

## The How of Creation: Parameters and Nodes for Gracious and Fruitful Dialogue— The Foundations and the Forward Motion of Pilgrims in Unity

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### Part One, An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-6

#### Introduction

*This essay is the first part of a plenary address delivered at the Vibrant Dance of Science and Faith Symposium in Austin, TX., October 26, 2010. The second part will follow in a subsequent essay. The overall intent of these two essays is to provide a biblical and theological basis for healthy and fruitful dialogue on the theology and science of origins for pilgrims destined for the same heaven-on-earth celestial city.*

Let us begin with some profound words about truth seeking written by Thomas Merton:

*We make ourselves real by telling the truth. ... To destroy truth with truth under the pretext of being sincere is a very insincere way of telling a lie ... A man of sincerity is less interested in defending the truth than in stating it clearly, for he thinks that if the truth can be clearly seen it can very well take care of itself. Fear is perhaps the greatest enemy of candor.<sup>1</sup>*

My own interest in theology and science arises out of a curiosity to know the truth that takes care of itself in every realm of reality, and that sets us free. It is motivated by the presupposition that all truth is God's and that all truth concerning the creation of the universe and its reconciliation is centered in the God-Man Jesus who said, "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

My interest in science and faith and their integration comes also out of two vocations in which disbelief that this is possible has often been expressed by people I have met, some who are people of faith, and many who are not. I have found, over the years of playing the occasional golf game with people I don't know, that when, during the round, my vocation as a pastor comes out, they are often terribly embarrassed about the expletives they have been uttering in the round up to that point. When I tell them that I played a lot of rugby and am used to this kind of language, and it's between them and God anyway, they are not always put at ease.

When I tell them that I have a PhD in chemistry, they are utterly bewildered, and usually say, "How do you put those two things together?" Their reactions epitomize the Enlightenment dichotomization of fact (the realm of science) and faith (the realm of religion), and have energized me towards this science-faith dialogue, and in recent years, back to the question of origins.

The dictum of Augustine and Anslem that the pursuit of truth is always a "faith seeking understanding" prospect has for me been the basis on which I have sought to debunk the scientism of the secularist on the one hand, and on the other hand, to encourage Christians to become aware of science and to embolden fledgling young scientists to pursue truth fearlessly in careers in science.

My interest in Christian *unity* in the dialogue on origins comes out of having served churches in which all shades of opinion were present and how I, with fellow leaders, have sought to manage this. I want therefore to bring my reflections on the foundations of unity and forward motion towards unity in the

context of an exposition of Ephesians 4. I write as a pastor or pastoral theologian and so I shall seek to do so in the manner in which a pastor should, through exposition of the Word of God.

Before looking at this passage however, I want to charge it with the elements of the prayer of Jesus on unity, John 17:20-23. I suspect that Paul may have been conscious of this prayer as he wrote this section of his epistle.

*20 My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

As we eavesdrop here on the inner communion of the Trinity, we get to hear what's on the heart of the Son as he pours it out to his Father. And what we hear is his deepest desire for the church—its unity.

Jesus defines it as a unity grounded in two unions—that between the Father and the Son (Trinitarian union) and that between believers who are in the Father and the Son (participatory union). The former is brought about by the incarnation or hypostatic union of God with humanity, and the latter in the indwelling of the Spirit which brings about the regeneration and incorporation of saints into Christ as His church.

There can be no more profound aspect of the gospel than this, one which does not negate the forensic aspect of the gospel, but which precedes it in God's intention for humanity, and surpasses it. These words about our organic unity in the triune God need to pervade our deliberations. But now to Paul.

#### **Ephesians 4:1-6: The foundations for unity as we dialogue - Things that should unite us:**

In what follows, I want to give a basis for the preservation of the unity of the church as it comes at the issues of science and faith, and in particular as it dialogues over the more controversial areas in this arena. I would suspect this first point is not ground-breaking, new information for most of us, but it is necessary exhortation nevertheless, especially given the disparate opinions of the kind that characterize the Christian church on matters of science and faith. Consider Ephesians 4:1-6:

*1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Let me offer brief comments on this text and its relevance to believers in this dialogue (or any other, for that matter):

### (i) The priority of unity

I am always struck by what comes first in Paul's exhortational or paraenetical section of this epistle. There are five exhortations towards "walking" (*peripateō*) and most of us would perhaps assume the first should be about holiness or right living or ethics. But the first is about unity. This reflects the weight Paul places on it, and it is in keeping with the primary theme of the theological section, which is the creation by the reconciling God of a new humanity in Christ.

It is one new humanity, it is one body, it is one temple. In making unity first, Paul is faithfully reflecting the heart desire of his Great High Priest Jesus as that is reflected in John 17. We Evangelicals and Protestants in particular seem to worry least about what Jesus and Paul worry most—unity and catholicity. We readily use our aversion towards organizational oneness and our theology of eschatological oneness in the future to justify our ever-growing multiplicity of unconnected churches, and also the potshots we take at each other in areas such as this one.

### (ii) The urgency of unity

This urgency in Paul here is further accentuated by the forcefulness of the exhortation in verse 3: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." This phrase can be rendered "take pains to keep the unity!"

Markus Barth expresses this very potently:

*It is hardly possible to render exactly the urgency contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength, and total attitude. The imperative mood of the participle found in the Greek text excludes passivity, quietism, a wait-and-see attitude, or a diligence tempered by all deliberate speed. Yours is the initiative! Do it now! Mean it! You are to do it! I mean it! Such are the overtones in verse 3. Those given the "vocation" to walk worthily (4:1) appear to be urged to race ahead, to meet the deadline, or to receive a "prize."<sup>2</sup>*

We should not naively imagine that the preservation in earthly practice of the heavenly and organic unity that is Christological and more real will be easy. But pursue it we must. It is inimical to who we really are and it is crucial to our witness that a new humanity has been formed in Christ, and into which all are invited.

But how will this unity be preserved? Preachers are good at the "why" and not often at the "how." There are two aspects to this "how." The first relates to personal formation of character. The second relates to the framework for unity—a communal theological basis for unity—one that is asserted positively in an essentialist creed, which is remarkable both for its affirmations and its absences. I will take each of these in turn.

### (iii) The personal character required for unity

Verse 2 reads, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." It has often been noticed that the first two of these relate to how we affect others and the last two how we are affected by others. Humble and gentle people can express their opinions and disagree agreeably without

offending others. Patient and forbearing people don't quickly react angrily when others are less than humble and gentle, and they forgive.

You don't need me to remind you how passions run high around the issues surrounding origins, nor of the arrogance that can just very occasionally (stated ironically) be evident in very bright scientists and even more so in very bright scientists who hold theological convictions. We need a dose of humility especially to admit when we are wrong. We also need humility to ascertain when we have sufficient evidence and when we don't. And when we don't, we need humility to expose that our prejudices have taken over. We need humility even about our approach to knowledge given that we are all influenced by presuppositions that influence our reason.

Scientists especially need humility to know that the existence of pure reason or objectivity does not exist! Furthermore, on this pilgrim journey in which the kingdom has come but has not yet fully come, we must have the humility to know that there are some things we may not know until we reach the celestial-terrestrial city! Paul wraps all four of these traits under the head of love. He reminds us of what he says on other occasions, that there is something more important even than knowledge in the economy of God and what he wishes for us... this is love.

The Eastern Orthodox monasteries, which privilege love over knowledge, and silence over noisy thought, can teach us Western theologians a great deal about this. The words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:2 seem timely: "If I ... can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

**(iv) The communal union with Christ, which is the ground of unity:**

Communal unity with Christ is expressed by Paul here in the phrase "keep the unity of the Spirit" (v. 3). This is a reality that sits over every exhortation here. It is the reality that we are one. Paul is building on all he has said in the first three chapters, and late scholarship has suggested particularly the opening paragraph which functions in this lyrical epistle like a refrain in a symphony.

What is its emphasis? That all believers in Christ are just that: in Christ. They are that by the pre-mundane electing covenant of God the Father in the Son who is both the electing God and the elect human for us (1:4; 3-6a); they are that by the redemptive reconciling work of the Son (1:6b-12); they are that by the regenerating and sealing and earnest and incorporating work of the Spirit (1:13, 14). These ontological realities are crucial to Paul's and to my exhortation towards unity of all who profess to be believers in Christ.

Pertinent to the theology/science interface, then, we are:

(1) United in the Christ of creation and redemption. We are united by the desire to honor that Christ who is the Alpha and the Omega of creation: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty'*" (Revelation 1:8);

(2) Fearless in our pursuit of truth in all aspects of science, for nothing can ever transcend the One who is the Alpha and the Omega of creation;

(3) United in the desire to participate in the redemption and reconciliation of creation (Colossians 1:15-20):

*15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

We are also united, irrespective of our positions—Creation Science, Progressive Creation, Intelligent Design, or Evolutionary Creation—in the endeavor of rescuing the church from latent dualisms, helping them affirm a theology and praxis of creation, helping them to see that Christian salvation is not salvation *out of* creation but *of and for* creation.

**(v) The communal confession that is the framework for unity**

We read in Ephesians 4:4-5:

*4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

This seems to have been an early creed of the Christian church, either one before Paul or perhaps written especially for this letter. It is remarkable for what it contains and for what it does not contain. It is Trinitarian in structure. It is minimalist in terms of content. It is salvifically oriented or kerygmatic in its intent.

It does two things: first it unites us around the core essentials of the faith and thereby minimizes and relativizes our differences with respect to secondary issues. For example, it speaks of baptism but says nothing of its mode or timing. It defines our Christian hope without specifying whether it is premillennial, amillennial, postmillennial or pan-millennial (it's all going to pan out in the end).

But secondly, it also provides some limits to unity. We cannot be in Christian unity with those who cannot affirm the Trinity and these essentials of triune, Christian faith. This early creedal statement, and creeds which developed from it in response to clarification of heresies and new cultures which the gospel encountered, is the guideline for our unity. In particular, the Apostles', Niceno-Constantinopolitan, and Chalcedonian creeds are *sui generis* in that there is nothing else like them as widely-agreed narrative and/ or propositional summaries of key points of Christian doctrine.

**Implications of Ephesians 4:1-6 for the Evolution Dialogue**

There are two aspects to this exposition of Ephesians 4:1-6 that are relevant for the science and theology of origins:

## 1. United in the faith

We are, I trust, united theologically in the main things that are the plain things—that is, around the essentials of the faith which are developed and more fully expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 381), which includes the affirmation “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, *Maker* of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible,” without saying how!

*That* God created must unite us as we dialogue over *how* God created.

There is much diversity in the history of the church as to how the world was created. Augustine, for example, believed in fiat creation, but was convinced that Genesis 1 could not be literally interpreted for the simple reason that a twenty-four hour day was too long. Why would God need twenty-four hours to create the animals if they were created *ex nihilo* or even out of other dust?<sup>3</sup>

It may come as a shock to many in the Reformed tradition that the theologian best known for his defense of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures may also have been open to creation by means of divinely supervised evolution.<sup>4</sup> I am speaking of B.B. Warfield. To make any viewpoint as to the “how” of creation a matter for determining Christian fellowship is frankly divisive and sectarian or uncatholic.

Whilst we may be convinced we have the best theory of origins at present, and whilst we may be convinced that we are the most intellectually honest or scientifically rigorous, or that we understand the genre and history and authorial intent of Genesis 1 most appropriately—important as these factors are—I venture that the level of certainty due to the nature of the science and the hermeneutics and the theology in this field, is a level of magnitude below that of the credal assertion *that* God created and that he in his providence is sovereign over and at work creatively and redemptively in creation.

We Protestants have enough divisions and schisms as it is—we don’t need another one based on the speculative matter of how God created. Rather we must unite on the basis of the fact that the triune God is the Creator. There isn’t a viewpoint represented in the dialogue on origins that doesn’t have some problems associated with it, problems that need to be worked through. Acute curiosity, robust research and careful scholarship in these areas are consonant with the creational or cultural mandate and the command to love God with our minds.

Dialogue between persons of different persuasions is healthy and good—in fact necessary for advancement in the field. But it requires an irenic and peaceful spirit along with an inquiring mind. I feel a particular need to exhort against accusations in the midst of this dialogue that disparage a person’s integrity with regard to the inspiration and authority of Scripture. These “how” discussions between serious minded evangelical believers are not about the authority and inspiration of Scripture, but on appropriate *interpretation* of Scripture. The Scriptures are authoritative as and only as they are properly interpreted.

Borrowing terminology from Jamie Smith,<sup>5</sup> another way to say this is that we must distinguish between theology type 1 and type 2. Type 1 is confessional theology, which is pre- and supra-theoretical and which must inform all the disciplines of knowledge, including science. Theology type 2 is more theoretical and speculative.

The first is the rich and unambiguous confession of the church's faith down through the centuries, expressed in creeds like Ephesians 4 and the ecumenical Creeds rooted in the revelation of God in His Word and affirmed by the historic church. This theology should shape Christian theoretical investigation of the world, including science, and indeed theology type 2. It is when Christians elevate their work in the theology type 2 area to the type 1 category that damage is done to unity and catholicity and therefore the mission of the church. Of course theology type 2 will always be interacting with, shaped by, and subject to theology type 1.

One of the reasons why I devote time to this issue is that it is a very important for missional reasons. First, because our unity in Christ, as the body of Christ around essential issues, is hugely influential for our mission, as Jesus expounds it in his great prayer in John 17, and as I have stated, I feel compelled to call the church to unity on the essential tenet of Christian faith that God is Creator and that he created the universe. There are times when I am tempted to write off others of a persuasion that seems to me unscientific and/or hermeneutically naïve, but I cannot.

The rub here is that commitment to cherished principles comes into conflict when this happens: on the one hand, a commitment to a process of seeking knowledge in this area through the use of fearless reason and research, albeit grounded in faith and tempered by faith and creedal commitments; on the other hand, a commitment to the unity of the body of Christ grounded in the essentials of the historic, orthodox, Trinitarian creeds of the church. This latter principle must win for the serious scientist Christian.

Of course, that immediately distances us from the secular scientific community, who often may not understand that they too have faith commitments that influence reason. It will certainly distance us from evolutionism as an ideology or completely dysteleological (goalless) evolution.

We cannot be one with people of this persuasion in an ecclesial sense, though we will still engage lovingly and humbly with them as image bearers and scientists. We must also see them as people designated by God for the new humanity in Christ. But we are speaking here of an organic and creedal basis for unity that on the one hand includes every Christian devoted to Christ and the essentials of the faith, irrespective of their views on Genesis 1, and that, on the other hand, delimits perspectives outside of this relationship and these commitments.

On these grounds, I would suggest the following very practical exhortations for maintaining the unity and advancing Christ's mission through his church:

- Terminating the positions of professors of colleges or seminaries who express any one of these views on origins whilst still committed to the authority and inspiration of Scripture and these Creeds, and indeed to the denominational or widely evangelical distinctives of these, is sectarian;
- Establishing schools where teachers or even students are required to profess one view in this arena is counter to the mission of Christ and therefore sectarian;
- Accusing opponents of compromising the Deity of Christ publicly on the Internet because they may differ on origins of creation is malicious and a move that grieves the heart of our Great High Priest and his desire for his church to be one, that the world might know him through it. It is after all

intended to be the one new humanity, the harbinger of the kingdom of God—the community in which persons can dialogue well and even agree to disagree about non-essential matters.

- Caricaturing the position of others or falsely representing them is grievous to the Spirit, and inhibits the mission of the church.
- Uninviting preachers who are committed to evangelical orthodoxy because we discover they hold one of these views in this arena of secondary theology, grieves the Spirit also.

But there is a second concern of a missional kind. It has to do with how we present the gospel. Making literal six-day creationism a condition for saving faith or conversion is adding to the gospel in a way that has possibly been the greatest stumbling block in the way of thinking people for over a century since this viewpoint became popular in American evangelicalism. The Church has all too often buried its head in the sand with respect to scientific reality and we can ill afford a repetition of the crisis that occurred in the wake of the Galileo affair.

## **2. United specifically around the tenets of a theology of creation:**

We are all bound by the essentialist creeds as we develop our specific thinking about creation. Here are five tenets to which I think we will all adhere, and which will keep us together as we debate the finer points of the “how” of creation.

(i) We can together affirm the goodness of God’s creation and that it reflects his glory now and that its chief end is the revelation of that glory, accomplished in the Son, through the Spirit, and from and to the Father. That goodness includes the human body. We can affirm that God has acted in Christ to reconcile and redeem creation, not to destroy it, and that human beings are reconciled not to be saved from creation and from their humanity, but in Christ to become human beings fully human and fully alive (Irenaeus).

(ii) We can all affirm the distinction between God and creation and the avoidance of monism or pantheism. Athanasius helpfully stated that God created out of his will not out of his essence. This provides a necessary distinction between the eternal *begetting* of the Son from the Father and the *creation* of matter in time. We can thus all affirm the necessity of *ex nihilo* creation of at least some matter, whether it be of just one atom or one species or all creation all at once.

(ii) We can all affirm a theology of providence over the process of creation. Dysteleological (goalless) evolution seems to fly in the face of the Christian view of the providence of God, for example, whereas teleological evolution more easily seems to accord with the notion of providence, as do Intelligent Design or progressive creationism or literal six-day creationism.

(iii) We must all affirm some kind of a theology of the contingency of creation. Alongside of the doctrine of providence, we must also affirm the contingency of creation. The dependency of creation on the God of creation must be held in tension with the createdness and the contingency, or the ontological differentiation between God and creation. What this means for (a) the mechanism of creation (b) a theodicy is less certain and is for me one of the front edges of ongoing dialogue with respect to origins to which I will refer later.

(iv) A theology of the *imago Dei* for created humans, which involves the following:

*Reason* and moral conscience (structural) and *rule*, which includes work (functional), but both of which were designed to be exercised in *relationship* with God. Allow me to explain.

This past summer I listened to the leader of the humanist organization in the UK in conversation with a Catholic bishop over the validity of the Pope making a state visit to the UK. He had some good points to make, but his fundamental assumption was that people don't need God or religion in order to have morals and ethics—the good of their fellow human was the only criterion necessary.

Regrettably one has to point out that this is sheer nonsense. Morality cannot exist in this environ, but rather nihilism. This is to suggest that any morality touted on the basis of humanism alone is based on borrowed capital—the heritage of Christian faith which is the only true humanism—for it gives value to humans based on their createdness by a common God and in His image. The concept of a neutral secular moral arena devoid of religious influence is also nonsense—there is no such thing, as Jamie Smith has stressed—if not Christianity or Islam then some form of religious idolatry fills the public square, including idolatry of the human being or human intellect.

Related to the matter of the image of God is the whole discussion about *human culture*. It is a product of two influences: the image of God, which is retained in fallen humans, and the fallenness of humans. It takes great discernment to inculturate the gospel and truth without enculturation. It is our task as scientists who are Christian to think Christianly about science, which is to think humanly about science in the highest sense.

This requires awareness that we can never be acultural and that we are inevitable incarnated within and influenced by the particularity of our own Western post-Enlightenment culture. This is what may be termed inculturation or contextualization. Part of our task is to discern, with heightened sensitivity, our own enculturations, by which I mean our undiscerning taking on of cultural values that are contra to God and his kingdom.

Modernity, for example, has potently influenced how even Evangelicals have done “reason” and theology.<sup>6</sup> How culture has influenced the theologies of the “how” of creation is a necessary study. For example, how it has influenced the methodology of literalistic interpretation and the theology of six-day creationism? Is this a result of literal hermeneutics and sincere study of the plain sense of Scripture or is it the product of a crass literalistic hermeneutic that has been influenced by rationalist Modernity? The desire for certainty by fundamentalists is just the other side of the Enlightenment disconnection between faith and reason.

Yet, on the other hand, there is also the danger that we have as Evangelicals all too readily accepted the tenets of science, without regard for its enculturation and domination by the dogma of the Enlightenment. Gadamer's true postmodern (much that passes for postmodernity is simply hypermodernity) critique of the Enlightenment's “prejudice against prejudice” is well taken.

It is possible to go overboard in critiquing Modernity also, however. Not all that was of the Enlightenment was negative, and as with all cultures there is evidence of that which is of the image of God. No one can

deny the blessings and benefits that science and technology and medicine have brought to society. One can in fact argue that the freedom to study creation in its own right, which the Enlightenment prospered, was consonant with and had its roots in a Christian doctrine of creation with roots as far back as the medieval church. I will expand on this below.

Summing up this point, it would seem impossible to find unity unless we share a common epistemological commitment to the fearless pursuit of truth no matter its source, in an empirical fashion, and with acknowledgement that knowledge is gained by more than mere abstract reasoning. This not only validates science, but theology also.

Let me give one example of how a theological discovery was made in a fashion similar to how scientific discoveries are made. Scientists tend to privilege scientifically verifiable fact to the neglect of historical fact. But both have merit.

The development of the most important doctrine of the Christian faith, that is, the identity of Christ and then the Trinity, was in response to the historical and tangible experience of the apostles and the early church. John's particular description of this as *sensual experience* is intriguing: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life* (1 John 1:1).

As Newbigin writes, the doctrine of the Trinity “was not the result of any kind of theological speculation within the tradition of classical thought. It was the result of a new fact (in the original sense of the word *factum*, something done).”<sup>7</sup> God had done those things that are the content of the good news that the church is commissioned to tell, the gospel. This fact required a complete rethinking of the meaning of the word “God.” One could, of course, decline to believe the “facts” alleged in the gospel. This is always a possibility. But if one believes that they are true, then this has to be a new starting point for thought. It is not something that can be fitted into existing models of thought—theological or metaphysical.<sup>8</sup>

Of course the correspondence is not complete in that science does require reproducibility. However, given that historical “facts” do not by their nature allow such a possibility, forming theological knowledge on history is not absurd, but reasonable. We will have to wait to the end of the age to argue a reproducibility of Christian experience of resurrection, but we can see some evidence of it in the spiritual regeneration of human believers and in the continuity of the church.

But personally I have found that scientific training served me well in the pursuit of exegesis and theological thinking. Both entail forming hypotheses based on the available data, both are empirical in that sense, and both share the rigorous application of intellect, and both ought also to appreciate the limits of intellect. The scientific community and the fundamentalist religious community are strange bedfellows in that they are less likely to acknowledge the insight that faith commitments affect how we see truth in science and in theology.

This is an insight of postmodernity but I would argue it was already present as far back as Augustine and Anselm. Philosophers like Michael Polanyi have pointed out that this is always true in all pursuit of truth, including scientific truth. Though I want to avoid the popular move of equating Christianity with

postmodernity, I do want to say that postmodernity has done the Christian church a great favor in the arena of its honesty about the relative uncertainty of knowledge, reminding us that we need to be honest and say that all knowledge, including our own, is faith seeking understanding, that all human knowledge has a fiduciary character.

It may be more difficult for scientists to accept that Cartesian certainty is a myth than theologians (depending on the theologians), and the work of philosophers like Michael Polanyi and Alasdair McIntyre are helpful in this department. My only point here is to express the fact that science and Christianity are not as far apart as my golfing buddies' incredulities suggest.<sup>9</sup>

Another way to say this is that science is also an art. Michael Polanyi believed that "Science can't be done without imagination and passion." Central to Polanyi's thinking was the belief that creative acts (especially acts of discovery) are shot-through or charged with strong personal feelings and commitments (hence the title of his most famous work *Personal Knowledge*). Arguing against the then-dominant position that science was somehow value-free, Michael Polanyi sought to bring into creative tension a concern with reasoned and critical interrogation with other, more "tacit" forms of knowing.

One has to admit that while prejudices do influence science, the levels of certainty achieved by some of the harder sciences in which conclusions are tested by instrumentation and reproducibility, are of a higher level than those achieved by some of the softer sciences. It is however at the higher level of the philosophy of science that theology and science share the common limits of reason.

A proper understanding of the *imago Dei* will not only guide our discussions about culture, but will also unite us around the pursuit of appropriate ethics of science. The articulation of ethics in light of the vocation of humanity, especially as that has been recapitulated in Christ, with its Godward and communal orientation, is especially urgent when the tyranny of human convenience and individualism seem to dominate the ethical arena in contemporary society.

A proper understanding of the *imago Dei* appropriated Christologically will also unite us around an eschatology that includes creation and assumes care for it in the now dimension of the eschaton.

**(v) A distinctively Trinitarian, incarnational worldview is compatible with the pursuit of science.**

I suggest that what may embolden us against the common enemy of scientism and what may unite and embolden us as Christians doing science is the notion that science is Christian in its historical origins, and that a specifically Trinitarian, incarnational worldview is more compatible with the pursuit of science than any other worldview. The reason that this sounds counter-intuitive has a lot to do with Enlightenment prejudices. Interestingly, in this, the post-modern era, the compatibility of science and Christian theology as "faith seeking understanding" has edged closer together.

As Tom Smail has written, "In our own day, the deconstructing skepticism that Feuerbach applied to religion has in much post-modern thinking been extended to all claims to know the truth about any reality that is objective to us."<sup>10</sup> Postmodernity has therefore exposed the gods of modernity as unreliable, and this can

only be good for Christian mission. Smail refers to Hans Kung who stated, “Atheism too lives by an indemonstrable faith; whether it is faith in human nature (Feuerbach), or faith in the future socialist society (Marx) or faith in rational science (Freud). The question then can be asked of any form of atheism whether it is not itself an understandable projection of man (Feuerbach), a consolation serving vested interests (Marx) or an infantile illusion (Freud).”<sup>11</sup>

Smail also asserts, of course, that the post-modernity that has seen through the gods of the Enlightenment has also rejected the possibility of revelation. Having rejected the humanistic optimism of Feuerbach and Freud and the political utopianism of Marx as themselves illusions, it has offered no new faith to take their place. As scientists who are Christian we unite together also against the radical doubt and nihilist tendencies in postmodernity.

Beyond this, our confidence may be bolstered and our unity enhanced as we recognize that doing science within a Christian framework was in fact the way in which science has prospered best in the history of human civilization, as Michael Foster, an Oxford philosopher of the 1930s, has indicated. As Loren Wilkinson has indicated, Foster sought to overcome the warfare language with respect to science and faith propagated by Bertrand Russell and John Draper by demonstrating amongst other things that the medieval Christian view of matter as created and as such at an ontological remove from God, made study of science possible.<sup>12</sup>

Many nations of a pantheistic bent were too fearful of nature to study it by means of sensuous experience. Other nations like the Greeks saw it as unimportant and could never advance science beyond abstract reasoning. Empirical science through sensuous experience took root, as Wilkinson writes:

*[T]he Christian experience of the Creator-God of love who invented physical reality, and who in Jesus, became a part of it, changed forever how we value that knowledge. We cannot know the world God has made simply by thinking about it. What God does, like who God is, is inexhaustible, surprising and gracious. Knowledge comes through engaged experience, not detached contemplation. The Psalmist said it well: “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” This recognition that sensuous experience is the source of knowledge is basic to Hebrew understanding. And it is here, rather than in Greek ideas of the superiority of the knowledge abstracted from the senses, that the tradition of empirical science took root.<sup>13</sup>*

In this essay I given a basis for the preservation of the unity of the church as it comes at the issues of science and faith, and in particular as it dialogues over the more controversial areas in this arena. I would suspect this is not groundbreaking new information for most of us, but necessary exhortation nevertheless, especially given the disparate opinions of the kind that characterize the Christian church on matters of science and faith.

In my next essay, to follow in due time, I want to point to some areas that may be called “front edges” in ongoing healthy dialogue in the field of science and Christian theology, specifically of a theological nature. This I see as fulfillment of the exhortation that comes later in this first section of the paraenesis of the Ephesian epistle, Ephesians 4:7-16.

## Notes

1. Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island* (Boston: Shambhala, 1955), 198, 199, 205, 206.
2. Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1959), 428.
3. St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J.; 2 vols.; New York: Newman Press, 1982), 1.125-50.
4. In his class lectures, Warfield comments, "I do not think that there is any general statement in the Bible or any part of the account of creation, either as given in Genesis 1 and 2 or elsewhere alluded to, that need be opposed to evolution. The sole passage which appears to bar the way is the very detailed account of the creation of Eve ... We may as well admit that the account of the creation of Eve is a very serious bar in the way of a doctrine of creation by evolution." Warfield was clear that the origin of the human soul could not be accounted for by evolution. His position in sum seems to be that he did not consider evolutionary theory convincing but stayed open to the possibility that it might be true. "The upshot of the whole matter is that there is no necessary antagonism of Christianity to evolution, provided that we do not hold to too extreme a form of evolution. To adopt any form that does not permit God freely to work apart from law & wh [??]. does not allow miraculous intervention (in the giving of the soul, in creating Eve, &c) will entail a great reconstruction of Xian doctrine, & a very great lowering of the detailed authority of the Bible. But if we condition the theory by allowing the occasional [crossed out, sic.] constant oversight of God in the whole process, & his occasional supernatural interference for the production of new beginnings by an actual output of creative force, producing something new ie, something not included even in posse in preceding conditions, -- we may hold to the modified theory of evolution and be Xians in the ordinary orthodox sense." Warfield, *Lectures on Anthropology* (Dec. 1888), Speer Library, Princeton University. Quoted in David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 118.
5. James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).
6. For a critique see Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 74-75.
7. Newbigin is referring to the resurrection of the Son, by which the apostles reasoned that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God; similarly the coming of the Spirit historically caused them to reason that God was Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
8. Lesslie Newbigin, "The Trinity as Public Truth" in Kevin Vanhoozer, ed., *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 2, 3.
9. A book I recommend on this whole area of epistemology is Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). It does, as Lamin Sanneh suggests in the credits, chart a "course between the fundamentalist reaction and postmodernist radical nihilism" and it "unmasks the unspoken and concealed conditions that have intimidated and effectively held Christians in check."
10. Tom Smail, *Like Father, Like Son: The Trinity Imaged in our Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 24.
11. Hans Kung, *Why I am Still a Christian* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 229-30.
12. Loren Wilkinson, "Cheeses, Chartreuse, Owls and a Synchotron: Some Thoughts from France on Science and Taste" *CRUX* 42/1 (Spring 2006): 9.
13. Wilkinson, "Cheeses, Chartreuse, Owls and a Synchotron," 9-10.