

Faith, Philosophy and Science – and the pursuit of truth.

Kel Hammond – 27 January 2018 Updates on this essay are [here](#)

Overview

This essay is divided into 3 main sections, as follows –

1. Part.1 - The History of Philosophy's Influence.
2. Part.2 - The Question of Faith and Philosophy.
3. Part.3 - Modern challenges to how we read the Bible – the Scientific Method.

Introduction.

This essay follows on from another essay titled, ¹“Evidence, reason and faith.” In this follow-on essay we will firstly focus upon the past and ongoing influence of ²philosophy upon Christian thought and the pursuit of truth. We will then examine some of the methods used to critique the Bible and its teachings, and show where many of these ideas came from and what assumptions they are based upon. In an age where the scientific method and the peer review process reigns supreme, it seems appropriate to also question the legitimacy of the assumptions and the basic ideas behind this modern approach. To begin, we will firstly look at the history of philosophy's influence, then later look at the different approaches of faith, philosophy and science to the great questions of life. This essay is only meant to be a summary of some of the key issues at stake.

Most believing Christians accept that the Bible's narrative, with its implicit and explicit teachings, was given by God so that every person who reads and considers it will be challenged by its message. That challenge will be on many levels, as our personal lives, beliefs, motives, loves, worldview and value system will be held up to the light of its testimony. **The Bible claims to hold within it God's revelation to man.** It claims to hold a true record of the past, as well as what God has declared to be his will and purpose for now and the future. This includes his moral code that mankind is to obey. This is the constant message of the Bible, from start to finish.

Christians believe that the perfection of God's revelation to man is seen in the life, words and works of the Lord Jesus Christ, for in him dwells all the fullness of God – including God's wisdom and character (**1.Cor.1:24, Col.2:9**). Christ's teachings and his personal example teach us about God and his ways and consequently how we too should live our lives. In his own words Jesus said that a man lives by every word of God (**Matt.4:4**), and furthermore, that his teachings were not his own, but were from God who sent him (**John.7:15-17**).

God has called us to repentance and discipleship, which in practical terms means to change our thinking. This means that we are to learn from Christ – i.e. how to think, speak and act in a way that honours God.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, spoke about the practical nature of our calling. We should keep these words in mind when we read the words of the 'wise' of the world so that we are not intimidated by them. God has called and chosen people of simple faith who hear, understand and believe him.

1.Cor.1:26-29. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.

¹ “Evidence, reason and faith” is an essay that looks at the reasonableness of the faith proposition, and examines the Bible's definitions and examples of faith. It is located on the vault. The link is [here](#).

² The etymology of the word 'philosophy' is from the Greek 'philo' which means 'love' and 'sophia' which means wisdom. Philosophers considered themselves 'lovers of wisdom'. There is an allusion to this in **1.Cor.1:22**.

Part.1 - The History of Philosophy's Influence.

The emergence of philosophy.

It is commonly claimed that there emerged in the Grecian world, from the 6th–4th century BC, a philosophical tradition which gave birth to a way of thinking and reasoning that has dominated Western thought ever since. The importance of this revolution is universally acknowledged by historians because of what they see as the significant and lasting influence for good that it has had upon mankind. This is plainly evident by the amount of space allocated to this period in most textbooks on ancient history.

As a result of this revolution, it is claimed that old superstitions and all assumptions were challenged by this new philosophy which employed a different way of thinking and reasoning in the search for truth. Although this is the common claim it is not strictly true, as wisdom and the sciences existed in ancient times many hundreds of years before they emerged in Greece. We will briefly touch on this again in our summary at the end of this essay. This later movement was developed by the likes of Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and was greatly refined over time by those who came after. These men laid the foundations of a new way of thinking and reasoning which in turn was based upon a particular way to view life. ³Some even claim that the modern empirical-evidential approach and the basics of logical reasoning, which are today employed by the many branches of science, were originally developed in an elementary form in this era by Aristotle.

The original Academies were set up by philosophers to teach their general approach to life. This is where our modern concept of the university system, and the academics who teach there, comes from. In some ways the original ideals of philosophy were a little like many religions in that it both sought converts and to change people and society. Some of the early philosophers and academics were like evangelists in their zeal.

The basic principles of philosophy.

In very general terms, ⁴Philosophy is divided into a number of sub categories, such as; metaphysics, epistemology, value theory and logic, etc. We do not intend to examine all of these in any detail but rather refer to some and more particularly consider the methods and basic assumptions beneath this new approach.

The intellectual revolution of this time raises many important questions about epistemology, which is basically the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, scope and the basic distinction between justified belief and opinion. This itself raises many questions, for instance - Is all knowledge timeless? Is the natural world and are the laws it operates by also timeless? Have things always existed as they do today? Is all knowledge, including both past and present, able to be found using a purely natural approach to life? Where does one find the source of true knowledge and ultimate truth? Lastly, just how valid and helpful is this approach, developed by philosophers, in supplying answers to the many complex questions of life?

How you answer these questions and more will essentially depend upon your worldview, which is often the hidden philosophical construct that underpins much of what's behind the how and why we think and believe as we do. In other words, it is more dependent upon whom and what we believe than we would generally like to acknowledge. This likewise is generally the product of our upbringing, nurture, education and peer group.

In summary, the influence of philosophy upon all centres of higher learning is profound and universally acknowledged. It is important to understand just how influential the teachings of these philosophers has been. As one Professor expressed it, ⁵“... **there is no educated person in the western world, in the last 2500 years, who wasn't influenced in some way or another by the thoughts and by the framework of understanding that Plato provided ...**” We are therefore unwise to underestimate philosophy's influence upon the world.

³ “... Aristotle has provided humanity with its blueprint for rationality in not just philosophy, but science as well” - “The Story of Philosophy” Pg.89 James Garvey & Jeremy Stangroom, 2012.

⁴ These categories of philosophy are taken from Pg.3 “The Story of Philosophy”, James Garvey & Jeremy Stangroom, 2012.

⁵ Tamar Gendler, “The Ring of Gyges: Morality and Hypocrisy” (Course Lecture @ 1 minute mark) Link [here](#)

Judaism and Philosophy.

The emergence of this intellectual development in ancient Greece stands chronologically between the end of the Old Testament (Malachi) and the beginning of the New (Matthew), as the conquests of Alexander and his followers spread its cultural influence across the ancient world. The Jewish people were affected by this new and bold approach of these Grecian (Hellenistic) thinkers. Many Jewish writings after this time testify to this influence. Sometimes the cultural influence was violently rejected (e.g. The Maccabees), but more often it was accommodated through an adoption and synthesis of philosophy and thought.

This cultural influence is observable in many of the religious writings of the times. For example, we can see it in some of the writings of the ⁶Apocrypha, where concepts and ideas are introduced that have no solid foundations in the Old Testament writings. We also note that some Jewish thinkers were affected by Greek philosophy, such as the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher ⁷Philo, who **used philosophical allegory to attempt to fuse and harmonize Greek philosophy with Jewish philosophy**. It is suggested that his method followed the practices of both Jewish exegesis and Stoic philosophy. His allegorical exegesis was important for several Christian Church Fathers although he was generally rejected by later Jewish scholars, many of whom resorted to a form of legalism to resist some of the influences of Hellenism.

Philosophy, humanism and the early Christian church.

It is clear that philosophy and its associated cultural perspective had a huge impact upon the Roman world of the first century. Its influence was seen in the exaltation of the beauty of the human form and essence, which is clearly seen in the curricular of the education at the Academies as well as in the art, culture and architecture of the whole Greco-Roman world. To all appearances it was primarily “man” focussed, and many suggest that it is the real originator of humanism.

Humanism is now basically defined by the American Humanist Society, as follows; “Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism and other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfilment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.” The link between philosophy and humanism is generally acknowledged, and Humanism was most likely developed in later times as a social philosophy to counter the natural outcome of Nihilism, which is a belief that nothing in the world has any real purpose. Nihilism itself is the outcome of rejecting a belief in any Divinity, i.e. a God of purpose and morality. Although it is generally believed that philosophy had a significant impact upon the development of early Christianity, the extent of the effect of humanism upon Christianity is a point of ongoing contention.

Now concerning the relationship between Christianity and this philosophic tradition, consider the following comments by Dean Inge (1860-1954), a famous professor of divinity, who writes that: -

- ⁸**“Platonism is part of the vital structure of Christian theology [If people would read Plotinus, who worked to reconcile Platonism with Scripture,] they would understand better the real continuity between the old culture and the new religion, and they might realize the utter impossibility of excising Platonism from Christianity without tearing Christianity to pieces. The Galilean Gospel, as it proceeded from the lips of Jesus, was doubtless unaffected by Greek philosophy But [early**

⁶ Some of the Apocryphal writings imitate Hellenistic influence and style and carry foreign concepts, for example; “Wisdom Chp.8:19-20 - carries the idea of a pre-existent soul”. While Greek influence is to be detected in some of the books of the Apocrypha, it is suggested they contain little that would have offended Orthodox Judaism of those days.

⁷ Philo (25BC-50AD), was an educated Jew who lived in Alexandria, Egypt. He was thoroughly Hellenised. His works display a strong tendency to metaphor and the synthesising of Hebrew and Greek Philosophies. See “The Works of Philo” Translation by C.D. Yonge 1993 Edition. See the interesting comments in Wikipedia on Philo, Link [here](#)

⁸ Dean Inge, an Anglican Theologian, Cleric and Professor of Divinity. The quote is from Daniel H. Shubin “Attributes of Heaven and Earth” Page.250. This is also quoted by Bertrand Russell, Page 284-5, “History of Western Philosophy”.

Christianity] from its very beginning was formed by a confluence of Jewish and Hellenic religious ideas.”

Inge is not alone in his conclusions, and many modern⁹ scholars agree with him. His comments are revealing in that he speaks openly of the development of what he calls ‘Christian theology’. He is of course referring to what is generally accepted today as ‘Christian theology’, and not to the original teachings of Jesus and his Apostles. He admits that Jesus was unaffected by Greek philosophy, but he nevertheless suggests that early Christianity was largely affected in more ways than most people realise.

In ‘A History of Western Philosophy’, philosopher Bertrand Russell also makes a similar point, where he speaks of the effect that Plotinus had upon Christian theologians. Plotinus was a philosopher and teacher of Plato’s ideas, who lived from 205-270 AD. He is considered the founder of Neoplatonism.

- ¹⁰To the Christian, the Other World was the Kingdom of Heaven, to be enjoyed after death; to the Platonist, it was the eternal world of ideas, the real world as opposed to that of illusory appearance. **Christian theologians combined these points of view, and embodied much of the philosophy of Plotinus. Plotinus, accordingly, is historically important as an influence in moulding the Christianity of the Middle Ages and of theology.”**

The philosophy of the enlightenment and what came after that.

At about the same time that Christianity ascended to become the official religion of the Roman Empire, things began to change. The power of the Western Empire began to crumble. What followed was formerly called The Dark Ages but is now generally known as the Middle Ages. They ran from the 5th-15th century. After them came a time of change, and a¹¹ Renaissance (re-birth) of thinking followed. Subsequent to the renaissance was the¹² Protestant Reformation. However, the philosophical approach of the Greeks with its thirst for knowledge and wisdom, gained most of its traction after the various¹³ Enlightenments of the 17th-18th centuries.

On one hand the protestant reformation resulted in a determined focus to understand the Bible and its teachings, while on the other hand there emerged a widespread acceptance of the Grecian philosophical approach to the questions of life and the acquisition of knowledge. How these two different approaches have been argued, synthesised and reconciled is of some importance in the questions and challenges we face today as believers. One only has to view the architecture of the times to see the evidence of this synthesis at work in the general civil and religious society. The emergence of Grecian architectural columns and statues along with Bible quotations, concepts and imagery can be widely seen in the buildings of this era.

This synthesis of thoughts and aspirations has so widely and subtly spread that its influence is unquestionably woven into the fabric of the society we live in. It has been a fundamental element and taken an even more prominent part in Western culture since the time of the American and French revolutions of the late 18th century, from which its spirit and influence has spread to all Western cultures and many others besides.

⁹ For a fuller summary of the influence of philosophy upon early Christianity, see the first section of the essay “The Apostles' Doctrine - Foundation of NT Faith” which is located on the Vault, [here](#).

¹⁰ Bertrand Russell, “History of Western Philosophy” 1945, on Page.284. Free PDF version is available – Link [here](#)

¹¹ The Renaissance ran from approximately the 14th-17th Centuries. The word means Re-birth in French, and refers to the rebirth of the learning – particularly after the Hellenic pattern. See the art of the time. Link [here](#)

¹² The main Protestant Reformation was a largely European religiopolitical movement. It ran from approximately the 16th to 17th centuries. There were many reformation precursors from the 13th to the 16th century. Link [here](#)

¹³ The various Enlightenments stretched from the mid-17th century to the 18th century. It culminated in the French Revolution, which overthrew the hegemony of the state and of the church. It brought in the age of reason and the modern age. Many Modern History book begin with the French Revolution. Link [here](#)

This synthesised approach has gone through a number of changes and developments, but in all of these **it has grown to be more dependent upon a particular philosophical worldview called ¹⁴Naturalism**. This has come down to our day through many developments and enhancements from the educated class who have been trained in the various academic traditions and philosophies that originated in ancient Greece. According to many modern experts and practitioners of this philosophical approach, ¹⁵divine revelation must be discounted and ignored as a left over from the age of superstition. Only a naturalistic reasoned approach to all life's questions is acceptable. In some quarters this approach has almost attained a divine status of infallibility.

On review, we might speculate that the general philosophical ideals and the basis of ethics that Plato outlined in 'The Republic' were somehow merged with the religious concepts outlined by Augustine in 'The City of God'. The merging of these philosophies has caused much confusion to believing Christians. Many have seen it as their ethical obligation to serve the society in which they lived (as public officials) as Plato directed, while holding to the religious traditions of Augustine, hoping for a future existence and life in heaven, which they believe is the real 'City of God'. To complicate matters, with some the basis for acceptance into heaven is dependent upon how ethically we behave in this life, according to the Platonic standards of behaviour. This synthesis reigned supreme among many leading Christians until the middle of the 20th century.

WWII to the present.

Sometime after WWII, probably in the period of 1950s-70s, there emerged a new cynical spirit in society that gradually cast off any pretence of a religious belief that was based primarily upon a submission to the Bible's teachings. The Civil Rights movement, the Hippie Movement, the Sexual Revolution, experimentation in drugs, the rise of consumerism, the sense of entitlement, and the rise many new "alternative" religions (e.g., yoga, transcendental meditation, Buddhism, Hinduism) all challenged the traditional church and its teachings.

After the late 1960s and early 1970s, religion itself was not rejected as much as was traditional Christianity. With the rejection of the traditional church and its teachings also came a cynicism towards the Bible itself. While a belief in God may have been maintained in some circles, God was now a small "g" "god", and to be thought of as serving human needs and not really as he has revealed himself in the Bible.

¹⁶**The rise of Materialism.** At the same time that this abandonment occurred, society generally retained and further developed the naturalistic (materialistic) approach that originated with philosophy. This has resulted in the ascendancy of naturalism, materialism and more recently ¹⁷scientism. This modern position is based upon the idea that the only source of knowledge and of truth available to us is found from applying the logical methodologies inherited and developed from these ancient philosophical traditions, which have now been refined by the modern scientific approach. **That is, that there is no such thing as divine revelation, and that**

¹⁴ **Naturalism** is defined as "the philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted". Link [here](#).

Regularism. Some theorists suggest that a better approach to science would be - "Regularism as a Metaphysically-Neutral Philosophy of Science." The world operates by set laws, established by God. These were set by God otherwise man could know no certainty or be accountable. See the explanation in the video presentation linked [here](#).

¹⁵ Revelation means that God has revealed himself and his ways ... i.e. as recorded in the Bible. A classic example of the times is Thomas Paine's book, "The Age of Reason" which was written just before the French Revolution. Paine argued for reason in the place of revelation, which caused him to reject miracles and to view the Bible as an ordinary piece of literature rather than a divinely inspired text.

¹⁶ See the interesting article, "The history of the rise of materialism in Western society" by Clement Butel. In the introduction he summarises as follows, "In the second half of the 20th Century Christian morality in Western society gave way to one founded upon materialism, which was predominantly based upon a naturalism that declared that only science can provide us with a knowledge of our origins. False philosophy, developed from ideas expressed as early as the 17th Century, prepared the way for acceptance in the 19th Century (and from then on) of pseudoscientific theories which, together with that philosophy, have been highly destructive to belief in Christian revelation. In the 19th century the attack on faith came from both inside and outside of the Christian Church." The whole article is interesting. Link is [here](#).

¹⁷ Scientism is the belief that science is the only reliable source of truth.

there can be no divine being, or God, unless God be part of the material universe and therefore is only a higher form of evolved life. As Carl Sagan famously said, ¹⁸“The cosmos is all there is or ever was or ever will be.” This is at the heart of materialist thinking.

¹⁹**The rise of the Personal Experience phenomenon.** In response to the subtle influence of this new philosophy that cast doubts upon the Bible, many Christians since that time began to place more emphasis upon the primacy of personal experiences and spirituality, while the Bible’s teachings have been (quietly) abandoned, as they are considered unreliable and outdated. This form of thinking has come to dominate in many circles, and is seen in the various ‘Pentecostal’ type movements where it is often taught that Christians must have some form of miraculous experience, which is claimed to be a sign of divine assurance and confirmation. It is noteworthy that many of these movements require only a rudimentary understanding and belief in the Bible’s teachings, and also that many who advocate this form of thinking have radically diverse beliefs. They often pick and choose the parts of the Bible that fit their belief or need, which is the worst type of reductionism.

²⁰**The Bible is only one book among many.** More recently this movement towards spiritualism has drifted even further away from belief in the singular authority of the Bible’s teachings. Many Christians now believe that the Bible is only equivalent to other ‘holy books’ from other religious traditions, or of the ‘book of nature’ that the laws of science reveals. **These developments have led to a general shift away from belief in revelation, or a dilution of absolute trust and belief in the unique and sole authority of the Bible.** The influence of this way of thinking has been insidious, as many who adopt this thinking are being subtly led away from finding God or knowing his ways. It has also led to a change in what is considered ethical and moral. Today’s ethical standards are more in line with the Grecian model than those outlined in the principles of the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles.

Today’s Challenges.

In this very brief, generalized and admittedly over-simplified overview we have endeavoured to lay out the basic problem and subsequently the challenge that we as believers face. On review, from a Christian perspective, we can probably conclude that if it were not for the gospel accounts that record the unique life, teachings and works of Jesus Christ, many of us would probably have been swamped by the influences of these general philosophical approaches to life. By briefly recounting history we have attempted to show that today we are not facing new problems or challenges, as the modern rationale (form of reasoning) has been with us and developed through the ages since the first century. We have examples of it in some of the experiences of both Jesus and Paul ([John.18:37-38](#), [Acts.17:21](#), [1.Cor.1:22-23](#)).

Philosophers have, over time, perfected the rules that govern logical reasoning. These includes the correct use of the syllogism, the rules of logic, valid deductive inference and induction etc. In their writings philosophers have established rules that determine the legitimacy of any reasoning process. In this short essay we are not seeking to challenge the correctness of this method of reasoning in determining the questions of natural life.

¹⁸ Sagan, C., Cosmos, p. 4, 1980. Link to the quote is [here](#).

¹⁹ See the article “Pentecostalism, Experience, and Scripture.” The summary has some interesting comments on this phenomenon – “Though Pentecostals and Charismatics pay lip service to the sufficiency of the Bible, in reality experience and “personal revelation” is commonly the higher authority. Some even admit this. Tommy Tenney, author of the popular book The God Chasers, says: “A true God chaser is not happy with just past truth. He must have present truth. God chasers don’t want to just study from the moldy pages of what God has done; they’re anxious to see what God is doing.”” Link to the website is [here](#).

²⁰ A good example is seen in John Templeton. John Templeton was Billionaire Fund Manager, and a very generous philanthropist. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church all his life. Yet it is said that he eschewed dogma and declared relatively little was known about the divine through scripture, espousing what he called a “humble approach” to theology and remaining open to the benefits and values of other faiths. References are made to him later in this essay.

The real challenge for us is to understand how this way of thinking operates, what parts of it are legitimate and useful, and what parts we need to be wary of. **Specifically, we should ask ourselves if we are we at liberty to treat God’s words in the same way that we treat men’s words? To every believer it ought to be self-evident that God, by very definition and according to his own revelation, cannot be measured or restricted by the laws that govern the universe, as he is the maker and sustainer of all.** Logically, God must only be understood according to his own revelation of himself. This is at the core of some of the most important issues at stake and the challenges that we face today.

To help us understand how this philosophical approach is conducted we have outlined the general methodology used by some forms of this rationale. These are explained in the following brief summaries.

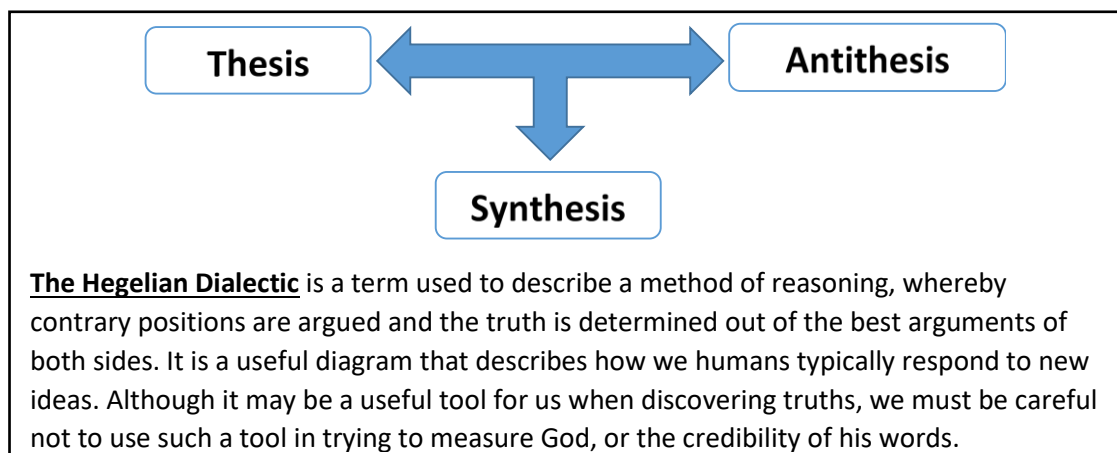
The Dialectic.

A dialectic is a method of argument and reasoning used in resolving disagreements and disputes, when the clear objective is to discover the truth of any matter. It was popularised by Socrates, and refined by those who came after him. For this reason it is sometimes called the Socratic Method. It seeks to logically pursue all life’s questions, our assumptions and beliefs by a series of questions that are designed to test the strength of any thesis, as it is argued logically against other positions. It is reasoned that by a process of elimination whereby only the strongest arguments are retained, the truth of any and every question and situation will eventually be brought forth.

The Hegelian Dialectic.

The Hegelian dialectic (named after Hegel, a 19th century philosopher) maps what happens when the accepted Thesis (a proposition or way of thinking) is challenged by an Antithesis (a contrary proposition, or way of thinking). It is generally explained that the typical response is often immediately hostile as the contrary view destabilises our world view which ends up making us feel uncomfortable.

Over time and circumstance, the Thesis and the Antithesis may be mentally reconciled, and a new position taken which is a Synthesis of the opposing views. This Synthesis may then become the newly accepted view or position (Thesis). This cycle continues through many repeated steps. Questions and knowledge are developed and refined by this continual process of challenges until at last ‘the truth’ of any matter emerges. This Synthesis may then become the newly accepted view or position (Thesis). See the following diagram.



Part.2 - The Question of Faith and Philosophy.

What is the proper way to understand the Bible?

When we read the Bible it is easy to forget that the books of the Bible originally did not contain chapter and verse divisions. In fact, it is only on a few occasions that we find either Jesus or his Apostles arguing technically from the Bible, i.e. quoting the equivalent of chapter and verse to support or prove their teachings. They primarily taught by expounding principles which are based upon the ²¹big picture, or upon the ideas contained in the events and narratives recorded in the Bible. This is a challenge for us who have been conditioned to think and debate in chapters and verses. For example, how well would we go expounding the atoning work of Christ without reference to any of the NT writings? Yet this is what Paul does in Romans and in Hebrews (assuming Paul wrote Hebrews). Here Paul lays his foundations in the narrative and concepts laid out in the OT, and shows how Christ is related to those concepts. How confident would we feel using this approach?

Let us remind ourselves that chapter and verse divisions were a late arrangement. Chapter divisions were inserted by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, in about A.D. 1227. Later, the Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by a Jewish rabbi named Nathan in A.D. 1448. Later again, Robert Estienne, also known as Stephanus, was the first to divide the New Testament into standard numbered verses, in A.D.1555.

On review it appears that the Bible was divided into chapters and verses to help theologians, lawyers and disputants find Scriptural references more quickly and easily, so that they could argue more effectively. Although convenient, chapter and verse divisions are artificial, and capable of diverting us from comprehending the way the Bible is designed to communicate ideas and concepts. Interestingly, chapter and line markings are the common format of legal documents, for quick reference in debate and dispute.

We should remember that the Bible was not given or designed to facilitate debate, but to communicate ideas and concepts through its narrative. The Bible primarily uses methods that employs words, stories, parables and word pictures etc. Even the Law of Moses was really a series of words and practices that were designed to convey principles. It is by using this method to communicate principles that the essence of God's message cannot be lost due to poor translations. All the major teachings of the Bible are, in some measure, communicated this way. Grasping this concept will have some bearing upon how deeply we understand the Bible and its teachings, and perhaps it will help us to more strongly focus our attention upon reading its message, with the 'underlying models' it uses, to help us grasp the Bible's core teachings.

The (Hegelian) Dialectical method and the Bible.

Although the Hegelian Dialectic may well describe how the world works and how knowledge is accumulated, it is not always a legitimate approach when it is applied to God's word, the Bible. Although it is beneficial to use this approach when sorting through the different interpretations and reasoning of men, **as believers and Bible students we should be very wary and reluctant to use this approach as a tool to measure or judge God's word. This is a common mistake, where men, in their learned enthusiasm (and accompanying pride) often go too far, and end up going beyond what is reasonable and wise.**

We must remember that the Bible does not claim to be the opinion of man, nor the accumulated wisdom of men. The Bible, from start to finish, claims to contain God's revelation of Himself and of His ways. We should not fall into the snare of treating God's words in the Bible as we would treat man's words. If we are believers, then God's revelation should not be questioned in the same way we would question human rationale. Our primary methodology and goal should rather be to correctly understand God and his ways, endeavouring to see what is revealed, from God's perspective (1.Cor.4:18).

²¹ For example, consider [Heb.7](#) where the life of Melchisedec is used to explain Christ's priesthood. Again, which scriptures is Jesus referring to in [Matt.22:29-30](#) "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

Let's emphasise this point. As believers we are certainly at liberty to challenge all human interpretations of God's word, but to go beyond this and to challenge God's revelation is very presumptuous. History ought to show us that this approach always ends in disaster. **Many stumble on this point and cross the line, treating God and his word as if he were just another man with an opinion that can be contested or debated.** To do that is to misunderstand the greatness and holiness of God. This would be treating what is holy as profane.

This approach to the Bible is noticeable in some parts of academia and with those affected by the same spirit, where the principles of 'comparative' religion and culture, along with the dialectical method are highly valued. This approach is at the heart of the position of those who contradict the Bible's testimony. Unfortunately, this can include some who claim to be Christians, who, when they do not agree with the Bible's testimony or some its teachings, often end up treating it as if it has no real authority. Sometimes this is done by suggesting that the words were only meant for the times when men were ignorant, primitive and culturally backwards, but not for our more sophisticated times when we have more knowledge of the world and of life.

For believers, the Bible reveals that God is a Holy God, and his word is likewise holy (**Matt.4:4, 6:9, Prov.30:5-6, Isaiah.5:4**). There is no avoiding the implications of this position, as the Psalmist says; **"For You have magnified Your word above all Your name"** (**Psalms.138:2**). Do we feel the same awe towards the word of God?

The Bible goes on to show that associated with the issue of hearing and believing God is **the question of will**, that is, whose will prevails, our will or God's. This is closely connected to the question of belief, trust and authority. Jesus himself confronted this same challenge when he faced and overcame the coming horrors of the cross. His example is one that we should pay particular attention to. In his hour of trial he said, **'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done'** (**Luke.22:42**).

It is a clear message of the Bible that God has spoken and revealed his will and purpose. This declaration is an open challenge to men and their philosophies. God has spoken and revealed his ways. Men hear what God says for his words are plain. As (allegedly) Mark Twain put it, **"It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."** However, mankind generally either ignores God's word, or more commonly synthesises it by re-interpreting it to suit his own needs, circumstances, worldview or the consensus opinion. This has been the common human practice and experience since the beginning, and it is partly why such emphasis is found in the Bible upon the concept of repentance, where repentance literally means to change one's mind so that it is like God's, that is one with God.

Are we at liberty to make the Bible mean what we like?

We have a number of examples in the Biblical record that answer this question. For example, we have a few examples of Peter compromising important scriptural principles which should stand as a clear warning to us. The first was through ignorance, when he disagreed with Jesus over both the inevitability and necessity of his coming crucifixion (**Matt.16:21-23**). The second was when Peter caved into his fears, and denied that he was one of Jesus' disciples (**Matt.26:69-75**). The third was when he gave in to peer pressure (perhaps out of a desire to be respected by Jewish Christians) and led himself and others into hypocrisy, thereby unknowingly and unintentionally undermining the truth of the gospel that he believed (**Gal.2:11-14**). This human pattern of response is evident in both the OT and NT scriptures, and is also clearly evident in church history where many sincere people have led others into serious error in difficult times, which ultimately undermines both the truth of God and the authority of Scripture.

Part of the problem we face today is the common desire for a form of religious pluralism, where the path to God is not what God determines it to be, but as we desire it. The rationale is often that God is a God of love (which is true), and therefore he is not too worried about the details (which is false). This position is based upon the (often unstated) proposition that there is no absolute truth or that truth only resides with God, and that the Bible has many areas where it lapses into uncertainty. As every conscientious Bible student knows, this position contradicts what the Bible plainly says (**Deut.30:11-4, Rom.10:6-7, 2.Tim.3:15-17**). **It generally springs from a personal disagreement with the Bible's teachings, although we might not like to acknowledge**

this fact. To reject the truth of God and encourage man's whims and ways which spring from his own imaginations, is not a mark of humility or spiritual enlightenment, but of rebellion against God.

As we have noted, the Bible makes the claim to have within its pages the words of God. **As believers, we are not at liberty to pick and choose the parts that we agree with, neither are we at liberty to believe in the majority vote or consensus position of the majority (Exod.23:2).** The issues at stake are not really about the conflict between "philosophy and faith", "science and faith", or "science and religion." **The real issues are rather about how we reconcile our belief in revelation with the principles of philosophy and the facts of science without falling into the trap of adopting a fully naturalistic approach to knowledge.**

Interpreting the Bible to suit our worldview.

The typical human response of re-interpreting God's word to suit our preferences or our world view has been a major problem since the beginning. We will list some typical examples of this shortly that show how this approach brings about consequences that eventuate in spiritual compromise. This approach is often used to justify departure from the plain teachings of the word of God. These examples will show that this approach is not of God, for God is not a man and his revelation is not to be ignored or changed. That would be like arguing with the law of gravity. God's wisdom is eternal and faultless, and we are constantly reminded not to either add to or diminish from what he says (Prov.30:5-6, Deut.4:2, 12:32, Gal.1:6-8). This testimony of God is clear and his word is near at hand (Rom.10:6, Deut.30:11-14). We are to hear his words and come to believe and trust in his revelation and promises, understand his ways and do his will. Nothing could be simpler.

For modern people, even those who claim to believe the word of God, this is the first and foremost test of the reality of our faith and perhaps the first stumbling block we will need to overcome. If we cannot accept that the word is uniquely authentic we will end up creating our own basis for truth and our own image of God, which will eventuate in false religion. On the other hand, if we accept the word as authentic and authoritative, but fail to understand it then this is another matter. There is opportunity for spiritual growth and maturity over time, as God works in us to bring us to a greater understanding of his ways, for we are told that God both corrects and directs those who trust in him (2.Tim.3:14-17).

At its most basic, there are certain statements and beliefs in the Bible that are core, and therefore essential to being true disciples of Christ. If parts of the scriptural record are unclear or vague to us, then perhaps we need to keep these thoughts outside the expression of our faith and place them in the category of 'uncertain details'. We may need time to help us come to understand these uncertain details.

However, what do we do with plain Biblical statements that do not match the consensus opinion? For example, if the God in the Bible says that he made the heaven and the earth in 6 days (Gen.1-2:4, Exod.20:11, 31:17), then this is a revealed truth to which there is no reason, within the context of the narrative of the Bible, to reject. We may not understand how this is possible, and there may be many interpretations of these words put forward and considered as explanations. However, they are and remain only opinions and sometimes even the result of clever reasoning. But in this we should not confuse core beliefs and plain declarations with speculation. Neither should we accept the worldly approach that reasons that the existence of various ways to read the text means general uncertainty. Therefore this leaves room for dismissing the plain meaning of the text itself. This is a big leap that springs from legal thinking and manipulating words, and many stumble at this form of specious reasoning. **It is one thing to read the text differently, it is another to dismiss it because it does not match our own preferences or the opinion of philosophy or science.** This is a dangerous kind of accommodation, and it is often an example of the Hegelian dialectic at work.

Although we can use honest reasoning and deduction to dismiss any speculation that contradicts the core teachings of the Bible, as believers we cannot justly turn the argument the other way around, as the world does, and dismiss the Bible for not matching the consensus of philosophic or scientific opinion. We should not miss the importance of this point, as it emphasises the right approach to establishing our core beliefs.

We are constantly exhorted in the Bible of the need to grow in our understanding and our faith, which is to be based upon God's revealed truths. In order to do this, we need to –

1. Accept that the word is from God, who teaches us of his core principles
2. Understand, believe and apply those principles in our life
3. Build upon and reinforce these core principles by developing a deeper understanding with experience.
4. Put aside contradictory teachings, while acknowledging that some things may not be known as we currently have insufficient details at hand.
5. Grow in our faith from known revelation and resist going down rabbit holes chasing ideas that lead to debates that are both untaught in the word, unprofitable for ourselves and destructive to others.

Rules for interpretation and Directions for Investigating the Scriptures.

[The following summary is from the ²²Herald of the Coming age, 1859. It may be of some value. We offer it for interest's sake only, as it does present a respectful and honest approach to the Bible]

First. *Let the Bible define and explain its own terms, figures and symbols.*

Second. *Give every passage a literal construction, unless its own connection and phraseology render such a course absurd, by bringing it into collision with truths elsewhere established by positive language.*

Third. *The proper connection of any given passage is not always that with which it stands immediately connected, but those bearing on the same subject found recorded anywhere in the Scriptures. Select all these texts from where they stand, put them together and you will have all the truth revealed on that subject.*

Fourth. *All passages belonging to any particular subject must contain one or more of the peculiar features of that subject, by which it may be identified as belonging to that subject.*

Fifth. *The truth in relation to any doctrine must be established by those passages which speak of it in positive and unequivocal language, and those texts belonging to the same subject but which only admit of inferential testimony, no inference should be drawn from them at variance with the truths already established by positive texts.*

Sixth. *No doctrine should be predicated upon mere inference, neither upon one isolated text of Scripture. Any true doctrine will be found interspersed through the whole Bible.*

Rules for Studying the Scriptures

First. *In any doctrine taught by types or shadows, the anti-type must always correspond with the type, and the shadow with the substance.*

Second. *In studying the Scriptures, consider that the New Testament is a commentary on the Old.*

Third. *Never be afraid of results to which you may be driven by your investigations, as this will inevitably bias your mind and disqualify you to arrive at ultimate truth.*

²² Herald of the kingdom and age to come (1859. Vol. 9, pp. 179–180). Link to a PDF of the original article is [here](#).

Fourth. Investigate everything you believe: if it is the truth, it cannot be injured thereby; if error, the sooner it is corrected the better.

Fifth. Pursue this course with as much independence as if you were the only one concerned.

Sixth. Rely on no authority less than divine in so momentous an undertaking.

Prove all things: Hold fast that which is good.

Some Scriptural examples of wrong thinking and reasoning

The Lie of the Serpent. In the beginning, God had plainly declared his purpose and ways with mankind. He gave a singular law of prohibition to the first pair. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on penalty of death (**Gen.2:15-17**). There was no logical basis or reason for challenging this law, yet we find in the reasoning of the Serpent in **Gen.3:1-5** a counter Thesis (an Antithesis) advanced, from this beast of the field. When speaking upon God's Law, he reasoned that the penalty would not be death but an eye opening experience that would advance them to Godlike status. His reasoning, when adopted, was a synthesis between **God's purpose** and **God's Law**. He knew that God's purpose was to make man like himself (**Gen.1:26-28**), and therefore probably concluded that God's Law would not hinder this purpose. Therefore, he may have reasoned that they would not surely die, but would rather be like the Gods (Angels), knowing good and evil.

Interestingly, people today sometimes fall for this same pattern of faulty reasoning when speaking or reasoning from the Bible. They reason that God is a God of Love who has promised eternal life to those who believe in him. They subsequently ignore or downplay those references that speak of judgement and rejection of those who practice evil or believe lies. In this, they reason like the serpent in concluding that God's purpose will not be hindered by our behaviour, works or beliefs, and therefore it does not matter what we believe or do. Although this is the product of seemingly clever human logic, it is clearly false. God is first and foremost a Holy God who always keeps his words, all of them. We must not treat God's words like fallible human words.

In the situation of the serpent's lie, like so many other forms of faulty reasoning, we are faced with the following problem. That is, that **the hardest lie to disprove is the one that is inserted and wrapped up in a framework of truth**. Unfortunately, that has always been the biggest challenge to revealed truth ... it is difficult to know how to effectively deal with it. However, we have in the record of Jesus' temptation a wonderful example of how to overcome. We read that when the tempter came to Christ, he answered with 'it is written' (**Matt.4:4, 6, 7**), thereby showing us the way.

The Apostasy of Jeroboam. The second commandment of the Law strictly forbade any form of idolatry and the Law legislated against any form of compromised practices of worship (**Prov.30:5-6, Deut.4:2, 12:32**). After Solomon's death, God divided the kingdom and the 10 tribes who followed Jeroboam were fashioned into an independent northern kingdom, called Israel. This immediately presented a 'problem' for Jeroboam, for the centre of National worship was at Jerusalem, in the Southern Kingdom. Jeroboam's 'reaction' was typically human. He feared that the people of his northern kingdom who went to worship God at Jerusalem, would turn back to the house of David and abandon their support for him and his house (**1.Kings.12:25-30**).

(Solution =) To solve the problem of this situation, Jeroboam established a duplicate imitation of the form of worship that existed in Jerusalem, in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (**1.Kings.12:31-32, 13:32-33**). He created a priesthood, and centres of worship so that worshippers would not have to travel to Jerusalem to worship. He included in these centres of worship a mixture of idolatry and true worship. We see here a classic human response to problem solving, which ultimately caused Jeroboam to be rejected and condemned for his worldly thinking that showed no trust in God and contempt for his ways (**1.Kings.13:1-5**). His fatal flaw was that he treated God's word and ways as if they had similar authority and standing to man's.

Law Keeping among NT Believers. Jesus came preaching the gospel message (an **Antithesis**), which, in many ways was different to the position held by the major Jewish religious groups of the time (**Thesis**) (**Mark.7:5-23**). The immediate reaction was hostile (**John.15:25, Mark.15:10**), nevertheless many Jews were moved to accept Jesus and his teachings. Later, as recorded in the book of 'Acts', a difficulty arose because a '**Synthesis**' was produced among many Jewish Christians, who were 'zealous for the Law' (**Acts.21:20**). They wrongly concluded and said to the Gentiles, "**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved**" (**Acts.15:1**). They had synthesized the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ. This created many problems in the early Christian Church. This was particularly evident after the Gentiles were accepted into the faith outside the requirements of the Law of Moses (**Acts.11:1-3, 15:1, 23-24**). Although this matter was discussed and resolved at the Jerusalem Conference, and it was agreed by the Apostles and Elders that the Gentiles were not obliged to keep the Law of Moses, the issue did not end there. Many who held to this synthesis worked against Paul in his work amongst the Gentiles. They insisted on Law Keeping as a basis of Justification (**Gal.3:1-5, Gal.5:1-7**).

Christianity's (prophesied) falling away into compromise.

After the Apostles had left the scene, and according to their warning (**Acts.20:29-30, 2.Thes.2:1-12, 2.Pet.2:1-3, 1.John.2:18-19, Jude.3-4**), there arose many who taught concepts and compromises that were not part of what is termed '**the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship**' (**Acts.2:42, 1.Jn.1:1-3, Gal.1:6-9**). We have already considered the effect that worldly philosophy had upon Christianity. As a consequence, many of the teachings of Christ and his Apostles were changed or modified, and their practices added to. This is particularly evident in the changed attitude towards the structure of the Church, the Clergy and Laity question, participation in the affairs of this world and the adoption of worldly beliefs and philosophies, as opposed to living as strangers and pilgrims in hope of the promise of that which is to come (**Heb.11:13-16**). This changed outlook and worldview fundamentally changed the face of mainstream Christianity.

Many Christians today unknowingly live in the legacy of these choices and this change of direction in the past. The original **Thesis** was what is called '**The Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship**' (**Acts.2:42**), the **Anti-thesis** was the worldly religions and philosophies that were everywhere present in the ancient world. The **synthesis** was the adoption of many beliefs and practices from these other sources, foreign religions and philosophies into the body of Christian belief and practice, which were often relabelled as Christian. The residue of these are clearly evident in many of the non-Biblical beliefs and practices which are now widely accepted as being of Christian origin. (for example; The title of Roman Pontiff, Temples, Priests, Altars, Christmas, Christmas trees, The Cross, Icons, Holy Days, Saints and saint days, and numerous other religious Festivals and symbols etc.). The adoption of this synthesis is so widespread and so all pervasive in Christendom that any semblance to first century doctrine and fellowship has been largely lost.

However, as we have endeavoured to show **the real issue is the misuse of the dialectical method to interpret the Bible, and the general ignorance of the philosophical construct that underpins modern thinking.** At its most basic, the modern societal approach itself assumes that God's testimony has little more value than human traditions. To some extent it must assume that the Bible is little more than the accumulated wisdom of man, perhaps suitable for the times in which it was written, but which time has made redundant.

Part.3 - Modern challenges to how we read the Bible.

The (Hegelian) Dialectic Approach and Theistic Evolution (TE) / Evolutionary Creation (EC).

On reviewing the concepts considered in the earlier part of this essay on philosophy's approach to knowledge and also to the Bible, there is no doubt that the rationale adopted by²³ some prominent supporters of TE/EC are influenced by this methodology. We suspect that some of those who are affected by this teaching are generally unaware of the subtleties involved and how they operate. In this consideration we are not challenging the honesty or integrity of those who support TE/EC, as it is clear that many who hold to it are seeking to make sense of the Bible while holding true to the scientific consensus. Furthermore, we acknowledge that there are many holders of TE who do not agree with some of these positions. The following comments are to be considered only as suggestions by one who has carefully thought about the arguments.

We will focus on the way some TE proponents approach and interpret scripture using the dialectical approach. As there are many versions of TE, we can only generalise when we suggest that some of the advocates of TE/EC subtly, and perhaps unknowingly, begin by treating the Bible as if it is of a similar status to the conclusions of man (i.e. it is a man-made document). See the two examples of various TE/EC positions in the footnotes below.

²⁴**Firstly**, they do this by reference to scholars who study the comparative religions and cultures of ancient times to support their interpretations of the Bible. It is unfortunate that some of these experts do not believe the Bible's testimony and have little regard for the Bible's historicity when developing theories and interpretations that run counter to its narrative. The inevitable consequence is that the Bible's truthfulness and thereby God's credibility may be rejected or made to fit into another model. When believers read their words they unwittingly accept an interpretation that is moulded to fit a different narrative and world view.

²³ A notable example is seen in the writings of John Templeton. John Templeton was Billionaire Fund Manager, and a very generous philanthropist. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church all his life. Yet it is said that he eschewed dogma **and declared relatively little was known about the divine through scripture**, espousing what he called a "humble approach" to theology and remaining open to the benefits and values of other faiths. The Templeton foundation is used to fund various faith and philanthropic pursuits. We get a measure of Templeton's beliefs in the following PDF book, "THE HUMBLE APPROACH IN THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE" See particularly pages 30 "*Differing concepts of divinity have developed in different cultures. Should anyone say that god can be reached by only one path? Such exclusiveness lacks humility because it presumes that a human can comprehend the fullness of truth. The humble person is ready to admit and welcome the various manifestations of unlimited divinity.*" Link is [here](#).

A further example is seen with Kenneth Miller, a well know (TE) Biologist. Wayne Rossiter reports this about him in his book "Shadow of Oz: Theistic Evolution and the Absent God" (2015) - "At the "Shifting Ground: Religion and Civic Life in America" conference in 2007, Miller suggested that, rather than humans, it could have been a hyper-intelligent mollusk or a big-brained dinosaur that evolved to the spiritual plane to meet God." Thankfully, not all TE supporters agree with him.

²⁴ **Claus Westermann**, "Creation," London: SPCK, 1974, 20, 26; Genesis: A Practical Commentary, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, Page 22–23. In his exegesis of Genesis 2–3, he presents sin as being inherent to human existence as we come from the hand of God. He believes that the account belongs to the '**timeless realm of myth**'. As such there was no "fall": rather, sin is inherent to human existence as we come from the hand of God.

Biologos also mentions that many Christian believers in evolution believe Genesis to be a myth – "Many orthodox Christians who believe God used EBP (*evolutionary biological processes*) to bring about human life not only do not take Genesis 1 as history, but also deny that Genesis 2 is an account of real events. Adam and Eve, in their view, were not historical figures but an allegory or symbol of the human race. Genesis 2, then, is a symbolic story or myth which conveys the truth that human beings all have and do turn away from God and are sinners." Link to the article is [here](#).

²⁵**Secondly**, they rely upon the conclusions of scientists who use the scientific method, believing it is the only reliable tool to interpret everything about the past, particularly origins. This would not be a problem if the Bible were silent on these matters. However, this is not the case. The Bible presents a detailed narrative on the origins of this world and the history of mankind, and the naturalistic / scientific narrative is drastically different. There is no easy way to reconcile the two differing world views. What complicates this even further is that many of the NT's core teachings are quite clearly based upon the assumption that the Genesis narrative is literal history, and factually true.

To support the TE worldview a dialectical method is adopted when reading the Bible, which is not dissimilar to that of the serpent in the garden who started his dialectic with, "**Did God really say ...**" (NIV Gen.3:1). The serpent's method of reasoning was to identify what he thought were weaknesses, doubts and inconsistencies in God's revelation. This then allowed his own reasoning and conclusions equal status with God's – i.e. of equally authority, and thereby he changed the meaning of God's word to suit his own rationale. He believed that his rationale, wisdom and conclusions were superior to God's.

Although the holders of TE/EC will reject the idea that they support this general approach, **there is no doubt that much of their scriptural rationale about human evolution is based upon 'silence.'** That is, the Bible does not speak or support the matters that the Anti-thesis of evolutionary science proposes, and no reasonable person would draw these or anything like these conclusions from the Biblical narrative alone. In fact, **the Bible has its own narrative that is significantly different to that of evolutionary theory.** Furthermore, any plain and reasonable reading of the Bible will show that these ideas would have been foreign to both Jesus and to Paul, and are completely at odds with what the Bible clearly declares in its own narrative.

The counter argument.

To deal with this obvious challenge it is sometimes argued that the Bible makes no comment on the earth being spherical in shape or of the sun being the centre of the solar system, and etc. However, such comments are really only a distraction and are not relevant to the discussion.

The discussion sometimes then leads to consider the unjust persecution of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), which is cited as an example of religious prejudice against scientific facts. Historically, among other things Galileo was persuaded by the physical evidence he found - that the earth revolves around the sun. This is called heliocentrism. At that time all (scientists and theologians) subscribed to geo-centrism, which means that they commonly believed that the earth was the centre of all. Galileo was persecuted and punished for his 'scientific' fact based conclusions.

Sometimes, special creationists are compared to Galileo's religious opponents and labelled as practicing a form of 'fideism.' Fideism is defined as 'an exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone, accompanied by a consequent disparagement of reason and utilized especially in the pursuit of philosophical or religious truth.'

However, again there is no genuine comparison between the situation of Galileo and his scientific conclusions, and the current questions raised by the advocates of TE. Firstly, Galileo did not oppose the Bible, but rather

²⁵ **Kenneth Miller** - "It is high time that we grew up and left the Garden. We are indeed Eden's children, yet it is time to place Genesis alongside the geocentric myth in the basket of stories that once, in a world of intellectual naivete, made helpful sense. As we walk through the gates, aware of the dazzling richness of the genuine biological world, there might even be a smile on the Creator's face — that at long last His creatures have learned enough to understand His world as it truly is." — Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*

John Polkinghorne (Physicist) – He speaks of the direct action of God in the world as an, "unacceptable reduction of the Creator to an invisible cause among competing creaturely causes (making God just a physical interventionist poking an occasional divine finger into the processes of the universe)." – *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, Pg.100.

the consensus view of the theologians and scientists of his day, and most importantly the authority of the Church leaders. The Bible does not speak upon either helio-centrism or geo-centrism, so the questions raised by Galileo should have had little effect upon a believer's confidence in the Bible. It is no more challenging to the Bible than the discovery of gravity, DNA or the general laws of physics. It was his challenge to the authority of the Church leaders and the consensus view of the scientists of those times that got him into trouble.

Galileo's position did not contradict the Bible's teachings. The ²⁶scriptural support that the authorities used against him was based upon some of the more figurative language used in the Bible. The real issue for Galileo was the acceptance and general faith of the majority of his time in the accuracy of Ptolemaic geocentric theory. This theory had been commonly held as a scientific fact since the earliest time.

It is not too difficult to grasp the Bible's use of figurative language. Even today, in our scientific world, we commonly use terms such as the four corners of the earth and sunrise and sunset, without believing that the world is flat or square or that the earth is not revolving around the sun. The Bible often uses similar terms to communicate ideas that have nothing to do with scientific exactness. These terms are quite clearly figurative. For example, in **Job.38:37** when God is speaking first hand to Job, he speaks of the 'waterskins' or 'water jars' of heaven. It does not take much mental effort to see that the term is used figuratively. In like manner, when God speaks about the 'foundations of the earth' in **Job.38:4**, we understand he is using a figurative language. We need to be wary of assuming or concluding that the God of the Bible had no understanding of the physical sciences or that he even used terms that complied with or confirmed the cosmology of the ancient times.

The points we have raised are often just part of a pseudo ²⁷warfare thesis, which at times has been advanced by secularists to bring discredit upon Christians. An interesting summary of this question is found in the article linked in the footnotes.

Moreover, seeing that evolutionary theory depends upon the purely random process of mutations being acted upon by natural selection. Many Theistic evolutionists cloud the obvious contradiction between chance and providence, as if there were no contradiction between Darwin's theory and any coherent understanding of the Bible. Flannery cites Karl Giberson and Kenneth Miller as cases in point. "No matter what interpretation of Genesis one invokes, the tension between Darwin's chance and God's providence will be there."²⁸

Theistic evolution is designed, whether intelligently or not, to reconcile religious believers to the denial of their own common sense as interpreters of their faith in relationship to science. The Bible often speaks of many of God's works as miraculous, and of them being clearly evident in the creation (**Rom.1:20**). But this concept is clouded if the random process of evolution is adopted as the primary mechanism in the generation of novel biological features, and of new Family, Genus and Species.

Lastly, TE supporters sometime charge those who don't believe in 'human evolution' with being ²⁹**science deniers**, or of using the logical fallacy of ³⁰**false equivalence**. Used this way, these carry the same general idea.

²⁶ The references used against Galileo were – 1.Chron.16:30 ("the world shall be stable, that it be not moved"), Psalm.93:1 ("the world is established, that it cannot be moved"), Psalm.96:10 ("the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved"), Psalm.104:5 ("Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever"), Eccl.1:5 ("The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose").

²⁷ The warfare thesis has been used to cast derision upon religion. It is based upon a number of falsehoods – See the EN&V article - http://www.evolutionnews.org/2011/05/the_dark_age_wasnt_that_dark_n046931.html

²⁸ <https://www.evolutionnews.org/2017/03/darwins-dice-michael-flannery-role-chance-darwinian-evolution/>

²⁹ Science deniers deny the results of research & scientific facts because of a prior opinion or philosophy. Link [here](#)

³⁰ False Equivalence, claiming there is an equivalence in the authority of the evidence when there is not. Link [here](#). It is an interesting scriptural fact that "Biblical Faith is sometime depended upon believing in what appears to be physically impossible. The prime example of that way of thinking is Abraham, as recorded in Rom.4:16-23.

The argument maybe a strong one from an Atheist's point of view, but we fail to see how any believer could use this form of reasoning. We could just as easily turn the question back upon the Christian questioner concerning their anti-scientific belief in biblical miracles or in the resurrection of Christ, as all the naturalist scientific evidence points the other way.

Therefore, we must try and avoid the false use of the ³¹Warfare Thesis, as popularized by A.D. White. The Bible is not against science. The facts of the matter actually fall the other way. The modern scientific revolution was initiated and developed from a largely Christian foundation that expected certainty in the laws of creation.

The Bible's testimony about the creation

The Bible speaks specifically and in some detail upon the original ³²'Creation of the World', of life and quite specifically with more detail upon the creation of man. **The Bible's narrative is very different to the narrative of evolutionary science. The only way the two can be reconciled is by either;**

- 1) Ignoring the plain narrative in Genesis, or**
- 2) Interpreting it purely as a metaphor, or**
- 3) Seeing it as a latter mythological story with no literal event behind it, or**
- 4) Re-interpreting the words to fit into a model that is not self-evident or consistent with the Genesis narrative.**

Therefore, dealing with the Genesis account presents some serious problems for TE supporters as they must change or modify parts of the clear Biblical narrative to allow for their evolutionary understanding.

Unfortunately, changing the narrative will have consequences in many different areas. Most importantly, some (not all) TE supporters change or ignore the plain testimony of the first chapter of Genesis, and the work of the 6 days of creation.

In Genesis chapter one there are 10 incidences in the record that record the words "God said." These must be either ignored or re-interpreted away from what they most naturally say. To do this is a gigantic leap away from the plain narrative of the record, and the implications of this may not be fully appreciated. At this stage we should all, with careful reflection, recall that the serpent also ignored or downplayed what God had plainly said, and changed the intent of God's word. The first century Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo, who allegorized much of the OT to synthesize it with philosophy, did much the same thing with the OT. In other words, this is not a new approach. We should take these examples as a warning.

Another worrying trend is that holders of TE may be persuaded to re-interpret the full scriptural meaning of Sin, the origin of evil, the meaning and origin of human death, the physical consequences of the curse upon man and upon the earth, and the origins of man's current physical condition. These all have some bearing upon God's work in Christ, in redeeming us from sin and death.

To achieve its goals of synthesising the Bible's narrative to allow for evolutionary theory, **the advocates of TE often identify apparent anomalies and uncertainties in the general narrative, and into this space it 'shoehorns' its own version of the theory of 'evolution'**. It achieves all this through the application of a type of Hegelian Dialectic. The thesis is the Bible's plain narrative. The anti-thesis is the worldview of the consensus of scientists about the certainty of macro biological evolution and common descent, which is clearly different from the Biblical narrative. To accommodate evolutionary views TE must either downplay, undermine or re-interpret the Biblical narrative. The outcome is a synthesis, which forms the basis of the TE position.

³¹ A.D.White's "Warfare Between Science and Theology". Biologos has an interesting summary of this, located [here](#).

³² The Creation of the World refers to the narrative of Gen.1. The author believes that Genesis refers to the forming and filling of the world, not the creation of the planet. See his reasons in this summary – 'Geneses.1v1 re-examined'. Link [here](#)

As noted earlier, TE's main challenge is that there is no support whatsoever for evolutionary theory in either the OT or NT writings. **The word of God is totally silent in its support of this position**, which means that those who adopt it must rely upon the consensus view of scientists. However, **what is not usually expressed is that many evolutionists don't believe simply in the "superiority of science" but rather in the superiority of the belief of the majority of scientists.** By this statement we do not call into question the integrity of scientists, but recall their faith in the inerrancy of the scientific method. This leads to the following related point.

Science is based upon?

Let us remind ourselves that **the evolutionary position of most scientists is believed because science can only use the body of natural evidence without any reference to a miraculous cause**, which would depend upon a belief in a supernatural God. **They must do this because science, according to its most common definition, must only be based upon natural processes and mechanisms. The very construct of modern science and its accepted definition creates a framework that can only lead to accepting some form of natural process to explain life and the universe.** ³³**A contrary worldview that invokes the supernatural must be rejected, because it is unscientific by very definition.**

This is an example of circular reasoning that assumes that God has not worked in the past in ways that defy the laws of science. Even scientists who hold to Christian beliefs must submit to this construct otherwise they will be labelled as un-scientific. This assumption presents a major challenge when seeking to harmonise the revelation found in the Bible with the scientific method, and no matter how we think about this issue we must conclude that ultimately the dependence of science upon naturalism affects how it will view the past.

As we have sought to show in the earlier part of this essay, using worldly philosophy to interpret the Bible is not new. It has been used on numerous occasions in the past, and it is often used by Academia and in the world at large. **The most important question remains for those believers who hold to TE is to consider if they are really comfortable, on the basis of the underlying naturalistic world-view inherent in the scientific-method, to challenge God's words? Do they think men's theories and sciences are superior to God's revelation of past events?** We need to think carefully about this and how we respond to this question. We also need to carefully consider which **worldview is guiding our thinking? Whom do we really trust?**

Perhaps we should be like Job, who when confronted by the overwhelming greatness of God and his revelation to him, responded in great humility. Or as Jesus himself, when tempted by contrary ideas.

"Then Job answered the LORD, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" (Job.40:3-5).

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matt.4:4).

Is this matter important? ³⁴**Many secular Darwinians employ Darwin's theory as a battering ram to topple the idea of human exceptionalism. According to late Harvard palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould, Darwinian "biology took away our status as paragons created in the image of God."** The words surrounding this

³³ This rejection of the supernatural is repeatedly asserted all through the scientific literature. For example, on "The Third Way" website, a site run by scientists who reject Darwinian Evolution and propose different evolutionary mechanisms, they make this comment on biological life - "One way is Creationism that depends upon intervention by a divine Creator. That is clearly unscientific because it brings an arbitrary supernatural force into the evolution process." Link to site is [here](#). Again, we see the same rationale in the (National Science Teachers Association) NSTA Position Statement on The Nature of Science. For example - "The principal product of science is knowledge in the form of naturalistic concepts and the laws and theories related to those concepts. ... Science, by definition, is limited to naturalistic methods and explanations and, as such, is precluded from using supernatural elements in the production of scientific knowledge." Link is [here](#).

³⁴ "Science and Human Origin", 2012 (Introduction). A PDF copy of the book is [here](#)

quotation of Gould's are also interesting, as they quote the philosophical thoughts of many scientists who express their opinion on morality and purpose, which are directly derived from the Darwinian model.

The effects of Darwinism also impact many Christians. ³⁵**Many religious Darwinists, meanwhile, use Darwinian science to urge revisions in traditional Christian teachings about God and man.** Karl Giberson, a co-founder of the pro-theistic-evolution **BioLogos Foundation**, argues that human beings were evil from the start **because evolution is driven by selfishness; therefore, Christians must abandon the idea that human beings were originally created by God morally good.** Current BioLogos president Darrel Falk urges Christians to scrap their outdated belief in Adam and Eve as parents of the human race, claiming that evolutionary biology now proves **"there never was a time when there was a single first couple, two people who were the progenitors of the entire human race"**. These ideas have subtle and far reaching effects for Christians, as their trust in the word of God will be challenged, with the danger of a drift towards either Deism or Atheism.

This matter is very important and we should not pretend otherwise. As, William B Provine, Professor of Biological Sciences, Cornell University, said; ³⁶**Naturalistic evolution has clear consequences that Charles Darwin understood perfectly. 1) No gods worth having exist; 2) no life after death exists; 3) no ultimate foundation for ethics exists; 4) no ultimate meaning in life exists; and 5) human free will is nonexistent."**

Again, ³⁷**"As the creationists claim, belief in modern evolution makes atheists of people. One can have a religious view that is compatible with evolution only if the religious view is indistinguishable from atheism."**

Consensus Science. On the question of institutionalised science and its priority on maintaining the status quo, the outspoken and well regarded evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis had the following to say -

³⁸**More and more, like the monasteries of the Middle Ages, today's universities and professional societies guard their knowledge. Collusively, the university biology curriculum, the textbook publishers, the National Science Foundation review committees, the Graduate Record examiners, and the various microbiological, evolutionary, and zoological societies map out domains of the known and knowable; they distinguish required from forbidden knowledge, subtly punishing the trespassers with rejection and oblivion; they award the faithful liturgists by granting degrees and dispersing funds and fellowships.**

Universities and academies, well within the boundaries of given disciplines (biology in my case), **determine who is permitted to know and just what it is that he or she may know.** Biology, botany, zoology, biochemistry, and microbiology departments within U.S. universities determine access to knowledge about life, dispensing it at high prices in peculiar parcels called credit hours."

How do we answer the challenge of evolutionary science?

One way we can do this is by constantly reminding ourselves that it is not a "religious way" of knowing or thinking, to believe what the all-knowing, truthful, eyewitness Creator God has revealed in His Word, about His part in the origin and history of the creation. Believing reliable eyewitness testimony is the most important and common way that we utilize to reconstruct the many unobserved events of the past. This is a universally accepted way of knowing history and understanding life. In like manner, the truly scientific way to know something is not by trusting the majority, but by observation and experimentation.

³⁵ "Science and Human Origin", 2012 (Introduction). A PDF copy of the book is [here](#)

³⁶ Provine, William B. [Professor of Biological Sciences, Cornell University], ", "Evolution: Free will and punishment and meaning in life", Abstract of Will Provine's 1998 Darwin Day Keynote Address. Youtube Link of an interview with Dr Provine, who forcefully expresses his commitment to Evolution and to Atheism [here](#)

³⁷ William Provine (1942-2015) Andrew H. and James S. Tisch Distinguished University Professor of Biology at Cornell University. – Various quote: Link is [here](#)

³⁸ Margulis, L. and D. Sagan (1997): Slanted Truths: Essays on Gaia, Symbiosis, and Evolution. Springer. Link is [here](#).

Here we are confronted with a problem. The creation itself cannot be replicated by us. As for origins, this leaves us with applying either a naturalistic methodology or hearing and believing God's first hand eye witness testimony ([Exod.31:17](#)). Interestingly, the majority of discoveries in science have been made by scientists not trusting what the majority of scientists believed. History is full of such examples. Furthermore, all informed believers reject the "science and religion conflict model". It is not science that they object to, but only to some of the conclusions drawn, that is, those that are interpretative and try and piece together the evidence about the origins of the world that are solely based upon a naturalistic approach.

It is unfortunate that many of the arguments advanced against evolutionary theory get side tracked by trying to argue that evolution is not possible. ³⁹This approach is wrong, for it is a fact that speciation and basic evolution does occur according to the standard textbook definitions. That is, that species can change and do adapt to varying conditions and they can and do split into sub-species, or join with other related species to create new species. This is beyond doubt and it is not wise to argue upon the principles of an assumed interpretation of the statements in Genesis that refer to creatures reproducing after their kind.

A way forward?

The following is only offered as a suggested way forward. Perhaps the best way to think about this subject is to follow something like the following guidelines -

Firstly, evolutionary science cannot explain how life came from non-life (abiogenesis). It must rely upon a version of Darwin's belief in the power of natural processes to spontaneously generate life in some small ⁴⁰warm pool, from which inanimate chemicals self-organized into simple single celled life forms. Here it is best to focus on the wonderful complexity in the DNA of even simple single celled life. This complexity has confounded science, and even ⁴¹changed the view of some prominent atheists.

Secondly, evolutionary science must also explain how simple life mutated and evolved into the vast complexity of life that we see today. The real assumption in evolutionary science is about the power of evolution to create the macro biological changes needed to support the theory of universal common descent. The main

³⁹ See the article "The Meanings of Evolution", Stephen C. Meyers and Michael Newton Keas. Link in [here](#). In this essay the authors separate into six main categories the different ways that the word 'evolution' is used by various scientists. As believers, most of us would have little or no problem with the first four uses of the word - 1) Evolution as Change over time. 2) Evolution as Gene Frequency Change. 3) Evolution as Limited Common Descent. 4) Evolution as a Mechanism that Produces Limited Change or Descent with Modifications. 5) Evolution as Universal Common Descent. 6) Evolution as the "Blind Watchmaker" Thesis – i.e. Natural Selection is the ONLY mechanism at work.

The linked article by Dr Todd Wood, who holds a PhD in Biochemistry and is a Young Earth Creationist, supplies an interesting perspective. "Creationist students, listen to me very carefully: There is evidence for evolution, and evolution is an extremely successful scientific theory. That doesn't make it ultimately true, and it doesn't mean that there could not possibly be viable alternatives. It is my own faith choice to reject evolution, because I believe the Bible reveals true information about the history of the earth that is fundamentally incompatible with evolution. I am motivated to understand God's creation from what I believe to be a biblical, creationist perspective. Evolution itself is not flawed or without evidence. Please don't be duped into thinking that somehow evolution itself is a failure. Please don't idolize your own ability to reason. Faith is enough. If God said it, that should settle it. Maybe that's not enough for your scoffing professor or your non-Christian friends, but it should be enough for you." Link to the comment is [here](#).

⁴⁰ The "warm pool" idea was proposed by Darwin, but later scientists now speculate that life arose "near thermal vents". See the references found in the EN&V article – "Daniel Dennett and Secular Creationism", March 28, 2017. Link is [here](#).

⁴¹ The discovery of DNA persuaded Anthony Flew of the existence of God. Flew was one of the foremost Atheistic Philosophers of the 20th century. He commented – "What I think the DNA material has done is that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together. It's the enormous complexity of the number of elements and the enormous subtlety of the ways they work together. The meeting of these two parts at the right time by chance is simply minute. It is all a matter of the enormous complexity by which the results were achieved, which looked to me like the work of intelligence." – There is a God, (2007) Pg.75 Anthony Flew. Link is [here](#).

evidence to support this concept is based upon theoretical reconstructions from palaeontology or biology. By necessity, these reconstructions utilize ⁴²abductive reasoning and depend upon knowing the conditions of the past. In turn this involves a huge set of assumptions, extrapolations and uncertainties which some of the more honest scientists plainly admit.

Thirdly, we can go further and state that **the question is not only whether it is theoretically possible for macro-evolution to have happened, the real question is whether it did happen and is responsible for all the various life forms we see today or that have ever existed in the past.** This inevitably leads to the point of our underlying world-view, **which is the question about whom we really believe.** This may not be much of a challenge to non-believers, but it ought to be a huge challenge to Christian believers who believe in the Bible's message, for nowhere in the Bible is the evolutionary model taught in any way, shape or form. This should be of significant concern to believers.

Fourthly, for believers in the God of the Bible, the answer to the question about origins is clearly explained in the plain narrative of the Bible's teachings. This is where the battle must be fought and won among believers. This is where ideas that are clearly contrary to the Biblical narrative, that have no sound scriptural support, **should have no standing and should not be taught.** ⁴³Irrespective of what the promoters of Evolutionary Creationism (Theistic Evolution) may say, the matters of disagreement are both large and important. Just as we should not use the time in our Meetings and Bible classes teaching or arguing about politics, philosophy or Aristotelian logic, we should not be teaching or arguing for concepts that are contrary to the plain Biblical narrative of Genesis. To this writer's mind, private opinions on this matter are tolerable, but publicly promoting a contrary narrative is unacceptable.

Fifthly, an important factor in the debate is that the majority of scientists who believe in evolution are also atheists, agnostics or deists. This is beyond doubt, and the danger for Bible believers who closely follow science is the resultant spiritual drift in this direction. No doubt there are some who hold to various forms of evolutionary theory who are drifting in this way. This bias in the scientific world makes it difficult for believers to accept some of the conclusions of science, because they suspect that their ⁴⁴evolutionary reconstructions may be the product of their faithless worldview, which must always seek for natural causes. The mocking and arrogant tone of some scientists certainly does not help their cause among believing Christians.

Furthermore, the modern scientific approach sometimes engenders some strangely unbalanced statements from its advocates. For example, theoretical physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking, famously stated that ⁴⁵"... Philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly

⁴² Abductive reasoning uses current evidence to postulate upon causes. Link [here](#). There is also an interesting article on the EN&V website by William Dembski and Jonathan Wells, dated July 6, 2016 that is worth considering. It is titled: "Why Fossils Cannot Demonstrate Darwinian Evolution." Link is [here](#).

⁴³ The question of evolution vs creation is more than just a matter of opinion or interpretation. As Dr Todd Wood, a Ph.D in Biochemistry and a rebel YEC creationist, said, "Sometimes I sort of wish it was just a matter of perspective. It might be nice to say, "Hey, Jesus is our saviour, so let's just not fight over these secondary issues. We don't do that though, because none of us believes that these are secondary issues. **For most of us, these issues hit on our very ability to know anything.** For me, I can't see how we separate a straightforward reading of Genesis 1-11 from all its doctrinal richness that touches directly on the nature of sin, the purpose of salvation, and the coming judgment. If I can't believe what seems so obvious in Genesis, why should I believe what seems so obvious in Matthew? Likewise, an evolutionary creationist looks at nature and thinks that evolution is so obvious that to question it is to question our ability to understand anything. It's so obvious that if it weren't true, God would be guilty of falsifying evidence. If evolution is wrong, either God is a liar, or all of science collapses. These are not secondary issues. As disturbing as it is to admit, the body of Christ is at war. That's just incomprehensible, but there it is. Other Christians have become my enemies. I've written about this before, and I still won't sugar coat it. We're battling over fundamental, irreconcilable differences. We can't all be right. We can't all win. We won't agree to disagree. It's just too important to let it go like that." Link [here](#).

⁴⁴ The Piltdown Man Hoax is a well-documented example of scientific fraud, now admitted by all. Link [here](#)

⁴⁵ "The Grand Design: new answers to the ultimate questions of life", Chp.1. (co-authored with Leonard Mlodinow) 2010.

physics. **Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.**" In this statement Hawking fails to acknowledge that his world view is no less "philosophical" than that of philosophers.

Lastly, all who claim to be believers, whether they agree with the scientific consensus or not, are bound by the ethical code outlined by the Lord Jesus Christ in **Matt.5-7**. They are not to be false accusers, mockers, arrogant or deceitful. They are rather to be patient, generous and honest. They are to love their enemies. They believe that they will one day have to give an account of their behaviour to the Lord for every idle, unprofitable, useless and damaging word (**Matt.12:36**). In the heat of debate these things are often forgotten in the desire to win the argument. Although they must contend for the faith, they must do so lawfully (**Jude.1:3, 2.Tim.2:5**).

Jesus said in **Matt.7:15-20**, **"by their fruit ye shall know them"**. He is advocating the practice of fruitful words and works among his disciples, while he suggests that those who are of a contrary position will be seen by their fruits. Let us take note of this warning and behave in all things in a way that is God honouring. In the context of Faith, Philosophy and Science, let us recall the words of the reference at the start of this essay –

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1.Cor.1:26-29**).**

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In Summary.

In this short essay we have endeavoured to show the historical origins of philosophy, its basic assumptions and methodology, its effect upon modern thinking and the sciences, as well as its profound influence upon Christianity. As we have seen, **philosophy's effect upon Christianity has been insidious in that it has crept in unawares under the guise of logic, science and reasonableness**. Its general approach is supported by the wisdom and learning of many well respected and highly intelligent men.

In the course of this essay we have also endeavoured to show that the dialectical approach, utilized by philosophy, is both useful and powerful when applied to the world at large and to the natural sciences, as well as Biblical interpretation, **but it remains a dangerous approach when misused to judge the words of God. It is self-evident that God cannot be judged by us. God, by very definition, is beyond the material universe and His ways are far above ours. Rather, our duty is to understand him.** The following speaks of this.

Isaiah.55:8-9. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah.40:21-22. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

Likewise, because God is both the creator and sustainer of all, He therefore existed before the creation of all and is in that sense far greater than His creation (1.Kings.8:27**).** One only has to go outside at night and consider the vastness of the universe to begin to grasp the enormity of this concept. From this and from God's revelation of himself in His word, we know that God is not bound by the constraints of the laws of nature. The scriptures speak of this in a number of ways, as the following references show.

Gen.18:14. Is anything too hard for the LORD?

Luke.1:37. For with God nothing shall be impossible.

We see this principle at work in the many miraculous events of the past that are recorded in the Bible. For example, consider the following naturally impossible narratives; 1) Daniel's three friends are preserved in a fiery furnace ([Dan.3:21-30](#)), 2) An iron axe head floats on water ([2.Kg.6:6](#)), 3) Manna from heaven feeds hundreds of thousands of people for 40 years ([Deut.8:1-3](#)), 4) Jesus feeds 5,000 with a few morsels ([Mark.6:44](#)), 5) Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana ([John.2:1-11](#)). In each of these cases and others like them, it is clear that these events are impossible according to natural laws. We should conclude from this that God is not bound by the laws of science and nature.

On a similar point, Professor Wayne Rossiter comments as follows:

⁴⁶“Literally, Jesus is their great stumbling block. Consider the words of Darrel Falk (one of the BioLogos founders): “Faith in Christ’s resurrection is thus the single most important belief that Christians hold. Is it scientifically credible? . . . It is not. Yet this is the position we hold. To a scientist . . . the belief in a risen body is irrational.”

“They think that purely scientific explanations for the world are compatible with Christian theism...except on Jesus. There, they will fly in the face of their science. But why? And if there, why only there? They all make space for miracles in principle, but never tell you which they actually accept. And what do they do with petitionary prayer, the miracles surrounding Jesus (in the NT). Heck, most aren’t real warm to the concept of angels. I’ve continued to evaluate all manner of TE-types. All have massive contradictions and unfounded claims. But boy, they’re an atheists best friend. That’s why Salon magazine called TE “training wheels towards atheism.””

One might quibble with Dr. Rossiter’s use of “literally.” Otherwise, this is about as penetrating and succinct a statement of the issue as one could hope for.

Rossiter has correctly identified the issue that is at the heart of the matter. This is a particular challenge to us who live in a world governed by the certainty of the laws of nature. How would we, within the bounds of the known laws of science, use naturalistic reasoning to explain miraculous events? We cannot. **We must agree with the testimony of the angels listed above and logically conclude that nothing is impossible for God.**

Considering the fact that we as believers accept that these past miraculous events occurred, and that Christianity itself is based upon the impossible fact of man rising from the dead, why is it so hard to believe God’s first hand testimony that he made the heaven, earth and seas in six days ([Exod.20:11, 31:17](#))?

In some measure we can agree with the man who is considered the founder of the scientific method, Francis Bacon. He taught that ‘God has written two books: the Scriptures and the book of creation (or nature)’. However, we also accept Bacon’s statement with some caution, knowing that similar reasoning was used in his time, and even until the present time, to justify the pseudo mystical practices of ⁴⁷‘astrology and divination’. We also cautiously ask if nature itself can really be considered a book. Furthermore, what do we do when there is an apparent discrepancy between what the Bible says about the past and the “record” of nature – i.e. natural laws? For example, the Bible’s teaching about the resurrection of Jesus Christ or the miraculous things he did? Whom do we believe? Why believe this part of the record and not the earlier one about creation?

⁴⁶ The quotation by Rossiter, who holds a PhD in ecology and evolution from Rutgers and is an assistant biology professor at Waynesburg University, is taken from the Uncommon Descent web site, dated 23rd Jan, 2017. Link is [here](#).

⁴⁷ Astrology is a form of divination, in which the will and purpose of God was divined from the movement of the stars. It was widely practiced by many of these early men of science as a way to generate income. It is still very popular today. It is spoken against in the Bible (Isaiah.47:12-14, Dan.1:20, 2:27, Deut.18:9-14).

It was Solomon, considered the wisest man of his times (1.King.4:3), who tells us that **the first requirement of knowledge and wisdom is the fear of the LORD.**

Prov.1:7. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov.9:10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Solomon was well aware of the power of ideas and the various philosophies of men. **Contrary to the bias in many history books, the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom is not an exclusive later Hellenistic development. The early Grecian Philosophers and Mathematicians learned much of their trade from Egypt and Babylon.** We know this from their own accounts of travelling to these areas and learning the basic sciences from the learned in these ancient cultures. This is also clearly observable in the mathematical precision of the engineering involved in ancient buildings, as well as their incredible grasp of astronomy and the basic sciences, including animal husbandry and agriculture. In fact, it is a peculiarity of history that the dominance of Grecian culture only emerged after the demise of the power of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, as well as the fall of Jerusalem.

We read in 1.Kg.4:29-34 of Solomon's wisdom, how it exceeded that of his contemporaries in both Egypt and in the East (Babylon?). The record speaks of how wide ranging his knowledge and wisdom really was, and how the ancients came to hear him speak. In the references above, what Solomon means by 'the fear of the LORD' includes both respect for God's word and trust in God's revelation. That is, coming to the realization that God is much greater than his creation, as Solomon clearly speaks of elsewhere (2.Chron.6:18). He explains that 'the fear of the LORD' is the basis for 'the knowledge of God' (Prov.2:5). **He then goes on to say that the wisdom and knowledge of God can only be found by diligent searching, and most importantly, it only comes from God who gives it.** How does God give it? **"For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding"**. He is clearly speaking of divine revelation.

Prov.2:1-6. My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

In this saying Solomon agrees with Jesus' assessment of the true origin of life-giving knowledge and wisdom (Matt.4:4). James likewise counsels us to seek knowledge from God who gives it, and not to doubt (James.1:5-8). It is also worth noting that Solomon was well aware of man's aspirations to know all the works of God. He also knew the limitations of man's perspective. He therefore goes on to say that although God has set a desire to know in the hearts of men, it is impossible for a man to discover all the works of God from beginning to end.

Ecl.3:11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

Through careful scientific study man can gain glimpses of the wonderful works of God and understand many things about how the world about him operates according to divinely ordered laws, but he cannot grasp it all. He may construct theories that use the evidence he has to theorize upon 'the how and why' things are as they are, but he really does not know much with any certainty.

Likewise, to theorise upon the past he must make assumptions based upon reconstructions using abductive reasoning. These assumptions will be guided by his underlying naturalistic methodology, philosophy and worldview. As we have noted, by using the scientific method his assumptions are limited to considering only natural causes, as any supernatural involvement, by its very definition, must be rejected as unscientific.



Plato & Aristotle - Raphael's 'The School of Athens' (1510)

The question of Philosophy or Science is seen in the different attitudes portrayed in Raphael's painting of Plato and Aristotle.

Plato was a **rationalist** = i.e. truth is derived by theoretical reasoning coupled with human intuition. He is pictured pointing upwards, as if all knowledge comes from (some higher) intelligence or intellect. (For example, Socrates his teacher, believed he was guided by a demon)

Aristotle was an **empiricist** = i.e. truth is derived by the senses through experience. Empiricism is a basic concept of science, where all knowledge is basically derived from evidence that is ultimately physical. He is pictured as pointing down to the earth.

Faith exclusively fits neither model, while not rejecting the fact that various truths can be found using both methods. **Bible based faith means believing what God has spoken**, not simply believing in God's existence or influence, i.e. **"God has spoken"**. Faith looks both forwards and backwards, it is timeless like God, **Heb.11:1-3.**, and allows us to see with God's perspective.

Conclusion.

In his letter to the Corinthian disciples, Paul said, **'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness'** (1.Cor.1:23). Paul felt the power of this statement through first-hand experience. When he came to Athens, the centre of learning in the ancient world, he spoke about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The record says that when they heard this, **'some mocked'** (Acts.17:32), for his words were totally contrary to all that they believed.

The words in 1.Cor.1:23 were written in the context of the exaltation of other sources of knowledge. It is easy to misunderstand what Paul is saying by assuming that he means that Jesus dying for our sins is all that matters. This is not the sole reason Paul writes what he does. It is not the complete story. **Paul is saying that 'Christ crucified' posed an enormous challenge to both Jews and Greeks, for both had philosophies, which in their own ways, exalted human thinking.**

Here was Jesus Christ, the very best of men, without sin, yet crucified to show us what God thinks of sin, by condemning sin in him (Rom.8:3). This includes all the aspirations of man and his accompanying worldview. We must grasp this point, as it is often misunderstood, and theories about penal-substitution have been developed to synthesise Paul's theology with a form of human philosophy that puts all the focus upon man.

Christ's sacrifice is presented as both representative and also exemplary. **He has called us to take up our cross and follow him (Matt.16:24), dying with him that we might live with him (Gal.2:20).** This is the basis of our redemption in Christ, **for all die in him (2.Cor.5:14-15).** While it is clear that we cannot find redemption apart from Christ and we cannot attain to perfect obedience, nevertheless we are to follow his example in seeking to do God's will. **Just as he laid down his life for us, so we too are to lay down lives for others (1.John.3:16).**

A large part of discipleship, therefore, involves practical obedience, which springs from a renewed mind, or way of thinking. We are to be dead with Christ, yet 'born again' with him to newness of life (Rom.6:2-7). **This involves a new way of thinking, no longer seeing only with man's eyes according to man's perspective, but now seeing things with God's perspective (2.King.6:17, 2Cor.4:18).** Although this may sound irrational and unscientific, it is described as being 'spiritually minded' and not 'carnally minded' (Rom.8:6-9). In this the scriptures are not talking about partial dedication or trust, but about **'bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ'**. Although we may and do struggle with this concept, knowing our own sins and weaknesses, it is what we are called upon to do.

2.Cor.10:3-5. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) **Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;**

Finally, let us hear the words of Job. **The context in the book of Job is about causation.** Evil had befallen Job and he and his friends sought to find out why. Even the tempter (Satan) himself had challenged God's integrity with questions revolving around causation, as he implied that Job only served God because he was richly rewarded. Job and his friends speculated, reasoned and argued, yet they were all wrong in their conclusions.

They had failed to see things from God's perspective, which caused them to make assumptions about God and his ways which called into question God's truthfulness, integrity and fairness. In short, they tried to judge God according to the standards of man and of man's wisdom. Let us take note of Job's final comment, when he comes to understand and submit to the full might and wisdom of Almighty God.

Job.42:1-6. Then Job answered the LORD and said: **"I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.** You asked, **'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.** Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, **'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'** **"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."**

This ought to be our spirit. One that admits that we do not know all the answers, particularly about matters relating to causation and origins. We do not know how God could have done what He has said He has done, yet nevertheless we believe Him. For the essence of Faith is believing God, that is, believing his word and not only believing in God's existence. This is a large challenge for modern people who are scientifically minded. This is particularly so for those influenced by the philosophy of the various streams of higher learning.

⁴⁸**This raises the important question of - why do we believe?** Sometimes we try and prove the Bible true by arguments that involve history, prophecy, archaeology, and textual consistency etc. As valuable and as helpful as these arguments are in strengthening our confidence, yet above this our faith is not the product of some cold rationale or scientific equation. **It is solely based upon hearing, understanding and believing the testimony of God's witnesses (Rom.10:17, Heb.11:1).** **It is intimately associated with coming to know and understand the mind of the God and creator of all, and of His purpose in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (John.17:3).** **This only comes from hearing the word of God. It is developed by growing in our knowledge of His word and His ways. From this we come to love and trust God without reservation.**

This is not blind faith as some would term it, but faith that comes from hearing and knowing God. **In His word, God introduces himself and persuades us to His all-pervasive reality.** This certainty is confirmed in us in a practical sense when we know God and keep His commandments (**John.7:14-17, Eccl.12:13-14, Rom.4:21**). **We need to appreciate this concept with that understanding and confidence that only comes from seeing the world through God's eyes ... that we may truly live by faith (Heb.11:1-3).**

End

⁴⁸ As we noted at the start of this essay, we more fully address these questions in the essay titled, "Evidence, Reason and Faith" which is located [here](#).