were given, which was 430 years before the law given at Mount Sinai.⁴⁹⁷ Paul exhorts the believers to exercise the same faith that Abraham had, for the same gospel was preached to him as that preached to us.⁴⁹⁸ Thus there is only one faith because there is only one gospel. The Old Testament saints exercised faith in the gospel that was promised. They were given many laws and instructions which served to point forward. Since Christ has come and fulfilled all of these illustrative pictures (the tabernacle, the sacrifices, the kingdom rules and so on), they are no longer required, but the faith in the gospel is still the same faith. This all makes sense because man is the same through time and across the globe. We are all descendants of Adam. Further, there is only one God. He exists in three distinct persons, but there is still only one God. Since he is perfect this means his plans must be perfect. He needs no “plan B” for his plan is perfect and faultless. This means that there is, and can be, only one gospel and one faith because there is only one Lord.⁴⁹⁹

Consequently those who turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, come to him recognising definite truths concerning him. He is the perfect and sinless man in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily.⁵⁰⁰ He was born of the virgin Mary as prophesied in the Old Testament. He is the one perfect sacrifice for sin and he is the peace and life we need. He is God in the flesh and he will return to judge the living and the dead. His word, the Bible, is true and complete with no error and no mistake. He is before all things and in him all things consist, i.e. he created all things and he keeps all things operating according to his perfect will. He has not left us as orphans for he has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in those of the faith of Abraham so that they can live as he intends. Those who have this faith continually go to the Lord and his word and accept the truth it speaks of, seeking to obey all that the Lord requires by faith.

496 Jude 1:3.

497 Galatians 3:16f.

498 Galatians 3:7-9.

499 Ephesians 4:5.

500 Colossians 2:9.

Declaring his praise.

Imagine that your daughter wanted to have a birthday party with all her friends. Being a loving parent you cook up a beautiful party tea, provide the games and party treats and lay it all out ready for the day. How would you feel if she then ignored the food, disdained the games and presents and shunned the guests? Well, what the Lord God, Creator of heaven and earth – Creator of the entire universe (i.e. everything that exists) – has provided in Christ, his death and resurrection is far greater than anything we can imagine. He has provided us with the means to understand, the release from sin, the chance of friendship with God, the opportunity to live righteously in short he has come that we might have “life” – real life!⁵⁰¹ What will we do with such good news? Well we don't have to wait to find out because the Bible tells us!

The very first thing we must do is believe the evidence before us! The fact of the matter is that we cannot do anything to change our condition. We are lepers with an incurable skin condition that has run wild like cancer. We are paralysed and unable to even lift a finger to help. We are dead! What can we do to make any difference to ourselves? None whatsoever. When faced with this truth about ourselves and then given the truth about what Christ has done, surely the only result is to believe it with all our hearts and to cry out for his help?

We have already considered the nature of our mission as human beings and then as followers of Christ but I want to explore this further using the Psalms as my source because the mission is not only more comprehensive than usually imagined, it is also more universal both in time and space. Our task, if we are the Lord's is to “make known” and we must “show forth” the greatness of the Lord.⁵⁰² As those who have received great and good things we must not hide or conceal what we have in our hearts. This news is far too important, serious and great for it to remain the preserve of a few.⁵⁰³ We are given some guidance and instruction on how we should declare the praises of the one who called us “*out of darkness into His marvellous light.*”⁵⁰⁴ First of all we must remember that God is the sovereign king and he deserves to be obeyed.⁵⁰⁵ Declaring the praise of God is right and good. It isn't something that needs coercion and force, as though it was something untoward. No! God is wonderful and amazing so it isn't anything strange or out of true when this is commanded. It is a bit like the command to have fun and enjoy yourself on holiday! Second we find that even though the entire creation declares God's praise, this is only to a limited degree.⁵⁰⁶ However it is

501 John 10:10.

502 Psalm 79:13.

503 Psalm 40:10.

504 1Peter 2:9.

505 Psalm 9:11; 96:3; 105:1.

506 Psalm 19:1; 30:9; 50:6; 88:11; 97:6.

men and woman who are given the task supremely.⁵⁰⁷ If they fail in this task that will be their loss and shame, for the very stones will not fail to declare God's praise.⁵⁰⁸ Third we must take note of the details of our praise. We are often guilty of being too general and vague in our praise of God but the Psalms give us many great particulars. For example the Lord's deeds, his acts or what he does all deserve praise.⁵⁰⁹ Then also his glory or his beauty and substantial nature are deserving of praise.⁵¹⁰ Who else is so beautiful and solid? Next we note that his miracles or wonders are deserving of great praise.⁵¹¹ There is the wonder of his parting of the Red Sea and his deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Or what about how he brought the children of Israel through the wilderness and into the promised land? There are numerous wonders throughout the Bible but we must mention before moving on the greatest miracle of all, namely the coming of the Saviour by means of the virgin birth, and the wonder of God becoming sinless man to die in the place of sinners offering up a perfect life which fulfilled all the law. Make no mistake though that God is not just the author of miracle, he is also the originator and keeper of all the regularities of creation. Thus we ought to praise all his works including his guide of creation, normally referred to as his providential rule, for not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his say-so.⁵¹² These details are numerous! But there are other things concerning the Lord deserving of praise. Each would require much thought and care but we merely mention those things which ought to be the content of our praise of God. We ought to praise the Lord's righteousness, his faithfulness, his salvation, his loving-kindness and mercies, his truth, his thoughts, his strength, his testimony, his greatness, his power, and his law.⁵¹³

The fourth aspect of praise to God is something I believe which is lacking in our day. It is the universal nature of praise. Often we get the idea that praise of God should only happen in a church building among those so inclined to engage in such an activity. But we note that in the Psalms we are taught to declare God's praise *amongst* all peoples wherever they live and whatever age they are. Thus we read clearly that praise to God must be "*among the people,*" in the "*great assembly,*" "*among the nations ... among all peoples.*"⁵¹⁴ Further we must ensure that those who are of the next generation must hear the praise of God.⁵¹⁵ Indeed our praise of God ought to be for all generations.⁵¹⁶

Fifth we find that praise to God, and of God, ought to occupy all of our time. We are to

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- 507 Psalm 30:9; 75:1.
 - 508 Luke 19:39,40.
 - 509 Psalm 9:11; 105:1.
 - 510 Psalm 96:3.
 - 511 Psalm 40:5; 71:17; 96:3; 106:2; 145:4,6.
 - 512 Psalm 40:5; 71:17; 73:28; 107:22; 118:17; 145:4.
 - 513 Psalm 22:31; 40:5,10; 71:18 78:5; 89:1; 92:2; 145:6.
 - 514 Psalm 22:1; 71:18; 78:5,6; 145:4.
 - 515 Psalm 79:13; 89:1.
 - 516 Psalm 75:9; 89:1; 92:2.

praise him “*forever*.”⁵¹⁷ Is this possible? Well of course! Whatever we are doing ought to be legitimate, and it ought to be to the glory of God, and in the doing of such righteous acts we can surely walk with the Lord and worship him in our lives. There will be times when we gather in congregations to praise, whether it be in a church building, in the streets, on the beach, or wherever. But there will be times when we are alone at work or on a journey, and our lives ought still to be to the praise of him who made us and redeemed our lives.

Sixth as we praise the Lord we must draw near to him and let him be our instructor and teacher. It isn't enough, nor is it satisfying to merely praise God as though it were a duty, as though we have done our bit for the moment and now we can get on with other things. No! Our great privilege is in *knowing* the Lord. Praise to him for him is not difficult if we truly know and love him because he is glorious! Our praise then ought to have elements of teaching in it. We have been taught and so we praise.⁵¹⁸ But as we praise, drawing near to God and taking the things of God on our lips and in our lives, the Lord may instruct others (and even us) as we are praising.⁵¹⁹

Seventh, we must remember that our praise of God must be through words and our testimony. We must open our mouths to declare what the Lord has done for us, but we need the Lord's help to open our lips that we might show forth his praise.⁵²⁰ Eighth, we need to recognise that praise of God's goodness is a matter of personal will. It is not something that will happen unless we intend and purpose it.⁵²¹ Ninth, although the task of praising the Lord fully and properly is a daunting one, nevertheless it is also a glorious task.⁵²² Tenth, we must remember that in the giving of praise there is much joy.⁵²³ This is something often forgotten. True praise of God includes drawing near and fellowshiping with him. This means joy! Praise to God is marvellous! It is all our joy and it is our very life. The wonder is that so many reject this for a paltry life of mediocrity. Sadly many Christians waver here too.

517 Psalm 41:13; 72:19; 89:52.

518 Psalm 71:17.

519 Psalm 73:28.

520 Psalm 51:15; 66:16; 89:1.

521 Psalm 118:17; 138:1; 145:6.

522 Psalm 40:5; 106:2.

523 Psalm 107:22.

Chapter 12

The three R's of salvation *(reconciliation, redemption, restoration).*

In this final chapter we will conclude our thoughts on salvation with three great Bible themes which serve not only to highlight both the relational and personal nature of what we need, but also the intricate extent of salvation. To get a proper handle on what salvation really is, we need to look at it from many vantage points. What we are discussing here is no mere two-dimensional construct, idea or theory. Rather, what we are involved in is the very work of God which must at least be four dimensional where we are concerned, but probably involves dimensions we are hopelessly unaware of since all of creation is being saved! However it is important that we do not think of all these terms merely in isolation. They are all aspects or flavours of the whole sumptuous meal which we call salvation. We end the chapter with some great verses which give further views on the salvation of God.

Reconciliation.

To be reconciled means to be brought back into a state of harmony. It indicates that there was formerly a state of enmity or war. Thus two parties that were once at loggerheads are now brought into a harmonious relationship – a state of peace. Usually in human affairs both parties need to be appeased or reconciled. There are some things one side are angered about, and different things the other side are furious over. Those brokering the peace try and appease both sides. Diplomats work hard to allay the differences on both sides. However with God it really is he who needs to be reconciled. He alone has been offended. I wonder if you recognise this? You see the Lord has given us absolutely no cause whatsoever to be offended. He provides all things for us despite our enmity towards him. Our very life, the air we breathe, and the opportunities we have are not ours or made by us. We are simply recipients of all the great and good things he has given. What of evil and harsh treatment? What of sorrow and wickedness we face? Well these are not things

which God has given to us because God is good and does good.⁵²⁴ No, these evil and harsh things that occur to us are brought about either by our own sin and folly, or they are brought about by wicked people and evil spirits. Take, for example, the story of Israel. It was the Lord who rescued Israel from the slavery of Egypt. You can read about this in the book of Exodus. It is a remarkable piece of history and one which bears close study. In Isaiah chapter 5 the Lord uses the image of a vine to represent Israel. He paints a picture of a man who builds a beautiful vineyard. He selected a fruitful location and prepared the ground thoroughly. He chose the best and choicest of vines and he constructed all the equipment and apparatus necessary to make it the best vineyard ever. He is right to expect that he is in for a bumper vintage! However what he finds is that instead of good grapes, he gets wild grapes. The Lord then applies the parable to Judah and Jerusalem asking this question:

*“What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?”*⁵²⁵

Having given Israel of old every advantage and every possible thing that they needed, the Lord expected and looked for justice and righteousness, but instead he found nothing but oppression.⁵²⁶ This is a simple illustration which can be applied to you and I. What do we have that we did not receive? Are there any self-made men? Of course not. No one ever brought themselves into existence! We have been born without our consent. What then do we have in this life? Is it all as a result of meaningless chance and random mutations? Of course not. Our very existence demands an explanation far better than evolution can provide. The Bible declares that you were created by God in his image but you have rebelled. Your life is not your own. You are merely a tenant, and God is the landlord. What have we done with this life that God has given to us? Well sadly all of us have turned our backs on him and have sought to make a life independent of him and his love. He has done nothing whatsoever to deserve our rebellion and rejection of his goodness. But we have done everything to spurn him, to reject him and to pour scorn on all he provides. This is how the Lord puts it with reference to Israel in Isaiah chapter 1:

*“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.””*⁵²⁷

Think of this simple fact. It is God who provides rain and food for all mankind, but what do we do

524 Psalm 119: 68.

525 Isaiah 5:4.

526 Isaiah 5:7.

527 Isaiah 1:2,3.

and say? We act greedily and amass hordes for ourselves and the few we love, and we blame God for others who lack the basic necessities of life. Or worse, we attribute what we have to another god, the god we have made, called “evolution.” Despite our rejection the Lord still provides and waits that he may be gracious, until one day (coming soon) when he will return for the final judgement.

I can imagine that many may protest that they are not in fact at war with God. They are going about their own business and are not doing anyone any harm. What's the problem with that? The trouble is that we cannot in fact continue in such a mode. We are made and built to be in a relationship with God and all the while we flout this, even if we are indifferent rather than at war with God, we are doing something wrong. To a perfect person this isn't right. Indeed we ourselves know that things are *out of kilter* as we laboured in the early chapters. But God is perfect and holy and for him to see people walk with crooked feet, hobbling through life aimlessly and without true purpose is horribly wrong. Maybe you are one who leads a quiet life and who has no issue with God at the moment. You are indifferent to him. However when he reveals to you the truth of your situation the hackles will rise. Pride gets the better of us all and underneath you will find that really and truly you are at war with God. We do such a good job of covering things up, but when the Lord opens things to us and shows us the way we really are, we get on our high horse and the quiet steady temper is gone in the fury of indignation. This is all bluff and bluster of course, for we have no real claim against God. He has done all for our good and we have rejected it.

And so it is God who is reconciled. We are enemies of him and he has been offended by our actions. His anger at our sin and utter folly must be appeased. There is nothing on our part that needs reconciling because God has only done good to us. Even what we perceive to be bad is in fact a mercy for our good. Take the history of Genesis 10 and 11. This is that part of history after the great flood which destroyed the world because of its utter wickedness to the extent that the entire earth was filled with violence, and man's thoughts were only evil continually.⁵²⁸ Noah emerges with his family and worships the Lord for his righteousness. His sons have families and the population of the new world expands. No doubt, each newborn is taught the great events that had happened in the world and the reasons for them. However as time passes one amongst the sons of Ham decides he wants to rebel. His name “Nimrod” means “that rebel” and he lead a defiant group to build their own society with its own religion which would reach into the heavens.⁵²⁹ Now what was the Lord to do with this? He could have let them get on with it and left them alone. What would that lead to? Well already the Lord had to destroy the old world because people had led independent lives and

528 Genesis 6:5,11 – the flood story can be found in Genesis 6-9.

529 Genesis 10:8-11; 11:1f.

had become so utterly selfish that violence and corruption became the norm. This was likely to be the result. Nimrod already had warfare in his mind because he built defensive cities. His greed and desire to be master meant that he feared someone would get the better of him. This perpetuates further self-interest and so the wicked cycle goes on. We see this type of attitude all through history and even in our own day. What was the Lord going to do? Well in his great mercy he comes down and confuses the language of the builders. By doing this it would prevent them from perpetuating a dreadfully, hopelessly, wrong course of action. Now this event was in the earlier days of Nimrod's rebellion. The Lord did this to prevent them establishing themselves in such a permanent system which would be very difficult to break down. You see when we set off on a path which is wrong, it is like going deeper and deeper into a well which is harder and harder to climb out of. Imagine you see your little son, who has only just learned to walk, hurtling towards an open fire. What do you do? You are too far away to reach out your hand but your foot is only a few inches from him. Instinctively you gently try to trip him up! Then you explain why, showing him the danger of the fire. This is exactly what the Lord was doing in Genesis 11 and it is what he does time and time again.

So the Lord is the one reconciled but how will this be achieved? Of course there is only one means for this reconciliation, as we have been at pains to point out. Only Christ can do this, for remarkably, reconciliation has been effected by the death of Christ as the following Scriptures show:

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”⁵³⁰

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”⁵³¹

“and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”⁵³²

“and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.”⁵³³

Now reconciliation brings with it many fruits and one of these is peace. It brings this peace in two ways. First the wrath of God has been appeased. What Christ did voluntarily in taking sin and being

530 Romans 5:10.
531 2Corinthians 5:18.
532 Ephesians 2:16.
533 Colossians 1:20,21.

punished for it yielded reconciliation and appeasement for God. His wrath is satisfied. But secondly, we now have that peace which passes all understanding, and we have it with God as Paul explains:

*“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*⁵³⁴

This peace is what we know and feel by the Spirit of God who now rests in the heart of those who believe. The amazing thing is that the Lord Jesus Christ *himself* is this peace. He is the one who brings peace making it possible for us to be friends of God:

*“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”*⁵³⁵

Reconciliation, for those who are saved, means that the wrath of God no longer rests upon them. If you are not amongst those whom the Lord calls his own, then this wrath of God hangs over you like the sword of Damocles.⁵³⁶

Redemption.

Another very important way of thinking about salvation is to consider the idea of redemption. You may be familiar with redemption when talking about a mortgage or in getting back something you have pawned. The idea is basically to buy back. A price needs to be paid to get back or redeem that which was given up or lost. In the case of a mortgage, redemption occurs when the last payment is made and the house which the lender owned is really now yours. The idea of redemption is found wonderfully illustrated in the book of Ruth. There we find the story of a woman who is not an Israelite but the daughter-in-law of a woman who left Israel for pastures new, and in the process lost her husband and two sons, one of whom was married to Ruth. Eventually Naomi, the Israelite woman, leaves Moab where she had gone to seek food with her husband, and returns to Israel because things had improved there. Naomi says to her two widowed daughters-in-

534 Romans 5:1,2.

535 Ephesians 2:13-18.

536 John 3:36.

law that they should return to their land where they may have a chance to re-marry, but Ruth persists and says in a wonderful way that she does not want to leave Naomi:

*“Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.”*⁵³⁷

You can read the story for yourself, but in essence the widowed Naomi and Ruth find care, love and provision at the hand of a kinsman, or near-relative, called “Boaz.” This man, who loved the Lord and knew his favour, acts as Ruth's kinsman-redeemer and marries her, and so the two find hope once again. The story illustrates how it is necessary that someone *like us* – a near-relative – must act as our redeemer. Thus Christ, must be a man like unto us in order to effect the purchase price. That is why he said that he came to earth to give his life as a ransom for many.⁵³⁸

Another tremendous account of the purchase price paid can be found in the book of Hosea. This prophet was commanded to marry a woman by the name of “Gomer.” The trouble was that she was a prostitute. After a hopeful start she was unfaithful to Hosea having children of prostitution but the Lord commanded Hosea to go and purchase her back from the way of an adulterer:

*“Then the Lord said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.” So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver; and one and one-half homers of barley. And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man—so, too, will I be toward you.”*⁵³⁹

Such love! This is just like you and I for we have turned from the living God to follow idols. We are spiritual adulterers. Instead of seeking God and of drawing all goodness from him in knowing him, we follow the corrupt inclinations of our own hearts. Like the godless citizens we say “*we will not have this man to reign over us*” and we build our own gods, be they modern science, personal greed, or fame and glory.⁵⁴⁰ But the Lord comes and says, in the midst of all this terrible situation, that he will redeem and buy back the adulterer from his folly! What love is this? Why would Hosea want Gomer back? Why ever would the Lord want to take people who have spurned his great goodness? But he does!

537 Ruth 1:16,17.

538 Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45.

539 Hosea 3:1-3.

540 Luke 19:14.

Sometimes the payment required to redeem something is termed a “ransom.” It is this term that the Lord Jesus used to describe himself as the payment:

*“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*⁵⁴¹

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*⁵⁴²

*“who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”*⁵⁴³

Now one way redemption has been misconstrued by some, is to think that the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased our souls from the clutches of Satan. The very idea of the Lord paying the devil to get our souls back from his domain is not only wholly un-Biblical, it is also thoroughly ludicrous. What then do we mean by redemption? Christ gave himself as the payment price for our release. From what then, has he released us? Well the Scriptures teach us that we have been released from the curse and bondage of the law:

*“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).”*⁵⁴⁴

*“to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*⁵⁴⁵

*“who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”*⁵⁴⁶

We were sold under bondage to sin but Christ has paid the required price, his blood, so that now we must be described as those “bought with a price.”⁵⁴⁷

*“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”*⁵⁴⁸

*“You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”*⁵⁴⁹

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers

541 Matthew 20:28.

542 Mark 10:45.

543 1Timothy 2:6.

544 Galatians 3:13.

545 Galatians 4:5.

546 Titus 2:14.

547 Romans 7:14; Acts 20:28.

548 1Corinthians 6:20.

549 1Corinthians 7:20.

among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”⁵⁵⁰

Amazingly, and wonderfully, our redemption is not temporal but eternal:

*“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”*⁵⁵¹

Christ Jesus is our kinsman redeemer and he is also the ransom price. How can this be possible? Well only because he was raised from the dead having paid the price in full by the blood he shed on the cross. He continually calls us to draw near to God and drink of his wonderful delights.⁵⁵² After Ruth married Boaz and bore a child to him, Boaz was described by the women to Naomi as the close relative who redeemed and as “*a restorer of life and a nourisher*” of her old age.⁵⁵³ Our ransom is also our restorer!

Restoration.

We have come to understand that we have been made friends of God, reconciled, and that Christ our kinsman redeemer has paid for our release from bondage and sin with his own blood. But this is not all. What the Lord also does is to bring restoration. Listen to the words of the Psalmist David, who wrote about the Lord being his shepherd:

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”*⁵⁵⁴

Amongst the many things the shepherd does is to restore the soul. This idea of restoration is a tremendous theme which has many points of departure. We could begin by considering revival, new life and new creation. Then we could turn our attention to the whole idea that our thinking, our minds and what is really true has dramatically altered and become so very satisfying. Next we could muse on the fact that we are adopted as sons and daughters into the family of God and that our relationship with God is restored. Finally we could extend the ideas of new creation into the wider concerns of creation itself as the Lord brings back righteousness as the touchstone and bedrock of all things.

550 2Peter 2:1.

551 Hebrews 9:12.

552 See, for example, Matthew 11:28-30; John 7:37,38; Revelation 22:17

553 Ruth 4:14,15.

554 Psalm 23:1-3.

New life.

Restoration has the idea and notion of healing. This word is used sometimes when the Lord healed the sick, for example the man with the withered hand.⁵⁵⁵ It is sometimes used of a restoration to life.⁵⁵⁶ But chiefly when we think of the word restoration under this heading we must think of new creation.

In John 3 we are introduced to the concept of being “born again” or regeneration. This is a teaching that is found in many places and it is one which is often neglected and sorely misunderstood. But think of this. In our “normal” unsaved state we are dead! How so? Well we are cut off from God. We have no relationship with him. Hence we are separate from God. Isn't this your experience? Do you naturally have close fellowship and friendship with the Lord? No you don't and none of us do until the Lord comes in. The Bible describes us as those dead in our trespasses and sins.⁵⁵⁷ Elsewhere the apostle Paul points out that the “*wages of sin is death.*”⁵⁵⁸ How can we change this? We cannot! Only God can do something and we find that when he does, faith is evident. Paul describes this change in his letter to the Ephesians. He starts off by describing what we were like. We were “*dead in trespasses and sins*” and we “*walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*”⁵⁵⁹ This resulted in us conducting our lives “*in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*” so that we “*were by nature children of wrath.*”⁵⁶⁰ In other words we did not know the Lord, and we carried out our lives in whatever way we wanted in accordance with the pattern of this world and its priorities. However in the midst of this rejection by us listen to how Paul describes the great kindness of God:

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*⁵⁶¹

It was the love of God and his mercy which brought us out of the death of this world, and it was this

555 Matthew 12:13; Mark 3:5.

556 Ruth 4:15; 2Kings 8:1,5; Isaiah 38:16.

557 Ephesians 2:1.

558 Romans 6:23.

559 Ephesians 2:1,2.

560 Ephesians 2:1-3.

561 Ephesians 2:4-10.

also that “*made us alive together with Christ*” – that is as Christ was raised from the dead. He literally recreated us “in Christ Jesus” so that now we have faith in God. What love is this? Isn't it remarkable?

New thinking.

We once had minds that could be described as “*futile,*” “*darkened,*” “*debased,*” and “*blinded.*”⁵⁶² In our minds we were enemies of God being alienated from him because we had our minds set on earthly or fleshly things.⁵⁶³ But now those who are “in Christ Jesus” having been made new by the blood of Christ and having been raised together with him, are of a *different* mind, for now “*we have the mind of Christ.*”⁵⁶⁴ Now, through new birth, the law of God is not external to us, for the Lord has put these laws in our minds.⁵⁶⁵ James talks about the word which has been “*implanted*” in our souls.⁵⁶⁶ Peter teaches us that we have everything we need to lead godly lives on planet earth.⁵⁶⁷ He states that chiefly what we have from the Lord is “*the knowledge of Him who called us*” and the “*exceedingly great and precious promises*” – that is, the Scriptures.⁵⁶⁸ Thus we have the very Word of God (Christ) who is revealed to us in the Word of God (Scripture). Through these great promises we “*may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*”⁵⁶⁹

However, we carry this great treasure (the indwelling God) in earthen vessels.⁵⁷⁰ We are constantly at war now, not with the Lord who is reconciled to us, but with the world. We have changed allegiances since we have been “*conveyed*” or transferred from the kingdom and power of darkness to the “*kingdom of the Son of His love.*”⁵⁷¹ Consequently there is a raging battle for our minds. We must do everything we can to protect and shield our minds from invasion and destruction. That is why there is so much teaching in Scripture exhorting us to be of one mind, to be sober in mind and so on.⁵⁷² We must be renewed in mind so as not to be conformed to this world.⁵⁷³ We must set our minds on “*things above*” not on the things of earth.⁵⁷⁴ We must “*gird up the loins*”

562 Ephesians 4:17,18; Romans 1:28; 2Corinthians 3:24; 4:4.

563 Colossians 1:21; 2:18; Philippians 3:19.

564 1Corinthians 2:16.

565 Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16.

566 James 1:21.

567 2Peter 1:3.

568 2Peter 1:3,4.

569 2Peter 1:4.

570 2Corinthians 4:7.

571 Colossians 1:13.

572 See, for example, Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 3:16; 4:2.

573 Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23.

574 Colossians 3:2.

of our minds being ready and prepared for action.⁵⁷⁵ How vital it is to cultivate good, healthy thinking governed by the Lord and his word! When we do this we find a new lease of life. Yes we think differently to the world, but it is so enlightening and liberating, for we see things as they really are and we see the Lord at work!

New family.

There are three oft recurring illustrations that depicts us in our lost state in Scripture. These are, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger (alien). In each case the one illustrated stands alone and is without something vital. The widow has no husband. In Bible times widows suffered terribly. Without a husband she had no means of making her way in life and she had no status. Thankfully things have changed! But in Scripture the widow is alone and uncatered for. The orphan has no father. The stranger has no home. This is how we are. We are widows without husbands and so we have no means to live. We are orphans without a father and so we have no direction or guidance. We are strangers and aliens so we have no citizenship or rights. But when we are born again and have faith in God something remarkable occurs. Now we are no longer widows for we have a husband, Christ who has provided everything we need! Now we are no longer orphans for we have a Father who loves us as sons. We are no longer strangers and aliens with regard to the Lord because we have been included in his kingdom. In short we have been adopted into the family of God. Adoption means we are no longer estranged, and as we call out to the Lord as our Father we cry out “*Abba, Father*” – that is with filial affection as though we called him “Daddy.”⁵⁷⁶ We are now sons and daughters of the living God. This has a number of consequences. When considering the fact that we are no longer strangers and aliens of the kingdom of God, we now find that we are, in fact, strangers and aliens as far as this world is concerned.⁵⁷⁷ Here we have “*no continuing city*,” for we are “*pilgrims*” who long for the heavenly home.⁵⁷⁸ A further consequence is that we find that just as an earthly father must train his son or daughter through life, we too are being trained or disciplined by our heavenly Father. Sometimes we need the chastisement of God.⁵⁷⁹ This is why things may appear to be harsh and difficult at times. Partly these difficulties are because we are being made holy and we need to be washed, cleaned and conformed to the image of Christ, and partly because we are still in this world cursed because of sin. We must endure hardship as soldiers of Christ and we must avoid the entrapments of this world.⁵⁸⁰ Thus another consequence of being sons of God is that we

575 1Peter 1:13.

576 Romans 8:15.

577 Ephesians 2:11-13.

578 Hebrews 11:16; 13:14; 1Peter 1:1; 2:11.

579 Hebrews 12:5-12.

580 2Timothy 2:3,4.

will suffer persecution, for as Christ suffered hostility from sinners, will not his followers endure the same?⁵⁸¹

New home.

The Lord is master Creator. When he created all things in the beginning he created them “good” and “very good.”⁵⁸² He can do no other for he is supremely good. Now, however, we see all things under the curse of God because of sin. But the Lord has in mind a re-creation, a restoration of things which far exceeds the return of that which was lost. There is a connection between the old creation and the new even though this order awaits destruction by fire.⁵⁸³ The book of Revelation describes the new creation as being new in the sense of fresh rather than novel. And yet what the Lord is re-creating is much more than that which he laid under the curse. Restoration begins as we see the face of God shine upon us:

“Restore us, O God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!”⁵⁸⁴

The Lord Jesus taught his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them.⁵⁸⁵ This would be where he was going, for in his high priestly prayer he asks the Father that his disciples would eventually be with him in glory.⁵⁸⁶ Thus we have a new home, and it is not of, or in, this current order of creation. No! This world is reserved for destruction.⁵⁸⁷ We look for the city that has the Lord as architect, the new heavens and the new earth.⁵⁸⁸ As a result of this, whilst we are still on earth in this current age and era, we are not at home. Meanwhile, we have been given the job of stewards of the good things we have been entrusted with, and we are ambassadors for the Lord being representatives of the Lord in this foreign and doomed world.⁵⁸⁹ We look up and forward to our final salvation, our final redemption when the Lord returns in all his glory. Even so Lord come!

Two audacious claims – rest and thirst quenched.

Salvation is such a remarkable truth that it is interwoven throughout the Biblical narrative. We can see it in all sorts of situations not just those direct ones we have already considered. Perhaps

581 John 15:20; Hebrews 12:3; 2Timothy 3:12.

582 Genesis 1:10,12,18,21,25,31.

583 2Peter 3:10f.

584 Psalm 80:3,7,19.

585 John 14:3.

586 John 17:24.

587 2Peter 3:7.

588 Hebrews 11:10,16; Revelation 21:1.

589 2Timothy 1:14; 2Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20.

you still think of the Lord as a man? Well I wonder if you consider some of the things he laid claim to? Take for example the Lord's words spoken after giving thanks to the Father that the humble poor “babes” had believed him whilst the prudent and the wise had not received him, found at the end of Matthew 11. The Lord issues this great call:

*“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*⁵⁹⁰

Here was a *man* calling people to come to him for rest. This is audacious! What man could issue such a call? Imagine someone standing in a public place saying that true lasting inner peace could be found in them alone? Oh we might expect people to say “buy my book telling how to get peace in three easy steps”! Or, “follow my course of lectures if you want inner peace”! But who has ever laid claim that *in them alone* true peace can be found? But this is what the Lord Jesus says: “*Come to Me ... and I will give you rest.*” How can this be? Of course the answer to that is found by considering exactly who Jesus was. He was the Son of God. God made flesh. He has two natures, perfect sinless human and divine, in one unified person. He is described in Scripture as the “*second*” and the “*last*” Adam.⁵⁹¹ He is the perfect and exact image of God, and He has made perfect atonement for sin.⁵⁹² In him, and him alone, sins have been punished and dealt with. He alone lived a righteous life. His righteousness is given to those who believe and their sin is given to him to bear. But note that this exchange, this perfect rest, is not simply that you can continue on in an independent way. The Lord gives rest, but he places a yoke on our shoulders. A yoke is a wooden harness which links two animals together so that a farmer can drive the animals to do some work, either ploughing a field, or dragging a cart. In this yoke the Lord is one side of the harness and we are invited to take our place beside him. I wonder if you have really thought about this? You see we are not created to be autonomous and independent spirits. We were created to be in relationships. First with God the holy Trinity, then with other people, and finally with all creation. Often a farmer would yoke a newly acquired animal alongside a more experienced one so that the new one could be trained. Here the Lord says that his yoke is “*easy*” and the burden is “*light.*” He is no hard taskmaster but one who is gentle and humble. How gracious! The Lord is one who guides and trains in righteousness by hitching us alongside himself. So salvation, rescue and deliverance, are all found in the Lord. By being united with him, by being yoked together with him, we find true peace.

590 Matthew 11:28-30.

591 1Corinthians 15:45,47.

592 Hebrews 1:1-3.

We are not lethargic lounge lizards but oxen who are in gentle training.

Then also, I want you to consider another astonishing claim the Lord made, this time at the end of one feast:

*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*⁵⁹³

Who is this who can satisfy real thirst and who has power to give the Holy Spirit? The Lord Jesus had already told the woman of Samaria in an earlier encounter, that he had such living water, and she put her trust in him.⁵⁹⁴ Imagine the scene here at the end of this later great feast! Jesus stands there and states openly for all to hear that essentially he is the fountain of living waters! He is the one who brings life. You can read about this idea of God as the life source in Jeremiah. The Lord through the prophet Jeremiah castigated Israel for their lack of trust in him. They had rejected him – “the fountain of living waters” – and had constructed their own source of life-giving satisfaction which was broken, leaky and hopeless.⁵⁹⁵ And now Jesus points to himself as this source of life. What an audacious claim for a mere man to make! But Christ Jesus is also “Lord” (i.e. God)! Thus his claim makes perfect sense. Jesus can bring life, living water, that is, the Holy Spirit whom we need to make sense of life (for he brings truth), and to actually live life to the full day-by-day, only because he is the God-man sent from the Father.⁵⁹⁶

So what about you?

We have discussed at length the many facets of being “saved” from this world, from our sin and from final destruction. There is much more that could be added, but whilst this subject is inexhaustible, it is something which demands our immediate response. We only have to hear a small part of the good news before we are challenged for a response. What do you think of Christ? What will you do with what you have heard? Knowing the truth is the first step. Acting on it shows that you accept it and believe it. May the Lord guide you to his wonderful goodness through our Saviour and his wonderful work.

593 John 7:37-39.

594 John 4:10,39.

595 Jeremiah 2:13.

596 John 15:26; 16:7-13; Romans 8:26.

Curtain call.

And now the end has come – at least the end of this book! So what shall we say? We do live in a sin-sick world which is subject to decay, disease, disaster and death. But this is all at the hands of God because he wants to give opportunity to all to come to realise their great need. It brings to mind the story of Genesis 11 – the Tower of Babel that we referred to earlier. It was this occasion that gave rise to the divergence of languages. It all started with one rebel – Nimrod – whose name means “that rebel.” He defied God's clear instructions to multiply and spread across the world. Instead he instigated a new course of action in defiance against God's good order. He promoted the building of a tower which would ascend into the heavens, and have the heavens as the basis for truth. It was technologically driven – including a new form of building material – and it was a united course of action. Now what was the Lord to do? Well he could have obliterated them, left them to their own devices or done any manner of things. What he did though was a great act of mercy. He confused the languages of the people so that they could not progress in their project for misunderstandings. They wanted to progress as fast as they could against the Lord's ways, and so to halt them in their folly the Lord puts this stumbling block in the way. Such mercy! It stopped their progress and they are spread abroad. And as a consequence the world has had these diverse languages. Fast forward some two thousand three hundred years or so and a great miracle of near reversal occurs. It was at Pentecost after Christ's death, resurrection and ascension that the Holy Spirit was poured forth and the church was born.⁵⁹⁷ Here we find the remarkable events of the saving of men. In this great event those filled with the Holy Spirit were supernaturally enabled to speak the great wonders of God in many different languages. Of course there was no reversal of the situation that occurred at Babel making all speak one language again, but what there was instead was the great declaration that the good news was for all the peoples of the earth. No one was to be excepted. And so the great gospel of Jesus Christ since that time has gone out into all the world. And now it has come to you, dear reader. What will you do about it?

597 Acts 2:1f.

Selected Bibliography.

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