AN EVANGELICAL WORLD-VIEW PHILOSOPHY

by Rev. Robert Evans.

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Introductory Outline

This book was written, on and off, over a three-year period, ending in January 1993.

It brings to a culmination a quest that I have tried to pursue in my spare time since my student days in the early 1960's.

The part-time nature of this quest, and the years it covered, will account for the age of some of the reference books used, and also for some of the things which have been left out.

The aim of the book is to set out the broad outlines of a world-view philosophy which seeks to bring into one framework a number of factors which otherwise might appear scattered, or even (to some people) unrelated.

These factors are:-

* Evangelical Protestant theology, and the associated emphasis on personal and social Christian experience.

* A workable solution to the problem of faith and reason, whereby science, everyday experience and evangelical religion can be seen to function together on the same foundation of basic ideas about the nature of human knowledge.

* Ethical and value theories which can be shown to be true, within the terms set by the underlying philosophy, and which provide a potential unifying basis for modern civilization.

* The inclusion also of an active power which has the potential of achieving the goal of voluntarily bringing enough people throughout the world to accept this religious stance, ethical theory, and other philosophical factors, so as to overcome some of the disintegration, and other problems, which occur in the modern world.

The starting point of this philosophy is in the field of the theory of human knowledge, also known as epistemology.

The theory of knowledge which has been used is the group of ideas set out by Albert Einstein - ideas which are readily acceptable to many people today.

The philosophy of science is also that used by Einstein in his later years, but modified slightly by more recent writers such as Michael Polanyi, Thomas Kuhn, John Ziman and Imre Lakatos.

Although most of these writers designed their philosophy of science with the discipline of physics mainly in mind, an attempt is made to show how the same approach is actually used in a number of other disciplines of enquiry (and, by implication, in all other disciplines), with the important allowance for variation due to changes in the nature of what is being studied in these other disciplines, and variations in what degree of certainty we might expect to achieve, as a result.

Astronomy is the first example where some of these variations are outlined. It is an area where I have a little more inside knowledge than in some of the other areas.

The other disciplines mentioned are geology, biology, sociology, economics and history. History is also an area where I have a little more experience. My lack of it in the other areas will probably be

very obvious to those who have that experience. But, I nevertheless believe that my basic claims here are true, and that the future will support these views.

The nature of evidence, and the role that evidence can play within a world-view, is of vital importance. So is the path which has to be followed in deciding issues when different world-views are in competition.

The faith and reason question is approached on this same basis. The factors providing variation are mentioned, but they are no different from what is to be met in many other areas of enquiry.Especially is this so when addressing many of the basic questions which have to be dealt with in any world-view philosophy.

The discussion about George Muller's experiences provide what I believe to be a very strong case in favour of our claim to know the living reality and power of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the New Testament is a reliable word from God. Support is also provided in the same way for a number of other theological opinions.

Muller's experiences provide simply a good example of what many other Christians have experienced. The experiences of others areoften less clear-cut than in Muller's case. The same could be experienced by anybody who is careful enough to follow the same path as Muller. In this way, the knowledge is public knowledge.

The remaining chapters are all built upon the foundation provided by this view of faith and reason.

Therefore, the views expressed in these chapters can all be known to be true in terms of what this understanding of faith and reason will allow.

The author welcomes further constructive discussion with anyone, as time and opportunity permits.

Chapter 1 - Aims and Reasons

(1.) Philosophical Quest

From the point of view of philosophy, the greatest and most fundamental need in the world today is the provision of a philosophical system which will combine all areas of life and of enquiry into a coherent whole, or, in other words, provide a comprehensive basis for the understanding of life and of the world.

This should include not only an understanding of the ways in which we use the scientific method at the present time, but, also, a good understanding of how our methods of enquiry operate in all of the other disciplines.

Seeing that all of the disciplines of human enquiry are included, this system of thought and knowledge will include a proper way for us to know what can be known about God, and about what is right and wrong, all within the one framework of knowledge.

Furthermore, because this whole picture is drawn on the basis of the same theory of knowledge, we should be able to apply these moral and religious insights in every area of life.

The system should also include some insights about how the majority of mankind (or, at least, a sufficient number of people) can be got to adopt this view of life voluntarily, and to put it into practice, to a sufficient degree. In this way, with the help of God, our world can be transformed by the higher qualities of these moral and religious insights.

From a philosophical point of view, this is the only way that it can become possible to save our modern world society from disintegration, and from the worst effects of the decline and decay of our so-called "western civilization".

No doubt, solutions to the world's problems must spring largely from other areas of life, experience and thought. But, all of these solutions must have their philosophical aspects, and, no matter whether people like studying philosophy, or not, the philosophical aspects of these possible solutions are of fundamental importance.

It is the aim of this book to set out the main features of such a philosophical system.

* The philosophical basis which is portrayed here consists of the basic elements of a modern philosophy of science (especially relating to physics and chemistry), and incorporating variations which allow for the different characteristics of the various other disciplines of enquiry and knowledge (such as astronomy, geology, biology, history, psychology, sociology, law, politics, education, economics, mathematics, aesthetics, etc.)

* The particular religious viewpoint which is included on this same basis consists of a group of factors within the general framework of evangelical protestant christianity. These factors are sufficient to support, with varying degrees of strength, enough theology of the evangelical protestant kind to provide a fairly complete systematic christian theology, a system of christian ethics and values, and a christian understanding of the nature of beauty, and of wisdom.

In specifying that the group of factors will support evangelical protestant theology in this way, it is meant to imply that there is no guarantee that the group of factors in this philosophical framework

will support any other type of christian theology, or any of the other world religions, in the same way.

This does not mean that the other types of christian theology, or any of the other religions of the world, are wrong or useless. Although, it may place extra pressure on these other views to demonstrate the truthfulness of their insights, if they can. What it does mean is that they will probably have to develop their own philosophical basis. They may not be able to use this philosophical approach for that purpose.

* To this input from protestant evangelicalism should be added many insights from the study and practice of evangelical spiritual awakenings, revival movements, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, and in the world.

This book seeks to show that a complete philosophy, and an entire world-view, can be reached on this basis, which can satisfy reasonable demands for verification.

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Many philosophical viewpoints have been thought out, and written, which have attempted to do what this philosophy is seeking to do.
A great deal can be learned from studying these other views. But, it seems that none of these other philosophies have succeeded in doing what needs to be done today, in the light of all the problems facing the modern world.

Some of these other philosophies have been full-orbed systems of thought, which have been produced by thinkers who had outstanding abilities and incorporated many powerful insights into the nature of things.
Most of these systems of philosophy are beautiful works of the philosophic art, and are a delight to study, and to learn from.

Some of these other philosophies have been more constricted, because of shortcomings amongst the assumptions used by the thinker. As a result, one aspect of life, or one discipline, has been used to provide the key to the meaning of life and human knowledge. In this way they have tended to reduce other aspects of life so that they are subjugated to the one favoured aspect.

Naturally, it is not so difficult to write philosophies of that kind, as you do not have to accommodate so many facets of reality within the system. Philosophies like that, however, have never provided the cohesive qualities which are required today, and obviously cannot satisfy those who know something of the truth to be found in those aspects of life which have been neglected or belittled in those philosophies.

Truth, however, has chronically been found to be something which is far bigger than any one human standpoint. The old reply has often to be used in such cases that "there are more things in this world, Horatio, than fit into your philosophy."

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The philosophy set out in this book seeks to include within it any claim to know any aspect of truth which can be verified within the bounds of the theory of knowledge described here.

It also seeks to allow suitable degrees of probability to any theory, or any understanding of reality, which can produce evidence in its support.

Naturally, what can be classed as "evidence" is also determined by the general characteristics of the

world-view which is being put forward here.

(2.) Personal History

Along with many others, I have grown up in the context of Western evangelical protestantism. There was for me an early influence from hyper-calvinism, which came from my parents' religious outlook and affiliation. This was strongly balanced by the arminian, and somewhat over-simplified, type of evangelicalism which pervaded many of the churches and missionary organisations in those days.

After I became a Methodist, and began training for the ministry, I came into my first experiences of liberal and modernist theology. I was able to learn their content, and I saw some of the results that they produced in the church, and in individual lives, although their influence upon me personally was not very great.

In these various traditions, philosophy has usually not held a high place, and in some cases has held almost no place at all.

Regardless of the jaundiced view I might have gained about the value of philosophy from my upbringing, there are legitimate questions that any christian might raise about its value,

I began to be interested in the philosophical aspects of the analysis and treatment of today's problems facing civilization when I was a first-year undergraduate student in the Arts faculty in the University of Sydney. One of my courses was in philosophy - mainly from the empiricist, materialist, positivist, and linguistic philosophical streams.

But, as general reading, I read Albert Schweitzer's little book, "The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization." It was certainly "general reading", because I am sure that the philosophy department would never have taught a course on a subject like that.

This book provided an eye-opener and a challenge for me. The eye-opener was that it introduced me to a whole new area of thought. The challenge arose because I had firmly believed that protestant christianity provided intellectual satisfaction. Certainly, I had not had much idea as to what might be required in order to accomplish this task. Yet, here was an area of fundamental importance where this satisfaction had yet to be demonstrated properly.
So, it started me reading widely in the broad area known as "faith and reason", and I began trying to develop my thoughts on these matters, as best I could.

The university library provided a useful quarry for my reading, and I tried to purchase copies of books that caught my eye.

No doubt I did not understand many of the things I read as well as might have been done by somebody with more ability in philosophy. I found that I was a very slow thinker, often taking months or years to realise some of the consequences or implications of some of the things I learned. To help me, I kept an intellectual diary whilst doing full-time studies.

Perhaps for reasons such as these, this intellectual project has continued for many years. Pastoral work has often required my time in such a way that little progress would be made during some

years, but the overall purpose was always in mind.

Because my parish work has often involved me in living in the country, away from well-stocked libraries, I have developed my personal library as a resource for this philosophic quest, as my meagre finances permitted.
Even before my years of study, and before the "philosophical awakening" that I have described, I had started to develop a specialised collection of books relating to evangelical awakenings and revival movements. Bearing in mind the limited opportunities for collecting books on such a topic which is imposed by living in a country like Australia, where there was no tradition of study or intellectual interest in revivals, my collecting on this subject tried to be as exhaustive as was possible. And this subject has been a key factor in the way my thinking has developed.

Some of my present ideas, such as the "Muller" argument, the general trend of my epistemology, and my interest in the thought and writings of Einstein, Collingwood and Butterfield, already existed before I left the Seminary. Many other developments have come since then, as my reading has widened.

Some book titles which are very important in this present book had not been written when I was in College, so the years which have passed in my intellectual quest have allowed me to benefit from these books, also.

Although there are very few parts of this book which can be called "original" in any way, I have tried to make it all hang together in a systematic way, as best I could.

(3.) The Value of Philosophy for Christianity

A christian who comes from the evangelical protestant stream of christianity must ultimately learn his or her estimation of the value of philosophy from a study of the New Testament.

Help can also be had by considering the achievements, both negative and positive, of the history of philosophy, and by considering what might be achieved in the light of the known limitations of human wisdom and knowledge.

One passage from the New Testament which is of vital importance in this regard is 1 Corinthians 1:18 to 2:14. (Good News Bible.)

From passages such as this, several things become clear about the nature of christianity.

(a.) God's wisdom and purposes are embodied in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. In this way, we are able to see the christian's basis to his whole idea of the meaning and purpose of life and of reality. So, there is a basis for a christian understanding of certain parts of philosophy, such as ontology, teleology, ethics, and the theory of value. This leads eventually to what Jesus meant when He said, "I am the truth."

(b.) Christianity is basically a spiritual religion. It is based in the character and purposes of God, and in the relationship between God and the human spirit. This relationship has many dimensions. It is individual, in the sense that it is between God and the individual person. It is social and national in the sense that societies, social justice, and national life, have a part to play before God, and are judged by Him ultimately. Indeed, every aspect of life is part of this picture.

(c.) So far as we are concerned, this spiritual nature of christianity is made possible by God's Holy Spirit, and is maintained and developed by Him. Our part is one of dependence, co-operation, obedience, surrender, and the use of all our abilities and capacities for the glory of God. This is all made possible for us through the atonement secured by Jesus Christ in His crucifixion. The work of the Spirit also includes redeeming society and humanity.

(d.) The great commandments - to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love our neighbour - is simply an expression of the situation that we are all in, and the duty that is upon us. However, this includes loving God with the MIND. So, what might be called "the life of the mind" is an important part of the whole picture of our relationship with God.

(e.) Consequently, all christians are called upon to be philosophers about life and the world. This is a general calling for everyone, apart from any special callings that individuals may have who have special abilities in philosophical matters, and who either become professional academic philosophers, writers, or thinkers, in a more specialised way.

All christians are called upon to be thinkers about life and the world, so that every aspect of our earthly existence can be brought into subjection to Christ, in an intelligent manner, and be brought to glorify God in the wisest possible way.

The thought of christians can then be used by the Holy Spirit in His creative work in building steps toward the goal of God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

(f.) From 1 Corinthians, and other passages, however, we can see that human philosophy is also able to get off onto other tracks in various ways which will lead to conclusions which are not consistent with christian insights.
Saint Paul was very concerned that his converts and disciples should not consider that any salvation could be found in any of these other philosophical views, nor that the converts should gain their world-view and their theology from these other philosophical approaches.
The early church existed in a world where many philosophical views were taught by many people, just as they are today.

If christianity is true, then it ought to be possible to present reasons in its support. So, there should be a possibility of producing a world-view, or a number of related world-views, which are basically christian in their character.

This has, of course, been done. But much more remains to be done. And the task will probably never be complete, within the confines of human history.

Other religions need to be tested in the same way, by asking whether they are true or not, or to what extent they are true.

More will be said about the dangers of philosophy at the end of this chapter.

(g.) Other parts of the scriptures are able more clearly to lead us to a christian understanding of the basis of the theory of beauty. The christian can see beauty as a basic aspect of God's character, which is reflected in everything He does and makes. In turn, humans are able to make and do beautiful things when they make wise use of their God-given abilities.

(h.) But, behind and underlying all of our philosophy must be the realisation that there is an enormous amount that we do not know. Possibly, much of it we cannot know.

Our capabilities for knowledge are great, but are not infinite. And the means we have for gaining knowledge are also great, but also have great and real restrictions.

Centuries ago we passed the point where it was possible for one person to know everything that was known to European men at that time. Today it is hardly possible for one person to learn all that is known within one small specialised area, let alone in all the areas mentioned in an encyclopaedia.

Factors such as these provide a sketch of the context within which christian world-view philosophy needs to be seen, and is an indication of the value philosophy can have for christianity.

The intellectual life is not the main part of christianity, but it is an important part, which should neither be over-estimated nor under-valued.

Enough has been said so far to indicate that many christians are suspicious of philosophy and of its usefulness in christian thinking.

The view taken in this book is that, like many other things, philosophy has certain values, and also certain dangers.

Regrettably, it has usually been the case in many of these issues where a balance is needed, that many christians have emphasised one side too much, and at the expense of the truths embodied in the other side of the question.

So, the two sides of this issue - the uses and dangers of philosophy - have in the past been overly polarised, so that a christian thinker was either FOR or AGAINST philosophy.

Theologians who were FOR philosophy included Justin Martyr, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and most of the medievals, John Calvin (to some degree), William Ames, and some of the modern thinkers.

Those AGAINST philosophy included such people as Tertullian, Martin Luther, Kierkegaard and Karl Barth, who taught that human philosophy has no role to play in our knowledge of God.
There are useful insights, and factors from which we need to learn, on both sides of the fence.

For example, on the one hand, a theologian who sees the value of philosophy can try to use philosophy to achieve things in the work of God which Saint Paul said should not (or cannot) be achieved by human personality, effort or reasonings. The mistake is that a primary dependence is placed upon the capacities of the human mind, or human abilities, in places where we should be depending primarily upon the work of the Holy Spirit and the efficacies of the cross of Jesus Christ. This mistake is very widespread in Western christianity.

On the other hand, a theologian of great ability can arise who seeks to stand against the dangers of philosophy. This theologian uses his abilities to construct a system of thought. This system of thought then becomes adopted too rigidly by others with smaller minds, and perhaps also by the great man himself. And in this way a new legalism, a new scholasticism, develops which displays

many of the dangers that the great man was trying to avoid. After the Reformation, the followers of Martin Luther achieved this result in Germany. The Fundamentalists, and many of the modern Calvinistic theologians have achieved this as well, unintentionally, of course.

In an effort to learn from someone who was largely against allowing any major role for philosophy within christianity, we will here look at an address given by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones entitled "The Weapons of our Warfare" based upon the well-known text in Second Corinthians 10.4. It appeared in print as chapter 11 of "Knowing the Truth", published in 1989 by The Banner of Truth Trust a book containing a number of Lloyd-Jones' occasional addresses.

The warfare is between the work of the Kingdom of God in this world represented by the cross of Christ, and by the spread of the gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and everything evil, on the other hand.

After introducing his text, he speaks of those who think there is no warfare, and then of those who try to avoid the warfare. Then comes the main part of his address where he describes ways in which people use the wrong weapons in trying to fight this war.

Some examples of this use of wrong weapons are drawn from the context of his text.

* We must not fight this battle by using our personalities. The battle is not to be fought by men's appearances, by the sort of impact that they make upon the congregation. What one might call a "personal following" must not be cultivated by a preacher.
* Paul did not use "enticing words of man's wisdom." He did not use the rhetoric of the Greeks. He did not use tricks, or salesmanship, or advertising methods apart from the proclamation of the message. The end did not justify the means.

Today, there is a great emphasis upon methods, at every level of the church's work. So much is this so that it often replaces the dependence we should have upon the Holy Spirit.

* The church should not rely for its defence, or for its effectiveness, upon the power of the state, or of the law.

* Paul did not rely upon Greek philosophy to make his message effective. He did not use "the wisdom of this world". This was a great offence to some who wanted him to use the great philosophical theories in his sermons. His sermons were Biblical and direct. He did not go out of his way to make them "intellectually respectable."

The wisdom of this world is a fallen wisdom. It is not subject to the lordship of Christ. So, it is a serious mistake for a preacher to appease people who judge by this fallen standard, or to appeal to people in terms of this standard. In the same way, the preacher must not adopt this standard in determining how or what he will preach.

The preacher must realise that he is being relevant, and obedient, when he declares the gospel of the cross of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit.

He must not judge his message by the way the world thinks, nor change the message to fit in with what he thinks will appeal to the world, or to unconverted people.

He must present the full-orbed message of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Let the Spirit of God make people realise how relevant it is to our need and situation.

It was the "warmed heart" of John Wesley, and the preaching of George Whitefield that changed England, and not Butler's "Analogy", or Paley's "Evidences For Christianity."

That is how the gospel is "mighty through God" and breaks down the strongholds of Satan.

Lloyd-Jones took the view that the only use philosophy has for the christian preacher is for purposes of "apologetics". That is, its only task is to show somebody who is already a christian that his faith is a reasonable thing to have and to hold, and also to show to the christian the unreasonableness of other views which oppose him.

He said that philosophy is very helpful in demolishing the other person's views, but it will not provide the raw materials for the christian to build his own views. This must come from the word of God.

Reasons for the faith are not supposed to be used as a primary tool of evangelism. Christians are not called to submit their message to be judged for intellectual quality by unconverted people, hoping thereby to gain the favour of their allegiance.

The gospel calls a person to renounce his sins, and his previously-held world-view, and to embrace Jesus Christ. This embracing of Christ provides a new outlook on life and the world which transforms the person, and impacts upon the society in which the person moves. Apologetics is the task of understanding this new christian world-view, of grasping its reasonableness, and the lack of reason in other views.

Nor must we fall into the trap of changing our faith so that it will fit neatly into what current philosophy or science considers to be reasonable.

What philosophy or science considers to be reasonable will change from time to time. It is wrong to change the message on such an unstable basis as that.

The word of God is not to be judged by man, but is, instead, the standard by which man is to be judged by God.

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I recommend Dr Lloyd-Jones' address to every thinking christian, as, indeed, I recommend all of his other addresses, as well.

In response to what we have seen of his views here, it needs to be pointed out that he was speaking within a specifically limited area of application.

Being the christian preacher that he was, he was speaking to a particular subject which had been defined for him by his text. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." He was speaking about the task of the christian in addressing the gospel message to the needy and unbelieving world in which we live. In this respect we need to note very carefully all that he says.

But he was NOT speaking about other very legitimate and proper tasks of philosophy which do not relate to his text.

For example, he was not speaking about the needs of science, history or politics to have a philosophy about what a scientist, historian or politician does. There has to be a philosophy of science, a philosophy of history, a political philosophy, an economic philosophy, and a philosophy of art.

Also, the world needs christians who are scientists, historians, politicians, economists, artists, etc., and who are good at their work.

Furthermore, these philosophies cannot function or be complete unless we also have philosophical views about many other subjects with which philosophers currently deal, such as epistemology, ontology, ethics, metaphysics, etc.

So, clearly, philosophy has a much larger role to play in the world than simply to provide apologetics for a christian.

The view being taken in this present book is that the task of an "Evangelical World-view Philosophy" is THREEFOLD.

1. Philosophy can certainly fulfil the role that Lloyd-Jones wanted it to perform - that of apologetics. That is an important purpose.

But, this same philosophy has to be put to work in the form of a world-view, to perform two tasks.

2. It has to help us UNDERSTAND the world that God has made, and in which we live, and seek to serve Him.

3. It also has to help GUIDE OUR THINKING in the task of renewing and redeeming this world through the power of the gospel.

These other tasks are also of major importance.

Our present book seeks to make a contribution in all three of these areas of philosophical enquiry.

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D. M. Lloyd-Jones. Knowing the Times. Addresses delivered on Various Occasions. 1942 - 1977. Banner of Truth Trust. 1989.
(The address on 2 Cor. 10.4, is chapter 11 in this book.)
Albert Schweitzer. The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization.
and Civilization and Ethics. were both published around 1923.
They were first published in English in 1949, are now available in Philosophy of Civilization. Prometheus Books. 1987.

Chapter 2 - The Problem of Modern Civilization

During the twentieth century, what seems to be an increasing number of books have appeared seeking to describe the sickness of modern civilization.

Many of these writings tried to indicate in what general directions the author hoped that a solution might be found.

Only a much smaller number of these authors, however, made any serious attempt actually to produce an answer which had any degree of adequacy.

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The protestant philosopher, Francis A. Schaeffer, has provided us with a most interesting survey of the history of western culture in his book, "How Should We Then Live?" He sees decline and renewal as being directly related to the way people have treated God, and, especially related to the attitude people have had toward the authority of the Bible.

Right at the start of his book he emphasises the key role of deliberate thought about the meaning of life.

"There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is rooted and has its wellspring in the thoughts of people. People are unique in the inner life of the mind - what they are in their thought world determines how they act. This is true of their value systems and it is true of their creativity. It is true of their corporate actions, such as political decisions, and it is true of their personal lives. The results of their thought world flow through their fingers or from their tongues into the external world. This is true of Michelangelo's chisel, and it is true of the dictator's sword.

People have presuppositions (Schaeffer continues), and they will live more consistently on the basis of these presuppositions than even they themselves will realise. By presuppositiions we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic world view, the grid through which he sees the world. Presuppositions rest upon that which a person considers to be the truth of what exists. People's presuppositions lay a grid for all they bring forth into the external world. Their presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions." (page 19.)

Schaeffer quotes the Biblical proverb, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he", and appreciates how profoundly true it is.

"Most people catch their presuppositions from their family and surrounding society the way a child catches measles. But people with more understanding realise that their presuppositions should be chosen after a careful consideration of what world view is true." (page 20.)

His analysis of the history of modern western culture lays a strong emphasis on the reformation, and the rise of modern science. He tries to make clear the way that modern philosophy, and much of modern theology, have helped to remove the real influence of Christ from our modern world. The effects of this departure from God are illustrated from many areas of life and thought in the modern world. He believes that living with a strong faith in God, and in obedience to the Bible, is the key to a healthy future, just as he sees failure in these matters to be the main reasons for problems in the

past.

Much of the second half of the book is taken up also with describing the rise of secular humanism in the West, and with the serious effects this is having, increasingly, in our society.

Naturally, his analysis of which parts of history were good or bad will not always be the same as that of somebody who is neither protestant nor evangelical. And, some evangelicals will want to follow a different philosophical path from the one Schaeffer tried to follow. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of his philosophical views, he has had a salutary christian influence in the intellectual world where he has moved, and has reflected in a most valuable way upon key problems of today.

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M. V. C. Jeffreys' little book "Personal Values in the Modern World" seeks to address these same world problems.
He says: "Looked at externally, the great danger to our civilization is perhaps of physical destruction. Inwardly, however, the greatest danger is of the destruction of those values which alone make human relations spiritually productive and any civilization worthwhile. The future of our civilization depends on the extent to which we can rescue and maintain these values." (page 160.)
As Jeffreys reflects upon what he had written in his book, he says that "The threat to personal values was broken down into three distinguishable but related factors which discourage personal initiative and responsibility, and encourage the treatment of people as things. First, the world becomes increasingly complex and therefore more and more difficult to understand. Secondly, our sense of values is confused; technical development changes the form in which moral problems present themselves; the stock answers no longer fit, and we are no longer sure what is right and wrong. Thirdly, our popular culture is increasingly standardised. The ease with which human beings can be "processed" by the powerful mass media of communication has made possible the manufacture of a mass culture which obliterates frontiers of class and race."

Jeffreys discusses (a.) the need for a coherent view of life, (b.) the fact that the quality of national life is determined by the quality of character of ordinary men and women, and not by systems or political action, and (c.) that people must choose for themselves those better things which can make the needed improvements.

Being an educationalist, Jeffreys discusses these factors as basically educational problems. But, being a christian, he also discusses the relevance of christianity in playing an influential role in dealing with the whole matter.

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Reference was made earlier to the interesting and illuminating analyses of the problems of modern civilization which were produced earlier this century by the famous Alsatian medical missionary, Albert Schweitzer.

His first little book in the area of the philosophy of civilization was entitled "The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization." It surveyed the problem, and outlined the type of work that any possible solution would need to achieve.

The preface to this book contained a statement to the effect that he hoped to produce four volumes, which would outline his entire contribution to the subject.

The second volume was entitled "Civilization and Ethics". It gave a summary of attempts in the past to write a philosophy, and provide a world-view, which could achieve wholeness for civilization, and which might guide us in meeting the needs of today's civilization.

The third volume was supposed to outline his own world-view, which he called "the world-view of reverence for life." We can gain a small insight into what this world-view would have been like from some of his other writings. Anthologies of Schweitzer's writings, such as the one edited by Charles R. Joy, give some of these pieces.

The fourth volume was to deal with the civilized state.

The third and fourth volumes, however, never appeared. But, the earlier ones are full of interest and useful insights.

Schweitzer confessed that he thought the philosophical answer to the problems of today's world should be looked for in terms of the rationalist philosophy of the German enlightenment, more than in terms of the theology of the Roman Catholic church, or the theology of the Reformation.

But, in analysing the problems of modern civilization, he tells us that the root cause of all the problems was the failure of philosophy to do its proper work of providing a satisfactory world-view which (a.) would lead people to be optimistic about the meaning and worth of their lives, and which (b.) had high ethical standards and expectations which could be defended rationally. "Civilization and Ethics" describes this failure in some detail.

Although this "abdication of thought" was the decisive factor, modern man is now restricted by a number of other factors which work against his ability to be civilized. Schweitzer lists the a number of these factors, including the following:-

(a.) Man does not have the material or spiritual freedoms to allow him good opportunities to think for himself. Man is separated from the soil, from nature, and from his neighbour, by the pressures of modern living, and by the types of work he has to do.

(b.) Although in many ways we have more leisure than we used to have, the modern "rat race" imposes pressures upon us which stop us from having time to think properly. The materialism of the outlook upon life that we are taught to have means that even our leisure and retirement is of an unthinking kind.

(c.) Despite the high aims of modern education, people do not have an all-round development of their personality and outlook. One of the great failures in this area is what Schweitzer calls our "lack of humanity". We are lost in our "mass culture" in so many ways.

(d.) Modern man has no spiritual independence. He is dominated by public opinion, advertising, propaganda, peer group pressures, political half-truths, the half-baked opinions of journalists, of high-school teachers, and even of academics, etc., so that modern man does not really think for himself to a sufficient degree.

(e.) The nation-states have betrayed us. They have sought to defend and bolster their power-base and their wealth by making alliances with people having very uncivilized ideas and practices, instead of developing and practicing high ethical standards themselves, and in their people.

(f.) A part of this abdication of thought involves the belief by many that progress is basically

material and financial, and that the standard of living can best be understood in these terms. There is not enough appreciation that quality of life is basically ethical and spiritual in character. Seeking material and financial improvements, without a better moral and spiritual basis and reason for it all, is like eating an apple which has worms at its core. If our society is based on materialism, it will inevitably lead to decay, decline, and the eventual collapse of our civilization. It was rotten at the core, and we ourselves built into it the cause of its collapse.

Schweitzer goes on to outline the enormous task that faces any attempt to rescue our civilization, and "encourages" us with the thought that such a rescue attempt, on such a scale, has never succeeded before, and, indeed, has never been attempted before.

Further, we may not have time for more than one attempt at rescuing civilization.

* * * *

F. S. C. Northrop, a professor of law from Yale University, poses the same problems in his book "The Logic of the Sciences and the Humanities." Following a long discussion of aspects of the scientific method, he seeks to promote his own peculiar answers to the world's problems. He believes that the traditional paths through which answers have normally been sought are bankrupt. A part of his peculiar approach was to try to use a form of the scientific method to answer moral and religious questions.

The preface to this book contains these comments:-

"This is the most difficult portion of the entire enquiry. Two things demonstrate the inadequacy of the traditional answers of social scientists and moral philosophers. One is the inadequacy of the methods they propose as exhibited by an analysis of the difference between problems of fact and problems of value and between factual theories and normative theories. (Most of Northrop's book is spent in dealing with this issue.) The other is the failure of the traditional methods to solve a single normative problem of our world, notwithstanding the fact that the proposed traditional methods have been known for decades, if not centuries." (pages IX and X.)

If a scientific method in physics never solved any problems, this method would be rejected. Northrop wants the same treatment to be meted out to the traditional methods used to gain answers to ethical questions. His answer is to use something akin to the scientific method (which he proceeds to describe) to be used in religious and moral areas, as well. In the process, he tries to treat all the major religions of the world as being able to contribute equally in the quest for truth, and in the search for a solution to the world's problems - matters which are by no means obviously clear.

Later in his book, he describes the same problems of the modern world, and the quest for an answer, that we have seen in Schweitzer, and the other authors.

"The instruments for the control of technology for good ends are morality and religion. Consequently, never before was the need for an effective moral and religious knowledge more pressing than it is today. Unless we can find a social morality and a religion with the power to win men to its ways everywhere throughout the world mankind may be doomed." (page 364.)

The other aspect he emphasises is that, especially since the second world war, the issues have become world-wide. We now live in a single world, and any solution must encompass both East and West. A "Western" solution will be inadequate.

Solutions which might be provided by christianity, either Roman Catholic or Protestant, will be inadequate for two reasons, so Northrop believes. The first reason is that neither have in fact produced a credible solution in the modern world. The second is that he sees both as peculiarly "Western", and not something that would be useful to Hindus or Buddhists.

His evaluations of the Thomistic synthesis of the Roman Catholic church, and of the efforts of thinkers that he sees to be in the protestant tradition, are very interesting.

The great synthesis created by Saint Thomas Aquinas is inadequate because it is based in the philosophy of Aristotle. The physics of Aristotle has been scientifically discredited in such a way as to compromise all of Aristotle's basic concepts. So, the Thomistic synthesis cannot speak to the modern world of science.

Protestantism, he says, has failed for a different reason. The protestant understanding of religion and ethics stands on a basis which is different from that of science, and of everyday life. So, although protestant ethics and religion can operate within its own private little world, this is not the same world as the modern world of science, politics and business.

He traces the history of this "protestant" basis through the thought of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Fichte and Hegel, in a most interesting way.
Whatever one may think of Northrop's analysis, or of his proposed answers to the problem, it illustrates again the same need that exists for an adequate unifying philosophical system in the modern world.

* * * *

Within the history of christian philosophy and theology many attempts have been made to set out a unifying view of life, with a full-blown philosophical basis, but one which included the existence of God, and of the contents of the christian revelation in Jesus Christ, as a fully established part of this unified view of life.

In this way it would be possible to show how each part of life and knowledge is related to each other part, and how the Lordship of God bears upon everything.

This is the normal method that christian theologians have tried to follow in seeking to establish a christian answer to the problems of the world that we have been looking at here.

If it is not possible to place our knowledge of God on the same philosophical basis as all other knowledge, then it is not possible to unify life, and, at the same time, apply a christian ethic to it, and bring all things into submission to Christ.
If this is not possible, the christian does not have any real answer to the problems of the modern world, except, perhaps, the experience of personal salvation to be realised only in heaven.

Some theologians have said that such a unifying philosophy is not possible at all. Perhaps the most outstanding exponents of this view have been the early church father Tertullian, and the modern theologian Karl Barth.

The two outstanding theologians who succeeded in producing such a unifying view of life, however, were Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (circa 400 AD), and Saint Thomas Aquinas (circa 1250 AD).

The only protestant theologian to have any noticeable success in this area was John Calvin, but his philosophy was not developed in a number of ways, and so cannot be classed in quite the same way as the other two. Some of his successors provided some of the missing detail (such as John Knox, Oliver Cromwell, William Ames, Cotton Mather and Roger Williams), but not enough to create a single total picture.

Saint Augustine adopted a modified form of Plato's philosophy, including many ideas from Plotinus. The general philosophical outlook is now called "Neo-Platonism". This type of philosophy seemed to suit being linked with christian thinking more than many of the other strands of Greek and Roman philosophy did. Augustine combined his christian theology with this philosophy in a remarkable way, to provide a total picture and understanding of life. This philosophy of life had an enormous influence throughout the middle ages. It is still influential in many ways. The church owes a great deal to what God did through Saint Augustine.

The other giant in this field was Saint Thomas Aquinas. Plato's philosophy had been known through the middle ages. But Aristotle's philosophy had been lost in Europe for hundreds of years. When European thinkers re-discovered it, Aristotle's views began to have a widespread effect, and it looked for a while that the unified understanding of life achieved by Augustine would fall apart under this new influence.
Saint Thomas created a synthesis by using most of Aristotle's thought, but combining it with some parts of Plato and Augustine, and with the Roman Catholic theology of the high middle ages.

Perhaps regretably, the impact of this new unified view of the world did not last very long. Criticism of aspects of medieval thinking by such men as William of Ockham, and Marsilius of Padua, together with the new interest in Greek philosophy which was such a key part of the Renaissance, emphasising the sufficiency of man, caused a shift in world-view.

The reformation, and the rise of modern science, also contributed to this shift, as did many economic, social and political factors.

Many modern Roman Catholics have tried to re-adapt Thomas' synthesis to a completely different situation today, trying to set a philosophical foundation to provide a christian synthesis for the modern world, but without great success, so far.

Protestants have had even less success, partly because they have had a less rich philosophical heritage to build upon.

But, the modern world is very different from the medieval, where Catholic christian philosophy did its best work. So, it may be that a new line of approach needs to be made. Certainly, numbers of thinkers have tried to do this. But, these efforts seem not to have had the kind of quality or success that was really needed.

* * * *

In the traditional study of the question of making a unifying synthesis between (a.) a philosophical world-view which will unify our understanding of the world, and (b.) christian knowledge of God, there are several approaches which can be made to the issues involved.
These include probing into the nature of, and the relation between:-

Philosophy and Theology;

Faith and Reason;

Nature and Grace;

Natural Theology and Divine Revelation.

Natural Law and Divine Law.

For example:-

Natural Theology and Divine Revelation.

"Natural Theology" refers to what can be known about God (if anything) simply by inspecting the world around us.
"Divine Revelation" refers to what insights, etc., God may impart to us directly through a prophet, or through Jesus Christ.

Other questions which will arise as we seek to answer this question about natural theology will be like:-

How much can we learn about God through nature? Is it knowledge enough to save the soul?

If we can learn things about God through nature, is any other special source of information or grace (such as divine revelation through Christ) necessary?

If we can learn about God through nature, was it then at all necessary for Christ to come, and to die upon the cross?

If the information we can gather about God through an inspection of nature is known in the same way as all other every-day pieces of knowledge, on what basis do we know the information which can only come through Divine revelation? Is it the same?

How certain is any knowledge about God gained through the simple inspection of nature?
What sort of a world-view is presupposed in this search to know God? Why should this world-view be preferred to any other?

If we choose to operate using another world-view, whatever was seen as evidence about God (on the basis of the first world-view) could appear as evidence for something quite different (on the basis of the second world-view).

On the basis of the second world-view, there might not be any evidence about God at all. Why, then, should the first world-view be preferred?
When we consider divine revelation, whilst God's knowledge of anything may be considered certain knowledge (when compared with human knowledge), what certainty does this knowledge have once it has become the subject of human thought? God's understanding of what He says to us is one thing. Our understanding of what God says to us is something else altogether.

How does one recognise the voice of God? Is it a natural knowledge? If not, what is it?

Is the process by which we gain this special kind of knowledge any different from the process used

to gain knowledge normally? If it is not different, why is this knowledge any different from natural knowledge? If the process is different, can these two kinds of knowledge be related to each other in any way?

If the two kinds of knowledge can be related, we must return to the question as to why there is any difference between them. If the two kinds cannot be related, we have an impossible situation when our knowledge of God cannot be related to any other area of life.

The other four examples, mentioned above, all raise questions of a similar kind to the ones given by this example, except that they are couched in a slightly different way.

* * * *

As will have been gathered from our discussion so far, what we need to solve the world's problems (that is, so far as philosophy is concerned) is to have a philosophical system which will allow us to have truthful knowledge of science; of all the other disciplines; of God; of values, and of morality, all functioning on the same basis of knowledge. This can provide a unified view of life and the world, enabling people to see what their purpose for living is, and what is right and wrong. So, they can be optimistic about the value of what they are doing in their daily lives, and a high morality will create real quality of life.

To this must be added a means of causing the majority of mankind to embrace and practice this way of living voluntarily, and cause people to be properly thoughtful and responsible about whatever they do. This should normally be a part of the religious views involved in the synthesis.

I believe, and I hope to show, that such an outlook is possible within the framework of evangelical protestant christianity, and that it is the Kingdom of God which contains all of the power and possibilities to cause this view of life to be actually put into practice. I believe that only God who has the creative power to bring it about, to any notable degree.

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Chapter 3 - Philosophical Starting Point

In this philosophical statement we are not concerned to seek any basis of knowledge which might provide a great degree of certainty for human knowledge, but we will be satisfied with the ordinary type of probable knowledge that we are used to thinking about in every-day experience.

In the previous history of philosophy, there has been a continual quest for certainty. Various theories have been put forward to support this quest. But, so far, all have been unsuccessful.

Many philosophers since Kant have tried to achieve this certainty by analysing what are supposed to be logically necessary conditions of thought prior to any possible knowledge arising from experience. The position taken here is that any analysis of supposed logically necessary conditions of thought can only be arrived at as a result of a great deal of experience, and so the whole project of seeking certainty in knowledge by this method is impossible right from the beginning.

Similarly, any systematic treatment of human knowledge, even of such a simple kind as we shall pursue here, is also the result of reflection on experience.

Not a Tightly Argued Position.

Our purpose is to present in outline a philosophical position of a certain general kind, in order to support the general framework of the world-view later on. There is liberty to disagree on many of the basic details put forward here, without destroying the whole framework. The general framework of the world-view should still be possible, even with a degree of latitude for variations of opinion about a good many of the details.

Obviously, there will be many points that will cause problems for the world-view if they can be shown to be mistaken. But this will not apply everywhere.

Thinking.

The viewpoint to be suggested here about the nature of human thinking is that put forward by Albert Einstein in his "Autobiographical Notes."

Briefly, his view is that humans receive a great many sense impressions. The human mind has an inherent ability or capacity to remember these impressions, perhaps in some pictorial form, and then to create ideas and concepts in relation to the experiences that we encounter.

The human mind is able to make use of these impressions, which come to us in our experience, and which we remember, to make links with other impressions that we remember in other contexts.

"Thinking" commences when an impression related to one series of experiences is used by us as an "ordering" element to make a link with an impression related to another series of experiences.
The "ordering" element is called a "concept" by Einstein.

Here is Einstein's statement on the matter.

"What, precisely, is "thinking"? When, at the reception of sense-impressions, memory-pictures emerge, this is not yet "thinking". And when such pictures form series, each member of which calls

forth another, this too is not yet "thinking".

When, however, a certain picture turns up in many such series, then - precisely through such return - it becomes an ordering element for such series, in that it connects series which in themselves are unconnected. Such an element becomes an instrument, a concept.

I think that the transition from free association or "dreaming" to thinking is characterised by the more or less dominating role that the "concept" plays in it. It is by no means necessary that a concept must be connected with a sensorily cognizable and reproducible sign (a word); but when this is the case thinking becomes by means of that fact communicable.

With what right - the reader will ask - does this man operate so carelessly and primitively with ideas in such a problematic realm without making even the least effort to prove anything? My defense: all our thinking is of this nature of a free play with concepts; the justification for this play lies in the measure of survey over the experience of the senses which we are able to achieve with its aid.

The concept of "truth" can not yet be applied to such a structure; to my thinking this concept can come in question only when a far-reaching agreement (convention) concerning the rules and elements of the game is already in hand.

For me it is not dubious that our thinking goes on for the most part without use of signs (words) and beyond that to a considerable degree unconsciously. For how, otherwise, should it happen that sometimes we "wonder" quite spontaneously about some experience? This "wondering" seems to occur when an experience comes into conflict with a world of concepts which is already sufficiently fixed in us. Whenever such a conflict is experienced hard and intensively it reacts back on our thought world in a decisive way. The development of this thought world is in a certain sense a continuous flight from "wonder"." (p.7.)

Einstein's Epistemological Credo.

A few pages later, Einstein gives us his "epistemological credo".
In quoting it here, we will divide Einstein's text into a number of extra paragraphs in order to make the separate parts of his credo clearer and easier to grasp. We will also introduce a numbering system for the paragraphs [e.g. (a.), (b.), (c.), etc.], in order to assist this clarity.

"I see on the one side the totality of sense experiences, and, on the other, the totality of the concepts and propositions which are laid down in books.

(a.) The relations between the concepts and propositions among themselves and each other are of a logical nature, and the business of logical thinking is strictly limited to the achievement of the connection between concepts and propositions among each other according to firmly laid down rules, which are the concern of logic.

(b.) The concepts and propositions get "meaning," viz., "content," only through their connection with sense experiences.

(c.) The connection of the latter with the former is purely intuitive, not itself of a logical nature.

(d.) The degree of certainty with which this connection, viz., intuitive combination, can be undertaken, and nothing else, differentiates empty phantasy from scientific "truth."

(e.) The system of concepts is a creation of man together with the rules of syntax, which constitute the structure of the conceptual systems.

(f.) Although the conceptual systems are logically entirely arbitrary, they are bound by the aim to permit the most nearly possible certain (intuitive) and complete co-ordination with the totality of sense experiences; secondly they aim at greatest possible sparcity of their logically independent elements (basic concepts and axioms), i.e., undefined concepts and undefined [postulated] propositions.

(g.) A proposition is correct if, within a logical system, it is deduced according to the accepted logical rules.

(h.) A system has truth-content according to the certainty and completeness of its co-ordination-possibility to the totality of experience.

(i.) A correct proposition borrows its "truth" from the truth-content of the system to which it belongs." (pages 11 and 13.)

* * * *

Discussion.

1. Firstly, an introductory comment.

Einstein put forward these views about the theory of human knowledge because, after much thought, he had come to believe that this is what we all actually do.

He knew that many scientists and philosophers had different opinions on these matters, and, earlier in his life, he had other opinions about this subject himself.

But, in another part of the publication where these "Autobiographical Notes" appear, he gives us the clue to his adoption of these views on epistemology. He says that it is necessary to look at what scientists actually DO, when they think creatively, and not to take so much notice of what they SAY that they are doing.

Not only was Einstein a great creative thinker, but he succeeded better than most in analysing the processes of his mind as he was thinking.

These processes are examples of what we all do as we think, each of us in our own limited ways.

2. Let us outline his views in another way.

First of all, there is the objective, outside world, including ourselves with our sense organs and brain.

There is also the inner world of the mind, which is related to brain processes in some way that is not properly understood.

The outside world impresses upon our sense organs, and affects the brain. Our brian remembers

some of these impressions, and creates tools for ordering these impressions, so that we can think about our situation.

Not only do we create simple concepts about simple things in daily life, but we slowly develop these concepts into more elaborate systems, in order to gain a better context for the simple ideas, and in order to get a larger, more whole picture of our situation.

These larger sets of concepts combine to become our world-view.
For many people, their world-view is learned from the family and from other similar social contexts, and happens to us without any great effort of analysis or philosophical questioning.
As Schaeffer said, this happens much like a child catches measles. It comes, so to speak, with our mother's milk, and with family love.

But, as he also said, it is very desirable that we should become people who think independently about these matters, and try to improve our understanding of the truth, not only in simple matters, but also in larger questions of the world and life.

We should return to Einstein here. Although we begin with concepts about small matters, these develop into wider views which provide us with a larger context.

It is this larger context which enables us to evaluate the meaning of the smaller experiences, ideas and concepts of life. Ultimately, therefore, the larger context provides the truth content for the smaller concepts. The larger context provides the terms of reference whereby the smaller matters are understood.

We believe that our understanding of the larger context is true in so far as it succeeds in providing us with an adequate way of understanding everything that goes on in our little world.

We will hold onto our understanding of the larger context while it continues to serve its purpose for us. We will see no need to change it until some experience arises which cannot be properly understood in terms of this larger context.

When an experience comes our way which we have difficulty in understanding, in terms of our existing thoughts about the larger context, we will try, at first, to come to terms with it without changing the larger context. We may even have to twist things a bit in order to do this.

But, eventually, we come to the conclusion that our larger context, as presently understood, is not adequate. So, we have to modify it is some way, in order to come to terms with the new input of information.

On some occasions we find that very large parts of this larger context have to be rejected, because it is chronically inadequate in some basic ways.

We talk, and make statements, when we use words to stand for some of the concepts that we have created in our minds.

Sets of concepts, and their attendant statements, should be judged according to agreed rules of logic. While this is very important, it is still very easy to have sets of concepts which relate to each other very well, from a logical point of view, but which are not correct when compared to our experience of the world.
The degree of "Truth" that we think we have is governed by the degree of confidence we have about the adequacy of our larger context of concepts.

To put it in another way (which will fit well into what we are to say later), the degree of truth that we think that we have is going to be governed by the faith we have in our basic outlook on life. Faith, here, means depending on the reliability of something. Here, we are relying upon our ability to get hold of a reasonably truthful world-view.

The truthfulness of concepts on a smaller scale is then governed by the way they fit into the larger context, bearing in mind also what has been said about the need for concepts to relate to each other according to the agreed rules of logic.

A TEST for truthfulness, however, can only be made by relating the concepts back to the basic experiences of the "outside world" to which they are meant to refer.

Testing of concepts, theories, etc., can apply best to those concepts which are related most directly and closely to the experiences to which they relate.

Many of the concepts in the larger context are not closely related to experience. As a result, they cannot be easily and directly tested. In order to try to test them, it is necessary first to think carefully of a way in which they can be more directly linked with experience. This may not be easy, and may, in some cases be impossible.

In such difficult and impossible cases, we need to be very careful about any claim to know something. It is very easy to be mistaken without us realising it.

A final point that Einstein made was that very basic concepts, or assumptions and presuppositions, which may not be able to be properly defined, should be kept to as small a number as possible.

Several reasons could be given for this.

One is that Einstein found from experience that the simpler and more beautiful the theory - the more likely it was to be correct. Another reason which we could give is that, while our philosophy should be large enough to encompass everything in its proper place, we should not leave too much room, in scientific disciplines, especially, for totally imaginary things which probably do not exist at all.

3. On the basis of this theory of human knowledge, all aspects of everyday experience can be included adequately, and, I believe, described in the way that they actually happen.

This also provides an adequate basis for a complete philosophy of science, such as Einstein used himself. And it also includes scope for all the other disciplines of human enquiry.

Contributions from other writers on these matters of the theory of human knowledge will be discussed a little later.

Abstractionism.

It will be remembered that Einstein said that concepts are created within the thinking mind of a person, and that thinking involves a free play with concepts.

This is normally opposed to the view that concepts are "abstracted" from raw sense experiences by the thinking mind. The mind is alleged to choose certain aspects of the sense impressions of raw experience, and set them apart from all the others, perhaps making a picture of these aspects in the

mind.

Many philosophers down through the history of philosophy have taken the view that all concepts are gained by this method of abstraction.

Northrop took the view that simple and basic concepts are made this way, by abstraction. But more elaborate concepts, such as are to be found in the advanced theories of physics, are created by the mind. The advanced theories and their concepts have to be related back to the basic concepts by means of mathematical deduction, and empirical tests, in order to gain support for the these concepts and theories being recognised as true.

He called the first, simple kind of concept, concepts by intuition. The second, created kind, he called concepts by postulation. (Northrop "Logic." chapter 5.)

Einstein pointed to the mathematical concepts of integers, as examples of concepts which clearly are created in the mind, and which bear no relation to the "outside world". As a result, they could not possibly be abstracted from raw experience. He held that this provided examples of the way all concepts are made.
Peter Geach, in his book "Mental Acts", takes a similar view, that all concepts are created in the mind, although he approaches this view from a different context.

Geach, also, produces certain concepts, which, he claims, could not be made by abstraction. And then he proceeds to argue that no concepts can be made by abstraction.

He points to the fact of experience that we can have (and in some instances do have) two different concepts where there is only one reality being experienced. By abstraction, such situations are impossible. Some of these instances relate to concepts which are quite simple and basic. As a result, he concludes, it is evident that NO concepts are made by abstraction, and all are created freely in the mind. (Geach. chapters 10 and 11.)
A part of the drive behind the idea that "concepts are gained by abstraction" is the desire to root human knowledge as firmly as possible into the outside world, which is the source of our sense impressions, and thus of our raw experience. Perhaps it will then be possible to discover some logical relation between the object experienced and the concept abstracted. Perhaps human knowledge will gain a greater degree of certainty in this way.
Einstein's view was that concepts, created in the mind, bear no logical relation to the experiences in response to which we have invented the concepts. As a result, concepts are made simply by the free play of the mind in seeking to understand the experiences of the outside world which it encounters, and they are improved by the same method.

The link between the object experienced and the concept created is not a logical relation, but is governed by the person's abilities at concept formation. Another way is to say that the concept is a reflection of the person's ability in understanding.

There is no certainty at all that the person has gained a helpful or truthful perspective on the reality that is being experienced.
This degree of certainty can only be improved by further experience and efforts at understanding. This can be described as a process of "trial and error." Hopefully, our experience will also lead us to develop ways of gaining knowledge which are not "blind" trial and error, but benefit from ways in which we have managed to be successful in the past.

Similarly, the concept that person A creates as a result of certain experiences, may not be the same as the concept created by person B, from the same experiences. The only way this can be judged is

by persons A and B trying to compare their different understandings of a situation, and making changes in their understandings where they come to see that this is needed.

Abstractionism can be used to try to show that persons A and B are experiencing the same thing, and are therefore gaining the same knowledge from the outside world. In this way we may be able to create a basis for greater certainty in human knowledge, and provide a sounder basis for knowing that we are talking to each other about the same things.

However, Einstein has rejected the entire abstractionist way of thinking.

This last point opens up the whole area of communications, and of the philosophy of history. We will look at both of these matters at a later stage of our studies.

SOME ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD.

The word "religion" is an umbrella term which applies to many of the basic questions and areas of enquiry which underlie any world-view.

It covers such matters as any questions relating to God, our relationship to God, salvation, and life after death. It also usually includes matters like the purpose of human life and society, and the standard by which one judges what is right and wrong, and what is ultimately valuable.

All world-views include opinions of a religious nature, whatever content these views might have, whether negative or positive. Since every thinking person has a world-view of one sort or another, and every world-view has religious components in it, every thinking person in the world is religious in this sense.

Furthermore, every thinking person practises his or her religion. It is true that many people may think that they have certain religious views but which they do not practice. This, however, is self-deception. The real religious opinions that a person has are those which the person actually practices, and are not necessarily those opinions which they merely say that they believe.

Science, on the other hand, is not a name which applies to any one area or discipline of human enquiry, such as religion is. "Science" is a method of enquiry which can be practiced, more or less, in many different disciplines.

Everybody is religious, but not everybody is scientific.

SCIENCE IS A METHOD OF ENQUIRY.

Furthermore, as we have already seen, the scientific method is not necessarily best described by what scientists SAY that they are doing when they do their science, but is best understood by looking carefully at what the scientists actually do, when pursuing their work most successfully.

In order to understand the scientific method properly it is firstly necessary to outline the assumptions upon which the modern scientific method is based, and then it will be possible to define more accurately what the scientific method is like in itself.

Historically, the modern scientific method arose within a Christian world-view, and the assumptions upon which the method functions in the late Twentieth Century are basically still the same as they were two hundred years ago. The assumptions which underlie the method at present operate best within a Christian world-view, and increasing difficulties should be expected by a scientist if other world-views are used as a basis for his work.

Some have even argued that the modern scientific method could never historically have arisen on the basis of any other world-view which is substantially different from the Christian world-view. The type of reasoning demanded by such a claim as this requires us to understand the basic characteristics of world-views generally, and then to try to envisage the logical implications of a world-view that would determine what kind of a science could develop on such a basis.

Whatever one might think on such issues as this, there is no doubt that the scientific method operates on the basis of a number of assumptions, and without the granting of these assumptions the modern scientific method cannot function.

What Are Some of These Underlying Assumptions?

1. The scientific method assumes that there exists an objective external world or reality, regardless of the existence or capacities of any knowing human mind. This reality is the object of study by the scientist.

2. The scientific method assumes that this external world is orderly. If the universe is disorderly it will not be possible for us to understand it, or make predictions about any future happenings in it.

3. Related to this is the assumption that the reality being studied by the scientist must be capable of being understood by rational processes. In pursuit of this, many scientists use mathematical forms of reasoning in order to improve the logical and rational qualities of their work.

4. It is assumed that human minds are capable of rational thinking, and that this rational thinking will be able to find a parallel in the objective reality being studied.

5. It is assumed that by such means as this, at least some truthful insights into the nature of reality can be gained. The success of the scientific method in recent times would seem to be good evidence in favour of this belief.

6. It is assumed that human knowledge is, in principle, always able to be improved. So, absolute and final certainty is never possible, except in closed situations (such as in arithmetic), where all the definitions, assumptions and other factors are known completely.

7. It is assumed that, in our "material" universe, the so-called laws of physics will apply everywhere and at all times. If there is part of the "material" universe where the laws of physics do not apply, we will face enormous and unusual problems in knowing anything about it.

8. If any parts of the universe, or of any other universe, are not "material", and to which the laws of physics do not apply (such as "free will"), then we will face other types of tasks in learning about them, although it may still be possible, perhaps, to use something like the scientific method. It must be admitted, however, that until quite recently the scientific method has only been applied to the "material" universe.

9. It is assumed that, within the "material" universe, "cause" and "effect" are also recognised as

proper and legitimate factors. The cause of something is not merely any thing which appears to us to have been nearby at the time.

10. A linear view of time is also assumed, and not a cyclical view of time. The linear view includes the uniqueness and non-returnability of events, ability to predict about an unknown future, and the possibility of progress in our knowledge.

11. A certain code of ethics is also assumed by the scientific method. It is assumed that the scientist will be humble before the subject material that he is studying, and will not do violence to the subject-matter in order to justify his pre-conceived ideas. It is assumed that the scientist will be humble about the value of his own opinions, and that of his peers. It is also assumed that strict truthfulness and honesty will be practiced in all of his work. It is assumed that both the human quest for knowledge, and the reality being studied, are inherently valuable in a way that justifies the scientist's work.

Any scientist who violates this code of ethics is considered to have lost his professional credibility.

Comment.

These assumptions arise naturally from a Christian world-view, where God is seen as the rational creator and organiser of the universe, who makes it orderly, beautiful and valuable, and therefore makes the universe able to be understood and appreciated by a rational mind, and makes the scientist's quest worth while.

Difficulties arise immediately when science is viewed from the perspective of a secular humanist world-view, where the universe is seen to have happened as a result of "mindless chance."

For the secular humanist, there is no reason why the universe should be orderly, or capable of rational understanding, or why the laws of physics should apply tomorrow as they do today.
There is no reason for expecting the beautiful, complicated and specialised animals (for example) that we see today to have arisen from chaos by mindless chance and without reason or purpose.
The secular humanist has to import into his world-view an additional hypothetical factor, an extra "law of nature", which produces order from chaos, and which performs for the humanist world-view the same kind of job that God performs in the Christian world-view.

For the secular humanist, there is no reason why effect should follow cause, and not vice-versa.

For the secular humanist, there is no beauty in anything. It is a quality which the human mind imposes upon the beautiful thing. Beauty can only exist in the eye of the beholder.

There is no reason for the secular humanist to consider that the task of the scientist is valuable, and worth doing. Nor are there reasons why the scientist should be humble, honest and truthful.

What is the Scientific Method?

The nature of the scientific method will be discussed at some length in the several following chapters, along with some insights about how our understanding of the scientific method has changed in recent years.

As a result, only a brief summary will be given here.

1. Firstly, the scientific method requires as its basis the acceptance of a world-view which includes all of the assumptions listed above.

2. The procedure is then that the scientist will collect what data he can, which he understands and interprets in terms of the assumed world-view, and which he sees to be relevant to his task of seeking to understand that particular part of reality in which he is particularly interested.

3. A theory or model is devised which has as much explanatory power as possible, and which hopefully allows some predictions to be made which can be tested.

4. Wherever possible, a mathematical form of reasoning is used.

5. The theory or model is replaced by something better, whenever the scientist considers that this is possible.

6. The method is adapted and modified, from one discipline to another, to suit the requirements of the subject material that is being studied in that particular discipline.

7. These factors do not necessarily happen strictly in the order outlined.
Let it be emphasised that this brief outline must be seen in the context of the discussion which appears in the following chapters of this book.

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Chapter 4 - Snippets From the History of the Scientific Method

It is hard to deny that using the scientific method has produced an enormous amount of success in gaining knowledge, especially in the physical sciences.

So, if we try to use various forms of the scientific method wisely, this may help us to streamline the improvement of our knowledge in the various disciplines of human enquiry, and make the gaining of knowledge, which happens also to be truthful, more efficient.

Firstly, perhaps, we should note that it is a mistake to talk simply about "the scientific method" as if it was one readily definable entity about which everybody agreed.

In fact, there are many different views about what the scientific method is, how it works, and what it is supposed to achieve.

In the book already mentioned, by F. S. C. Northrop, the author illustrates this point by comparing what several different authorities had to say.

He lists, first of all, the famous "Aphorisms" of Francis Bacon, which are of such fundamental importance in the history of the philosophy of science. Then he describes the views of Rene Descartes on the same subject. Next are given the views on the scientific method of Cohen and Nagel (a widely-read text book on the subject through the middle of the twentieth century). This is followed by an exposition of the thoughts of the American philosopher John Dewey on the same subject. (chapter 1.)

Northrop notes the differences between these various views, and tries to determine why they arrived at their different views. He concludes that the differences arose because not enough notice was taken of the difference between "problems of facts" and "problems of values." This, again, was a problem because the users of the scientific method did not trace the problem that was confronting them back to its ultimate source before trying to present an answer.

This can be described in another way by saying that the scientists formed their method in the light of what they thought "ought" to be done and known, instead of letting the nature of reality speak to them, and tell them what to do.
The instruction we can learn from this is - that we should let the nature of the problem, and the nature of the reality with which we are seeking to deal, determine what we can do, and what kind of results we can expect. We will find this lesson of very great value to us as we proceed with the study we are making in this present book.

Northrop uses an example from Galileo as a case in point. This, again, is an example of what Einstein said, that we must look more at what scientists do, than at what they say.

"First, we must examine a concrete example of the analysis of a problem of fact in the natural sciences. None is more illuminating than Galilei's analysis of a problem left by the Aristotelian physics. Galilei's analysis not only solved this problem but also, in doing so, provided the fundamental concepts of modern science.

The inquiry which led Galilei to the discovery of the basic and novel concepts of modern physics began with an inescapable sense of a problem left by the Aristotelian physics. (It is an example of what we mentioned earlier. He began to realise that the accepted view of the world was inadequate,

and this caused him to go in search of something better.) The problem appeared in the motion of a projectile, such as a shell shot from a cannon. More and more it became evident to Galilei and his contemporaries that the projectile does not move the way it should were Aristotle's physics true. That was Galilei's problem. Something was wrong with the Aristotelian theory of the motion of a projectile.

It may help us to discover the rules governing the analysis of a problem of fact if we begin by asking what Galilei would have done had he followed the advice of our previously mentioned authorities. Were Bacon right, Galilei would have thrown and shot off all kinds of projectiles, carefully observing and describing what happened, gathering more and more detailed empirical information until this information added up to a generalisation which was the answer. It is likely that had Galilei done this, he or his successors would still be observing, with the problem unsolved. Had Galilei followed Descartes, he would have doubted everything. This would have left him with certain minimum data from which he could have deduced the solution of his problem and the principles of modern mechanics. This also would have been equally fruitless. According to Cohen and Nagel, and also with John Dewey, after thorough sensitivity to the problematic situation, he should have allowed his imagination to suggest hypotheses. But it is not quite clear what hypotheses could possibly have occurred to his imagination except the traditional ones.

Galilei fortunately followed no such advice. Instead, he analysed his problem. This analysis took on the form of tracing the problem back to its roots. This was accomplished by stating clearly what the problem was and then noting the traditional assumptions which generated it.

Once this was done, it became evident that his problem centred not in the projectile but in the Aristotelian definition of force, a definition which applied not only to projectiles but to any motion whatever. This made it clear to him that it was hardly useful to pay any more attention to projectiles, or to become more sensitive to them. For the difficulty concerning the projectile arose because, according to Aristotelian physics, force is that which exhibits itself as the motion or velocity of the object upon which it acts. In other words, force is that which produces velocity. From this it followed that when a force ceases to act upon a body, the body should cease to move.
In millions upon millions of empirical instances this definition of force is apparently confirmed. When one pushes the table, the table moves, and when one ceases to exert the force, the table ceases to move. Yet in the projectile and its motion, this consequence of the Aristotelian definition is not confirmed. The force has ceased to act the instant the explosion takes place. Yet the projectile continues to move over great distances of space and over a considerable interval of time., following the cessation of the explosion. Thus analysis of the theoretical source of the problem which presented itself in the motion of the projectile located the difficulty in the basic concept of force as it relates itself to any motion whatever.

Consequently, Galilei's problem, under analysis, took on a much more fundamental and general form. The difficulty centred not solely in the motion of the projectile, but in the Aristotelian definition of force in general. Clearly, a new conception of force was required. This alone was sufficient to indicate that the real solution to the problem raised by the projectile reached far beyond the projectile and its motion, consequences which would alter the most basic concepts of the entire Aristotelian physics.

Galilei's analysis of the problem thus transformed it into that of finding a new and correct definition of force in terms of the motion of any object whatever. This permitted him to choose the simplest case of a force acting on a moving object which he could find, namely, a body falling freely under the force of gravitation. This is a much simpler case of a moving body than that of the projectile in which there is a freely falling vertical motion compounded with a horizontal motion perpendicular thereto.

It is important to note that up to this point no hypotheses have been put forward. Galilei has merely analysed his problem of the projectile to trace it back to its source in the Aristotelian definition of force for any motion whatever. He has then chosen the simplest possible observable motion in which he can study the relation between motion and force in order to get a correct definition of the latter concept.

Having now cornered his problem in the notion of a ball which he can let drop from his hand to the floor, he proceeds again, not to form hypotheses, but to observe the factors involved in this directly observable phenomenon. In short, his method takes on a somewhat Baconian character. He notes that the ball falling from his hand to the floor exhibits three factors upon which the fall, as governed by the gravitational force, might depend, namely, (1.) the weight of the ball, (2.) the distance through which the ball falls, and (3.) the time through which it fall.

It is these three observed factors which suggested to Galilei three hypotheses. Thus it is to be noted that he did not, after the manner of John Dewey, become sensitive to his initial problem and then allow his imagination to throw up whatever hypotheses happened to come into it. But, instead, he allowed an analysis of his initial problem to guide him to its roots in a more general and basic problem, and then the latter general and more basic problem to guide him to the simplest possible phenomenon in which the factors in his basic problem might exhibit themselves. It was these factors which, when observed, prescribed his three hypotheses: (1.) That force is simply proportional to the weight of the body upon which the force acts. (2.) That force is simply proportional to the distance through which the body moves when the force acts. And (3.) that force is simply proportional to the time through which the force acts.

His analysis having thus guided him to these three RELEVANT hypotheses, his next task is to determine which one, or whether any of them, is correct. This he does by the method prescribed for hypotheses by Cohen and Nagel, and also by Dewey. That is, he deduces from each hypothesis what follows if it is true and then attempts to put this deduced consequence to an empirical test.

If force is proportional to the weight of the body upon which it acts, it follows that bodies with different weights dropped at the same instant and acted upon by the same gravitational force, should arrive at the ground at different times. The famous Tower of Pisa experiment, which apparently was apocryphal as an historical fact, would have easily led to the rejection of this hypothesis had it been performed. Thus Galilei was left with two other hypotheses.

Galilei believed that he demonstrated mathematically that the hypothesis that force is proportional to the distance through which the body moves leads to a contradiction. Ernst Mach has shown that Galilei's proof is invalid. Nonetheless, the hypothesis can be shown to be false. Thus Galilei did not err in rejecting it. This left him with the hypothesis that velocity is simply proportional to the time.

His problem then became that of putting this hypothesis to an empirical test. He began first by deducing from it the consequence that the distance covered must be simply proportional to the square of the time. This means that if a body covers one unit of distance in one unit of time, it must cover four units of distance in two units of time, nine units of distance in three units of time, etc. It was the need of putting this consequence of his third hypothesis to an experimental test which guided Galilei to his famous experiment in which a ball is allowed to roll down the side of an inclined plane.

The purpose of the inclined plane was to slow up the fall of the ball so that it would be possible to measure the distances covered in different units of time and thereby determine whether the relation between distance and time is the one prescribed by the hypothesis. The confirmation of this

hypothesis in this experiment is well known.

The result was a new definition: Force is that which produces (not motion or velocity, as Aristotle supposed, but) changes of velocity or acceleration. This new definition of force is the foundation of modern mechanics. According to this definition of force it follows that when a force ceases to act on a body the body will not cease to move, it will merely cease to change its velocity." (chapter 2.)

This lengthy quotation from Northrop has been given because of its interest as a description of the scientific method, and as a key factor in all that will be said in what follows in this philosophical statement.

* * * *

Recent Steps in the Philosophy of Science.

Since the time of Northrop and Einstein, several leading figures have appeared on the scene in the history of our understanding of the scientific method.

Karl Popper.

The main thrust of Popper's understanding of science is contained in the title of one of his books, "Conjectures and Refutations."

The emphasis, however, is more on the second part of the title. In order to be "scientific", a conjecture must be able to be refuted, or tested, in such a way as to be disproved if it is not correct. If a theory (which happens to be wrong) cannot be shown to be wrong, then it must be classed as metaphysics, and not as science. All metaphysics is best ignored or forgotten. Any theory which cannot be tested in such a way as to disprove it if it is wrong cannot be classed as science.
Popper's views might be seen today as a more traditional outlook on the scientific method. Experiments and research which produce results according to prediction offer some degree of evidential support of the presuppositions and models being tested, but never a full proof. On the other hand, only onefailure in achieving the predicted results are sufficient to show that the presuppositions and models are inadequate or wrong - provided that no mistake has been made in the way that the experiment has been carried out.

At one stage, Popper was a little more extreme, and said that it did not prove anything if positive results always came. Some other explanation might still be the correct one. While, logically, this is a possibility, this part of his view has not been followed very much, because it has the result that it is not possible to get good evidence for anything, only negative results being of any value. This idea was too severe.

It is true, however, as Popper said, that no model or theory is ever finally proven to be true. There is always the possibility that improvements may be made in the future. Human knowledge is always provisional, and subject to revision. So, even continual and overwhelming positive evidence can never be called "final proof", no matter how dogmatic some people may be about the correctness of their opinions.

The other side of this traditional view of science is that only one properly conducted test has to be

produced which has yielded results contrary to expectation in order for the model to be called into question, and the need for revision or rejection established.

Later writers have tried to show that science does not in fact operate in this manner. Negative results do not always spell the doom of any model or theory. If only one refutation was required, no theory would ever last for more than five minutes, and its true worth would never be discovered.

Popper's views are a refinement of the old positivist philosophy which tried to sweep metaphysics away entirely.

Popper's views have been criticised in a number of ways by subsequent writers. One simple point is that Popper's basic beliefs about the nature of science are not provable or disprovable in the way he requires, and so the basics of his theory have to be classed as metaphysics.

Michael Polanyi.

Polanyi made an important contribution to this subject in his book "Personal Knowledge."

He emphasised that knowledge generally, and scientific knowledge in particular, has to take place in human minds which are each part of historical, feeling, social persons. So, a whole range of psychological and social factors will be essential parts of any method of gaining knowledge.

So, the scientific method, and the results of its use, cannot be treated as clinical, cold and impersonal. Science cannot be treated as entirely mathematical or logical - or even largely so. Scientific knowledge is always personal knowledge.

This emphasis has pointed to an important aspect of the scientific method which had previously been not thought of, played down, ignored, or denied, especially by the positivists, their followers, and others who took a similar attitude to science, metaphysics and religion. It has been developed more by later writers.

Some writers had, of course, enlarged upon this theme in earlier years. But, Polanyi's book seems to have been the one which created sufficient impact so that this aspect of scientific knowledge has become more widely recognised, even by some people who were not inclined to notice it before.

Thomas Kuhn.

Kuhn has emphasised another aspect of the scientific method, and of scientific enquiry generally, in his book, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions."

Kuhn had gained a certain understanding about the nature of physical science from his earlier studies in theoretical physics. But, an opportunity to explore widely in the history of science showed him that, in many cases, scientific work and progress did not in fact occur in the manner he had learned.

In the new outlook that he then developed, his basic concept was what he called a "paradigm", which he defined as "universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners." (p.viii.) In any discipline, a certain understanding or theory will be the universally accepted outlook on reality held by those involved in that discipline. This will continue until a revolution takes place, and a different theory takes the

place of the former one as the universally held outlook on that part of reality that the discipline relates to. For example, Aristotle's physics prevailed until the onset of a new revolution, of which Galileo's work was a part. Newton's theories provided a view of physics which held sway until a revolution took place - in the form of Einstein's theories of relativity.

However, this does not mean that no progress is made in science in between these major revolutions. Kuhn believed that "normal science" took the form of facing unsolved problems, new areas of research, etc., in these periods between revolutions. This work was not viewed as a threat to the "paradigm", or prevailing major overall theory, but as "solving puzzles" wherein some detail of the overall theory is modified so that the paradigm will include new information and insights.

Research would be seen as a means of extending and modifying the old revolution, instead of always trying to make a new revolution.

A new revolution would not be seriously contemplated, nor would it be recognised as being needed, until it was manifestly clear that the old revolution was inherently inadequate, and that no amount of fiddling or repairing of the cracks would make the old revolution adequate for the new needs.

Most scientific research results in attempts to patch up or extend the old revolution, and does not try to make a new paradigm.

Kuhn's views have been partly adopted, partly modified, and partly rejected by the writers who followed him. But he does help to clarify, in basic ways, the nature of scientific thinking.

John Ziman.

Ziman has extended the contributions of Polanyi and Kuhn, in particular, as well as adding other aspects.

His first book in this general area was entitled "Public Knowledge." It emphasised this public aspect of scientific knowledge, and led to his basic statement about the goal of scientific work, which is "to create a concensus of rational opinion over the widest possible field." (Rel. K. P.3)

Many areas of scientific research are not known well enough, or may include some parts where theories cannot be tested with enough clarity, to create a concensus about those areas. But, because scientists are supposed to be able to gain similar results from similar tests, regardless of who does the test, a public knowledge can be steadily created, about which there can be a growing concensus. This project is more easily accomplished in some areas of research than in others.

Ziman's next book, "The Force of Knowledge", contains a discussion of a number of aspects of the development of modern scientific knowledge, paying especial attention to a number of personal and social aspects, as well as the more purely intellectual ones.

He describes personal and social factors which undeniably have a large impact upon the progress of knowledge. These include such things as the role played by scientific societies, conferences and journals, and the forces exerted towards conformity by various academic pressure groups, orthodoxies, funding procedures and organisational structures.

This book, therefore, made a good contribution to the budding area of interest now called "the sociology of science". It studies especially the nature of science as a human activity.

Ziman's third book, "Reliable Knowledge", turns away from the sociological factors, and proposes a model which seeks to make clear why science ought to be believed.

Science consists in information which has to be able to be set out in statements which can be recognised and understood by others working in the area, and must aim at contributing to a concensus of some sort. These statements can be stored in an archive (that is, in a journal, a book, or a library), but always a human mind is needed for their meaning to be appreciated. Thus, science is "inter-subjective", and is not "objective".

Science requires strong interaction between human actors as a necessary part of its development. In this way many errors and other misunderstandings may be eliminated. Many parts of scientific publications are not simply statements of facts, or explanations of evidence, but have a rhetorical purpose to convince and persuade other scientists of the validity of a new hypothesis, or to shatter received opinions.

The "concensus" developed in this way would be like what Kuhn called a "paradigm", but, there are pitfalls.

"In the first place almost every scientist is raised up, by formal education and research experience, within the world-picture of his day, and cannot happily consent to statements that are obviously at variance with what he has learned, and come to love. The achievement of inter-subjective agreement is seldom logically rigorous; there is a natural psychological tendency for each individual to go along with the crowd, and to cling to a previously successful paradigm in the face of contrary evidence. Scientific knowledge thus contains many fallacies - mistaken beliefs that are held and maintained collectively, and which can only be dislodged by strong persuasive events, such as unexpected discoveries or completely falsified predictions. In other words, our model must take into account the effects of its collective intellectual products on the cognitive powers of each of its individual members.

Secondly, and more significantly, is there any defence against the charge that the whole scientific paradigm is a self-sustained delusion. The scientists in our model are almost always deliberately trained to a particular attitude to natural phenomena. How are their intellectual constructs to be distinguished from those of any other self-accredited social group, such as a religious sect? What reasons have we for preferring the scientific paradigm as the ideal, unique world-picture?
We may assert that the social system of science is always open to the outsider, and that contributions of fact or opinion are not solely restricted to True Believers. It is well known, for example, that major scientific progress often comes from scientists who have crossed conventional disciplinary boundaries, and have no more authority than a layman in an unfamiliar field. According to the ethics of "the scientific attitude", science is valid in principle for Everyman, because any man could, if he wished, take up the study of science for himself, and would eventually be fully persuaded of its truth.

In practice, however, this is almost impossible; and when we look at the brainwashing implicit in the long process of becoming technically expert in any given branch of science - he who emerges from this process is no longer the unbiased independent inspector who entered it ten years before.

More to the point, it must be emphasised that no scientist is a disembodied observing and conceptualizing instrument; he is a conscious human being, born and reared in the common life of his era. Long before he is taught about electrons, and genes, and exogamous fratries, he has acquired practical experience of pots and pans, cats and dogs, uncles and aunts. Although such mundane objects are seldom discussed as such in high science, they are not excluded from its realm. However fantastic it may appear on its wilder shores, the scientific concensus includes, by

definition, the matter-of-fact, and must be coherent with everyday reality. Failure to accord with reliable "commonsense" evidence is quite as discreditable as falsification of a theory by a contrived, abstruse experiment. Of course, commonsense evidence may often turn out to be irrelevant or ambiguous, but it cannot be trampled underfoot." ("Reliable Knowledge." P.8-9.)

This epistemological challenge to science, Ziman says, leads to such questions as - how each person acquires his view of the world, how far all men see the same world, and whether there can be any conceivable alternative to the "reality" in which most men believe.

These are the kinds of questions being raised in this present book on the possibilities of an evangelical world-view philosophy.

Ziman claims that the triumphs and successes of science do tell in favour of a certain view of the physical universe. "It would be absurd to deny the validity of a theoretical system such as quantum mechanics to which we owe our stocks of nuclear weapons."
(page 9.)

In his last chapter, Ziman discusses to what extent the social and behavioural sciences can be called "science", as physics is.

Every discipline is a social quest for knowledge where concensus is being sought, and he does not see any real difference between the basic nature, quest and methods of the disciplines, as such, although they each have their own peculiar problems to cope with, and their own material to study.

"To believe in science is to have some confidence in its predictive power. To make a reliable prediction, it is necessary to have in mind a sound model, or map, or picture, of that aspect of things. The credibility of any science of behaviour thus depends on the status of its theories - the selection and communication of the observational data, their mental organisation into significant patterns and the validity of conjectures and hypotheses by the collective activity of the scientific community. The fundamental issue for the behavioural sciences is whether the theory-building process can produce a strong, sure, unambiguous framework of concepts and relations as reliable in its own domain as the physical and biological sciences in theirs.

It must be emphasised, however, that man does not need "science" in order to live. From time immemorial, tradition, emotion, poetry and myth have provided him with comprehensive schemata of belief and motive. Until quite recently, humanity has managed to survive quite well, thank you very much, without the benefit of any consciously scientific study of its own behaviour. What we ask of a science of society is a body of knowledge, a guide to action, that is significantly more reliable, significantly broader and deeper in scope, than the agglomerations of practical wisdom with which most of what we do is still decided."
("Reliable Knowledge". P.159.)

Ziman tries to comment upon what he thinks might be needed in terms of scientific method to achieve this goal.

Imre Lakatos.

Historically, the views of Lakatos appeared during the earlier years of Ziman's writing. So, Lakatos did not make any comments or references to Ziman. His comments were mainly directed at Popper, Polanyi and Kuhn.

Lakatos' main area of interest was the philosophy of mathematics, and his writings often appeared in Hungarian, rather than in English.

In many ways, his views are like those of Kuhn and Ziman, but there are also many differences.

Since his death in 1974, a collection of his most important papers in the philosophy of science has been published under the title "The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes." A second volume contains more of his papers related to mathematics.
Lakatos wanted to avoid having to be satisfied with weak "probable knowledge", or with a truth that can only be known "by concensus". He wanted to re-assert, as best he could, the old aim of knowledge being "proven knowledge". He thought that Polanyi and Kuhn reduced science to the psychology of science - that is, to psychological factors more than to rational ones.

Lakatos distinguishes between immature science, where trial and error is practiced, and mature science, where there is a battle between proper research programmes. Newton's gravitational theory is a classic example of a successful research programme.

He believed that each research programme has a "hard core" which is defended at all costs.

If research seems to produce evidence which upsets parts of the hard core of a prevailing research programme, then the usual reaction is to re-interpret the evidence so that it will fit into the hard core better. The hard core is not considered to be under real threat until there are a number of major problem areas in which it is clearly inadequate.

Each research programme also has a "soft core" or "refutable protective belt", which can be changed and adapted, as need arises in the development of the research programme.

Every research programme has a number of unsolved problems, or even major difficulties, that it has to face at any time. It is much better to try to cope with these problems, one at a time, in terms of the prevailing paradigm, than to have to start from scratch each time a problem arises. Kuhn called this the puzzle-solving phase of normal science. Lakatos expressed it differently, but had a similar basic pattern in mind.

"The positive heuristic of the programme consists of a partly articulated set of suggestions or hints on how to modify and render more sophisticated the "refutable protective belt". (Hallam. P.227.)

In this way the research programme can develop itself, without being continually defeated or refuted by relatively unimportant details, which will probably be solved one day, anyhow.

A. Hallam and H. E. LeGrand.

Two recent writers have studied the history of changing opinions and theories in the field of geology. Special attention has been given to the variations in, and rise to prominence of, the theory of continental drift, although earlier changes have also been considered.
They have used this history as a basis for reflecting upon the suitability or otherwise of the views of Popper, Kuhn, Ziman and Lakatos as an account of changes in scientific opinion. These two writers are A. Hallam "Great Geological Controversies." (2nd edition, 1989.), and H. E. Le Grand "Driftung Continents and Shifting Theories." (1988.)

Le Grand also includes in his test of suitability the writings of Larry and Rachel Laudan, which appear in many ways similar to what we have already outlined. Le Grand, in fact, prefers the views

of Larry Laudan. I have not been able to examine Laudan's views, apart from reading what Le Grand says about them, so they have not been included here.

Hallam does not consider Laudan's writings, and, while he likes Kuhn's views very much, he likes Lakatos' ideas even better.

Le Grand concludes that, in geology, at any one time, a number of paradigms or research programmes might be in open competition with each other, each developing improved versions. But, Lakatos' idea of a "hard core" did not really describe the situation about theories of continental drift accurately, because the drift theories were so varied, and changed so much over the years, that there was very little that was common to all the different versions of "drift" that appeared over the decades.

It needs to be remembered that the ideas on scientific change put forward by Kuhn and Lakatos were really designed for physics, and so we should not be surprised if they need to be modified a little when they are used in relation to changes in other disciplines. There will, no doubt, be a continuing debate about the suitability of these ideas in various disciplines, and this can only succeed in casting further light upon this whole area, and upon the nature of human knowledge generally.

Summing-up.

So far as the thesis of this present book on evangelical christian world-view philosophy is concerned, I believe that the issues we have considered, and that the general direction that is being taken in these matters, provides a suitable basic understanding of the nature of ALL human knowledge, in ALL areas of interest, in ALL disciplines, and in every aspect of everyday life, so that all of life can be seen as a coherent whole.
While much more insight needs to be gained in all areas of research and thought, as to how our knowledge is gained and improved; as to what factors are at work bearing upon the quality of knowledge that we can gain; and how certain we may consider any part of it to be, a basis does exist here for us to see human knowledge and human life as a whole.

As we look further at a range of disciplines I believe we will see more clearly how this will be so.

Random Comments.

(a.)
As we have seen, in the past there have been many philosophers of science who tried to develop theoretical views about the nature of science, and based largely upon a consideration of physics. They have described the scientific method according to a pattern showing what they thought it OUGHT to be like, more than in the way science was actually done in practice. Sometimes their ideas about how it was actually done were coloured by these ideals of how they thought it ought to be.

These idealistic theories about the nature of science often had hidden agendas and ulterior motives. Many of them wanted to get rid of as much metaphysics as possible, and religion, too. Many shared the anti-religious quest, and were trying to build a rational view of things which did not include the christian foundation of previous generations.

Other motives with some thinkers included the quest for certainty in knowledge. Many thought that only science was certain, and all the rest could safely be ignored. Others thought that what was clear and obvious to them, personally, must certainly be true. They thought that the feeling of confidence that they had about what they knew, themselves, was a reflection of ultimate truth. They did not realise that one person could think a thing was clearly and obviously true, while somebody else could feel just a confidence about the exact opposite.

(b.)

Science students in high school, and the unsuspecting public who absorb television programmes on scientific subjects, often get the idea that certain ideas they hear expressed are reliable and certain, and are known to be true beyond any question. This is how scientific opinions and theories are presented to them by the high school text books, high school teachers, and by television journalists.

They absorb what they are told, and think that science means learning "facts", in much the same way that some students are taught history - as a succession of "facts".

They do not know anything about the real scientific method. They do not know anything about the provisional nature of human knowledge in general, and of the sciences in particular.

Others, again, are taught technological skills, and think that they have learned what science is. They can wire up a radio, and make it work, and think that thereby they have come to know some radiophysics, and have learned something about the scientific method.
Anthony Standen's amusing and illuminating little book, "Science is a Sacred Cow," contains many insights into the real nature of science.

"Physics is NOT a body of indisputable and immutable Truth; it is a body of well-supported, probable opinion only, and its ideas may be exploded at any time. This ought to be more generally known, and should be widely publicized." (page 68.)

Science is best learned by studying the stories of the unsolved problems in science which made someone "wonder", and try to think what might be done to remedy the problem. This should be followed, of course, by the stories of the great concepts, theories and experiments, which led to the solutions.
Science can also be taught well by studying the lives, times, thoughts and works of the people who have made the great landmarks in the history of the subject. Jacob Bronowski is only one writer on science who has shown us the value of this kind of education. His book, written with Bruce Mazlish, "The Western Intellectual Tradition", is a good example of it.
Physics is not a list of facts, or proven theories. It contains nothing that is known with absolute certainty. It is all provisional, like the rest of human knowledge - all subject to revision - the same as all of our concepts, and all of the results of our thinking.

Some of Standen's rude comments about chemistry are also illuminating in another way, and could be applied to other subjects, as well.

"Chemists have the habit of beginning in the middle of things, and then making little excursions backwards. The class in Chemistry 1, meeting together, 300 strong, for the first time, may hear the Great Man announce in a booming voice, "Now a hydrogen atom is made up of one electron and one proton." Only later do they find out what is meant by "atom", "electron" and "proton", and only much later still, if at all, do they find out any of the facts that justify scientists in believing in these things. Later on the class may embark on a project of building, out of wood and wire, an exceedingly complex model of what an atom is supposed to be like. Needless to say, only a very

few students who go on to be specialists will find out, after years of study, the experimental evidence upon which all the complexities are based, and by the time they have got there the whole theory of atomic structure may be quite different. Completely gone is any pretense of inculcating the virtue of reserving judgment until all the facts are in." (page 79.)

Many other penetrating comments can be found in Standen's book, and, one day, some publisher will do us a good turn by re-publishing it.
(c.)

Another important point to remember is that physics and chemistry have often had another factor about them which makes them somewhat different from any of the other disciplines. This is that the subject matter that is being studied can usually be manipulated and analysed in a laboratory.

In some of the other disciplines, which are also commonly called "physical sciences" this direct study of the subject materials is not possible in the same way.

For example, astrophysics is limited in a number of ways in its ability to study its subject matter, and, of course, none of it can be brought to a laboratory, except, perhaps, meteorites and moon samples.

Geology has to make theories about the earth when much of the earth cannot be directly observed. Also, many of the geological theories are about the past, which can only be observed very indirectly, and on the basis of a number of assumptions which are very difficult to support with evidence (although that may not mean that they are mistaken).

Atomic physics has its own very real limitations, both so far as observation is concerned, and also verification.

Factors like this help us to realise that the scientific method is something which has to be handled wisely and well, and in the full light of the limitations imposed upon us by the materials that we are trying to study.

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The Philosophy of Science (Physics.)

Our whole discussion, so far, has centred around physics because of its crucial position amongst the scientific disciplines, and because it provides some of the best examples of what can be achieved by the scientific method.

Physics is the major science which deals with the fundamental constituents of the physical universe, the forces which they exert upon each other, and the results produced by these forces.

In some approaches to modern physics, elements of the three factors listed above are combined in relation to the laws of symmetry and conservation, such as those pertaining to energy, momentum, charge, and parity

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The Philosophy of Science (Astronomy and Astrophysics.)

We have already noted that astronomy and astrophysics are going to be somewhat different from physics and chemistry because the heavenly bodies are generally not able to be analysed and manipulated in a laboratory.

Many astronomical objects can only be observed at certain times of the year, and under certain atmospheric and weather conditions. They can only be observed with special equipment, and often only with great difficulty, because of their great distance from us in remote parts of the universe. There are also only certain "windows" in the electro-magnetic spectrum which can be observed from the earth's surface. Other parts of the spectrum can, perhaps, only be observed from a balloon, or from space, or from deep inside the earth.

Other astronomical objects are transient, such as supernovae. Almost all of them can only be observed during the short time when they are visible, and then with great difficulty, because of their great distance. As a result, information about them can only be gathered very slowly, "in dribs and drabs".

Because of all of these factors, it takes a long time to get all the information that we need about many of these types of objects.

And yet - this does not stop the astronomers from theorising about the objects that they are studying. They may not know all that they would like to know. But, they will invent whatever theories they can think of which might account for what they can see. Then, they will try to arrange observational programmes in order to test these various ideas, to see which one is true.

As a result, it is easy to have several different theories being put forward at the same time to account for some aspect of astronomy. One, or more, of these theories may be widely believed.

They can all be theories which have never been properly established in observational evidence. But, they can still have a great influence in this science.

To put it another way, astronomers can admit several "working hypotheses", in relation to a certain area of research. It becomes the task of research to try to test the implications of these different hypotheses, and to decide which one has a better chance of being true.

For example, most astronomers believe that the universe is expanding, and that the red-shift in the spectra of galaxies shows that they are moving away from us, with speeds that are increasingly greater in proportion to their distance from us.
Estimates are made as to what kind of distance is represented by a certain red-shift, and so on. Yet, as at this time of writing, nobody knows what distance is represented by any particular red-shift. Especially is this true when the distances being considered are very great - at thousands of millions of light years. It is largely guesswork. The distance to a particular group of galaxies may be estimated at 1,000,000,000 light years. But this estimate might easily be out by between 50% and several hundred percent. Yet much of our insight into the age of the universe, and the early history of the universe, is based on this kind of reasoning.

Theories of this kind can be very wrong very easily.

In astronomy, and astrophysics, there is a great deal of speculation about many of the subjects being studied. Much of the "knowledge" is much less certain than some astronomers would generally admit. Others are more candid about what little is really known.

Yet, astrophysics is a branch of physics. And the scientific method, reduced to mathematics, as practiced in physics, is what is practiced in astrophysics.

Another example concerns supernovae - an area of interest where my experience is more directly involved.

Very little is known about supernovae with a great deal of certainty. There are several recognised types of supernovae, but how many other types exist is not known.
There are theories about what makes a supernova explode with such enormous power, and there seem to be two, or more different possible mechanisms. There is some evidence about the nature of these mechanisms. But, it is not yet possible to show, with good evidence and with sufficient detail, exactly how even one of these mechanisms actually works, or what the pre-conditions of the explosion are like.

Astronomers use the scientific method as well as they can, with what limited information is at their disposal. To fill in what is not known, the theorists try to use "educated" guesses, and other estimates, which may, or may not, be well educated.

So, the science has to work on what material is available, with whatever equipment it can, and with the degree of certainty and confidence that it is entitled to have. It tests its theories as well as it can, under the circumstances.

We need to be candid about all such matters.

A basic assumption in astronomy is that the laws of physics in distant parts of the universe are the same as we find them here on earth. This is a necessary "working hypothesis", which may turn out to be quite mistaken, but without it astronomers cannot conduct their research. No progress is possible without it.

Some areas of astronomy suffer from the described limitations more than other areas do. Some areas are more prone to contain guesses and speculations than others. Some of the speculations are taken more seriously than others. But, the bottom line is that the scientific method is also taken very seriously, and, normally, it has the last say.

As we proceed, we will find that the other disciplines all operate in the same way. That is, they use whatever of the scientific method they can, and do the best they can with what they have got, and with what the subject matter will allow them. Also, they verify their theories as well as the practicalities of their subject matter will allow.

Let us hope that school education in the sciences, and the popular television education of the public in scientific matters, can improve their ability to show people what science is really like. We will all be better off, then.

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<u>The Philosophy of Science. (Geology).</u>

The earth sciences study the nature and history of the earth, along with the oceans and atmosphere around it. Geology studies the rock structures of the earth.

This science also tries to practice the scientific method as best it can.

Certain limitations operate in geology which affect how the scientific method can be used. Amongst these limitations are the facts that, generally, only the surface of the earth is open for inspection, and that the past history of the earth cannot be directly inspected, and has to be inferred from the present realities. The past is not open to direct inspection.

Also, geology is based upon a certain assumption, called the theory of uniformitarianism. This theory holds that the processes and forces which moulded the earth in the past are the same as those which we see to be at work today.

Obviously, there is no direct evidence to support this view, any more than there is any direct evidence to help astronomers in knowing that the laws of physics are the same here as in any other part of the universe. Uniformitarianism may be mistaken entirely, or in part. But, without it, geologists cannot make any steps in studying the more distant past in the earth's history. We can only hope that, if it is mistaken, even in part, we can somehow discover it, and rectify it.

So, geology has a number of restrictions which affect its ability to use the scientific method. The limitations are created by the nature of the material being studied, and by the limitations that we have, ourselves.

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H. E. Le Grand presents a most interesting study of the way that the scientific method operates in geology in "Drifting Continents and Shifting Theories." His study uses the story of the rise to acceptance of the theory of drifting continental tectonic plates as an example of how the scientific method works more generally in this discipline.

His basic conclusion is that attempts to solve these problems have involved the use of "multiple working hypotheses" which were competing for attention. Each one of these hypotheses has many unsolved problem areas. But, each hypothesis has its own areas of strength, as well as its areas of weakness. Each one can cope better with certain problems than it can with other problems, and all these factors may vary greatly from one hypothesis to another. (Page 268.)

A consensus of opinion may be gained in favour of one of these theories when it manages to cope more successfully with more of the problems facing it than its competitors can do. It is a question of the relative performances of each of the candidate hypotheses.

This consensus may continue for some time, until research shows that a new hypothesis, or a modified form of one of the older ones, can be made to perform better than the existing "orthodoxy".

The purpose of research is, at least in part, to test out and strengthen the basis of "orthodoxy", or of one of its competitors.

A change in the consensus like this may involve a modification of a theory within an existing world-view, or it may require the replacement of the orthodox world-view with another which is not compatible with the older world-view in a number of ways.

Any hypothesis may be challenged on various levels:-

(a.) whether known facts fit the hypothesis well;

(b.) whether the hypothesis itself has been invented, thought out, and built up, by acceptable means;
(c.) whether proper methods are being followed in studying the whole matter;

(d.) whether proper standards are being used (for example, standards of evidence, or of logic.);

(e.) whether the theory is aiming in the right direction or not.

Le Grand's book is not easy meat for beginners, but it is a most illuminating and thought-provoking study. His book is one of several recent studies in this area.

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Geology, Physics and Astronomy.

In astronomy we have seen that several theories can be considered as possible explanations of an aspect of the universe, without enough being known to decide between the candidates, and without enough being known to refine the theories any further. In that situation, astronomers have to try to gain more information. And this may take a great deal of time in theoretical work, and in telescope observing time. Both can be very expensive. Many years may pass before the matter is improved greatly.

Northrop has shown us, in the instance involving Galileo, it was possible, in that instance, at least, to produce a "knock-down" argument, through good thinking and direct testing, which showed conclusively that one theory was better than the other.
This is certainly the kind of progress that we would all like to see. But, it is often not possible, in the short term.

Even in physics this is not always possible, because in some instances physics also deals with entities which cannot be seen, and with which it is very hard to experiment. (e.g. neutrinos.)

Although dealing with very different materials, astronomy and geology have much in common.

In geology, the limitations provided by the subject material have prevented the development of "knock-down" arguments in relation to many matters. The example of the theory of continental tectonic plates is only one of many that could be cited.

Despite our good thinking, we are not able to make the direct tests which are desirable. Thus, we have had to be content with a theory which is generally preferred to its competitors because it has less unsolved problems than the others have, and looks more promising. It has become orthodoxy, and, although some evidence is available to support the theory, there is much more supporting evidence that we would like to have but do not yet possess.
The orthodox hypothesis may not be correct. Or, it may be partly mistaken in various ways. But, we have been unable to think of sufficient improvements, and we cannot make enough tests to decide the issue.

Being unable to think of better alternative theories may arise from a number of factors, greatest of

which might be our simple inability to get key information on a number of matters.
We may not be short of imaginative abilities, but we do need to have some idea about which direction will be the most profitable in which to use our imagination. And, we need to be able to gain extra empirical evidence to test our hypotheses.

In each case, we may not be able to get enough.

Certainly, the use of the scientific method has greatly increased the scope of human knowledge, especially in the last hundred years, or so.

But, there are still immense areas for us to conquer, and the nature of the objects that we have to study often provide us with obstacles which can be extremely difficult for us to overcome.

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After I had written this chapter, a copy of Michael C. Banner's book, The Justification of Science and the Rationality of Religious Belief. (Oxford. 1990.) came into my possession. The book had only been published a few months before. Readers will note a number of similarities between

Banner's approach and mine, so far as philosophy is concerned. The theological side of his book does not follow the possibilities of the "Muller argument", as is done here, but his approach does open up a number of interesting possiblities.

Chapter 5 - The Philosophy of Biology

The Philosophy of Biology.

Biology is the study of that part of the physical realities on the earth which are alive. This has to be distinguished from physics, on the one hand, where the subject matter is not alive, and psychology, on the other hand, where an attempt is made to study the mental aspect of our activities.

Biology concerns itself with the processes by which an organism stays alive, adapts itself to changing conditions, reproduces itself and produces mutants, converts foodstuffs into energy and tissues, and affects other organisms. It deals with living organisms as whole structures, and in terms of their components.

Classification has long been a major interest of biologists, but, modern biology tends to emphasise the broad, general principles common to all organisms.

Biology used to consist of botany and zoology. It now tends to be subdivided into a number of other specialised disciplines, which all have their own peculiar interests and character.

These specialised disciplines include such areas of research as morphology, physiology, taxonomy, biophysics, biochemistry, genetics, eugenics, evolutionary studies and ecology.

But, we must not allow this new direction in biology to make us assume that all these areas function in exactly the same way as each other, or in the same way as physics and chemistry.

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Definitions.

The first problem to be faced concerns some of the basic definitions that are used in biology, and the ways these definitions differ from those used in other disciplines.
The biological definitions given here are from G. E. Allen's "Life Science in the 20th Century."

Idealism.

This is defined in the same way as idealism in philosophy. Eachmaterial object is an imperfect copy of its ideal type which exists (perhaps) in the mind of God. The ideal type is knowable only by study of the imperfect copies.

Allen claims that idealism expressed itself in the old view that all the species were immutable, and so one species could not develop into another species without a creative act.

Materialism.

In philosophy, materialism is the view that nothing else exists apart from the material universe.

Allen says that in biology there are two types of materialism.
The first is mechanistic materialism. This is the view that the best understanding of any

phenomenon comes from studying the individual parts of it that interact. The parts are studied in isolation, and the whole is reconstructed as a sum (and nothing more) of those parts. This arises from the old view that all of creation can be looked upon as a large machine. However, it does not follow that any biologist who has to study some individual part of a thing must have a mechanistic world-view.

This form of materialism is linked with Reductionism, which again, has two definitions. In philosophy, reductionism means that all aspects of a reality, or of reality as a whole, can be explained fully in terms of one aspect only. Allen says that in biology reductionism is the view that the most thorough understanding of any phenomenon can be gained when that thing is broken down or reduced into its lowest accessible level of organisation. So, to look upon a living organism as if it was like a machine, and to study its basic operations like a set of levers or cogs, assuming that this would, in due course, lead to a complete description of the thing, is mechanistic materialism.

The other form of materialism found in biology is dialectical materialism, a view which was used largely by Hegel and Marx. They believed that what is important is not simply the sum of the individual parts, but how they interact.
One cannot know about any part of a thing without knowing about its interactions. A nerve cell could be studied as a single unit, but we need to know how this nerve cell operates as part of a larger unit, if we are to understand it properly.
This type of materialism does not necessarily imply that any object is greater than the sum of its parts.

Vitalism.

I think Schweitzer would have seen vitalism as a philosophy and ethical system based upon the assumed value of life.

In biology, vitalists maintain that living organisms are animated by a force, by a set of properties, that have no counterpart in the inorganic world. While this view takes many forms, it means that "life" or "mind" are something in addition to the mechanical parts of an animal, and that this something extra is the driving force in the situation. Life cannot be discovered or analysed simply by examining the basic physical units of something. This is what vitalists see as the difference between a living thing and something that is dead or that has never lived.

History of Biology.

Biology has a very long history. But here we will simply point out that, in the nineteenth century, biologists were largely involved in describing as many species of plants and animals as they could, and in devising a classification system so that they could be adequately pidgeon-holed.

In the twentieth century, this work has continued, but much more emphasis has been placed upon experimentation, with the aim of gaining a better degree of certainty in what is known, and with the aim of studying the broader principles underlying all of life, as well as gaining more knowledge about many details.

"Contemporary biology is characterised by several important features. One is the firm belief that all biological problems can ultimately be studied on the molecular level. This view does not maintain that studies at other levels of organisation, such as that of the cell, the organ, the whole organism, or the population are of no value. In fact there is a growing awareness among some biologists that it is

equally as important to study these higher levels of organisation." (Allen. page xiv.)

Reductionism is not so prevalent now. But, the powerful impact of molecular biology felt in the 1950's and 1960's is still being felt today.

"Contemporary biology is also marked by a highly experimental viewpoint. The twentieth century has witnessed the continuous attempt of biologists to bring their fields of endeavour within the rigorous domains of experimental analysis.

The Relationship Between Physics and Biology.

Throughout the recent history of biology it has been believed by all those involved in biological research that the methods of research are the same in biology as are found in physics or chemistry.

"Biologists in the 1880's or 1920's continually looked to physicists and chemists for models of how scientific investigations should be carried out. Biologists were aware of the truth of the accusation, often leveled at them by workers in the physical sciences, that their field was not scientific - that they could not rigorously prove their conclusions and that many of their lines of evidence were incomplete and tenuous. Most important, they recognised how few of the accepted generalisations in biology...could be tested by experiment." (page xv.)

These untested generalisations included the foundations of Darwin's selection theory within the theory of evolution by natural selection, and basic features of genetics.

The first area of biology to emerge as highly experimental was physiology. The early physiologists were mechanists and reductionists. Later work was not so naively mechanist.

This experimental emphasis spread to embryology, and then to cytology and heredity, and finally to evolutionary theory.

"By the 1930's most areas of biology...were loudly claiming new advances because of the use of experimental analysis and the methods of physics and chemistry. Biologists, perhaps protesting too much, continually reminded their readers (and one must presume themselves) that only through the use of physicochemical reductionism, or rigorous experimentation, could sound advances be made. And some, whose fields such as heredity had indeed made enormous strides, could claim that nirvana had been reached: biology was as much a scientific discipline as physics and chemistry.

The admiration that most biologists in the early twentieth century showed toward the physical sciences was always at a certain distance - both in concept and in time. Most biologists, in fact, knew relatively little physics or chemistry, and what they did know was often what they themselves had learned inschool - usually twenty or thirty years earlier. Thus there was always a lag in the kinds of physics and chemistry being practiced in physics laboratories and those biologists were applying to revolutionise their own disciplines. Those biologists who carried out the transformation were familiar with the physical sciences in only the most cursory, second-hand way.

Physics itself was not a static science but instead, during the very period in which biologists were borrowing its methods, physics underwent a revolution of profound significance. The period between 1890 and 1920 saw (discoveries which initiated) a philosophical debate which undercut the very foundations of the classical view of matter and the nature of reality.

Physicists departed from the older style, mechanistic philosophy, which saw the universe and all its

parts as machinelike, a series of individual parts bumping into each other in mechanical ways. They turned, instead, to a more complex and interactive view of natural phenomena. The whole of something was not knowable from the sum of its parts, and its nature could not be predicted simply from knowing all the attributes of the parts studied in isolation.

Just after World War 1 the new viewpoint in physics began to enter biology, again through the portals of physiology. In the 1920's a less mechanistic trend became discernible in biology, rejecting the simplistic tendency to reduce all biological phenomena to molecular reactions. (Allen. pages xvii - xix.)

This trend appeared in biology following 1918, but it was the physics of some few years earlier that was being copied.

Today, while the influences of physics and chemistry are still felt very strongly, some biologists are emphasising the differences between physics and biology, in order to make biology independent of physics and chemistry - into a fully independent discipline.

One such is Ernst Mayr.

"The conceptual framework of biology is entirely different from that of the physical sciences and cannot be reduced to it. The role that such biological processes as meiosis, gastrulation, and predation play in the life of an organism cannot be described by reference only to physical laws or chemical reactions, even though physico-chemical principles are operant. The broader processes that these biological concepts describe simply do not exist outside the domain of the living world. Thus, the same event may have entirely different meanings in several different conceptual domains. The courtship of a male animal, for instance, can be described in the language and conceptual framework of the physical sciences (locomotion, energy turnover, metabolic processes, and so on), but it can also be described in the framework of behavioral and reproductive biology. And the latter description and explanation cannot be reduced to theories of the physical sciences."

"There is perhaps no better way to demonstrate the epistemological differences between the physical sciences and organismic biology than to point to the different roles of laws in the two sciences. In classical physics, laws were considered universal, and Popper's falsifiability principle was based on this conception. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, biologists also tended to explain all phenomena and processes as being due to the operation of laws. Darwin's "Origin of Species" refers to laws controlling certain biological processes no fewer than 106 times in 490 pages.

Today the word "law" is used sparingly, if at all, in most writings about evolution. Generalisations in modern biology tend to be statistical and probabilistic and often have numerous exceptions. One can generalise from the study of birds, tropical forests, freshwater plankton, or the central nervous system but most of these generalisations have so limited an application that the use of the word "law', in the sense of the laws of physics, is questionable.

At the same time, some very comprehensive biological theories have been formulated concerning the mechanisms of inheritance, the basic processes of evolutionary change, and certain physiological phenomena from the molecular level up to that of organs. These theories of biology appear comparable in scope, explanatory power, and evidential support to those of the physical sciences. Yet every student of biology is impressed by the fact that there is hardly a theory in biology for which some exceptins are not known.

The so-called laws of biology are not the universal laws of classical physics but are simply high-

level generalisations.

In the physical sciences it is axiomatic that a given process or condition must be explained by a single law or theory. In the life sciences, by contrast, various forms of pluralism are frequent. For instance, a particular adaptation may have been produced by several different evolutionary pathways."
A belief in universal, deterministic laws implies a belief in absolute prediction. The ability to predict was therefore the classical test of the goodness of an explanation in physics. In biology, the pluralism of causations and solutions makes prediction probabilistic, if it is possible at all." (Mayr. pages 18 - 19.)

One comment which can be made in response to Mayr is that the time lag in understanding physics still exists amongst biologists, because Popper's views on falsification are no longer widely held, and the laws of physics are no longer seen in the way he describes.

However, the main reaction that we must make to all that Mayr has said here is that the reasoning processes now used in biology look much more like both (a.) the latest understandings of the philosophy of science that we have noted earlier with Kuhn, Ziman and Lakatos, and (b.) the reasonings used in the philosophy of history, and the other humanities, as we will see in future chapters.

So, it is becoming increasingly clear that a single general pattern of reasonings is being used in all of the different disciplines. The actual details of how this general pattern is used are modified somewhat in each discipline in the light of the particular features of the part of reality that is being studied. But, the same general pattern holds well.

Summary, So Far.

From Allen's book we have got a picture of biology before the Second World War as a discipline struggling to become a self-conscious science, and in so doing trying to copy the standards and methods of physics, but a physics of some years earlier.

This resulted in the widespread adoption of mechanistic materialism, reductionism and naturalism.

Mechanistic materialism, and the determinism that goes with it, is still very strong in biological circles, although, in more recent years, others like Mayr have tried to show that biology is different from physics in a number of ways.

Questions such as "What is life? Is it anything more than the sum of certain physical processes in motion? What is the mind?" were given materialist answers, and very often the attitude still remains today.

Living things were often treated in experiments as not essentially different from dead or non-living things.

Humans were treated as not different in any essential detail from other animals.

While, in many ways, it may be true that any basic differences between other animals and humans do not fall into areas studied in biology, not enough care was taken in trying to apply directly to humans the results of experiments on rats and mice.

Biologists seem also to have paid insufficient attention to the fact that animals (or human beings) which have a mind of their own can contribute to situations in a way which cannot be described simply in terms of physics or chemistry. They assumed too easily that the human mind was like a machine.

This raises more psychological matters, such as "the will", and animal instincts, and their place in a person, or an animal. Also included are such matters as psychosomatic illnesses.

Differences between physics and biology can also be found in the limitations which arise from such facts that there are peculiar difficulties in studying processes within living things, because they are not always easily accessible in a laboratory, and the process cannot be studied if the animal is killed in order to gain access.
Another difference can be found in the fact that some of the concepts of biology cannot be strictly defined. Arthur Standen wrote in the 1950's, and loved using witty and scornful language about what he saw as some of the peculiarities of biology. Comments made in the 1950's do not necessarily retain their applicability, but he made this comment about some of the concepts used in biology in his day.

"Continuing their slavish imitation of physics, biologists feel that they have to give neat, precise definitions of their terms. The results are ludicrous. It is extremely difficult to define "life" - fortunately it is not at all necessary. "Stimulus" and "response" are defined in terms of each other. No biologist can define a species. And as for a genus - all attempts come down to this: "A genus is a grouping of species that some recognised taxonomic specialist has called a genus" - no kidding, it really is that.

Biology is one vast mass of analogies, very different indeed from the cold logical thinking of the physicist. In the higher reaches, such as genetics, biochemistry, neurophysiology and other "ologies", biologists do some making of hypotheses and testing them against experiment, although even there they are apt to talk of "understanding in terms of...", or of "stressing this or that aspect..." In its central content, biology is not accurate thinking, but accurate observation and imaginative thinking, with great sweeping generalisations." (Standen. pages 99 - 100.)

There are many other situations where we have to infer things about the objects of study in biology by watching behaviour, or by watching other outer symptoms, instead of having direct access to what we want to observe.

Also, as has already been mentioned, biology is notorious in that there always seems to be a number of exceptions to any general rule that is made.

This must show not only that there is an enormous variety of species and details to be discovered and studied, but also that we have not yet understood the basic biological processes sufficiently well.

So, again, the methods we use, the type of results we can expect, and the sort of testing which can be done, will vary according to what it is that we are trying to study. This will also affect the degree of certainty in the knowledge which can be achieved.

In view of the limitations and conditioning factors arising from the nature of the subject matter being studied in the various areas of biology, we would expect to see that the scientific method would be used in biology in much the same way as it is used in the other disciplines where there are other substantial limiting and conditioning factors.

Therefore, it is imperative to discover exactly how far any principle is applicable, where abouts it does not apply, and why.

In this quest, a proper understanding of the method that is actually being used is very important. Illusions at this point can adversely affect all we do in a most serious way.

So, this search for basic principles is a great ongoing task which will confront the biologists for many years to come.

Perhaps the most balanced concluding comment we can make at this point is to say that biology needs to be a physico-chemical science, insofar as it seeks to understand the physico-chemical nature of living things.
BUT, it would be a MISTAKE to assume too readily, as a result of that, that this physico-chemical description is a TOTAL description of ANY living thing which has been studied by the biologist. Similarly, we must guard against the easy assumption that mechanistic materialism is in any way an adequate world-view.
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The Darwinian Paradigm.

Charles Darwin's theory of organic evolution by natural selection has created an enormous following, and an enormous amount of antagonism, over the years. We will try to describe it in as even-handed a manner as possible.

As Mayr indicates, "The theory of evolution is quite rightly called the greatest unifying theory in biology. The diversity of organisms, similarities and differences between kinds of organisms, patterns of distribution and behaviour, adaptation and interaction, all this was merely a bewildering chaos of facts until given meaning by the evolutionary theory. There is no area of biology in which that theory has not served as an ordering principle." (quoted in Curtis. page 9.)

It is because biologists use this theory as a foundation for all their work "they are able to make generalisations and connections of a sort that would otherwise be impossible. It is not necessary for them to examine every type of living organism in order to draw conclusions about structure and functions common to all living things. And, just as evolutionary theory gives meaning to the similarities among organisms, it also makes possible an understanding of the differences among them and how these differences arose." (Curtis. page 9.)

This work as "ordering principle" which the theory performs makes it the key factor in modern biology.

This is the same kind of task as that which was performed by Newton's gravitational theory, or is now performed by Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, in physics, or by the quantum theories in atomic physics.
Curtis describes the historical background of the theory of evolution, as Darwin set it out, as well as the other similar ideas which appeared around that time, both in natural history and in geology.

Back in 1801, Lamarck, in studying rocks which contained fossils, noted that the older rocks contained the simpler forms of life. This had already been noted by others. But Lamarck "interpreted this as meaning that the higher forms had risen from the simpler forms by a kind of progression. According to his hypothesis, this progression...is dependent on two main forces. The first is the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Organs in animals become stronger or weaker,

more or less important, through use or disuse, and these changes, according to Lamarck's theory, are transmitted from the parents to the progeny. His most famous example was that of the giraffe which stretched its neck longer and longer to reach the leaves on the higher trees and transmitted this longer neck to its offspring, who again, stretched their necks, and so on.

The second important factor in Lamarck's theory of evolution was a universal creative principle, an unconscious striving upward...that moved every living creature toward greater complexity. Every amoeba was on its way to man. Some might get waylaid - the orangutan, for instance, by being caught in an unfavourable environment had been diverted off its course - but the will was always present. Life in its simplest forms was constantly emerging by spontaneous generation to fill the void left at the bottom of the ladder. In Lamarck's formulation, the ladder of life of the ancients had been transformed into a steadily ascending escalator powered by a universal will.
Lamarck's contemporaries did not object to his ideas about the inheritance of acquired characteristics, as we would today with our more advanced knowledge of the mechanics of inheritance, nor did they criticise his belief in a metaphysical force, which was actually a common element in all the theories of the time. But these vague, unprovable postulates provided a very shaky foundation for so radical a proposal. Lamarck's championship of evolution was damaging not only to his own career but to the concept of evolution itself. The result of his theories was that both scientists and the public became even less prepared for an evolutionary doctrine." (Curtis. pages 4 - 5.)

The evolutionary theory came into Darwin's mind after his study of the forms of life on the Galapagos Islands.

"From his knowledge of geology. Darwin knew that these islands...were much younger than the mainland. Yet the plants and animals of the islands were different from those of the mainland, and in fact, the inhabitants of different islands in the archipelago differed from one another. Were the living things on each island the product of a separate special creation?" (page 7.)
"Not long after Darwin's return, he came across a book by the Reverend Thomas Malthus that had first appeared in 1789. In this book, Malthus warned, as economists have warned frequently since, that the human population was increasing so rapidly that it not only would soon outstrip the food supply but would leave "standing room only" on the earth. Darwin saw that this conclusion - that food supply and other factors hold populations in check - is true of all species, not just the human one. The process by which the survivors are chosen was termed by Darwin "natural selection". He saw it as a process analogous to the type of selection exercised by breeders of cattle, horses and dogs - which, as a country squire, he was familiar with. In the case of artificial selection, man chooses variants for breeding on the basis of characteristics which seem to him to be desirable. In the case of natural selection, environmental conditions are the principle active force, operating on the variations continually produced in all species to favor some variants and discourage or elimiate others.

Where do the variations come from? According to Darwin's theory, variations occur absolutely at random. They are not produced by the environment, by a "creative force", or by the unconscious striving of the organism. A variation that gives an animal even a slight advantage makes that animal more likely to leave surviving offspring. Darwin saw that variations are the real fabric of the evolutionary process. Species arise, he saw, when differences among individuals within a group are gradually converted into differences between groups, as the groups become separated in space and time.

Darwin did not believe that direct proof of his theory was possible. However...the twentieth century has produced clear evidence of evolution in progress. No scientist now doubts that species have originated in the past and are still originating, that species have become extinct in the past and are

still becoming extinct, and that all living things today have an ancestral species in the past." (page 7 - 8.)
Michael Ruse, a self-confessed mechanistic materialist, points out the method of verifying a theory which operated in Darwin's mind as he was devising the arguments involved in his theory. The system of verification had been set out by Sir John Herschel, the famous astronomer, and was supported by William Whewell in his writings on the subject, in the period around 1830-1840.

The crux of this view was that a theory could consider itself resting on solid ground, and should absolutely be taken as true, if the theory was found to explain phenomena in ways unanticipated when the theory was devised or to explain phenomena which seemed hostile to the theory when first devised.

Ruse quotes Herschel in the following way:- "The surest and best characteristic of a well-founded and extensive induction, however, is when verifications of it spring up, as it were, spontaneously, into notice, from quarters where they might be least expected, or even among instances of that very kind which were at first considered hostile to them. Evidence of this kind is irresistible, and compels assent with a weight which scarcely any other possesses." (Ruse. page 12.)

"Were one to single out from the Herschel - Whewell philosophy the two features most likely to be mainfested in any scientific theory consciously influenced by the philosophy, they would probably be: first, the hypothetical-deductive model, and secondly, the use of the one central mechanism or cause to explain phenomena in widely different areas. " (page 16.)

Both of these features appear strongly in all of Darwin's statements of his theory, even the earlier versions of it.

Ruse argues that Darwin was strongly influenced by the principles of the Herschel - Whewell scientific method, and tried to practice it in setting out his theory. Darwin used this method of reasoning in trying to show that natural selection was a natural part of the whole framework of life on earth, that a struggle to survive will exist for any species in due course, and that it is completely natural that the fittest will survive, and others will tend not to survive.

"Darwin tried to show that his conclusions, first about the struggle, and then about selection, MUST follow. And, of course, this is what deduction is all about."

But, even clearer is his attempt to use natural selection to explain phenomena in many widely different areas. "Thus, Darwin showed that natural selection solves problems of geographical distribution, of instinct, of geology, of classification, of comparative anatomy, of embryology, and so on." (page 17.)

"Both Herschel and Whewell reacted unfavourably (to Darwin's theory). Herschel spoke of the law of higgledy-piggledy, and Whewell reputedly refused to let the offensive volume into the library at Trinity. They both felt that Darwin had failed to do what any good biological theorist MUST do, pay adequate recognition to God's design in the formation of organisms. To them it was inconceivable that organic adaptation, something like the hand, had not been Designed, and to them it was inexcusable for a biologist not to have given this Design a central place in his theorizing.

Darwin thought that his mechanism of natural selection made an appeal to explicit Design unnecessary. Organic adaptation could be seen to be the result of normal, undirected laws. Against Herschel, Darwin wrote "astronomers did not state that God directs the course of each comet and planet. The view that each variation has been providentially arranged seems to me to make Natural Selection entirely superfluous, and indeed takes the whole case of the appearance of new species

out of the range of science."
Herschel and Whewell had presented to the world a philosophy of science inspired chiefly by Newtonian physics, particularly Newtonian astronomy. Their greatest pupil had learnt his lesson well; so well in fact that when the time came, Darwin, as pupils are wont to do, turned their teaching back against them. Darwin's was a theory modelled, through the medium of Herschel and Whewell, on Newtonian astronomy. Why then should his theory be expected to do that which astronomy does not do?"
(Ruse. pages 30-31.)

Most of our story here has been involved with Darwin himself, and with early forms of his theory. Many developments, refinements and changes have occurred in the intervening period, and there is no room here to take a proper notice of them all.

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Problems with the Darwinian Paradigm.

Thomas Kuhn and the others have shown us that paradigm theories will probably have a whole range of unsolved problems attached to them.

Newton's mechanics answered an enormous range of questions, but, there were enough unsolved problems to cause Einstein to think of a refinement of Newton's views, in the form of his theories of relativity, which not only provided an even better explanation of those things which Newton had explained well, but also provided good explanations for those factors which Newton failed to cover properly.

Many of the problems facing a paradigm theory will be solved by it, in due course. The paradigm will eventually supply less satisfactory answers to many other problems. Some other problems will resist all efforts to be answered, in terms of the existing paradigm, and this is what will trigger the search for another paradigm theory to replace the older one.

Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection is such a paradigm theory, and it certainly has its share of unsolved problems.

It is not my purpose here to introduce all the problems, or even to explain some of them in any detail. I propose simply to mention quickly some of the issues which seem to me to be major problems facing the theory of evolution, at present.

(a.) Natural Selection does not, in fact, tell us anything about HOW a new species develops. Random variations influenced by environmental factors may be among the circumstances when a new species develops, but it does not give us any information about how the development happens.
The description of the mechanism whereby a new species develops needs to show how a random variation in a species can become an entirely new species which cannot be crossed any longer with the ancestral species. So far as I am aware, there is no known genetic method whereby an ape species (for example) can produce homo sapiens. There may be vague guesses about how it might happen (radiation from a supernova, etc.), but no evidence exists which can show how it could happen.

(b.) Even if a method could be described which could succeed in turning the genetic material in an ape species into homo sapiens, there is still the "historical" problem of being able to show that this

is actually what produced homo sapiens, all those years ago.

(c.) I believe that the fossil records do not support the idea that there was a slow and gradual change through a progression of species, with a great many variations which did not succeed.

I believe that the fossil record show that there were bursts of activity, with numbers of new species appearing quickly, and without the gradual steps implied by Darwin.

Furthermore, the fossil records present a picture which is far more complex, and with much more overlapping of aspects which evolution requires to be following in sequence, for evolution to be an adequate or accurate story of what happened.

This leads to the point that Natural Selection does not actually happen as described by Darwin.

(d.) Random variations seems to imply the existence of many "missing links" at each stage of the evolutionary process. But these missing links are missing. They did not exist in the form required by the theory.

(e.) The "creationists", or proponents of the so-called "creation science", have made many sustained attacks upon the theory of evolution, raising many criticisms of it.

Whatever the motives of these people may have been, the best part of their work has been their attack upon evolution. Their criticisms of it need to be taken much more seriously by biologists, and others. However, I believe that these "creationists" have so far not been very successful at all in establishing their alternate paradigm theory about creation, especially where it involves a much younger age for the universe.

(f.) My main criticism of evolution may seem weak to many people. It is that the theory is too narrow. I believe that a much more inter-disciplinary theory should be developed, which can include many more insights from different sources than is possible while the theory is more purely biological.

Perhaps this is what Herschel and Whewell wanted.
An inter-disciplinary theory, of course, would not be scientific theory in the stricter sense, but it is more likely to be truthful, when one considers the inter-disciplinary nature of the reality that we are trying to describe.

Consequently, it may not please those who want to reduce everything to physics and chemistry.

Darwin complained (as quoted by Ruse) that to include Providence in any theory which describes how new species occur would make natural selection superfluous, and remove the theory and the subject from the range of scientific enquiry.

This type of reasoning is too "black and white", too "either/or". There are no reasons at all why a person could not combine belief in Providence with belief in an evolutionary theory. Many people have already done so.

Darwin did not want to accept creation because he thought it was not scientific.

There are two factors hidden here. The first is, as Clark and Bales have shown, that Darwin and many other scientists of last century accepted evolution because they did not want to believe in the supernatural. They had accepted a world-view which committed them against supernaturalism. So,

they had to find another way of explaining things.

The second factor here is that there is a confusion of categories in trying to find religious answers to scientific questions, and vice versa.

Once it is decided that the question about the development of life on earth is a scientific question only, and in no way a religious question, then it is only reasonable to do what Darwin did, and provide a purely scientific answer to the question. Many scientists today still assume that it is solely a biological question, and so requires only a biological answer.

Herschel and Whewell thought that the question of the development of life on earth was BOTH a religious AND a scientific question, and therefore they wanted to provide an answer to it which had both religious and scientific aspects.

So, the real question to be faced about understanding the development of life on earth is, whether one wishes to have solely a biological theory which operates within one scientific discipline, and using the verification proceedures within that discipline, in trying to establish our explanation of what happened, OR whether we will accept insights from several disciplines in answering the question.

Reality is clearly inter-disciplinary. Large subjects, such as cosmology, and the origin and development of life on earth, are questions which are larger than what can be adequately covered by one discipline, and, as a result, inter-disciplinary theories ought to be acceptable in dealing with them.

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Astronomy and Evolution.

Most astronomers believe in evolution, at least so far as the history of the universe is concerned. Indeed, evolution is pervasive in astronomy.

But, in astronomy, there is a vast difference between the kind of evolution that is involved in:-

(a.) the life-history of a star; the idea that an atomic unit may appear in one form in one generation of stars, and in another form in the next generation of stars; the idea that a galaxy has a life history which involves the formation and deaths of generations of stars, the idea that there can be generations of galaxies, etc., and
(b.) the idea that the entire universe can be explained fully in its entire existence and history in terms of physics, and that there is nothing else to be said about it.

The first option offers a scientific account of the history of the universe, without reference to any possible theological contribution to the topic. It does not necessarilty deny that theology may have something to say. The scientific element of the explanation may be partly or wholely true, depending upon what evidence can be produced to support it.

The second option, of course, denies any truth or reality to religious insights of the christian kind, and probably denies religious insights of any kind at all. It must be seen as being reductionist in character, in the philosophical sense of that word, and therefore supremely questionable.

Geology and Evolution.

Similarly, in geology, there is a world of difference between saying that:-

(a.) the earth and the solar system had a beginning as part of the milky way, and they have a life history, which involves a great many natural processes, and they will one day come to an end; and

(b.) the earth, in its entire existence, history and purpose, and the study of life on the earth, can be understood only, and totally, in terms of natural processes, and there is nothing else to be said about it.

Biology and Evolution.

Again, there is a great difference between saying that :-

(a.) individual plants and animals have a life history, as also do entire species. These species can adapt themselves, perhaps, to their environment (although some of them become extinct). Perhaps we will one day discover a way in which one species can change into another. (although it will still be an entirely different question to show that this method of change is actually what accounts for all the existing species.), and

(b.) the entire existence, history and purpose of all life on earth can be understood only, and totally, in terms of physical and psychological processes, and there is nothing else to be said about it.

The physical disciplines cannot say, as Standen points out, "whether God gave things a sort of evolutionary shove every now and then (or perhaps all the time), or whether He just wound things up in the beginning and let them rip. God is involved in either case, unless you can believe that things wound themselves up." (page 102.)
The physical disciplines have no comment that they can make on issues like that. It is out of their court.

They are similarly unable to tell us anything about values or ethical principles, or about the nature of beauty. We may see many examples of beauty in many parts of creation, but the physical sciences cannot tell us what beauty is, where it came from, or how it is to be judged.

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Conclusion.

Our discussion has shown that the scientific method is practiced in biology, but that there are qualifying factors in each of the disciplines which will modify how the method is used, to what effect it can be used, and what degree of certainty we are able to achieve in these disciplines, at present.

But, there is one basic method of gaining knowledge underlying all of these disciplines.

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Chapter 6 - The Philosophy of Sociology

Sociology is concerned with the organisation of societies, and the study of the units of which societies are composed.

It contrasts with other social sciences, such as economics and political science because sociology is concerned with a wide range of social institutions rather than with a single one.

It contrasts with psychology because it is concerned with the features of social units, rather than with the individuals involved in those social units.

And it contrasts with anthropology in that it is concerned with complex societies, or components thereof, instead of societies which are smaller and relatively self-contained, such as tribes.

Naturally, however, these disciplines have much in common, and share many concepts and methods.

In What Way is Sociology a Science?

Books on sociological theory are often not directly helpful in telling us how a sociologist goes about doing his science.

Certainly, the book will give us a long list of all the "theories" and other guesses that sociologists have used in trying to analyse and understand society.

And, it will also tell us some of the studies that these sociologists have made in order to get their information, gain their insights, and test their opinions.

The book of sociological theory may also, if we are lucky, tell us something about the world-views of the people who developed the main sociological theories. In this way it is sometimes possible to gain an insight into why they thought as they did, and why their views had the particular peculiarities that they had.
We will concern ourselves here with asking how a sociologist actually does his work, and with seeking to evaluate this work.
As before, this is not necessarily the same as taking notice of what any sociologists SAYS that he is doing. The two things must not be confused.

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In the early years of sociology, the sociologist thought that he should try to work in the same way as he thought a physicist worked. In this way he could try to achieve results of similar worth to that which the physicist achieved.

During the 1950's, several books arose to challenge this effort.

One of these was "The Idea of a Social Science - and its Relation to Philosophy." It was written by Peter Winch.

Winch's book seeks to show that the materials studied by a sociologist are really not suitable to be studied in the way that a sociologist tries to do, and that the materials are handled better if they are

treated like a historian would treat them.

The typical proceedure used by a sociologist is, first to collect basic data about some aspect of society, and from this data to develop some generalisation or theory which is meant to show that certain links exist between one social situation and another.

These generalisations and theories are then meant to be used to help us understand other situations which we will come across in our future studies or experiences.

Winch tries to show that violence has to be done to the data in order to make these generalisations and theories apply to more situations than the one from which they were first devised.

History, however, does not try to make these grand theories and generalisations. It treats all situations as unique, although it may also see some similarities in them.

According to Winch, what makes each social situation unique is the people who are involved in them, and, in particular, the thought processes which people use and which are essential parts of those social situations. If these personal thought processes are not taken into account, no social situation can be understood in any profound way. When one considers social situations in this light, no two situations can ever be the same, although there may be some similarities.

Also, no sociologist can have any profound understand of any of these social situations unless he or she uses historical methods of enquiry, and historical standards of reasoning, certainty and verification, to set up the basic data, and the theory.
This means that the type of reasoning used in physics is not suitable for use in these areas of enquiry.

While we will not be considering historical method until a later chapter, we present here some of what Winch said about Collingwood's philosophy of history, to get a little more of an insight into his train of reasoning. The context of this quotation refers to the essential dependence of social situations for their meaning upon the thoughts and ideas of those who were part of the situation.

"This view of the matter may make possible a new appreciation of Collingwood's conception of all human history as the history of thought. That is no doubt an exaggeration and the notion that the task of the historian is to re-think the thoughts of the historical participants is to some extent an intellectualistic distortion. But Collingwood is right if he is taken to mean that the way to understand events in human history ... is more closely analogous to the way in which we understand expressions of ideas than it is to the way we understand physical processes.

There is a certain respect, indeed, in which Collingwood pays insufficient attention to the manner in which a way of thinking and the historical situation to which it belongs form one indivisible whole. He says that the aim of the historian is to think the very same thoughts that were once thought, just as they were thought at the historical moment in question. (6: Part V.) But though extinct ways of thinking may, in a sense, be recaptured by the historian, the way in which the historian thinks them will be coloured by the fact that he has had to employ historiographical methods to recapture them. The medieval knight did not have to use those methods in order to view his lady in terms of the notion of courtly love: he just thought of her in those terms. Historical research may enable me to achieve some understanding of what was involved in this way of thinking, but that will not make it open to me to think of MY lady in those terms. I should always be conscious that this was an anachronism, which means, of course, that I should not be thinking of her in just the same terms as the knight did of his lady. And naturally, it is even more impossible for me to think of HIS lady as he did.

Nevertheless, Collingwood's view is nearer the truth than is that most favoured in empiricist methodologies of the social sciences." (pages 131 - 132.)

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Another point which is raised by Winch, and which is a natural result of the important place held by people's thoughts and ideas in any social situation, is (a.) the role played by the world-views of the persons involved in the social situation being studied by the sociologist, and (b.) the way the sociologist's own world-view will colour his entire work.

World-views and Conceptual Frameworks.

If we are to set out our understanding about the general qualities of society, then we will find that the question of the world-view of the sociologist becomes of crucial importance.

David Lyon is quite explicit on this point, in his book "Sociology and the Human Image." This book, like his others, is written from a Christian viewpoint.

"The synthesis of classical sociology achieved above all in Parsons' grand theory came to be known in the later twentieth century as the "orthodox concensus". It was positivist and functionalist in orientation, generally having an image of humans as relatively passive cogs in a machine. There was a gaping rift between empirical studies and social theory. Since the 1960's, however, the orthodox concensus has been broken up, the fragments forming the numerous "schools" and "perspectives" which confront the bewildered sociology student today.

Divergences of opinion in sociology are rooted simultaneously in problems thrown up by the real world and in ideological and metaphysical commitments." (page 79.)

In other words, at this stage, no new concensus has replaced Talcott Parsons" grand theory, No other general view of society has become widely accepted amongst sociologists, as an adequate explanation of things.

And the reasons for this are (a.) that sociological theory is not coping with the complexities of the subject matter to be analysed (namely, human society.). And, (b.) the world-views of the various theorists have led them in such directions as further to complicate matters. There is no single world-view which is both widely accepted amongst sociologists, and which is also adequate to produce a theory which can command a concensus.

Lyon's concluding comments on this issue are as follows.

"First, remember that all perspectives have some world-view presuppositions. They are not neutral. Max Weber recognised that different perspectives could be traced back to competing "gods and demons". Subsequent social theorists have tried, unsuccessfully, to find a fixed vantage-point for assessing the worth of all perspectives and theories. For instance, Marxists think that the "proletarian perspective" is ultimate, whereas Habermas believes we can judge from the Archimedian point of an "ideal speech situation", where there is harmonious communication between persons. My proposal, once again, is different. Rather than resorting to merely political or utopian criteria, a Christian view of humanness is available, offering a framework by which

different perspectives may be evaluated - and sometimes critically utilized.

Two, do not prejudge the perspective. I doubt the wisdom of rejecting any sociological perspective out of hand. Despite their often being traceable to secular roots, they may contain undeniable insights on the social world compatible with (and maybe illuminating for) Christian commitment... Genuine perceptions can come from very unsuspected quarters!

Third... Remember that the aim is not mere social speculation, but to find coherent explanations of social phenomena, using concepts and theories. This "principled pragmatism" must do justice to both a Christian social perspective and to empirical data." (page 101 - 102.)

Another aspect of this problem facing sociology lies in the more complicated nature of its subject matter.

The "facts" with which sociology deals are not "simple facts", like counting the number of marbles in a bag. The "facts" of sociology are theoretical constructs which demand the basis of a world-view for the "facts" to have enough meaning.

So, any sociologist has to have a world-view already in place before he can do any sociology. Entire theories of human nature, and of the nature and purpose of human society, are involved. If the sociologist does not ALREADY HAVE ideas on these matters, before he starts his sociology, he cannot do any work on the general features of society which would be seen as significant.

Every major social theorist has his own world-view. The characteristics of this world-view will basically determine his attitude to the whole range of issues in sociology, to the way that he pursues his work, and the results that he gets.

In proper science, any person is supposed to be able to carry out an experiment and reach the same result as anybody else, providing the experiment has been done properly.

In sociology, it is only possible to get agreement if the two researchers agree, first of all, about what world-view they believe in. Then agreement about interpretation of details becomes possible.

Or, the two world-views of the two researchers have to be sufficiently similar to create a basis of agreement.

So, any degree of agreement amongst researchers in understanding society depends very largely upon whatever degree of agreement regarding world-view that the researchers are able to achieve.

Clarity and Definiteness.

Another factor which complicates the use of scientific method in sociology, and which is linked to the fact which has been mentioned above - that the "facts" with which a sociologist deals are not simple facts, but are complicated conceptual constructs - deals with questions of clarity and definiteness of concepts.

Physics and chemistry begin by dealing with definite and simple things which can mostly be defined with exactness, and can be handled with mathematical precision in many situations.

Sociology begins with complicated concepts, which cannot be defined with exactness, and which cannot be used precisely.

For example, physics and chemistry begin with elements like hydrogen, mercury and sulphur, and with compounds like water and sulphuric acid. These can all be defined exactly, and measured exactly.

Sociology begins with things like persons, social units, anxiety, depression and paranoid schizophrenia. Few or none of these can be defined exactly, so that borderline cases can be handled with confidence. Nor is there enough widespread agreement amongst the experts as to what these concepts mean.

Physics and chemistry have tables of information which are similarly exact, such as tables of the atomic weights of elements, arithmetical multiplication tables, and tables which predict to the second when the sun will rise and set for the next one hundred years.

Sociology has train and bus timetables, which might be correct to within a few minutes, but often are not, and nobody knows when they will or will not be accurate.

So, it is not hard to see that a method which depends upon clarity, definiteness and exactness is not going to succeed very well in an area of research where this clarity and exactness does not exist.

Small-scale Studies.

The most helpful work that sociologists are able to do, and which will be least vitiated by any peculiar world-view that the researcher may believe in, is to be seen in studies and surveys which a sociologist might make within certain specifically limited parameters, and applicable to a certain small and specified group or class of people.

Many useful insights can be gathered in studies of this kind, provided the limits of the study are carefully noted. Even in such very limited studies, however, sociology will still need to use concepts which are vague, and affected by the world-view of the user, like those mentioned above. As a result, the lines of reasonings which the sociologist will be able to produce will be rubbery, and will lead to conclusions which are even more vague. These conclusions will also have many exceptions to them.

But, once we begin to look for principles which are of a more general nature, or we begin to make claims about broader issues, the problems and limitations of this kind of work will begin to multiply rapidly.

Other Limitations.

A number of other peculiarities of sociology, and of psychology, are described in detail in a surprisingly frank "confession of sin" by Harvard sociologist Pitirim A. Sorokin in his "Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology and Related Sciences."

Many of the matters which he discusses relate to the misguided or wrong use of methods in research.

My reader is referred to this book for many details on these matters.

To these factors could be added the fact that surveys and questionaires often test nothing at all, or test something else other than what the researcher was trying to understand.

The limitations which are immediately relevant to the purposes of this present book are, however, the kind of things which we have discussed so far, related more directly to the theory of human knowledge.

Conclusion.

From all this it must not be concluded that sociology is a waste of time, or a mistaken enterprise. It is a subject which is potentially of great value. But, this potential is often not realised or achieved, because of common failures by sociologists to practice a scientific method which is best suited to the subject material with which they are dealing.

Much greater care needs to be taken in the way that sociology is done if mankind is to gain the benefit from this science which we need to gain from it.

Sociologists gather information about aspects of society from various sources, and in various ways. The quality and truthfulness of the information may vary greatly. On this basis, they attempt to create a deeper understanding of aspects of society, in the form of insights, models, theories, principles, etc. These insights may be based upon the research performed, and may not be able to be verified easily, or with much strength.
Often, despite the existence of many exceptions, insights can be more or less widely accepted, partly because they fit well into a general view of society that the researcher has been promoting, and which is shared by many others.

Thus, in many instances, it is really the acceptance of the wider context, or world-view, which helps to make the more detailed insights accepted also.

The detailed insights depend upon evidence which has been chosen from a range of available information, and used to support a view of things, much as an historian chooses what information he thinks to be relevant as the basis for what he says about his subject. Thus, the sociologist's conclusions bear the stamp of a world-view which has been largely chosen beforehand, and for other reasons.

Again, we see examples of the free play of concepts in an attempt to create a wider and clearer understanding of reality around us, or to promote details of a wider understanding which has been previously chosen by the researcher, or both of these.

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Chapter 7 - The Philosophy of History

A study of the recent philosophy of history is important in its own right, as a part of the acedemic discipline of historical studies.

It is also of basic importance in a book like this because it provides us with key insights into the nature of human knowledge as a whole.

The philosophy of history is like the philosophy of the physical sciences in that it has reached a certain maturity of self-understanding in recent years, which has not been achieved in some of the other disciplines.

Historians have come to an understanding of what is actually taking place when an historian does his work, as opposed to trying to state what the historian ought to be doing, according to some theory which is driven by ulterior motives.

I believe that historical thinking provides us with a very clear example of how human knowledge is obtained and grows. I believe it gives a clear picture of the practice of this epistemological theory that we have been considering in this book.

What is History?

An historian has certain items of evidence at his disposal about persons, thoughts, happenings in the past. He has to choose a certain part of the past to study. Then, he has to choose which parts of all the available items of evidence are relevant to his quest. He has to evaluate the evidence, and try to form some opinions about what happened, and why. He has also to realise what other possible accounts and explanations of the past might exist, and what reasons, for and against, can be drawn with respect to each of these other possible explanations.

An historian has to try to conjure in his mind the world-view, personality and situation of the person or persons about whom he is studying. He has also to know the world-view, personality and intentions, etc., of the person who is providing the information that the historian is using. The historian must try to be aware of his own presuppositions, assumptions and outlook that he brings to his research, as well as those of other historians who have written on the same subject before him.

An historian has to try to realise what limitations and restrictions are placed upon him because he does not have all the evidence about his chosen subject that he would like to have. Many details were never recorded, and are lost for ever. Other details have been so mis-represented by those who recorded them as to be almost worthless. Other evidences might exist somewhere, but he does not have access to them.

So, history, of all subjects, provides the classic instance where the human mind has to create concepts, or has to use and modify already existing concepts, in order to understand its subject of enquiry as best it can.
Modern philosophy of history, especially since the time of Collingwood, has consisted largely of explicit attempts to be aware of the processes of mind which are involved by the historian in seeking to achieve his goal.

These "processes of mind" are precisely the features of the theory of human knowledge that we have been seeking to outline in this book, and which have been reflected in various ways with

respect to the other disciplines that we have already mentioned.

Robin G. Collingwood.

Perhaps the classic book to be written this century regarding the philosophy of history is R. G. Collingwood's "The Idea of History.", which was produced from his post-humous papers at the end of the second world war. Collingwood was a professor at Oxford who died at the age of 52.

Two-thirds of the book is spent outlining the views of history expressed or implied by many writers since antiquity. These climax with the European philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey and Benedetto Croce, and English idealist writers like F. H. Bradley, to whom Collingwood was in many ways akin.

He pays very little attention to Lord Acton, who might have deserved special mention, but who was less in line with the thoughts Collingwood was following.

The final one-third of the book expounds Collingwood's own ideas. He was a child of the English idealist philosophers of the late nineteenth century.

E. H. Carr summarises Collingwood's views in the following way:-

"The philosophy of history is concerned neither with 'the past in itself', nor with the historian's thought about it by itself., but with the two things in their mutual relations. (This dictum reflects the two current meanings of the word 'history'- the enquiry conducted by the historian, and the series of past events into which he enquires.) "The past which a historian studies is not a dead past, but a past which in some sense is still living in the present." But a past act is dead - i.e. meaningless to the historian - unless he can understand the thought that lay behind it.

Hence, "all history is the history of thought", and "history is the re-enactment in the historian's mind of the thought whose history he is studying." The reconstitution of the past in the historian's mind is dependent on empirical evidence. But it is not in itself an empirical process, and cannot consist in a mere recital of facts. On the contrary, the process of reconstitution governs the selection and interpretation of the facts; this, indeed, is what makes them historical facts."

"History is the historian's experience. It is 'made' by nobody but the historian: to write history is the only way of making it." (Oakeshott.) (E. H. Carr. p21-22.)

Carr picks out three important lessons from this analysis.

1. This emphasises to us that the so-called "facts" of the past always come to us refracted through the mind of (a.) the historian, (b.)those upon whom the historian depended, and finally, (c.) ourselves, as we read and try to understand what the historian has written.

But, as we have seen from Einstein, ALL thought is like this. The same basic process is involved, no matter what subject we are thinking about. Every concept is original in the mind of the person who creates it. Some, like Einstein, are original in an additional way, of inventing something like the theory of relativity. So, we are all original thinkers, except that some are more original than others. All of our concepts are our own, even if we try to think like somebody else.

2. The historian has need of imaginative understanding in order to enter into the minds and outlooks, as much as he can, of the people with whom he is dealing.

Physicists, astronomers and geologists need to have this same imaginative understanding in order to have the insight needed to model and understand reality, and to judge their own previous work.

Historians and psychologists need this imaginative understanding to study people, and the events which people cause.

The same imaginative understanding is needed in appreciating a work of art, or trying to recognise beauty.

This same imagination is used by all of us, all of the time, in all of our thinking - except that some of us are more apt at using it in a way that corresponds to the reality that we are thinking about.

When we form an opinion about somebody or something, and lack the insight and imagination to revise our opinions when we are confronted by evidence that would lead us to another conclusion, we are failing to make the best use of the situation.

3. The historian is a child of his own age, and brings his own presuppositions, world-view, commitments, etc., to his study of the past. So, he will look at the past through the eyes of the present.

Being aware of this helps our understanding both of ourselves, and of the past. And it can save us from making unjust and dogmatic judgments about others whom we have failed to understand properly.

The best historians will gain a more incisive understanding of the past, and will be able to help us gain a better understanding of how it felt to live in a bygone age, with a different outlook on life.

This does not mean that we are not entitled to think that somebody in the past made a mistake, or committed a sin. But, if we think that, it will be our own opinion, and not the voice of God.

Collingwood's view of history was described in terms of the old English idealist philosophy, and referred to ideas only.

It is necessary for us to make a wider context than this, and not to speak only of the ideas which occurred in the past, but any other part of the past which may seem to us to be relevant to our quest to understand what happened, and about which we have evidence which can be cross-examined.

Herbert Butterfield.

Lord Butterfield approached these philosophical questions about historical thinking from a slightly different angle.

Many of his best writings are based on studies of the history of historical scholarship, called by the experts "the history of historiography."
His early work explored the so-called "whig interpretation" of English history. His more mature work in this area is found in a book called "George III and the Historians." A discussion of the

historian and his evidence is given, as it bears upon this aspect of English history, along with an extensive application.

More directly applicable is his book, "Man on His Past." This book deals with the way that historians have done their work, and deals especially with Ranke and Lord Acton. Amongst the examples that he used to illustrate the complexities of how historians struggle to discover what really happened are two major examples.

The first concerns the start of the Seven Year War. The second example concerns whether or not the massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day was pre-meditated or not. Here we see a mass of misleading and questionable clues being used in detective work, trying to solve these questions. One conclusion that came to light was the willingnes of Catherine de Medici to tell lies under almost any circumstances.

"In depth" studies of this kind reveal very interesting insights into the inner workings of how human knowledge is gained.

Many other interesting insights are scattered through his other writings, such as "History and Human Relations" and "Christianity and History."

Historical research is like detective work in which every factor which might be considered as evidence relating to the topic under discussion can be examined, analysed and cross-examined. As Collingwood emphasised, it is necessary to try to get behind the documentary evidences into the minds and motives of the people who gave us the documents.

Successive historians who have worked with the subject-matter before us must be cross-examined in the same way. As Acton said, we must get behind the historians if we want to get the wisest idea of what happened. We must not only study what they said, but why they said it. We must know as much as we can about their life-style, world-view and context.

Many aspects of this we may not be able to discover. But we can prepare for this shortfall a little by trying to be aware of how little we know - how much we do not know about the subject, and what possible reasons may have caused this.

Then, the conclusions we reach will be the best we can achieve. But our knowledge will still be partial, subject to revision, and to some degree reflecting our own day and age.

Edward H. Carr.

One of the best-known books on the philosophy of history is the one by E. H. Carr, already quoted, "What is History.?"
His book seeks to show that historical "facts" are those facts from among the facts in the past which have been chosen by the historian as the significant and meaningful ones, in the light of the particular slant or approach to the past that the historian has adopted.
Historical facts are those which historians have selected for scrutiny. Millions have crossed the Rubicon, but the historians tell us that only Caesar's crossing was significant. All historical facts come to us as a result of interpretative choices by historians influenced by the standards of his own age.

The past can be likened to a vast mountain range which can be viewed from many angles and in many different lights.

Carr's outline of Collingwood's view was given above, but he had two criticisms of these views.

Firstly, "The emphasis on the role of the historian in the making of history, if pressed to its logical conclusion, rules out any objective history at all; history is what the historian makes. Collingwood seems indeed, at one moment, in an unpublished note quoted by his editor, to have reached this conclusion.

Saint Augustine looked at history from the point of view of an early christian; Tillamont, from that of a seventeenth century Frenchman; Gibbon, from that of an eighteenth century Englishman; Mommsen, from that of a nineteenth century German. There is no point in asking which was the right point of view. Each was the only one possible for the man who adopted it.

This amounts to total scepticism, like Froude's remark that history is a child's box of letters with which we can spell any word we please." (p. 26.)

"But a still greater danger lurks in the Collingwood hypothesis. If the historian necessarily looks at his period of history through the eyes of his own time, and studies the problems of the past as a key to those of the present, will he not fall into a purely pragmatic view of the facts, and maintain that the criterion of a right interpretation is its suitability to some present purpose." (p. 27.)

According to this view, it does not really matter what actually happened in the past, so long as we tell a story which does us some good in the present.

The first chapter in Carr's book is about the historian and his facts.
(a.) It assumes that there are, or were, real events in the past.

(b.) Some evidences of these events have survived.
With ancient history and medievel history only a small range of evidences have survived, and we must be careful in noting where abouts these sources come from, and what particular interests the authors had. So, the information is both limited and loaded. Despite the limited nature of information available, the historian still, necessarily, imposes his own interests upon the way he writes the history.

The amount of information that has been lost is enormous, so, after stating fully what is known about things ancient and medieval, the historian is still enormously ignorant.

With modern history, there is a great deal of raw information, and the historian has to select his data. This selection is governed by what the historian thinks is relevant to his project.

So, not only is the information in itself loaded, but the historian is also loaded in his choice of data, and of his understanding of it.
Carr says that an historian is like a fisherman. His facts are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean. What the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in, and what kind of tackle he uses - these two factors being determined, of course, by what kind of fish he is trying to catch.

He concludes the chapter by saying "The historian starts with a provisional selection of facts, and a provisional interpretation in the light of which that selection has been made - by others as well as by himself. As he works, both the interpretation and the selection and ordering of facts undergo subtle and perhaps partly unconscious changes, through the reciprocal action of one or the other. And the reciprocal action also involves reciprocity between present and past, since the historian is part of the present and the facts belong to the past. The historian and the facts of history are necessary to one

another. The historian without his facts is useless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless. My first answer therefore to the question "What is History?" is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, and unending dialogue between the present and the past." (p. 29-30).

It is not my purpose here to make a full summary of Carr's little book, or to try to deal with all the issues that he raises. But we will look at several other points that he mentions in our effort to get some ideas about the nature of history, and how it is both the same as, and different from, the other disciplnes we have been considering.

His second chapter deals with "The Society and the Individual", and he begins by asking the "chicken and egg" question, which came first, society or the individual?
"As soon as we are born, the world gets to work on us and transforms us from merely biological into social units. Every human being at every stage of history or pre-history is born into a society and from his earliest years is moulded by that society." (page 31.)

However, the individual can also influence the course of history in his society. Some have played an outstanding role. Much history is written from this viewpoint.

One of the possible fallacies in the writing of history is for the historian to try to take a detached viewpoint on proceedings, and to imagine that he is not part of the process that is being studied.

"The historian, then, is an individual human being. Like other individuals, he is also a social phenomenon, both the product and the conscious or unconscious spokesman of the society to which he belongs; it is in this capacity that he approaches the facts of the past. We sometimes speak of the course of history as a "moving procession". The metaphor is fair enough, provided it does not tempt the historian to think of himself as an eagle surveying the scene from a lonely crag or as a V.I.P. at the saluting base. Nothing of the kind! The historian is just another dim figure trudging alone in another part of the procession. And as the procession winds along, swerving now to the right and now to the left, and sometimes doubling back on itself, the relative positions of different parts of the procession are constantly changing, so that it may be perfectly good sense to say, for example, that we are nearer today to the Middle Ages than were our great-grandfathers a century ago, or that the age of Caesar is nearer to us than the age of Dante. New vistas, new angles of vision, constantly appear as the procession - and the historian with it - moves along. The historian is part of history. The point in the procession at which he finds himself determines his angle of vision over the past." (page 35 - 36.)

The other comment from Carr that we will quote is a reference that he makes to the "circular" method of reasoning in the sciences that has been referred to already a number of times.

He makes this quotation from Cohen and Nagel's "Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method" "We obtain evidence for principles by appealing to empirical material, to what is alleged to be 'fact'; and we select, analyse, and interpret empirical material on the basis of principles." (page 596.)

Then Car says, "The word 'reciprocal' would perhaps have been preferable to 'circular'; for the result is not to return to the same place, but to move forward to fresh discoveries through this process of interaction between principles and facts, between theory and practice. All thinking requires acceptance of certain presuppositions based on observation, which make scientific thinking possible but are subject to revision in the light of that thinking. These hypotheses may well be valid in some contexts or for some purposes, though they may turn out to be invalid in others. The test in all cases is the empiritcal one whether they are in fact effective in promoting fresh insights and adding to our knowledge.

The status of the hypotheses used by the historian in the process of his inquiry seems remarkably similar to that of the hypotheses used by the scientist. Take, for example, Max Weber's famous diagnosis of a relation between Protestantism and capitalism. Nobody today would call this a law, though it might have benn hailed as such in an earlier period. It is a hypothesis which, though modified to some extent in the course of the enquiries which it inspired, has beyond doubt enlarged our understanding of both these movements. Or take a statement like that of Marx: "The hand-mill gives us a society with a feudal lord; the steam-mill gives us a society with an industrial capitalist." This is not in modern terminology a law, though Marx would probably have claimed it as such, but a fruitful hypothesis pointing the way to further inquiry and fresh understanding. Such hypotheses are indispensible tools of thought." (page 59 - 60.)

Conclusion.

The recent philosophy of history, like Einstein's epistemological credo, has served to show us how we all think, in fact. We make use of a continual free play of concepts which we ourselves create and modify.

If we are trying to be truthful and careful in our thinking, our concepts will be modified in response to experience.

As Carr pointed out, there is a "circular", or "reciprocal" action taking place as we use our assumptions and world-views in order to provide a wider context within which we can understand our experiences, but we, in turn, must try to use our experiences to refine our assumptions and world views. Hopefully, this will provide growth in knowledge and understanding, in a kind of "spiral" pattern, more than in a circle.

He will also take what note we can of the rules of logic, without allowing logic to distort conclusions which may be based upon insufficient evidence.

We will try to allow for alternate possible explanations for situations, and for the relative strengths and weaknesses that these may possess.

We must try to be aware of the provisional nature of our concepts, and of all parts of our knowledge. Some parts of it are naturally able to be relied upon more than others.
If we are more consciously aware of what we are doing; of the many mistakes that we can make; and of the factors which contribute to the partial and provisional nature of our knowledge, we may be able to be wiser at reaching better quality conclusions in the various subjects about which we are seeking to know something.

These characteristics underlie our insights in all of the disciplines, and all of life.

A Synthesis?

R. G. Collingwood wanted to achieve a synthesis of all human knowledge by reducing everything to history. (See his early work "Speculum Mentis.") While I do not want to reduce all the disciplines of human knowledge to history like this, I do believe that the philosophy of history provides key and fundamental insights into the nature of human knowledge generally, and that it is

of central importance for that reason.

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Chapter 8 - The Philosophy of Economics

For many years I could not find anything in published literature which explained to me how an economist did his work. I wanted an epistemological statement about how things happened in the mind of an economist, so that I could compare it with what happened in physics, or in religious experience.

The only book I had, for a long time, was Joan Robinson's little book, "Economic Philosophy", which was very interesting in a lot of ways, but did not really provide me with what I wanted.

About two years ago, as I was writing some correspondence course materials on "Christian World-view Philosophy", I came across the macropaedia article on economics in the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

A part of this article speaks of "economics as a science." Here is the summary of this section of the article which I made at that time.

"This section explains that economists speak of "positive economics" and "normative economics".

Positive economics seeks to establish facts about a situation. (e.g. Will a subsidy to butter producers reduce the price of butter?) Positive economics in principle does not involve any judgments of value about the things being studied. It does not try to decide whether the thing is good or bad.

On the other hand, normative economics is not concerned with matters of fact, but with questions of policy. (e.g. Will a certain course of action be good or bad?)

The article does not seek to deny that most of the interesting propositions involve the addition of definite value judgments to a body of established facts. Ideological bias will creep into the selection of the questions that economists will choose to investigate, therefore. Most economic advice which flows from this will be loaded with concealed value judgments, which will serve to make others choose the view of the world, and the ways that the economist has already adopted.

So, economists are only human, and their "science" is a human science.

The article describes the method of reasoning used by economists.

Economists typically begin by describing the area under study according to what they feel to be important. Then they construct a "model" of the real world, deliberately suppressing some of its features and emphasising others. They then manipulate this model, and try to impose order upon an apparently disorderly world. Having evolved an admittedly unrealistic representation of the real world, they use a process of reasoning which the article calls "logical deduction" in order to arrive at some prediction or implication which is of general significance. At this point, they return to the real world to see if the prediction is borne out by observed events.

However, the economist cannot generally conduct experiments, and the observed facts do not serve to eliminate all possible ways of explaining what is happening, so that the economist CANNOT provide an explanation which has eliminated all other possible ways of accounting for things.

So, the economist's conclusions must inevitably be surrounded by many doubts, and he must express himself in statements which have only "a certain degree of probability."

While normative economics will display the economist's personal assumptions, and views of the world, to some degree, he must try to keep his personal preferences out of positive economics.

But, even in positive economics, he still has to make judgments of various kinds in his reasoning processes.

There is meant to be a greater degree of objectivity in positive economics, and the economist's success as a positive economist will depend to some extent on his abilities in being wisely objective. This is one of a number of ways in which economics is a work of art, like so much that we find in the other branches of knowledge.

The encyclopaedia article goes on to speak of the difficulties which lie in trying to test economic theories or ideas, even ideas of a basic sort, and which look quite simple at first sight. It is good to see such honesty. "While virtually all economists today agree that theories should be admitted to empirical testing and that the theory is to be preferred which allows prediction that conform, in a probabilistic sense, most closely to observable events, this precept can be very difficult to apply in practice. There have been periods in the history of economics when there was overwhelming agreement in the profession as to which models or theories were "true". But a period of concensus may be followed by a generation of doubt until a new departure is made that succeeds in producing a new concensus. In this, economics is not very different from physics.

Much has been written about the doubtful accuracy of economists' predictions. Of course, economists cannot foretell the future as such; only soothsayers and prophets do that. Economists can foretell the effects of specific changes in the economy, but they are better at predicting the direction than the magnitude of events."

Short-term predictions are likely to succeed better than longer term ones. Economic predictions are about the plans and intentions of economic agents, and thus relate to the future. But, the theories and models have been tested by what happened in the past. So, no clear factor can be inserted about how long an aspect of things will take to occur. Only a rough guess can be made.

While this is difficult, it does not mean that economics is not a science."

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In reflecting upon this article, a number of things which have been said need to be emphasised. And, a number of things which were not said, need to be pointed out.

(a.) Firstly, the article mentioned that generally economists could not conduct experiments in order to test their theories. This is a clear difference with what is possible in some of the other disciplines.

(b.) The cautions which must be placed upon economic predictions were also mentioned.

(c.) There was also an interesting mention of the way a concensus is achieved for a period of time, until it becomes clear that revision is needed. And then it is possible for another hypothesis to develop into what becomes the concensus for the next period of time.

(d.) What was mentioned in passing, without having the implications of it drawn properly, is that economic agents (or human beings) are involved in the nitty-gritty of what economic predictions are about. Consequently, the reactions of moral agents are included in the process of economics. As a

result, the kind of predictions which can be made, when moral agents are involved, and where their decisions are factors in the situation, must render the work of prediction into something of a very general kind, similar to what a historian might be able to make.

What the Article Did Not Say.

What was not mentioned, but which is very important, is:-

(a.) that many of the basic concepts of economics are really highly abstract, and can be very remote from immediate experience. This has many repercussions for other aspects of the discipline.

(b.) Also, the paradigm theories in economics assume an entire world-view, including a number of factors about human nature, the purpose of society, and the kind of economic activity which is desirable and ought to be practiced. These assumptions are included in both positive economics and normative economics.

Everything the economist says, therefore, assumes an entire world-view, which may not be the most helpful one to use, or the most truthful.

So, along with history, we have to emphasise that the economist is a part of the scene that is being studied, and that his vision is coloured by the point of history at which he lives, and the cultural milieu in which he was born and educated.

(c.) There is no doubt that an education in economics involves a form of brain-washing in the same manner as advanced study in other disciplines, so that a particular outlook is adopted upon the subject matter being studied. This has a pervasive and conditioning effect upon the economist, helping to determine his whole outlook on life, including his understanding of the contents of the world of economics.

(d.) Also, whenever economists speak about the past, historical reasoning methods and historical probability, along with all the potential mistakes that historians can make, are necessarily involved in the economist's understanding of whatever happened. This kind of thing may flaw the economist's work, without him realising it.
So, although economists may not speak about it, or may not even realise it, the whole range of epistemological factors that we have been referring to in this book are evident in the work done by economists.

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For the Common Good.

Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr, have been seeking to introduce a new paradigm theory in economics, and have testified to the enormous difficulty which they have faced because economists have been educated to look at their subject in certain particular ways, and so cannot easily learn to look at it from another stance.
Daly and Cobb's book is called "For the Common Good". The sub-title is "Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future."

They found that everybody who heard of any new economic theory immediately wanted to know where abouts it fitted on a scale which had capitalism at one end and socialism at the other end.
But Daly and Cobb did not accept that their theory should be judged in this way. They thought that there were much more important ways of classifying economic theories than that.

They believed that the extent to which an economy supports or destroys healthy communities was a more important standard of judgment.

Their book gives a devastating criticism of traditional economics, and an extensive exposure of its many shortcomings.

They provide a good description of the rise of industrialism, and the way in which both capitalism and socialism are designed to serve the ends of industry. The factory system has served to make people serve industry rather than the other way around. The demands of the market are now allowed to cause the destruction of the earth's fuel resources within a very few generations (allowing none for the future), and the spoiling of the environment for the pleasure of the present occupants of it.

So, true community is destroyed in the service of an economic goal that is drastically short-sighted.

Their book seeks to replace the egoism and selfishness of capitalism, of the wealthy few, and of the market economy, with a different kind of economic system which is controlled in favour of a sustained future and the needs of all mankind.

One of the factors which helps to make solutions to these problems so difficult is the academic structure of the discipline of economics within universities. Not only are certain fallacies continuing to be taught, but the area covered in the teaching of economics is too restricted to create a scenario for a possible solution to be put forward. The universities encourage "the quest for solutions in the narrowly canalised lines of its departmental structure. This blocks the fresh approaches that are needed and places those who undertake them on the defensive before the authority of the disciplinary mainstream, which in turn undercuts their influence in the university." (P.357.)

"We recognise that much of this book falls outside the boundaries of what is regarded as the discipline of economics, but we feel that the economy, the Great Economy, is far larger than what that discipline studies. We think that our collaborative work is a type of reflection in which citizens from many backgrounds need to share. Decisions that will be made soon in this country (the U.S.A.) will shape the world of our children and grandchildren, probably irreversibly. They should not be made within the restricted context that now governs the academic discipline of economics.

This book is divided into four parts. Part One views economics as it is. One of the great achievements of economics is to have become a "science". That involves two major elements: it has the characteristics of an academic discipline; and it has chosen the deductive model. Immersion in the science makes it very difficult to remember the degree of abstractness involved and to discount one's scientific results with that in mind. After explaining that problem in Chapter 1, we illustrate the consequences for economics with respect to selected basic concepts: the market, measures of success, Homo economicus, and land.

Part Two presents an alternative approach to the economy. Instead of shaping the study to the requirements of a science, this approach proposes that reflection be ordered to the needs of the real world. This will not put an end to abstraction, since all thought abstracts, but it will provide a basis for selecting better abstractions and for keeping the elements abstracted from continually in view. The topics treated in Part One are reconsidered from this point of view in the same sequence, although the chapters do not correspond directly.

Part Three proposes policies that would follow from this different perspective. At an abstract level, the policy implications would have certain similarities, and at some points the formulations are quite general. But policies mediate between overall perspective and particular situation. In order to

avoid too high a level of abstraction, we have focussed on one country - the United States. Obviously, if the United States actually decided to move in the directions proposed, much more exact and detailed analysis would be required.

Part Four discusses how changes in the required direction might come about. Even less than elsewhere is there an effort to be exhaustive. We have seen our chief task to provide an image or vision of an economic order that, in the language of the World Council of Churches, would be just, participatory and sustainable." (page 19 - 20.)

"A final word. We have tried to follow the academic conventions of fair descriptions and dispassionate analysis and argument. We believe in them. We want, above all, NOT to disparage the lifelong efforts of many who have advanced the discipline of economics and shaped policies to reflect it. We respect their integrity, their commitment to human welfare, and the keenness of their insights.

But at a deep level of our being we find it hard to suppress the cry of anguish, the scream of horror - the wild words required to express wild realities. We human beings are being led to a DEAD end - all too literally. We are living by an ideology of death and accordingly we are destroying our own humanity and killing our planet. Even the one great success of the program that has governed us, the attainment of material affluence, is now giving way to poverty. The United States is just now gaining a foretaste of the suffering that global economic policies, so enthusiastically embraced, have inflicted on hundreds of millions of others. If we continue on our present paths, future generations, if there are to be any, are condemned to misery. The fact that many people of good will do not see this dead end is undeniably true, very regretable, and it is our main reason for writing this book." (page 21.)

Concluding Comment.

In this section dealing with Daly and Cobb's attempt at this new paradigm theory I am not trying to promote or advocate their theory in any special way, thinking that it does not have any shortcomings or major criticisms that could be made about it.

Certainly, as Daly and Cobb explain, there are many grievous shortcomings in the ways that traditional economics have been applied in the modern world, and we may need a new paradigm theory. Only the future will fully show whether this need is really true or not.

But, here, I have simply used it as an example of the fact that theories function in economics in essentially the same way as all the other disciplines.

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Chapter 9 - General Theories of Truth and Wisdom

General Theories of Truth.

There have been a number of purely philosophical theories about the nature of truth.

Two well-known ones are the correspondence theory of truth, and the coherence theory of truth. Neither of these theories are able to be applied universally, but there are certain applications to which they are each suited more than to others.

Correspondence Theory.

According to the correspondence theory, our ideas and words can be known to be true if they correspond to the reality to which they refer. This theory suits best those situations where ideas are being compared to a reality outside of ourselves, but may not suit other situations so well where, for example, we are dreaming or hallucinating. There is also a problem in knowing just what "corresponds" means. The theory has a number of other problems, also.

Coherence Theory.

The coherence theory suits best situations where two ideas are being analysed, or sets of ideas are being analysed, and it is the logical relation between them that is in question. This clearly suits best those situations where we are using mathematics or logic.

For example, when I was a student at the University, Professor David Armstrong had just come onto the staff of the philosophy department, and he was developing a book, which was later published, entitled "The Materialist Philosophy of the Mind." This approach tried to show how it was at least logically possible to explain the whole range of functions of the human mind, and all of psychology, in terms simply of "material" things such as are found in physics and chemistry.
He was influenced in this exercise most by the coherence theory of truth, because he was primarily concerned with the logical relations between ideas, and NOT with whether these ideas fitted well into our understanding of how things actually worked in the world. I remember him saying that he did not want to take much notice of a lot of factual details because this would cloud the minds of people in being able to recognise the basic logical relations that were involved in the subject.

The result of this type of thinking can easily be to create a set of ideas which may cohere well logically, but which bears little or no relationship to what the actual world is like.

Some people have thought that this logical relation is wider than simply our ideas about reality, and that if we knew something about an object, we could improve our knowledge of it simply by proceeding logically. Medieval metaphysical theories were often like this, and could result in very strange speculations at times. Some forms of the scientific method have tried to function like this, also, but tests for verification have usually been considered necessary, in order to avoid the excesses of unverified speculations.

The coherence theory is of particular importance for those who are dealing with the relationships between ideas. It does not serve the same purpose as the correspondence theory, which is more appropriate for other purposes.

Perspectivism.

Problems can be raised for most purely philosophical theories of truth when emphasis is placed upon the fact that there are many aspects or perspectives from which most things can be viewed.

Every individual has his or her own partial insights into any matter being considered. It can often be extremely difficult to take these insights and form a more complete, and more truthful, understanding of that part of reality.

In many instances, the truth about a matter can be such a complicated thing that it gets impossible to know it all.

Relativism.

The ultimate difficulty in all this is not so much the matter of "perspectivism", but the much more intractable problem of "relativism".

When there is no clearly defined way of discovering the truth, it is very easy to slip into relativism, where each person has his or her own truth. An understanding of something may be right and true for person X, but not for person Y.
The logical result of relativism is that there is really no such thing as truth at all.

This can be seen from a consideration of the following:-

If we have, say, six people who all have different ideas about a certain matter - ideas which are mutually exclusive or contradictory of each other - it is no use saying that each person's view is true for that person. Because they are mutually exclusive or contradictory of each other, they cannot all be right. Only one of them can be true, or they can all be wrong, or several can be true in certain aspects only which are not contradictory or mutually exclusive.

If somebody says that they are all true, that is the same as saying that none of them are true, and that there is no such thing as truth at all.

While people may say that they believe relativistic things, so far as truth is concerned, it is impossible to live according to these ideas, because normal life is impossible if there is no truth.

If there is no truth, and no right or wrong (for the same kind of reasons), then lawful and civilized behaviour, proper reasoning, and all scientific enquiry, soon becomes an impossibility. So, relativism must be rejected by anybody who hopes for truth and morality.

If there is no truth, then relativism itself is not true. We are left with a hopeless situation, so far as human knowledge is concerned, where we can know nothing at all.

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Truth in Human Epistemology.

In giving definitions of truth which fit in with all that we have been discussing in the earlier parts of this book, a number of factors must be borne in mind.

(a.) Fundamental to other factors is the recognition that there is a reality to be known and

understood, and about which we want to communicate.
(b.) The question of truth involves the degree of accuracy and completeness which can be attained in knowing and understanding reality by any one of us.

This is affected by:-

* the fact that reality as a whole, or any part of it, has many aspects to it - many parts - many angles - many facets. (perspectivism.)
* as a result of the limits attached to human knowledge, we cannot know all of these aspects for most parts of reality, nor can we know them completely or accurately

(c.) We can therefore only attain complete truth regarding things about which we know all aspects fully.

(d.) We can attain partial truth (to a greater or lesser degree) about those other aspects of reality which we can know only partly.

(e.) Limitations caused by the nature of human language, and other forms of communication, will further affect our ability to communicate what we think we know to somebody else, and will also affect the hearer's capacity to gain knowledge.

(f.) This partial knowledge, partial human capacity, and limited means of communication, provides the basis for all instances where we mis-understand each other, or mis-understand the reality with which we deal.

Wisdom in Human Epistemology.

The question of wisdom involves:-

(a.) our ability to be aware of as many as possible of the aspects, facets, parts, angles, which may pertain to the reality with which we are dealing;

(b.) our ability to keep these facets in their real perspective and balance; and

(c.) upon this basis, our ability to make judgments about these matters in a balanced manner.

The greater degree of success we have in these tasks marks the degree of wisdom that we posses, and that we are able to exercise.

Wisdom would also seem to involve an appropriate degree of humility in the light of what is NOT known about the matter in question.

It is considerations such as these which prompted the Biblical writer to say that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

No doubt it is possible to have some limited degree of wisdom without it being based in the fear of the Lord, but that would seem to be rather like building a house without laying a proper foundation.

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Religious Insights Are Needed.

There has to be some ultimate standard of reference if we are going to have any solid possibility of gaining truth or of being wise.

Such ultimate standards of reference are matters of metaphysical or religious consideration.

Human philosophy by itself is not able to set up anything like this. Human thought, apart from knowledge about God, cannot make any "archimedian point" from which everything else gains its meaning and perspective.

This matter will be raised again in a later chapter, where insights gained from Christian theology will be included.

Problems of Communication.

Apart from considerations of truth or of wisdom, there are additional, accompanying factors which are of great importance, and which need to be mentioned here.

1. The degree of truth that we possess may be defined as the degree of success we have achieved in gaining complete and accurate knowledge about a matter.

Truthful knowledge is an accurate and complete understanding of "that which is the case".

Only God has complete and accurate knowledge of everything with which we have to deal.

In this absolute sense, truthful knowledge is God's understanding of what is.

Human knowledge is limited in a number of ways, and is man's attempt to understand what is the case. Man is capable of partial insights. God alone is able to judge for completeness.

2. Concepts are creations of the human mind, flowing from our experiences of reality. They are "ordering tools" that we make in order to understand our situation. They are our attempt to understand the truth. The possibilities in our concepts are strongly modified by which language that we use. Language limits our concepts.

But language itself is merely a conventional tool of communication. It is a means of communicating from one person to another about what we are thinking, and its success depends upon people having concepts which have at least some degree of similarity.
So, concepts may be said to be true in so far as they reflect an accurate understanding of what is the case.

God is alone the judge of the truth-value of our concepts. All we can do is the best that we are able at making our concepts as truthful as we can.

So, this part of our understanding of truth is rather like the correspondence theory, but it has an ultimate standard of reference, which the purely philosophical theory did not have.

3. Words and language forms which are used to express concepts are related to truth in two ways (and possibly three ways.). These two ways may not be the same.

(a.) The first way is in respect to the person who utters or writes the words or language forms.

What is said or written is considered to be true in so far as it expresses an accurate and complete understanding of what is the case.

This is so regardless of the intention of the speaker or writer, and regardless of what is being spoken or written about.

(b.) The second way is in respect to the person who hears or reads the words or language forms.

What is heard or read evokes or prompts the use of concepts in the minds of those who hear or read, and may cause the concepts to be modified in some way.

These concepts in the hearer or reader may be considered to be true in so far as they express an accurate and complete understanding of what is the case.

These concepts, in speaker and hearer, are never absolutuely true, are only more or less true - unless they are part of a self-contained conceptual system which includes all of its own absolute definitions (such as mathematics or logic).

Again, God alone is the judge of the degree of truth-content of all of our concepts, regardless of how we may have derived or used them. All that we can do is the best we can at being as truthful as we can.

(c.) Any difference between the speaker's understanding and use of a concept, and that of the hearer or reader, is a problem of communication.

As a result, I prefer to see words and language forms as neutral, so far as truth is concerned. They are merely agreed and conventional tools with which we seek to communicate with one another about the contents of our concepts. If somebody wishes to attribute a truth-value to words or language forms, then it must be based upon the agreed conventional meanings and usages of words - a thing which changes with time, as a result of the influence of many factors.

Chapter 10 - Faith and Reason

Introductory Notes.

1. There are a number of approaches to the problems in this area of thought, amongst theological and philosophical writers today. A number of the modern theologians have tried to address these questions, with more or less of success, and have produced a wide variety of possible answers. Some aspects of the problems of faith and reason are taught in seminaries in the philosophy of religion courses.

Also, there have been a number of approaches to these problems throughout the history of christian theology. The most famous ones have been produced by such outstanding thinkers as Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. But, many others have been produced which are not so well known.

In this chapter, a different stance is being taken on questions about the relationship between faith and reason from what is commonly taught in theological seminaries.
This stance arises from what we have been noting in the earlier parts of this book about the nature of human knowledge.

2. It is also possible to state the problems about the relationship between faith and reason in a number of different ways. The problems can wear different clothes; be couched in different sets of concepts; be described by using different terminology, etc. This will often depend upon the type of world-view that the philosopher is using, and the degree to which he embarks upon the policy of making his own set of technical terms which have their own particular meanings, different from everybody else's.

The problems can be described, as we have here, as an attempt to set out the relationship between faith and reason. Or, they can be described as an attempt to state the relationship between philosophy and theology. Another approach is to see them as the philosophical basis of religion, or as part of the philosophy of religion.
For many people there has been a clash between science and religion, since the time of Darwin especially. Such clashes can only arise if those involved do not have an adequate answer to the problems in this area of the philosophy of religion.

Many other people have seen a problem in relating christianity (especially christian ethics) to all the rest of life. As a result, their life has tended to become divided up into several pidgeon-holes, each of which contained a part of their life which had no relation to the other parts of life in the other pidgeon-holes. This, again, is due to an inadequate philosophy of religion. The person may not have thought things out, and may not have recognised the problem in this way. But, that is where the seat of the problem resides, nevertheless.

Here we will note some basic factors which are necessary to be considered before we proceed further.

(a.) Questions Involving Several Disciplines.

Many questions can be viewed from the standpoint of several different disciplines. For example, the acquiring of religious ideas can be viewed from the standpoints of theology, psychology, sociology, history, physiology, etc. Each discipline has its own insights to add to the overall picture, and none

must try to claim that their insights are the only valid ones.

Questions about the truthfulness and validity of claims to know something about God are all of this character.

So, when we approach certain experiences, or certain historical evidences, these will all have historical and psychological aspects to them, and perhaps aspects from a number of other disciplines, as well. No attempt is being made here to belittle the value of these other insights into the evidences and experiences being studied. But, on the other hand, people pursuing studies in these other disciplines must also avoid being reductionists, and must not imply that religious insights have no place or value in understanding the matter in question.

One factor to remember is this. Many people could claim "I have found a new discipline. It should be treated seriously." - when, perhaps, other people are not inclined to admit that the alleged new discipline represents a proper insight into the nature of reality. How are we to know whether this alleged new area of knowledge and research, and the way it is being viewed, is real, distorted, or imaginary? (e.g. Are UFOs and E.S.P. to be taken seriously, as physics and chemistry are?)

Only by asking for descriptions and explanations of experiences, plus having reasonable tests and standards of verification, which suit the area of reality being studied - only by having evidence, and by showing that a certain explanation of the evidence is the most likely to be true, and that other possible explanations are less likely to be true (for certain reasons which are spelled out, and can be evaluated in some way,) can anybody judge the reality or truthfulness of any of these claims to have an insight into some area of existence.

Indeed, all claims to knowledge, in all of the branches of knowledge have to be treated in this same way, or we will finish up believing myths in physics just as we can anywhere else.

So, these same lines of reasoning will be applied to religion. Religious claims to know something must be treated on the same basis as any other claim to know something.

Many claims to know something about God, or about a spiritual world, are largely or wholely a matter of the imagination, and have no further hold on the reality of such matters than that. We need to beware lest we are guilty of holding ideas of this kind, and believing that they are true.
In many of the foundational areas of a world-view we need to have beliefs about certain subjects which are very difficult to check against our experience of the world. Wherever these ideas can be verified they need to be, in order to keep our quest for truth on the rails.

But, if some claims are true, or largely true, it is most important that we should know. That is how we may be able to answer some of the most fundamental questions of all.

So, we must pursue our quest for knowledge in these basic areas, as best we can. Having an insight into the way human knowledge works in such areas is an important starting point for us. And, that is what we have been doing, so far.

(b.) <u>Definitions.</u>

Definitions are, naturally, of fundamental importance in the statement of a position. Only by careful use of definitions can
there be any communication of ideas from one person to another.

The definitions of "faith" and "reason" used here must be noted very carefully. These definitions may not be the same as those to which others are accustomed. Also, the whole of the positive statement in this chapter, and in the chapters of the book which follow, depend upon the definitions given here.

Definitions are not right or wrong. They are simply statements which indicate how a person is going to use a word. Others may, if they wish, use different definitions. But that does not make the first ones wrong. So long as we all understand the definitions we are using, we will have a proper basis for our communications.

1. What is FAITH?

Faith means depending upon someone or something. Having faith in somebody means that you trust them in a particular respect. Faith means depending upon the reliability of someone or something.

As indicated, this definition does not cover all the area which some people use the word "faith" to mean. Both dictionaries and many theological writings will have other factors included in their understanding of the word as well as this one. One common meaning that is often given to the word is to say that faith means believing something - some idea, belief or statement. That is not how the word is being used here. Certainly, if we rely upon a person in a certain respect, we will believe a statement which describes that point at which we are trusting the person. (For example: I may rely upon my spouse to be faithful to me, and have good evidence that my trust is well founded. Thus I will freely admit my belief in the statement "My spouse is faithful."
The statement becomes an article of faith for me. It describes something that I believe. It describes a matter over which I have faith in my spouse. When I make this statement I am declaring my faith.

N.B.Another thing to notice carefully about faith, is that , as a general rule, it is necessary to know things about the something or somebody in whom we are placing our trust. Faith does not operate blindly. Faith is based upon a claim to know something about the object of our faith. We cannot have faith in a person about whom we know nothing.

Certainly, what we think we know about the object of our faith may be mistaken. We may think we know something when our ideas about that person do not correspond to reality. So, our faith may be misplaced, or placed on the basis of wrong information.

Nevertheless, it is still faith.

To rely upon someone means that we have made a judgment about that person that they are trustworthy in a certain way. As a result of our judgment, we trust them.

Or, without knowing much about a person, we may decide that we hope they are trustworthy, although we do not really know from experience that they are reliable at that point. On this basis, we may place our trust in them. The basis of our faith is not so well founded in this instance. Another way of describing this kind of thing is to say that we are adopting a "working hypothesis" that the person is reliable (although we do not really know that it is so), and we will trust the person on that basis. If we discover that the person is reliable, then we will treat this as evidence in support of our working hypothesis. Later on, we may find some way in which the person is not reliable, and so we will have to modify our hypothesis a little.

Faith is a choice or decision to place our trust in something or somebody, and to trust them about certain matters.

N.B.Another important point to note is that, there is an important difference between (on the one hand) a situation where we say that we have faith in a person, but we do not need to exercise that faith. The faith is simply an idea in our heads, until it is put into practice. It is part of our outlook on the world, part of our attitude to people. But, (on the other hand) when we have to put this faith into practice - a new situation has now arisen. We actually have faith in that person in a practical way.

As another example, we may have the knowledge in our heads that we have faith in that chair, so that, if we ever need to sit down, we could do so safely. This is having faith, in a certain fashion. But, it is not exercising that faith. We do not exercise our faith until we sit on the chair.

Exercising our faith, then, involves a situation where we have to place our trust in something in a practical situation.

To have faith in Jesus Christ means that we know something about Him, and we place our trust in Him, in certain respects. Biblical faith means that we will trust Him in a practical way, and not simply that our faith in Him will be an idea in our heads
about some future possibility that has not yet arisen.

This arises from the fact that faith in Jesus first occurs for us at a point of personal need. We discover that we have the need of someone to make us acceptable to God in view of our sins. We discover that Jesus Christ is legitimately our God and Lord, and we have not previously taken sufficient account of this in the way that we have lived. Therefore, we trust Him to set us right with God, and to forgive our disobedience. Because He is God and Lord, we decide to obey Him in future, and rely upon Him for help in doing this.

So, christian faith ALWAYS means having a practical trust in God, and a dependence upon God which will embrace every aspect of our lives.

When a christian says that he will trust God in all future unknown situations, he is saying it on the basis of a present practical trust which covers every area of life.

His faith is NEVER the kind of thing which implies that he will trust in God in some future hypothetical situation which may not happen, and which does not involve practical trust at the present.

Also, at its basic level, faith does not mean believing some doctrines, or obeying some rules. When we place our trust in Christ in a practical way, we may well come to believe certain doctrines, and obey some rules, as a result of our faith. But believing doctrines and obeying rules is not what faith means.

2. What is REASON?

Historically, the word "reason" has meant many different things.

It had a number of particular meanings during the Middle Ages, for different philosophers. Several of them developed special views about the relationship between faith and reason.

The Renaissance, and the so-called "Age of Reason", produced other meanings.

For many people, the word has been a slogan which they have used freely, implying that they were being reasonable, and that anyone who disagreed with them was being unreasonable.

Usually this understanding of reason was held by people who did not practice any christian faith, and their claim to believe only what was according to reason was made to impress themselves, and others, that they were being superior to unreasonable believers in Christ. It was not necessarily an indication that they had any good reasons for their opinions which were better than those reasons held by the christians.

Similar to this has been the equating of a "free-thinker" with someone who followed "reason." This usually implied that the free-thinker did not submit his opinions to any other authority apart from his own ability to recognise the truth. This is a hang-over from the times when people were supposed to believe what they were told to believe, and somebody who believed some other idea than what the authority prescibed was being a free thinker.

But, the historical use of the word "reason", since the renaissance, at least, has generally involved the implication that following the particular current form of reason was the only way to be truly intelligent, and that any person was therefore both wrong and foolish who happened to disagree with whoever it was who was claiming "reason" in support of his own views.

For the purposes of this book, the word "reason" means - the methods of reasoning which have now been spelled out in the sections on epistemology, in the various branches of knowledge that we have looked at so far.

Another way to describe this use of "reason" is to say simply that reason is an ability to apply proper methods of logic to an intellectual problem, so far as that is possible within the scope of the limits of human intelligence.

As a result, our task in this section on "faith and reason" is to show how our knowledge of God fits into the pattern of reasonings which we have been studying, and also to see that what we know about God meets reasonable requirements about verification and certainty which might be expected from it.

We will see that the faith in God which is spoken of in the Bible, and which is practiced by an evangelical christian,is a practical trust in God, which is based upon knowledge that is both coherent and verifiable, within acceptable limits.

(c.) Assumptions and Prejudices.

To understand any world-view it is necessary for the prospective student of the world-view to try to get rid of any prejudices or assumptions that he might have which provide a blockage. If this is not done, there is little or no hope of that person ever properly understanding that world-view.

For example, Christianity is a supernatural religion, because God is at work in His world. So, the assumption that supernatural miracles, or the resurrection of Jesus, could not possibly have happened because such things are impossible, must be abandoned, or no progress can be made in understanding the Christian world-view.

Such things as resurrections may be believed on the basis of some evidence, or may be disbelieved,

for similar reasons, but to assume that such things cannot happen defeats completely the possibilities of the world-view before we start.

Sufficient possibilities must be allowed which will give enough room for the truth to appear. There has to be enough room in our
view of the world for all of the truth to appear in its proper place and context. We have to be especially careful that our assumptions, pre-conceived ideas and prejudices do not restrict our ability to discover the truth.

(d.) Historical Arguments.

There are a number of different types of arguments about God's reality. Most of the arguments that we will be dealing with are "historical arguments", that is, they are based in historical events. Discussion about God is not historical discussion. It is theological discussion. But, if we are to look at evidences about the existence of God, we need to study certain historical happenings, and certain ideas which were held and used by historical people, as a basis for our thoughts about God.

(e.) What Will Constitute Evidence?

Some disciplines (such as physics, chemistry, and often law.) have fairly well defined ideas about what evidence is, and what it is evidence for. Although, even in these fields, there can be debate about such matters.

In other disciplines (such as psychology, history, and through an entire spectrum to the fine arts,), what is accepted as evidence varies considerably from one discipline to the next. We have already made quite a study of this kind of issue.

Similarly, in these other disciplines, what one person wants to accept as evidence may well vary from what another person of equal expertise will accept as evidence.

This is the kind of situation we find in studying evidences about God.

Disagreements about what constitutes evidence, and what it is evidence for, can arise from a number of possible factors.

For example, such a disagreement may arise simply because we may not know enough about the subject in question to be able to settle the matter.

Another possible source of such disagreement is that different pre-conceived ideas held by the various parties to the disagreement will cause one party to accept certain things as evidence for something, whereas the other party will not accept it. Both of these examples are very common in religious studies.

An instance of this second example can be seen in the reaction of different people to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some say that the entire gospel story is a fabrication. Others treat the story of the resurrection as an invention of the disciples, so that only part of the story has been fabricated. In the first instance, Jesus either did not exist, or existed in a form quite different from what we see in the gospels. In the second instance, many parts of the gospel story might be true, but not the story of the resurrection.

Most Christians treat the story of the resurrection as strong evidence that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is living, and that Jesus is evidently our Lord and Saviour.
Naturally, the claims of Christians depend upon what they understand about the historical accuracy of the witness of the gospel writers.

Others, again, are sceptical about the resurrection by saying that we simply do not know what happened. So, we do not know whether it is true, or not.

In both cases, conclusions within the realm of theology are being drawn on the basis of evidences which are, at least partly, historical in their nature. It is necessary to realise clearly the differences in disciplines that are involved here.

Usually, differences in theological conclusions that might be reached about the resurrection of Jesus show us that two different world-views are being used. In the case of the resurrection of Jesus, the christian adopts a world-view where God exists, and such miracles as the resurrection are therefore possible. The person who does not believe in the resurrection has embraced a different world-view in which such miraculous things cannot happen, and which is therefore basically different from the one embraced by the christian who is willing to believe in miracles.

We have already seen that the task of choosing between world-views is quite different from that of evaluating evidence from within a world-view.

So, what we must do is simply to look at the evidence, as best we can, and as objectively as we can. And, as we do this, we must try to be aware of what prejudices and pre-conceived ideas we bring with us to this task.

If the problem is then the more simple one of evaluating the evidence on the basis of an agreed world-view, we will be in a better position to do this.

But, if we have to decide between two world-views, we will have a much more difficult task of deciding which world-view does the better justice to what we are trying to understand from our learning and experience.

(f.) The Role of a "Working Hypothesis".

Let it be clearly stated, that many Christians are convinced on the basis of the evidence about God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ.

However, many others approach christian experience without being sure of its truthfulness, and may continue to have doubts for a long time. We could describe this approach to God as one in which the person accepts various beliefs about God as a "working hypothesis" about Him, and then approaches God on that basis.

Certainly, a great many people become christians for various practical and spiritual reasons, and NOT because they have been convinced by any arguments or evidences. They have one of many possible heart-felt needs, and they come to God seeking His mercy and help. Usually, christians become convinced about Jesus when He meets them at this point of need.

When they feel themselves convinced, then, perhaps, we can say that the "working hypothesis" has been replaced by some degree of knowledge.

(g.) First Hand Experiences.

This last point leads us naturally to the fact that such personal experiences have a certain appearance in the mind of the person who actually has the experience.

It will appear quite differently, however, in the mind of some more distant person who did not have the experience.

A close personal friend of a person who has a dramatic experience of God will have a much better chance of having a sympathetic understanding of what has happened than will somebody who lived two thousand years later in a completely different cultural background, and who read about it in a book.

This factor is commonly understood by historians, and by mostpsychologists (but not all of them). It is a basic factor in many aspects of daily life, and in the study of any religious experience.

(h.) Verification.

The procedures involved in verification will depend upon what sort of evidence is being produced to support a claim to know something about God.

If historical evidence is being produced, then the kinds of steps used by historians should be used to verify the claim.

If a person bases his claim upon statements in the Bible, then questions about the reliability of the Bible, and about the meaning of the particular Bible passages in question, will need to be asked.

If a person bases his claim to know something about God upon someinner experiences of their own, then it may become very difficult for somebody else to have any way of checking up on the claim.

But, somebody who has had similar experiences may be able to judge the situation better than somebody who has no such similar experiences, or who has only read about it all in a book.

The person having the first-hand experience, however, will have a different way of verifying his knowledge, from the kind of verification possible to somebody for whom it is all a second-hand experience. The person having the experience will have an inner approach to it all which will not be possible to others.

John's gospel, chapter 7, verse 17, provides a most interesting word from the Lord Jesus about all these matters. Jesus invites us to obey the will of God, and then we will find out for ourselves whether God is true, or not.

This raises what is probably the most basic factor in verifying most claims that people make that they know something about God. That is, we must find out for ourselves, by having the experiences of God that He calls us to have. This will lead us to have experiences of a similar kind to those which so many others have had, and upon which their knowledge about God is based. As the Psalmist says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

It has to be emphasised that inner personal experiences can lead to enormous mistakes. When someone is being swayed by his or her interpretation of one of these inner experiences which is believed to be linked with God in some way, it is possible for the most amazing things to happen as a result, which will help to confirm that person's belief that the experience did in fact come from God in some way. But, very great numbers of the most serious mistakes have also been made in this same way, where a person has thought very sincerely that he was being led and taught by God, when in fact he was not.

So, there ought to be some other way of supporting one's beliefs about inner experiences of God than simply being dogmatic about how we have decided to read the signs. Christians ought to be very careful about such claims to know God, and should also look for other supporting evidence of a more objective kind, if this is at all possible.

Other evidence is not always available, of course, nor can it always be procurred even if it was available in the past.

Lastly, when we consider the "working hypothesis" situation, mentioned earlier, then, verification must proceed in a similar way to all the other situations where support for any point of view is being sought, whether it is a fairly well established theory that is in view, or a piece of unadulterated speculation, or anything in between.

(i.) When Verification is Difficult.

Earlier, it was noted that many of the more basic scientific, ideas may be difficult to test and to verify because they operate at a level which is much removed from immediate contact with the reality about which they speak.

Both Einstein and Northrop said this about some of the basic concepts in physics. It certainly applies, for example, to many aspects of the general theory of relativity.

This same difficulty in verification applies to many philosophical and religious ideas. The reason why the positivists hated metaphysics so much was because metaphysical ideas could not be tested adequately against the reality of which they spoke. The same applied to the speculations of the medieval philosophers.

The same difficulty in verification must be accepted about the vast majority of religious opinions. Indeed, it may be that no verification is possible at any point in a set of religious or philosophical ideas.

In such a case, where no verification is possible at any point of the set of religious ideas, it must undoubtedly be possible to make enormous mistakes without there being any way of detecting that such serious mistakes are being made.

What is to be earnestly desired is that, at some significantpoint, it will be possible to produce some fairly clear evidence which tells in favour of the truth of what is being believed.

It is the purpose of the next chapter of this book to produce such evidence, in favour of the evangelical protestant approach to christianity.

(j.) The Authority of Jesus Christ.

This is a most important point in christian theology.

Right from the start we must draw a clear distinction between (on
the one hand) the authority that we might accord to any human being who is considered to be an "expert" in some field of enquiry, even if this person is the highest authority in the world, or the most respected of persons. Such an authority must be distinguished (on the other hand) from God, who is an authority of an absolute kind.

God's authority is absolute in two ways that we are considering here.

* He knows all about what we know. He knows completely, and we can only know in part. He knows all aspects of the matter fully, whereas we only know certain aspects. He knows fully and certainly, whereas we can only know uncertainly.

** He is God, and therefore He is to be obeyed.

So, God's authority in matters of judgement, wisdom and knowledge. is not to be confused with whatever other kinds of authority He might have.

IF Jesus Christ is the only true Son of God, as He claimed to be, then, clearly He will have an authority in matters of knowledge (apart from other areas) which will have to be put in the same class as God's authority. Under these circumstances, His degree of authority (in theological matters, especially) must not be confused with the authority of a mere mortal human.

So, naturally, a key matter of christian evidence must be to enquire whether the claims that Jesus made about Himself can be believed, or not.

Chapter 11 - The "Muller" Argument

As mentioned in the last chapter, in the section dealing with the difficult verification of ideas, or sets of ideas, which are not easy to relate to the reality about which they speak, it is to be hoped that, at least at some point in a set of religious ideas, it will be possible to produce a test, or verification, which will support the truthfulness of the religious outlook in question.

This verification may relate to a limited part of the set of ideas. But this is certainly better than having no verification at all. On the other hand, the verification may relate directly to a limited part of the system of thought, but have strong implications in many other areas of the system. This second alternative is what is happening in the case of the argument being presented here.

The argument presented here is intended to provide a point of contact where certain basic christian beliefs can be tested against our experience of reality.

It is often not easy to find points like this in the area of religious experience, and so they are very important in helping us to choose between (a.) religious ideas that may be void of truthful content, (b.) ones which contain some truth but are somewhat mis-directed and need to be greatly revised, and (c.) ones which are true.

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Introduction.

Before setting out the evidence in this regard, there are certain preliminary questions that we would do well to bear in mind as we try to evaluate any religious doctrine, opinion or belief.

These preliminary questions may not be discussed in much detail here, but they should be borne in mind.

1. What is the history of each idea, and of each set of ideas? How, when and where did they first appear?

2. What reasons existed in the past as to why each of these ideas, or sets of ideas, should be believed? Why were they believed in the first instances?

3. What reasons exist now as to why these ideas should be believed?

4. To what extent are these reasons based upon history or experience?

5. To what extent are these reasons purely speculative, metaphysical, or only of logical necessity?

6. To what extent are these ideas based upon somebody's inner, personal experiences (such as inspiration, visions, prophecy, ordinary thought, etc.) which are not in any way public, or open to public scrutiny or testing? If it is based upon such a personal experience, what is the credibilty of the person making the testimony about their experiences? What other track record does the person have of verified predictions? Why should the person be believed?

7. In what ways, if any, could these individual opinions, or sets of ideas, be tested, or compared with reality?

8. What is the history of attempts (if any) to test or verify these opinions in the past?

9. Did these attempts at verification produce strong support for these ideas? What degree of strength is there in these tests? What other possible explanations are there? How probable are these ideas?

10. When we have considered the "evidence" in question, we must also be aware of what world-view is assumed, and is implied, by the ideas being tested, and by the proceedure of the test, so that the evidence in favour of the ideas can, in fact, function as evidence.

11. Other possible explanations requiring other world-views and assumptions may, or may not, be more plausible, in our estimation. What reasons do we have which make this other world-view and explanation appear more plausible to us? Why should these reasons be believed, in preference to the others?

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Considerations such as these should underlie our assessment of the philosophical foundations of an evangelical world-view, or any other view that we may choose instead.

Background to the "Muller" Argument.

What I have called the "Muller" argument is a most interesting historical argument which arises from the evangelical experience and understanding of THE PRAYER OF FAITH. Other examples could also be drawn from the experiences of others within this same area of christian experience.

It should be noted clearly, however, that it is the EVANGELICALunderstanding of the prayer of faith which is being spoken of here, as taught by men like Muller, Finney, Torrey, Hudson Taylor, J.O.Fraser, Andrew Murray, and many others.

This should NOT be confused with the teaching and practice about the prayer of faith in pentecostal and charismatic circles, especially as they apply it in their healing ministries. There are clear differences. The "Muller" argument only applies to the evangelical understanding of the prayer of faith.

This is not meant to imply any criticism of any pentecostal or charismatic idea or practice. It is simply intended to point out some differences, and avoid confusions, in making this argument.

While pentecostals and charismatics may often agree (although not always) with the evangelical view on the prayer of faith, they do not carry it out very often in practice according to the evangelical view.

The "Muller" argument provides surprisingly strong support for many of the facets of evangelical christianity, and, in the process, provides definite evidence about the existence, living power and faithfulness of the christian God, and for the authority of the New Testament.

In essence, the argument arises from the christian experience of George Muller, founder of the orphanages in Bristol. In his early twenties he decided that his life would be a kind of experiment, to demonstrate that the God of the New Testament is a living God who answers prayer.

Muller's prayers covered an enormous field. But, the part which is most interesting for our purposes here, is that which related to the founding and running of the orphanages. In that area of activity

Muller tried with great care to carry out the teaching of the New Testament regarding prayer. At each point, he tried to discover the will of God, and tested in a number of ways what he came to believe was the will of God, seeking to avoid making a mistake.

When he became convinced that he knew God's will, with respect to the matter being prayed about at that time, he would then pray for that particular thing which he believed was according to God's will, and persist in that prayer, full of confidence that God would grant the request.

His testimony was, that, whenever he carefully followed this method of prayer, he ALWAYS received exactly what he asked for.

This was tested out in many hundreds of instances, over a period of forty years, and under a great many different circumstances. His word of testimony to God's living power and faithfulness was a great encouragement to many christians, and set an example that many others have followed.

Many other details of the way he went about the work of founding and running the orphanages could be given. These details help to strengthen the understanding that he was in fact dealing with God, and that he was not systematically deluding himself, or imposing an understanding upon the facts which was foreign or unwarranted.

A careful study of his experience and methods provides a great lesson in the christian life for anyone, and is recommended to any person who wants to explore the force of this argument concerning the existence of God.

For example, Muller's entire operation was based upon praying to God to supply all their needs, and not making any appeals for help or for funds outside of staff members. Yet, on a great many occasions, the exact money that was needed arrived on the precise day that it was needed, usually from a variety of donors, none of whom knew of the need, or of the deadline. The donors did not know each other, nor had they consulted together about making up a certain amount between them. When all the gifts were totalled up, the exact amount of money was on hand, down to the last penny.

<u>The Argument.</u>

In order to carry out his experiment, Muller had to make a number of assumptions - that the christian God exists; that the New Testament is a reliable guide to the will and Word of God; that what it says about Jesus Christ is true, etc., etc.

Muller would not have looked upon these things as "assumptions", but as things about which he was convinced. But, for the sake of this argument, we will call them assumptions.

Whenever Muller carefully followed the New Testament teaching about praying according to the will of God, he ALWAYS received exactly what he asked for.

This provides strong support for the truthfulness of his assumptions.

If he received what he asked for SOMETIMES, then it could be seen as a fluke, or as dependent upon factors which Muller did not know or understand. It would strongly suggest that some of his assumptions were mistaken, or even that all of them were wrong.

If he received what he asked for OFTEN, but not always, then it might be possible to find some

other pattern in what happened so as to discover a key factor that he perhaps had overlooked, or the value of which he had estimated wrongly.

But, seeing that he ALWAYS received what he asked for, we are led to the conclusion that Muller understood clearly what he was doing, and that his assumptions were correct.

If Muller had been mistaken in one of his basic assumptions, we would expect to find many of his prayers not answered, or at least not answered in the way he expected.

If the christian God did not exist, we would expect to see only a few of his prayers answered, as a result of happy coincidences. The existence of God is such a fundamental factor that, if Muller was wrong at that point, it would destroy his whole experiment. It would become impossible to get any consistent results, and any pattern of results would be due to other factors, which might be able to be discovered by a proper analysis.

The fact that he ALWAYS received exactly what he asked for, under certain specified conditions, is very strong evidence for the truthfulness of his main assumptions.

So far as I can see, the only ways that the force of this argument can be avoided are:-

1. to show that Muller has described the facts wrongly.

2. to produce some other explanation which accounts for all the facts in a more satisfactory way.

So far as number 1. is concerned, anybody is welcome to examine the facts for themselves. Sufficient evidence is still available to test the claim. Muller's story has been around for over a hundred years, and there has never been the slightest suggestion that the facts are not described correctly. There has been plenty of opportunity to refute the claim, but nobody has done it. If the claim is not correct, let somebody show us all.

Point number 1. emphasises for us that the Muller argument is an historical argument, and is subject to the same questions and weaknesses of any other historical argument.

So far as number 2. is concerned, it is certainly logically possible to have a different explanation. Logically, there can be any number of possible explanations. The question then is - which one of these possible explanations best accounts for the known facts? Which one is true?

Number 2 is the alternative which is most suitable to somebody who wants to use some other basic world-view than a Christian one in trying to understand all of this.

But, I think that producing another explanation is not a practical possibility. The reason for this is that any other explanation would not only have to account for the answers to Muller's prayers, it would have also to explain how Muller always got the right answer but was at the same time mistaken about one (or all) of his fundamental assumptions.

To repeat, the alternative explanation would firstly have to explain how Muller's prayers were all answered. That might be easy if there were only a small number of instances to account for. But there were many hundreds, under many different kinds of circumstances.

But, secondly, the alternative explanation would have to explain how the prayers were always answered in the expected manner, while Muller was mistaken at some basic point.

In creating explanations in science, for example, being mistaken over a fundamental assumption would normally be sufficient to destroy the expected pattern of results. Similarly, if Muller had been mistaken over the existence of God, it would have been impossible to achieve the results he did. Yet, this alternative explanation would have to show how Muller could make such a basic mistake, and yet get 100% results. Those who know anything of the practice of science know that seriously mistaken assumptions do not produce totally predictable results (when the prediction is based upon the belief that the wrong assumptions are correct.)

So, I conclude that it would be extremely difficult, in practice, to produce any alternative explanation to account for Muller's results, and which could deny the existence of the christian God, or, indeed, deny any of Muller's major assumptions.

Furthermore, many others have done the same thing as Muller did (obeying the New Testament teaching on prayer in the same way that Muller did), and have seen the same quality of results as Muller saw. The value of Muller's story is that he carried out his experiment in such a consistent and thoroughgoing way (more so than others did). So, his experiment is a clearer example than what most others have done.

So, a christian can add the further comment in defense of the argument, that critics should test out Muller's theory, and see for themselves whether it is true or not. However, they would have to be just as careful and thoroughgoing about it as Muller was, if they were going to test the theory properly.

It must be plainly stated, however, that Muller's basic beliefs were not greatly different from those of a great many evangelical believers. His manner of working for God is basically similar to the way many others served God. So, Muller's beliefs and practices were all part of a great tradition, and his work provides support for claims about knowing God which have been made by many other evangelical christians.

Conclusion.

The "Muller" argument is an historical argument which arises out of the evangelical understanding and experience of the prayer of faith.
It provides surprisingly strong evidence in favour of our knowing that God our heavenly Father is alive and well; that Jesus Christ is just who He claimed to be; and that the New Testament is a reliable guide to the will and Word of God.

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Chapter 12 - Building a Christian World-View

A number of comments have already been made, and others need to be made at this point, relating to some factors involved in the making of a world-view.

Firstly we saw that any world-view is based upon a number of assumptions, prejudices, hunches, pre-conceived ideas, and ideas drawn from other disciplines. Some of these ideas have been arrived at by conscious choice and reasoning, while others may have been picked up unconsciously from one's upbringing and cultural milieu.

Secondly, we saw that logic, and other lessons in straight or crooked thinking, will help a person in many ways to build his world-view, but it will not get rid of all his non-factual beliefs and claims to knowledge. This can only be attempted by the process of testing our ideas and theories against the reality to which they are supposed to refer.

Then arises a factor of basic importance. This is the problem of circular reasoning, when a thinker uses his assumptions in order to help him evaluate evidences which will be used to support his views, and help justify his assumptions. Naturally, a person's basic assumptions will colour ALL his thinking, and, as a result, this circularity is impossible to avoid.
This is a very serious problem facing any person trying to build a world-view. In many cases it can largely destroy the value of his opinions. But it is a difficulty we have to try to overcomeas best and as wisely as we can. At least being aware that the problem exists will help to keep us humble about the limited value of our ideas.

So. major problems exist in the area of the handling and evaluation of evidence, and the pursuit of truth.

However, the most difficult problem in this area arises where it becomes neccessary to choose between two competing world-views. That is the point where the evaluation of evidence is at once most difficult, and also critically important. This is because we have to try to make a judgment about which world-view offers a better possibility of the comprehensive understanding of reality. This is where the greatest wisdom is needed, and the most creative thinking.
While, in one sense, there may be almost as many different world-views as there are people, it is also true that only a small number of world-views have become very influential in the history of ideas, and in world history generally.

Especially in reading books like Albert Schweitzer's "Philosophy of Civilization", we can see the role played in our lives by the world-view that happens to be the prevailing one at a given time.
As a result, we can see the need that exists for us to develop better world-views which can be more truthful, positive and constructive in this modern world where our western civilization is coming apart at the seams.

Structure of a world-view.

Under this heading we will note two things.
(a.) There are certain basic components of a world-view.

(b.) And, there are some less basic parts of a world-view which are logically dependent upon the more basic parts.

In order to emphasise the first of these two points, we have already used a good deal of the contents of this book in highlighting such subjects as epistemology, the handling of evidence, probable conclusions, and the quest for truth.

We have also emphasised the place and influence of one's basic assumptions, prejudices and beliefs, their pervasive influence, and the difficulties that exist in verifying them, or showing faults or weaknesses in them.

Questions relating to what we will allow as evidence, and how it is handled and evaluated, can have far-reaching effects upon what can be known and done in many of the disciplines, and can seriously affect the whole of a world-view.

As we have seen, the Muller argument ASSUMES a certain world-view, in which Muller himself believed. From a philosophical point of view, this world-view is necessary for the happenings in Muller's life to be seen as evidence about something in particular.

Naturally, the Muller argument also IMPLIES a certain world-view, which is supported by the argument.

As noted, this circular type of reasoning applies to all use of evidence about anything whatsoever, and is impossible to avoid.
We must be aware of what aspects of any world-view are both assumed by and supported by arguments, and we must be careful how satisfied we feel about any world-view that we choose to adopt. We must be aware of what reasons, if any, we have for this feeling of satisfaction.

If we have chosen to adopt a world-view different from what is assumed by and supported by this Muller argument, we still have the task of evaluating George Muller, his beliefs, and the happenings of his life, to see what we can make of them. Then we must be honest enough, if we can, to judge whether our world-view does better at understanding everything than the world-view that Muller believed in.

While it is possible, as a matter of logic, to make any number of different explanations about the happenings referred to in the Muller argument, it is the author's belief that, amongst the known possible explanations, the one which Muller himself provided is by far the most plausible and reasonable, and ought to be accepted.

I believe it is extremely difficult, in practice, to provide any other explanation that will be satisfactory in any profound way.

However, the Muller argument is based upon a whole range of beliefs about the truth, reliability and God-given nature of the New Testament, and of the whole Bible. It is very hard to see how Muller's experiences could have happened if these beliefs were not basically correct.

These considerations provide some direct implications.

We are provided with the biblical basis for an evangelical theology, including many basic principles of christian ethics.

Aspects of this evangelical theology will provide key insights into basic components of our world-

view philosophy.

Again, if the world was substantially different from what an evangelical, biblical world-view philosophy outlines, I believe it becomes exceedingly difficult to understand how Muller achieved his results as he did.

Again, if a different world-view is to prevail, it has the task of not only giving a more adequate explanation of Muller's results than he gave himself, but this explanation has also to cope with showing us how he achieved his results whilst he based his work on many seriously mistaken beliefs.

In the realm of scientific experimentation, it is usually considered impossible to get a long series of results 100% correct according to prediction, and yet to achieve this on the basis of completely wrong assumptions.

This same principle will apply to the Muller argument, also.
Concerning our second point, that some philosophical ideas are logically prior to others within a system of world-view philosophy, we will note the following points.

Knowledge about the nature of reality has all to be gained from experience in the way we have been describing. But, we can then re-arrange these ideas into a system, starting with basic questions about the nature of things.

Whether or not there is a God is a good starting point, and what we can know about Him, and our relation to Him.

Then come our ideas about the nature of the material universe, its history and purpose.

This should include thoughts about the nature of truth, value and beauty.

Then comes our understanding of this world, and of human nature its history and destiny.

The doctrine of man, or the theory of human nature, is basic to such considerations as politics, economics and education

The existence and nature of God will bear upon our knowledge of what is right and wrong. Ideas of morality which are not based on theological factors have usually not had much success in making a moral standard.

These various considerations combine into our theories of society, and our philosophy of civilization.

<u>Some Basic Factors Considered So Far.</u>
If you have not disagreed with me over too many things, so far, we have looked at a number of points which are very important for any world-view, and which are basic building-blocks of our christian world-view.

1. We have seen, for example, that knowledge has to be based upon evidence, and cannot be based upon speculation.

2. We have seen that knowledge in ALL of the disciplines has to be based upon a single, coherent epistemology. We cannot have knowledge of God obtained in some way different from all the other areas of knowledge, or in some way that cannot be related to the basis of the rest of knowledge.

What is more, we have seen how this single, coherent epistemology actually works in a number of different disciplines, including in evangelical christianity.

3. We have seen that evangelical christianity can provide good evidence about the existence of the christian God, and about a number of related matters, which will be of vital importance in developing an evangelical christian world-view.

This is not meant to deny the possibility that some other form of christian theology may also be able to develop a similar coherent philosophical basis which will serve the needs of that particular kind of theology, or that some other major religion might also achieve this. But, we are looking at the whole subject from the standpoint of evangelical christianity, and for the purpose of outlining a world-view within that intellectual context.

4. I think we have also made clear that, when constructing any systematic set of ideas about reality, it is possible to start at a number of different points. And the choice of the starting point will probably influence how we proceed, and what kind of results we will finish up with.

In this book, we have really started with epistemology, although admitting that other areas exist that are more basic, from the point of view of systematic thinking. and that they will have to be treated in their more basic position in due course.

This procedure will naturally have a considerable effect on what we do in making our world-view, and the results we get.

So, if we try to make a list of subjects, putting first those subjects which arise at the most basic point, we would probably end up with a list something like the following:-

the basis of reality.
the nature and purpose of reality.

truth, ethics, values and beauty.

human nature.

human knowledge.

human society.

man's place in the world,

various disciplines of enquiry,

various applied sciences.

No doubt, this list could be re-arranged in a number of ways, depending upon the likes and dislikes of the philosopher.

As we try to expand this short list, and as we look at differing answers that are provided in different world-views, we will get a better idea of the shape that our christian world-view will take. The

Basis of Reality.

This area involves religious considerations.

A christian would say that the basis of reality is God, and would produce evidences in favour of his views from the teachings of the Bible, or such as we considered in the previous chapter.

A secular humanist would have to say either that such questions (about God) cannot be answered (for lack of evidence), or that the universe exists by itself, and does not depend upon anything else for its existence.

The secular humanist's first option, that the existence of God cannot be known, raises questions about the secular humanist's assumptions, prejudices, etc., and about what he will accept as evidence about God.

The second option, that the universe is self-existent, is based upon speculation. It is very hard to see how any evidence could ever be obtained to support the idea. It could, however, still be true, despite these limitations of human knowledge, of course.

We have also already seen that some popularisers of science (and some scientists), try to offer quasi-religious opinions in this area, pretending that they are expressing scientific theories which have much evidence to support them. This practice has misled many people.

The Nature and Purpose of Reality.

This area also involves religious opinions at many points.

A christian would say that creation is the handiwork of God, and is beautiful because He has made it so. It is maintained in existence, and in order (according to the so-called laws of nature), by the same power and authority that produced it in the first place.

We may not know when creation was made, or how God went about it all, or how long He took to make it all. This is not one of the things which has been revealed clearly in the scriptures. The research of scientists can sometimes cast some light on aspects of these questions.

However, as we have seen earlier, we must be careful to realise that some of these questions have religious aspects to them, which are not open to be answered by the scientific method. And, in the same way, there can be other aspects of these questions which can be approached scientifically. These aspects must not be confused. We must not succumb to the temptation of trying to provide religious answers to scientific questions, nor must we put forward quasi-scientific speculations in an attempt to answer
religious questions.
The purpose of creation is determined by God, and this has been partly revealed in the scriptures.

Evidence in support of these views is not difficult to obtain, once the more basic questions have been answered about the existence of God, the person and authority of Jesus Christ, and the authority of the scriptures.

A secular humanist can not take the view that "creation" has intelligent design, or that it is the handiwork of any known God. There is little alternative to the view that the universe occurred by chance, and without design.

This "chance" view has a number of implications, which transcend all bounds of rationality. (This is a judgment that christians would make about secularist views, at least.)

For example, it requires belief in certain probabilities that innumerable highly organised and complicated organisms, and even much simpler molecules, have evolved from hydrogen atoms, by pure chance.

The probabilities of this occurring are so remote as to make belief in this hypothesis very difficult indeed. As Frank Ballard said, many years ago, the miracles required by non-belief in God are much more difficult to cope with, within the bounds of human reason, than are the miracles which flow from belief in an Almigty God.

Also, the secularist view is a religious view, which has not a single shred of evidence to support it. It is certainly not a scientific view of any kind. However, it is a widely held view, and seems to be the only option open to a secular humanist.

Naturally, it is not possible for a secular humanist to talk about any known purpose that "creation" shares, or that is the destiny of human history chosen by God.

Truth, Ethics, Values and Beauty.

There are a number of possible views about these subjects which an evangelical christian can hold. At least some of them can be based directly upon the foundations which we have laid in the previous chapters. As has been mentioned, there is enough scope in this way to build an entire christian world-view, and to provide for a number of possible variations in detail within it.

In each case, we need to be aware of basic, general considerations, as well as specific insights which can be provided from Christian theology.

Truth.

We have already noted some general theories of truth. But we also noted that no real trut is possible unless there is an absolute standard, or "Archimedean point" which will provide the points of reference from which ultimately truth, wisdom and value can be judged.

It is at this point that theological insights are not only useful, but are of crucial importance.

For, example, truth is reality as seen and understood by God.

The Bible says that creation has been made by and for Jesus Christ, and will be summed up and judged by Him according to purposes chosen by the heavenly Father.

Therefore, Jesus was able to say "I am the truth."

Human understandings of truth are possible, within this framework, and must be judged by this standard.

Secular humanists have NO similar standard of truth, and so have to speak of truth only from limited human perspectives. It is only a short step from this position to having to say that there is no such thing as truth.

Ethics.

As we have already seen, ethics is a study of the foundations of moral judgments. Ethics provides the basis upon which we can determine what is right and wrong.

For christians, this is provided by what we know of the nature of God, the will of God, and the Kingdom of God. God has communicated some of this to us through His Word. Jesus Christ is personally the Word of God, and He has spoken to us through the scriptures.

The Holy Spirit can give us the wisdom to use this foundation as a basis, enabling us to make judgments about what God sees as right or wrong for us in all our situations.

Every individual is, in this way, responsible to God to do what is right.

Every individual ought to be given the space (freedom) to be able to carry out his or her responsibilities to God, and to others.

A secular humanist has no standard of this kind for deciding what is right or wrong. He has to decide on the basis of a feeling for what is most fitting in any given situation. And, as a result, the ultimate purpose that he serves can vary greatly.
The secularist seeks freedom of a different kind, also. He wants to be free to act according to his own choice, or to seek his own personal fulfilment. This may, or may not, take any account of any personal responsibilities.

Values.

Opinions about what is most valuable operate in a similar way to estimations about what is right and wrong.

A scale of values requires a series of comparative judgments which will give us a list of things, purposes, actions, goals, etc., in ascending or declining order of worth.

For a christian, the worth of such things is related to whether we carry out our daily life for God, or for some other ultimate goal. And, whether we are obeying God, or not. What is done for God, and in obedience to God, has an eternal value which other courses of action do not possess.

For a secular humanist, the worth of our actions has necessarily to be limited to this earthly life, and it may be difficult to find any satisfactory way to show that anything is worth more than anything else.

Beauty.

For the christian, beauty is possible because God is the source and standard of all beauty. Creation is beautiful because He has
made it, and it expresses His qualities to some degree. Man is able to make beautiful things, at times, because he uses abilities that God has given him.

Man's ability to recognise what is beautiful (his taste), is partly corrupted by sin, and a christian

ought to see it as his responsibility to re-educate his taste into conformity to our knowledge of God.

For the secular humanist, there is not objective standard of beauty, and, as a result, his judgment on such matters is ultimately subjective. Beauty is "in the eye of the beholder."

Certainly, many secularists may agree that a particular thing is beautiful. But, ultimately, the reasons for this depend upon what opinions happen to prevail at the time, and not upon any objective standard which is independent of human judgment.

Human Nature.

This subject is of profound and far-reaching importance in the implications it has for every area of social philosophy, and the philosophy of civilization.

At this point we need especially to note the place that this topic has in the systematic structure of our thinking.

Granted the Christian understanding of what we have listed about reality, truth, ethics, values, beauty, etc., then our understanding of man is based upon these other factors, and not vice versa.

For the Christian, man's nature is determined by the nature and purpose of creation, and is revealed basically in Jesus Christ, and in the Scriptures.

The secular humanist, or those with some other world-view, will have to develop his insights about human nature out of raw materials coming from some other source.

The American theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, has shown how these other world-views produce theories of human nature which are based upon illusions or speculations, or which contain illusory elements in them. He has also shown the terrible results which have flowed from these mistaken theories of human nature in the course of history.

Human Knowledge.

This subject has been covered extensively in this book, so far. So it will not be enlarged upon here. But, the main point here is to notice the position it has in the systematic structure of our thinking, and of our view of the world.

The Remaining Structure of the World-View..

All other areas of human knowledge and endeavour operate upon the basis described above.

The Humanities and Social Sciences.

As we have seen, this area involves history, psychology, law, education, philosophy, and many other areas of life and study.

Sociology and the other subjects can be treated as separate from the humanities, or together, as desired.

The Physical Sciences, the Earth Sciences and the Biological Sciences

These all form definable areas, as we have seen in an earlier part of the book.

Other Disciplines.

The other disciplines, such as mathematics, religion and aesthetics, are also of fundamental importance for a full-orbed understanding of life.

The Applied Sciences,

These include such areas as medicine, engineering, military studies, agriculture, horticulture, and many other areas of the application of technology, are also very important parts of life, and must have an appropriate place in our world-view.

Naturally, things which arise in any area of knowledge can have implications and repercussions which might affect very basic parts of the system of thought which makes up a world-view.

But, generally, we must look at ways in which the superstructure of our system of thought depends upon the foundations that we have spelled out at the beginning.

Chapter 13 – Evangelical Christian Theology

Up to this point we have been dealing with the philosophical basis of our views of reality. In order to have a coherent view of all these things it is necessary to view all disciplines and subjects of enquiry on the same basis regarding human knowledge. All real knowledge has to be achieved by the same methods, or by ways which can be related to each other.

We do not want to have two areas of "knowledge", which operate in two different ways, and which therefore have to be put into two separate pidgeon-holes, and cannot be related to each other.
It is a recipe for a situation where we might think that we know things in these two areas, but where one area provides true knowledge, and in the other area we have misled ourselves.

Yet, this "two areas" problem is precisely what we usually have, when it comes to religious matters.

There are so many religious views held by different people, and these views are usually so different from each other that they cannot all be right. Yet, the adherents of each of the views can all be very determined that their particular religious opinions are the correct ones, even if nobody else agrees with them.

How are we to know which ones are on the right track? The study of "faith and reason" should help us to solve that issue.

Then we can proceed with the necessary work of building the rest of our world-view.

What is Theology?

Theology is that area of enquiry which deals with our knowledge of the nature of God, and of our relationship with this God. It also should deal with the opinions which serve the same purpose for an atheist that belief in God performs for a believer. So, substitutes for God should also be included.

For example, Buddhism is usually classed as one of the world's great religions, although some of its ideas about God are quite different from those found within Christianity. Yet, Buddhism contains a complete range of ideas about the foundations of all things, and about the meaning of human life, and is able to set out an entire world-view, as you would expect of any major religion. So, we need to spread the net very widely in defining theology. The Starting-Point for Christian Theology.

The starting-point of any theology is a matter of choice by the theologian, and usually indicates what his or her major interest might be. A change in starting-point will also produce certain changes in the actual content of any theology. But, in a systematic Christian theology, the doctrine of God, or the doctrine of the Word of God, is the normal starting-point.

Philosophy, on the other hand, starts with man, and talks about the possibilities of knowing anything, on a more general basis.

Theology, therefore, assumes that we have already answered the more basic philosophical questions about how such knowledge is to be gained, and what value that knowledge is supposed to have.

So far as the systematic treatment of human knowledge is concerned, philosophy must provide the basis about the possibilities, methods and extent of what we can know.
Theology can come in at a later point, giving us an example of how knowledge about God operates,

and what this knowledge reveals.

Theology will give us many valuable insights which will have to be put at the very foundations of any world-view, as we saw in the previous chapter.

But the previous chapters about philosophy will have helped us into a better position to judge whether, and to what extent, these theological insights are true, and to judge what value we should place upon them.

So we must clearly recognise that Christian theology does NOTuse as a starting point the "Muller" argument, or any other line of reasonings which serve the same purpose as that. The "Muller" argument is simply a test, or an effort at verification, concerning some things which are believed about God for other reasons, and using a different starting point.

The starting point of Christian theology is normally a consideration of what we can know about God, particularly as expressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and also as testified in the Christian Scriptures.

Evangelical Theology.

Evangelical theology is a particular type of Christian theology.
It is a theology of the Word of God, based (in recent centuries) upon the theology of the Reformation, of the Puritans, and the 18th Century and 19th Century Evangelical Awakenings, and revivals, although it is seen also as a return to a bettertheology of the New Testament.

Evangelical theology emphasises that the Scriptures alone are our basis and final court of appeal for all doctrine and duty, as opposed to the view that other standards should also be included (such as, the traditions of the Church, the decisions of Popes or Councils, or the writings of any favoured sect leader.)

It also emphasises that salvation is to be obtained by one means alone, that is through faith in the atonement wrought by means of the death of Jesus Christ. Therefore there is no room for any other factor to be included as the basis of salvation, alongside the death of Christ, whether that is thought to be some merit or works that we achieve, the use of the sacraments, or even our faith.

A renewed life is a key part of the Christian life, but that must arise as part of our response to Christ, and not as a condition needed before we can receive Christ.

THE BASIS OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Christian knowledge of God arises from several sources. These are:-

The Central Importance of Jesus Christ,
The Biblical Scriptures,
Consideration of the Physical Creation,
Direct Illumination by the Holy Spirit.

(a.) The Centrality of Jesus Christ.

The key question in Christianity is "Who is Jesus Christ?"

Like all other types of Christian theology, evangelical Christian theology is built around the fact that Jesus Christ is God's Messiah, sent in love to meet the needs of mankind, and to fulfil God's purposes for His creation. From the earliest days of the Christian church this has been expressed in the affirmation that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord.

We can learn about God from His self-revelation in the Old Testament. But, the value of the Old Testament as a source of knowledge about God is greatly limited unless it is seen in terms of the way God fulfilled its meaning, promises and expectations in the coming of Jesus, as described in the New Testament.

Jesus Christ is "the Word of God". He is the only adequate self-expression of God. God's expression of Himself in Jesus Christ is sufficient to provide a context in which everything else can be evaluated and given its meaning.
Christ's redemptive work on the Cross provides the basis and power to bring to fulfilment all of God's purposes for mankind.

(b.) The Biblical Scriptures.

In certain respects, the Bible is an independent and separate revelation from God, apart from all other revelations.

In other respects, it is a dependent revelation, relying for its value and meaning upon Jesus Christ.

The Christian believes that the Bible has been specially prepared by God. It is God's way of recording and interpreting His plan and truth for us. The whole story is important. Every part of the Bible plays its role in revealing God's heart, truth, plan and character to us.

It has a special relation to Christ, and serves as a lasting, written witness to Christ. It also provides an account of the whole context into which Jesus came, and in terms of which He is to be understood.

So, in one sense, the Bible provides the context and terms of reference for understanding who Jesus is, and what He has done. In another sense, the Bible is to be understood in the light of Christ. These two insights must be held in tension.

The Bible is to be understood and judged in the light of God's self-revelation in Jesus, and in terms of what Jesus Himself said about those parts of the Bible which existed during His days in Judaea, and the writings which arose directly from that period.

Jesus also described Himself in certain ways. The evangelical Christian believes these claims. Jesus also described the Biblical Scriptures in certain ways. He had a certain attitude toward them, and valued them in a certain way. The evangelical Christian accepts this valuation.

Jesus Christ is the kind of person that He is revealed to be in the New Testament, and the New Testament is a reliable revelation from God about Jesus, about the Heavenly Father, and about God's purposes.

Consequently, our knowledge about God, and about Jesus Christ, has to arise from the Bible, as

those writings are viewed in the light of the Christian revelation as a whole.

The Bible has apparently been specially given to us by God to fulfil this role of being the basis of our knowledge about Divine things.

Reference should also be made to the section on "The Authority of the Scriptures", which appears a little later in this chapter.

(c.) The Creation.

While we may be able to learn something about God from looking at creation, we cannot learn enough from that source to build a proper context and world-view for this understanding if we rely simply upon what we can learn about God arising from this source. It is not enough for an adequate frame of reference to give us a sufficient understanding of all that God wants to reveal to us about Himself.

From the creation we can learn something about God's wisdom and power, but not enough about His character to distinguish Him from other alleged gods, and certainly not enough to achieve the task of overcoming human sin, and including mankind in the fulfilment of God's great purposes. The work of Christ in His incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, seems to be the only way that God could do all that He wished to do with us.

(d.) Illumination by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is able to illuminate the minds of people in many ways. Such illumination is an important part of normal Christian experience, and is also an essential part of the preparation which takes place in people who are being led by God to the point of Christian conversion. The Spirit also works in many similar ways to achieve many different purposes in people throughout the world.

But it is very easy for people to think they are being led in some way by God, and for all kinds of unworthy things to be done as a result. In order to test such illumination, and in order for it to be a proper part of God's revelation located in Jesus Christ, the church normally considers that all such illumination has to be tested against the teaching of the Scriptures in order for it to be classified as properly Christian in character.

<u>The Interpretation of the Scriptures.</u>

An evangelical has to use certain methods of interpretation in reading the New Testament, in seeking to understand its meanings.These methods of interpretation, however, are basically the same as we use in understanding any other similar document.

This must be followed by the task of trying to apply what we have learned to our own situation, in order for the Scriptures to become, in practice, our guide, in matters of faith and practice.

Yet, these issues must never be seen as purely academic, nor even as mainly academic. Nor must they function purely according to the sinful wisdom of this world, but rather as we are illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

These two steps in (a.) understanding, and (b.) applying the Scriptures must be borne in mind as two separate matters. There have been many instances of Christians who were gifted at seeing what the Bible meant for writer and hearer, but who did not then apply it in their own lives with the same

clarity.

So, the methods of acquiring knowledge from the New Testament are the same as are used anywhere else in our theory of knowledge, but bearing in mind the nature of the materials that we are studying, and the nature of the person about whom the New Testament testifies.

Applying this knowledge to ourselves firstly requires wisdom, in seeing just what we should do. This should lead us to depend very much in prayer upon the guiding and teaching of the Holy Spirit, as well as making wise use of the wisdom of other Christians. Then, secondly, there comes the matter of obedience.

Example: The Puritans as Interpreters of Scripture.

The Puritan understanding of how to interpret the Bible is set out here as a guide and example for us in our approach to Bible study. The Puritans were not perfect, and some additional insights have been raised by various Christians since those days.

This summary is based upon a chapter on this subject by James I. Packer, republished in his book "The Quest for Godliness."

(a.) Two Presuppositions.
(1.) Scripture is the utterance of God. God has an eternal purpose and truth. The historical study in the Bible is God's way of recording and interpreting this plan. Every part of the Bible plays its part in revealing what God wants us to know about Himself, and about this plan. Even the parts which some allege to be of "lesser value" (such as Psalm 137), also have their role to play in the whole picture.

For the Puritan, it was God who uttered the prophecies, recorded the histories, expounded the doctrines, declared the praises, wrote the visions, etc., although He used mortal and limited people to do it. God's mind is unfathomable, so there is always more truth for God to break forth from His Word.

(2.) The subject matter of Scripture is what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

This affects every area of life - every thought, word, action, motive, association, etc. Every aspect of life involves devotion to God. Because of our limited knowledge and understanding of all these things, we must pray for the help of the Holy Spirit. Thus we must be reverent, humble, prayerful, teachable and obedient to God in all we do. (b.) Six Principles.

(1.) The primary meaning of any passage in the Bible is the normal grammatical meaning intended by the author, and which would have been seen in the passage by the people to whom it was written.

(2.) Despite all of the human authors who were involved in writing the Bible, and who came from various ages, cultures, backgrounds and languages, there is one overall author. So, the Bible has to be seen as one book, the work of one author, and any one part has to be understood in the light of the whole.

(3.) It teaches us about God, and about how things look from God's standpoint. This often involves radical differences from the normal viewpoint espoused by any human culture, society or

personality.

(4.) The Bible is Christological and Evangelical. That is: it is all basically about Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

Christ is the truth and substance of all the Old Testament types and shadows.

He is the substance and matter of the Covenant of Grace.

Christ is the centre and meeting-place of all of God's promises.

Christ is what is signified, exhibited and sealed in all the sacraments, both of the Old and New Testaments.

Scripture genealogies are useful to lead us to the true line of Christ.

Scripture chronologies are intended to show us the times and seasons of Christ.
Scripture laws are intended to bring us to Christ. The moral law corrects us toward Christ, and the ceremonial law directs towards Christ.

The Scripture gospel is Christ's gospel. By Christ's light we are drawn to see, hear and follw. We are drawn by Christ's love. Christ's gospel is the power of God which achieves and secures our salvation, and fulfils all of the purposes of God for us.

So, Christ is the substance, marrow and soul of the whole of the Scriptures.

(5.) The Bible is also a book of spiritual experience. It speaks to us about our need, our fears, doubts, temptations, despair, faith, the fight with sin, the attacks of Satan, peaks of joy, and dry wastes of spiritual depression. But it tells us how to relate to God in all these situations of life. So, it is eminently practical in that way.
(6.) It is also useful and applicable in order to reprove us and correct us. It is a textbook for self-examination. It tests our spiritual condition, and shows us that we are not as Christ-like as we thought.

In our modern age we are more aware of the ways we are different from the people in Bible times, and this colours our attempts to understand the Bible. Our culture and technology are very different indeed. We face many questions that had never been thought of 2000 years ago.

The Puritans were more aware of the ways in which they were close to the Bible people.

Despite the differences, God is the same, and human nature and needs are very much the same, despite the "progress" that may have occurred in so many other ways.

<u>The Authority of the Scriptures.</u>

Many attempts have been made by theologians, and by many others, to set out theories which try to show HOW, WHY, and TO WHAT EXTENT, the Scriptures are our authoritative guide in matters of faith and conduct.

Some of these doctrines have been promulgated with great determination, so that those who did not agree were made to appear as unbelievers or disobedient.

In many cases, it must be said, the reasons given in support of some of these views have left a great deal to be desired.

For example, the claim that the Scriptures are self-authenticating, is insufficient, as the same claim is made about the Koran by many Moslems. These Bible believers have felt that the Bible has such an impact upon them that they feel it is very convincing to them. But why should a claim that the Bible is self-authenticating be accepted, and then not accept the same claim about the Koran, probably based upon the same kinds of evidences?

Many others have simply relied upon whatever the Bible claims about itself. "All Scripture is inspired by God" is believed because the Bible says so. Now, it may be true that all Scripture is inspired by God. But, believing it simply because the Bible says so is clearly inadequate. There are many other books which claim to be inspired by God, so, why should we believe it about the Bible, and not about these other writings? Answering this last question as to why the Bible is trusted as opposed to other books which claim inspiration for themselves will perhaps get us a little closer to the core of the matter.

In terms of the theory of human knowledge which we have been setting out in this book, the best approach to a realisation of the authority of the Scriptures is to be found by considering the authority of Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus Christ is embraced as Saviour and Lord by Christians, usually for purely religious reasons. These religious reasons usually function in terms of an "inner", personal kind of knowledge and experience, which is not open to public scrutiny or verification which is open to others.

In the chapter on "Faith and Reason" we saw that embracing Jesus like this involves an act of faith in Jesus, a dependence upon His reliability, as to who He is, and as to what He has promised.

While we may have depended for our knowledge about Jesus (that is, for the knowledge about Jesus upon which our act of faith was based) upon what others told us about Jesus, ultimately, all of this knowledge about Jesus depended upon what generations of Christians have learned about Him from the Bible.

Philosophically, this embracing of Jesus as Saviour and Lord can be looked upon in the same way as the making of an assumption, or the acceptance of a "working hypothesis".

This involves us in the further assumption or working hypothesis that Jesus Christ has an authority similar to the authority of God Himself. Jesus claimed to have been given an authority of a kind something like this. And, saying "Jesus is Lord" implies attributing to Him the possession of an authority of this kind.

As a result, we must embrace for ourselves the attitude that Jesus had toward the Scriptures, as they existed in His earthly days. We must also accept as authoritative the testimony of the first disciples about Jesus, because of their personal experiences of Him, and because of the way that the Holy Spirit spoke to them, and through them, during the first days of the primitive church.

So, we have accepted certain views about the authority of the Scriptures, because of the authority of Jesus Christ Himself. However, as we have seen, it is possible to treat these views as assumptions or working hypotheses, until some test or verification becomes available.

For many Christians, a great many of their subsequent experiences in the Christian life provide for them a continual string of verifications for these fundamental beliefs. But, these usually fall into the area of private, inner experiences, which do not necessarily provide a more public kind of verification.

We have seen, however, that there are some instances when these verifications are more open to public scrutiny. In the case of George Muller a most interesting verification test has been made. Muller's experiences depended entirely upon the full authority of Jesus Christ, and of the Scriptures, as we have been describing. Muller's experiences cannot be properly understood in any other context.

Also, Muller's experiences were simply examples of the kind of experiences that a great many other Christians have had, although his seemed both to occur, and to be described, in a more thorough and systematic way, and thus they provided a clearer, public test of many of the features of evangelical theology.

It must be added, however, that Muller's experiences do not necessarily provide support for any particular modern theory about the psychology of how God inspired the writers of the Bible. For example, it does not necessarily support the modern theories of "verbal inspiration" or of the infallibility of the Bible. Certainly, there is no problem with any attempt to describe the psychology of inspiration, in relation to the Bible. But, we must not claim too much for these theories.

While these modern theories may, or may not, be true, the support of the Muller experiences implies simply the view that God is able to lead people to say, or to write, what He wants them to say or to write. Regardless of how God has achieved this, the practical effect which is fundamental to all of Muller's experiences is that the Bible depends for its authority upon the authority of Jesus Christ, and that it shares in this authority. It has the authority that Jesus said it had. And we must be careful to treat the Scriptures in the light of this.

The Bible writers were ordinary people, who had normal mental limitations, and who lived in a particular cultural setting, and used thought-forms, concepts and a language, which had certain characteristics and limitations. These features affected what they wrote, so that the message of the Bible cannot be understood unless we bear these features in mind.

No doubt God was well aware of all these characteristics and limitations when He led these writers and prophets to write and say what they did.

And, no doubt, God is also able to help us in gaining what He wants to say to us, as we read the Bible in our own very different day, age, cultural setting, and language characteristics, and with our limited ability to receive communications from an ancient literature. It is part of the work of the Holy Spirit to be involved in all these matters.

What Did Jesus Say About This?

Three statements of our Lord are recorded in the gospels which relate to the issue of the authority and reliability of the Scriptures.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away" This is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke in regard to Christ's prophetic statements about the destruction of Jerusalem, and the events near the end of the world.

"It is more possible for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail, until all is fulfilled." Words similar to this appear in both Matthew and Luke as part of the sermon on the mount, and the sermon on the plain.

"The Scriptures cannot be broken." This is part of a dialogue recorded in John, chapter 10, where Jesus quoted a verse from a psalm as an authority for a case He was making against the Pharisees.

The impression created by these statements is that Christ placed a very high price upon the reliability of the scriptures, and that He took a lot of notice of their God-given authority. A main purpose in His coming into the world was to fulfil the Scriptures.

From the philosophical point of view, as set out in this book, the claims Jesus made about the authority, reliability and God-given nature of the Old Testament, and of His own words, can be accepted directly because of the evidence provided by the George Muller argument.

We do not need to worry about what the liberal theologians, or the Biblical critics, might say about these verses, because the value that is being placed upon them here does not depend at all upon these analytical or critical factors. The basis of evidence upon which we are here operating is quite different from any of those things.

If some critic claimed that Jesus did not actually say those words, and that they were invented and put into His mouth by some of the disciples, our case about their complete reliability is not weakened in any way at all.

An evangelical Christian is committed to place the same value upon the Scriptures as our Lord does in these verses.

Infallibility? Human or Divine?

The question of infallibility raises an issue which has created a great deal of confusion for many, many people.

Many Roman Catholic Christians believe that the Pope is infallible when he speaks under certain specified circumstances.

Many evangelical Protestant Christians believe that the Bible is infallible, either in what it says about God, or in what it says on any subject.

From our insights into the theory of human knowledge we have learned that all human knowledge about matters of experience is apparently PARTIAL - so far as we can tell, it never has complete information on any matter. Also, it is PERSPECTIVIST in its nature - it only looks at issues from certain points of view. It is always culturally conditioned, and influenced by the limited experiences of the knowing person. There is always room for improvement, and there are always other perspectives to explore.

As a result, it is very hard to see how any concept of infallibility will be of much use in thinking about any part of human knowledge arising from experience.

It may be true to say that God is infallible, or that His knowledge, wisdom or judgment is infallible, or even that any expression of Himself that He makes is infallibly what He wants it to be.

This may simply mean that God is God, that He is the final authority, and that He doesn't make mistakes.

But, it is another thing entirely to say that any part of our human knowledge arising from experience, whether it is about God, or any item of human knowledge about any matter relating to God, or relating to any other subject at all, is infallible or complete, or is not able to be improved upon.

God, within His sphere of activity, is able to guide or lead people, or to inspire Biblical writers, Popes, or ordinary Christians, so that they do, say or write what He wants them to.

But, if this is intended to mean that certain statements within the areas of human knowledge and communications are infallibly true, then we are going to have problems with our basic philosophy. We are going to have to cope with two types of knowledge, one of which is infallibly true, and the other which follows normal epistemological theory.

God is infallible, but humans and human knowledge are not. The Bible has a Divine author. But it is also a human book. As a human book it will share all of the limitations relating to human knowledge and communications generally. But, we do not need to fear this, or see it as a source whereby we will be deceived and misled.

God has made human limitations in the first place. He understands our limitations better than we do. He is able to take and use them with perfect confidence. So, God is able to make the Bible into exactly the book that He wants, and that will fulfil His purposes for it exactly. He uses human limitations to glorify Himself.

So, the Bible contains precisely what God wanted it to contain. In this way it is thoroughly reliable., as Jesus said it is. But it is also a fully human book which fits within the framework of our human epistemology. Thus we are able to see the glory of God in producing and using this book, and making it reliable for us.

When we look further into the location of any possible claim of infallibility we can consider the matter as follows.

Statements are given a meaning by the person making the statement, within a particular cultural setting. The person who reads or hears the statement will not necessarily succeed well in arriving at the same meaning that was first intended, especially if the language and cultural setting are different.

If statements about God are meant to be infallibly true, what meanings are we to attach to these statements? A number of possibilities exist.

(a.) Are we going to approach the statements with that meaning attached to them which was intended by the first speaker in his or her own limited cultural and linguistic setting?

From a human, philosophical point of view, it is hard to see how these statements which make claims to express knowledge about God are different from any other statements which make claims to knowledge. The only difference is in the object about which the claims to know are made. It is the human speaker who gives the meaning. How can this human action be infallible?

(b.) Are statements about God meant to stand on their own, as isolated kinds of things, regardless of the personal elements or cultural setting? Such statements are not a part of human knowledge,

and can play no role within human knowledge or experience, unless they are given personal elements and a cultural setting, by the person who uses the statements.

Within the scope of human knowledge, statements have no meaning, in and of themselves, apart from the human mind in which they occur, and which gives them meaning. How, then, can they be infallible in some way independent of human minds?

(c.) Are statements about God meant to be infallibly true in terms of the meaning that God intended them to have?

This is the usual attitude taken by conservative protestant theologians.

But, how are limited human minds to discover these meanings in the mind of God - a meaning which is probably far deeper and greater than we can grasp?

As soon as we develop concepts in an attempt to discover this meaning, and to make it a part of human knowledge, it becomes affected by all our limitations, and cultural factors, and is no longer infallible.

The infallible element, which was possible to God, is lost as soon as we try to make it enter the realm of human knowledge.

So, it is hard to see how these ideas of infallibility can be made to apply to anything within the scope of what human beings claim to know.

While God, and God's knowledge, may be infallible, human beings and human knowledge are not.

If our analysis of human knowledge is anywhere near to the truth, then, there seems to be little use for any claim to infallibility about any human attempt to know something as a result of experience, whether it is uttered by Pope, saint, Biblical writer or ordinary Christian, and whether the object of the knowledge is God, or not.

If the claims to an infallible Bible by many evangelicals were simply taken to mean that they were making very strong expressions about their confidence in the reliability of what the Bible says, then there would be less difficulty, as confidence in the Biblical witness, and dependence upon its reliability, is a key feature of evangelical theology. A thing which Jesus also had as a very strong feature.

God said what He meant to say through the Bible and through Jesus Christ, and He can help us to a better understanding of these things.

I fear, however, that such ideas of infallibility are often not meant to be understood like this. I fear that they are meant to imply some unknown theory of human knowledge which includes the possibility of human infallibility, and which is therefore substantially different from the theory of human knowledge presented in this book.

Such ideas of human infallibility seem to me to be both unfortunate and untrue.

What is also unfortunate is that many evangelicals, and others, have thought that a belief in Biblical inerrancy and infallibility is a test of orthodoxy, and that anybody who does not believe it is a heretic.

One of many evangelicals who have tried to avoid ideas of inerrancy and infallibility was the American Baptist theologian, Augustus H. Strong.

"While holding a high view of Biblical authority, Strong's starting point was that truth was not doctrinal or propositional, but rather 'the truth of a personal Being, and that Christ Himself is the truth'. Strong attributed the intellectual difficulties in the church to a view of truth that was too abstract and literal. People mistakenly supposed that the perfection attributed to the deity could be attributed equally to statements about Christ made by the church, the ministry, the Bible, or a creed. 'A large part of the unbelief of the present day', he said, 'has been caused by the unwarranted identification of these symbols and manifestations with Christ Himself. Neither the church nor ministry, Bible or creed, is perfect. To discover imperfections in them is to prove that they are not in themselves divine.'

Strong rejected very explicitly the idea of Scripture as inerrant and in his influential "Systematic Theology" eventually dropped language that might even suggest such a conclusion." (George M. Marsden. "Fundamentalism and American Culture" P.107.)

This seems to me to have been a very wise decision.

THE GRACE OF GOD.

The supremely characteristic word of the Christian gospel is the word "Grace".

The conceptions linked with the idea of God's grace which are found in the Old Testament are very rich in meaning. But, extra dimensions are added in the teaching about grace that we find in the New Testament, especially in the epistles of Saint Paul.

Thomas F. Torrance describes the idea of grace in the Old Testament as follows:

"There is no one word for grace in the Old Testament as there is in the New, nor are the precise lineaments of the New Testament thought manifest, but the substance of the doctrine is there. In fact there is no language that expresses so profoundly and so tenderly the unaccountable love of God as the Hebrew of the Old Testament. This is not thought of abstractly but in intensely personal terms as the active love of One who is essentially the living and loving God of Israel. The dominant thought throughout is the amazing choice of Isael by God as grounded only in His free and unlimited love and as creating a community in fellowship with God who bestows Himself upon them as Father and Saviour for ever." (page 10.)

Two of the Hebrew words used in conveying aspects of the idea of grace in the Old Testament can be described in the words of H. R. Macintosh, "Grace is love in its princely and sovereign form, love for the indifferent and the disloyal, whose one claim is their need." (Torrance, page 12.)

The other word for grace is linked with showing loving kindness within the bonds of a covenant relationship.

"Such a bond or covenant might be on a private or personal level as that between David and Jonathan, but in Israel the ties of determining importance were those made first personally by God with Abraham and the patriarchs, nationally with Israel at Sinai, and then with the royal house of David."

This grace "is therefore not to be regarded as a virtue among virtues, or even as one at the top of the

scale, but rather as the fundamental relationship upon which the whole structure of Israelite society and religion rested. As such it embraces all social and personal relationships, but primarily it is a relationship between men and God which includes all men's relations with one another because they are all related to God" within the same grace. This grace "is the act of kindness by which God chooses Israel and promises therewith blessing and salvation." (pages 12 - 14.)

Grace not only entails the transcendent righteousness of God, but also calls upon us to be righteous as well. But this grace of God persists with us, despite the fact of our consistent failure to practice the righteousness which is required.

The New Testament word for grace not only includes all of the Old Testament insights, but adds another complete dimension.

The New Testament word for grace "is such a new word that it cannot be interpreted in terms of antecedent roots or ideas. Rather is it to be understood in the light of a singular event which completely alters the life of man in basis and outlook: the Incarnation. God has personally intervened in human history in such a way that the ground of man's approach to God, and of all his relations with God, is not to be found in man's fulfilment of the divine command, but in a final act of self-commitment on the part of God in which He has given Himself to man through sheer love and in such a fashion that it cuts across all questions of human merit or demerit. All this has been objectively actualised in Jesus Christ, so that Christ Himself is the objective ground and content of (grace) in every instance of its Christian use." (page 21.)

Saint Paul's use of the word provides the fullest expression of the meaning given to God's grace in the New Testament. His own first experience of it helped determine this understanding. He was arrested by God while he was in the headlong pursuit of entirely different goals, and he was given a task of being the apostle to the gentile world, to which he could only respond in willing obedience.

"Grace is the decisive deed which makes the ground of our approach to God an act and word of His in which He is irrevocably committed. It means the establishment of something quite new among men, a new relation to God, not one in which the divine command forms the basis of our relations with God, but one in which the divine self-commitment invites us to approach Him on the grounds of love, because in Christ the divine will has been perfectly fulfilled on our behalf. Grace is a colossal deed that cuts away the ground from all our human religion, and establishes a new religion in the gospel, so wonderful that men are utterly overwhelmed, and so radical that it entails a complete reversal of all attitudes and ideas. Such a reversal means that we cannot think our way into the wisdom of God, which is, as Paul says, the Cross, because God has done a deed which makes our wisdom foolish and which interrupts us in our career. But in the light of this deed we may look back and give a dogmatic analysis of our state and thought. An entirely new perspective is given to human history through which everything is thrown into a new light. Thus Paul thinks of grace as disclosing a new world which has broken through by the Cross into our world and is now operative in the gospel." (page 29.)

Professor W. Manson describes Paul's primary insight about the nature of God's grace this way. "Grace in its primary and fundamental sense must not be conceived like the Jewish idea of the divine mercy as something merely ancillary, something which merely comes to the assistance of man in his own efforts for righteousness. Rather is grace the will of God to constitute man's life afresh on a wholly new basis and in a renewed world, to set him free from sin and Satan; to endue him with the Spirit, to make him the possessor of a supernatural life. It is thus the presupposition of the whole Christian life, not one principle which (along with others) works within that life." (page 30.)

But Paul also has a second aspect to his understanding of grace.

"Just as Paul thought of the grace of God as having actualised itself among men in Jesus, so in an applied sense Paul thinks of that same grace as laying hold of men in an act of forgiving and creative love. As Paul had found in his own experience, to be a Christian means to be overtaken by the invasion of spiritual power in Jesus Christ. Christianity is, as it were, the actalisation in flesh and blood of the supernatural will and love of God."

This grace of God "lays hold of men through Christ and becomes a concrete reality in 'the fleshy tables of the heart', so that believers are transformed into the image and glory of Christ."
(Torrance. pages 30-31.)

This grace was also strongly linked to the task that Paul had been given as an apostle to the gentiles. So, what was embodied in Jesus Christ is made to work in the lives of individual believers, so that they are made new increasingly into a closer likeness to Jesus, and made part of His body.

In this way, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of grace to everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, in sincerity and in truth and in full surrender.

JESUS CHRIST - THE TRUTH OF GOD.

The claim of Jesus Christ "I am the Truth" has profound philosophical significance.

When He said this, He meant that, to some extent, He is a revealer of information. But, at a much deeper and more basic level, He meant that He personally embodies God's eternal thought about Himself, about the universe, about the relations of one thing to another, and about their relation to God.

The claim also involves the thought which might be strange to many of us, that the ultimate truth is not basically found in the meaning of statements, or in any expression in any language, but it is embodied in a person.

(a.) When we think that Christ embodies God's truth, we are thinking that God has made all things for Himself. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ the Son of God was involved in all of creation. It is Christ's creation. And it is all going to be judged and summed up by Him.

Since sin has corrupted this creation, God is going to make all things new. And Christ is the One who embodies this effort at a new re-creation. He is the One who, by His death and resurrection, has brought this new creation into existence, and who has made it possible for us to be part of this new creation.

Saint Paul said that this is the mystery which had been hidden from our human knowledge since the beginning of human history, but is now revealed to those who are united to Christ. This is the meaning and purpose of our lives. Christ Himself embodies the purpose of the creation.

(b.) Not only does creation exist for Christ, but He will bring creation to its chosen fulfilment. The New Testament tells us that Christ is the Head of this new creation. By His death and resurrection He has made within Himself the new creation, and has so overcome all the enemies, forces and obstacles which oppose the fulfilment of this new creation, that He is able to bring about the fulfilment of it all, in its proper time.

When we become men and women "in Christ" we become a part of this new creation. And He gives us the Holy Spirit, not just to give us information about Christ, but to quicken us and make Christ's new creation a reality within us.

But the Spirit is able to illuminate us about Christ, according to our very limited capacity, and as the Spirit chooses, so that we can see things more clearly from Christ's viewpoint.

How can we know that this is true?

In one sense, our knowledge of these things depends upon the authority of Jesus Christ, and the authority of the Scriptures. In a sense it is also something which can be expressed in statements, and in other language forms, although not adequately.
So, only in a limited way can this subject be covered by mental or academic endeavour.

More basically, it is known to be true by knowing Jesus Christ personally. This involves a personal response of total surrender and commitment, and supreme love for Jesus.

Saint John records Jesus as saying, "Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him or is merely my own." (John 7:17.) Of course, "doing God's will" in this sense can only be done as that will is revealed in Jesus, and so this personal verification cannot be found by following other religions which adopt a stance in opposition to Jesus Christ.

When we look at Jesus in this way, we begin to see something of the grace of God, as it is expressed and embodied in Christ.

This exclusive Christian stance, that salvation and the purposes of God can only be found in Christ, is a consequence of the way God has chosen to do things through Christ. This is expressed in Christ's teaching, and so the exclusive attitude arises within Christian theology. It is not a result of any of our basic philosophical ideas in our theory of human knowledge. Philosophically, knowledge about God's truth can arise from any religious source. But in Christian theology this is more restricted, in that, personal knowledge of God can only be had in Christ Jesus.

<u>Sin is the Great Lie.</u>

In this context, sin is anything which denies that Christ is the truth, whether this denial is expressed verbally, or in thought, motive, attitude or action.

Anything which says or implies that something other than Christ is Lord, Judge and Purpose of human history; any thought, word or action which does not seek first God's Kingdom; which does not love God with heart, mind, soul and strength; which denies the love of God - is a lie.

Seeing that Christ is the truth, everything which denies God's purposes and glory as it is embodied and fulfilled in Christ, is wrong.

Any world-view which does not operate upon the basis that Jesus Christ is the truth is fundamentally mis-directed.

People can refuse to come to Christ for many different reasons. In some instances it is because they have chosen sin and lies, and they like it. They enjoy what is wrong. And it would hurt their pride too much to have to admit their mistake and repent.

People can refuse to come to Christ because they have adopted some other God, whether this other god has any worth or not. For some it is their egos, or their good deeds, or some pet theory.
Allied to this is that many people will not come to Christ because they have embraced a world-view which does not permit Christ to be seen as He is revealed in the New Testament. As we saw earlier, the embracing of such a world-view may arise from many possible reasons. Perhaps they were taught this other world-view by their parents, or because it was the view prevailing in their society and they gained it by osmosis. Perhaps they reacted against Christian views as part of their efforts to grow up.

Whatever the reason may be, such a person cannot become a Christian without rejecting whatever it is which keeps him from Christ - whether it is his love of sin, his willfulness, his choice of some other god, or his mistaken world-view.

JESUS CHRIST - THE WISDOM OF GOD.

In an earlier chapter we have seen that wisdom is having a balanced understanding about something, which will enable us to make decisions and perform actions which are wiser than we might otherwise have made.

In the Old Testament, some writers had quite a bit to say about wisdom. Wisdom became personified. It became almost a Being next to God. It was a type of poetic personality on the throne alongside of God. It was there when the world was made, and was one of the controlling factors with and within God at creation. This wisdom also inspired wise men at various times and places.

In the New Testament, however, Saint Paul took hold of this Old Testament idea, and he described Christ as the pre-existent, creative, Wisdom of God. This is one of the highest things he could say about Christ. Christ is equal in every respect to the wisdom of God, and we can find Him to be such in our own experience.

Three examples will be considered here.

Creation.

The physical sciences can tell us that there probably was a beginning, and can offer us a number of ideas about how things developed after that. But these sciences have no way of telling us what might have happened before "the big bang", why it happened, or anything about a possible Creator who designed it, made it all happen, and who has been developing the whole project. The "why" and "wherefore" questions are religious questions, and are not open to be studied within the physical sciences.

When we turn to philosophers, metaphysicians, and other people who are more obviously guessing and speculating, the answers given by them are by no means conclusive, are not widely accepted, and often are not well-based, either.

Insights offered in the New Testament include the following:- The creation exists BY and FOR Jesus Christ. He began it, and will finish it. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the First and the Last.

As in the previous section, the only way that we can know that these claims are true is by getting to know Jesus Christ for ouyrselves, and thus establishing the personal side of getting to know a truth

that is more fundamentally personal than it is able to be expressed in statements. This must be followed by us listening to His authority, and to the authority of the Scriptures.

But, when we see Jesus in this way, there we begin to see the grace of God, as it is embodied in Christ.

Human History.

Historians are able to tell us many things about human history. This ability is governed by the method which has to be used, the evidence which is available, and the possibilities which exist (or do not exist) for verifying what we think we know about the past.

It is like looking at a tapestry. We can look at the front of it, but we cannot look at the back of the tapestry, in order to try to get other insights about how it was made.

Historians can work on "why" and "wherefore" questions only in so far as human beings contribute to the reasons for things happening.

Ideas about the providence of God, and the purposes and goals of history, point to a different and deeper dimension to history that historians can only guess at. These deeper dimensions involve religious considerations.

Biblical insights include the following:- Jesus Christ personally embodies God's purposes for human history. What Jesus Christ is doing in the world is the golden thread running through history which gives it all its ultimate meaning. Jesus Christ is going to sum up human history personally. He will judge the entire course of mankind, the history of ideas, groups, nations and civilizations, as well as everything relating to each individual.
The New Testament tells us that Christ's plan is the one that will prevail. The history of salvation, and of the Kingdom of God, is the most important part of human history.

How can we know that these insights are true?

Again, we must turn to a personal knowledge of Jesus, and to a consideration of His authority, and of the authority of the Scriptures, if we are to find immediate verification for these thoughts.

And, when we do look at Jesus in this way, we begin to see a deeper insight into the grace of God, as it is expressed and embodied in Christ.

Righteous Judgment.

Throughout the world today there is great variety and great confusion on every hand when it comes to defining what the standard is by which we can tell right from wrong.

Some people use their own feelings when trying to judge what is right or wrong. They reject whatever does not feel right.

Others rely upon public opinion, and are swayed by what is commonly believed in their society, by what is believed in their cultural milieu, or by what others around them are saying.

Others believe what they were taught when they were young.

Another standard of judgment which is often used in moral matters is the law of the land. We talk about justice which is executed in the courts of law. Certainly, without such law and justice our societies and our freedoms would be greatly weakened, and possibly would cease to exist.

But the law only covers certain types of actions. It covers certain outward actions, and intentions only where the evidence is clear. Legal justice suffers from deliberate lies told in the witness box, from conspiracy to mislead, and from witnesses failing to remember accurately what happened. We all know how different witnesses of a crime, or of an accident, will give differing accounts of what happened, or will give accounts which show emotional bias one way or another. Even in democratic countries it can make a great deal of difference whether someone involved in legal action has a lot of money or not. It may not necessarily be true that the courts are corrupt, but it becomes possible for a richer person to hire a more able lawyer to act on his or her behalf.

So, the law is a very rough tool of justice. It is necessary for us, and is often effective enough. But it does not provide a moral standard which is satisfactory enough to provide moral guidance for an individual, or for the twists of human history to be judged by, nor is it reasonable to expect such from this source. The law needs a moral standard. It does not provide one.

One of the most famous and long-lived attempts at portraying a moral standard is what has been called the "Natural Law". It purports to describe standards of behaviour, morality and justice which, it is claimed, have been built into the nature of things. If this is so, then it is reasonable for us to develop our country's laws, and our ideas of what is right and wrong, in conformity with the law of nature.

For example, it might be said that the nature of things would lead us to believe that murder is wrong, that sexual relations should be hetero-sexual, and that marriage should be monogamous.

However, there is no general agreement amongst thinkers as to what this standard actually is, in any detail. What appears to be natural to different people will include many abiding moral principles, but these will be influenced by many other factors which will vary according to the feelings, the ideological interests, the class interests, the pecuniary or political interests, the cultural milieu, or other passing features of the age, of the person who is seeking to know what the natural law is.

The insights brought to us in the Bible are very relevant in dealing with these questions of what standard we are to use in judging what is right and wrong.

Away back in the story about Abraham, he was told that Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed because of the sins of the people. Abraham prayed to God in fear lest some righteous people might be killed along with the ungodly. In his prayer he asked "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

As more time went by in the Old Testament times, the will and righteousness of God came to be seen as something alive, and, like wisdom, as on the throne with God. It was equal with God. It was not a philosophical formula, or a quality built into nature. It was a poetic entity alongside of God.

In the New Testament, it is Jesus Christ who is seen as embodying the will and righteousness of God. He is the One who will judge the world. He knows all the facts. He knows all the aspects of every issue, and so He is well equipped to give wise and Divine judgments on human beings and on human history.

Again, we can know this is true by establishing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, as God's will and righteousness is personal in a more basic way than it can be expressed in any language or

set of statements. In connection with this, we must listen to the authority of Jesus, and to the authority of the Scriptures.
And, in experiencing Jesus in this way, we learn something deeper of the grace of God, as it is embodied and expressed in Christ.

JESUS CHRIST - JUDGE OF TRUE VALUE AND RICHES.

The question "What is of value?" or "Why is one thing of more value than another?" is a similar one to the question we have considered about what is right or wrong.

There has to be a standard of value against which the worth of other things can be judged.

Our whole way of life in the modern world is based upon the idea that individual human life is valuable. Why are we valuable? Why should we be treated equally before the law? Why should doctors struggle to save a life, regardless of who it is? Why should murder (or any destruction of human life) be considered wrong?

Secular humanists might answer that we have value simply because we are human beings. But this is not a sufficient answer, because it does not tell us WHY, or where the value came from.

No doubt they could say that civilized life would be impossible if we did not consider people as valuable, so it is an essential postulate or assumption. This may be true. It may be true that we need to assume that life is valuable, in order to prevent society degenerating into the survival of the fittest.
But this is not a reason for us knowing that the assumption is correct, and corresponds to the real value of things.

Governments and judges can decide that they will treat people as if they were valuable. Let us all hope that they do. But this cannot create intrinsic value for anybody. This does not create a situation where we have value regardless of the way we are treated by governments and judges.

We believe that people have value even if governments treat us as if we had none. The standard of value determines that such governments are wrong if they treat us as worthless. Why is such a belief well founded? What is the standard of value?

Philosophers have tried to establish such standards of value without reference to any God, but have not succeeded.

The Bible teaches us that the most worth-while thing that exists is God, and His Kingdom. God the heavenly Father is over all. Jesus Christ has been appointed King and Judge of mankind by His Father. So, God Himself is the source and ultimate standard of value. Jesus Christ is valuable, similarly. And, Jesus has the position of determining how true value operates for us as individuals, and for all human history.
It is Christ who has made us valuable. He has determined that it is so. This value is demonstrated in that He has died on the cross for us. Furthermore, it is Christ who determines how much each factor in our lives is worth, and which is worth more than other factors. He determines how much emphasis we ought to put on one factor or another in our lives. He chooses which things fit in best with the calling that we have in Christ, and in whatever He wants us to do, as children of God.

True Riches.

Real riches are able to be discovered in the same way. God is the most valuable, and is Himself the reward of those who love Him. So, those who love God are the richest people in the world.

How can we know that these insights are true?

Basically, it is only possible by knowing Jesus Christ personally, and by developing this personal relationship in the light of the authority of Christ, and the authority of the Scriptures.

Again, the role of the "Muller Argument" is simply that it provides us with a more public test of these facts than is usually possible.

THE ATONEMENT.

The New Testament portrays the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as the centre-piece of God's plan to redeem mankind from sin. It is the one fact which provides the righteous basis for God to deal in mercy with sinners without violating His justice.

God has always had the power, the ability, to carry out all of His gracious plan of using humankind as a part of an overall purpose far greater than any of us could imagine. This plan would be a way of displaying further depths of His character to all aspects of His creation, angelic and otherwise. God has chosen to involve us in this great purpose.

The problem has arisen because of human sin. Mankind became alienated from God, and the purpose could no longer be carried out. The atonement which Jesus secured by His death on the cross has made it righteous for God to forgive sinners, and to involve them in His plan again.

As a result of the atonement, therefore, Jesus has secured the right to fulfil all of God's plans for mankind, and, indeed, for the whole of creation. The power to put God's plan into effect was always there. Now it is just and righteous to put the whole plan into operation, despite the interruption caused by sin. Christ is now able to exercise all of the power of God which may be needed to fulfil God's plan in its completeness.

In God's providential dealings, human sin has been made to serve God, and to provide a new aspect to the whole situation.

Within the realms of systematic theology, many attempts have been made to understand the way the death of Jesus is effective.

As one would expect from what has already been said about the nature of human knowledge, various theories or doctrines have been developed down through the years in order to provide this explanation about the effectiveness of Christ's death.

None of these theories have been fully successful. And this is understandable, as well, because we are attempting to deal with the mysteries of God, which should be expected to transcend the capacities of human grasp.

However, the Bible does provide some insights into the meaning of the death of Christ. These can be found in the way that the sacrifices of the Old Testament period cast light upon the New Testament events, and in the way that the New Testament writers draw upon the old Jewish inheritance in trying to explain what Jesus did when He died on the cross, and rose again.

Especially applicable to this is "The Epistle to the Hebrews."

So, the key to an understanding of the cross of Christ must be found in what the Scriptures themselves say about the matter. And, although the systematic theologians have tried hard, and will continue to try, it will be very difficult to go very much further than what we can find fairly directly in the Bible.

OTHER DOCTRINES.

There are many other aspects of Evangelical Christian theology. They will not be entered into here. The fundamental aspects of theology that we have considered in this chapter will be sufficient to help us deal with the chosen goals that we are aiming at in this present volume.

The reader is urged, however, to become acquainted with evangelical theology as deeply as he or she possibly can, as these are all matters of very great importance.

And, in emphasising evangelical theology, it must not be thought that all the other strands of Christian theology deserve to be neglected, as they can all provide a great many insights of enormous importance.

Furthermore, the ability to think creatively in any discipline of enquiry depends upon making use of insights which can be gained from sources other than the sources to which we happen to have grown accustomed.

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Chapter 14 - Christian Ethics

OUTLINE.

(a.) We have seen that ethics is the study and statement of the foundations of moral actions, of considerations which determine what is right and wrong for us.

In general, an ethical system has at its centre a moral standard, against which human actions can be measured. Ethics would also have to show the reasons which lead us to believe that a certain moral standard is correct, and that other ones are not. So, ethics needs to include questions concerning what evidence exists in favour of believing that the moral standard is true.

(b.) Despite some attempts to the contrary, no system of ethics function without having a basis in religion, or in metaphysics. It is in these areas, of religion or metaphysics, where we will find the moral standard upon which the ethical system depends.

(c.) While it is true that, within the history of ethics, many different people have stated, and believed in, many different moral standards, it is also true to say that no moral standard has been established convincingly by philosophical argument and evidence, and which is widely recognised as being successful in today's western secular society.

This is one of the points that Schweitzer makes in his two books on the philosophy of civilization, and it is admitted to be the case by many others.

While the history of ethics is extensive and varied, no non-religious metaphysic has ever established itself convincingly by philosophical argument and evidence.

Certain of the world's higher religions have attempted this task, but have not yet succeeded as well as might be hoped.
The various Christian ethical theories have failed to be "established convincingly by philosophical argument and evidence" because of a long-running failure in recent centuries to solve the range of problems relating to "faith and reason" which we looked at earlier.
Solutions offered by Saint Augustine and by Saint Thomas Aquinas were used widely in the middle ages. No synthesis of similar quality and effect has ever been produced by Protestant thinkers. None of these "christian" answers have been widely considered to be successful in the twentieth century.

I believe, however, that a christian answer is possible, and that Jesus Christ personally embodies the ethical solution which we, in our limited ways, may stumblingly try to state in terms of philosophical argument and evidence.
This book is an attempt to point to such a possible solution.

(d.) Amongst the world's religions, there are quite a few that can produce demonstrations to support their claims to embody some truth.

Some of these, such as those connected with the occult, do not produce a high ethic which might provide a suitable basis for the reformation of modern civilization.

Schweitzer discusses reasons why he thinks religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam will suffer from the same problem of being unable to produce an ethic which would be suitable to perform the task of healing which is needed in the modern world. See his "Civilization and Ethics" for these reasons.

(e.) In this book, however, we are making no judgment about the other major religions of the world. The only claim that is being made here is in favour of the evangelical form of christianity. The other world religions will have to speak for themselves.

(f.) Here, we are not trying to invent, discover or introduce any ethical standard which might be known to all people throughout the world. We are not speaking of any "natural law" which is supposed to be intuitively known by everyone. We are speaking, instead, of the ethical standard which is revealed to us in the New Testament. It is this revealed Biblical standard which we have found to be supported by such evidences as the Muller argument.

(g.) Once the New Testament is known to be a reliable, God-given guide to the will of God for mankind, it is not difficult to discover therein a number of basic principles which can govern our understanding of what is right and wrong.

The New Testament gives us these principles and commands.
We must each then earnestly seek the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit in deciding how we are going to put these principles into practice in the various range of differing circumstances in which we can find ourselves.

The principles can be found in such places as the two great commandments, Christ's new command to His disciples, Saint Paul's teaching on the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the famous chapter on love, the sermon on the mount, and many other similar passages in both the old and the new testaments.

Principles such as these, or qualities of character such as are seen in the list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, need to be differentiated from advice which is given about how these commands, principles and qualities of character might be applied in daily life situations.

While all of the commands, etc., apply in every situation all of the time, one of the principles may need to be emphasised in a certain situation more than some other.

For example, principles about love and justice will always apply everywhere. But the demands of each may not fit together easily at times. In certain situations it may be wise to emphasise one of these principles more than the other, and on another occasion the balance may need to be different.

In this matter, we need continually the guidance of the Holy Spirit in answer to our prayers.

* * * *

Religion and Ethics.

William Lillie's "An Introduction to Ethics" is a good general introduction to the whole subject of ethics, wherein he discusses the different types of possible moral standards that it is possible for people to use.

So, it is not written from a christian standpoint. Nor would one expect a general introduction to be.

When outlining the relationship between religion and ethics, he speaks of the idea of God as a postulate, or assumption, which might help ethics in a number of ways. The idea of God is treated as an assumption because no solid answer is recognised to the questions in the area of "faith and reason". Lillee is simply recognising what has been said above, that there is no argument for the

existence of God, today, which is based upon philosophical reasonings and is widely recognised standards of evidence.

The "widely recognised" nature of any philosophical argument is no guarantee of its truthfulness or reliability, of course. But, it provides a point of departure in our quest for a moral standard which hopes to be widely recognised enough to transform the world and bring healing power to the nations where disintegration is now occurring.

However, Lillee points out that religion is able to help and undergird morality in a number of ways. He says:-

"(a.) Morality implies a certain metaphysical outlook, at least a belief in the existence of individual selves who are in some sense the doers of their own actions, in the reality of time and in the existence of evil, and gains from certain other philosophical beliefs. For most men this outlook is provided by their religion. The ordinary man does not study technical metaphysics, but he has none the less a metaphysical outlook on the universe, without which his moral rules do not make sense. This metaphysical outlook, however simple or crude, is largely supplied by religion.

(b.) Religion gives objectivity to moral values. There is throughout moral thought a haunting fear that good and evil may be mere imaginations of the human mind, that the moral stuggle is illusory and that the real universe bears no relation to our human opinions. In religion, however, man has a guarantee that the moral struggle is a real one in which God, as creator and supporter of the universe, is concerned and that His moral laws are as much the laws of nature as any of those with which the natural sciences deal.

(c.) Morality implies an impulse or initiative from something that is beyond nature. This is the view of those who say that the voice of conscience is the voice of God within us. Whether we accept this view or not, we must admit that there is in our human nature an urge toward what is higher and better which can never be explained in merely natural terms. There is more in living than the satisfaction of our animal instincts; there is what may be called figuratively an "instinct" to do better, to reach something new in the way of good action, an aspiration, as we said in an earlier chapter, "for the man to arise in me, that the man that I am may cease to be."

(d.) Morality implies a personal loyalty rather than obedience to an impersonal law. Our attitude to a law that we regard as a moral law is very different from our attitude to a political law concerned primarily with a non-moral matter, such as a law restricting the movement of people from one place to another in time of war. The political law must be obeyed because we see the use of obeying it, or because we wish to avoid the penalty of breaking it, or because we hold that it is a moral duty to obey all the laws of our country however stupid they may be. On the other hand, a moral law is to be obeyed in the way that the wish of a friend is to be obeyed. If we fail to obey it, we fail in something which is very like a personal obligation. The nature of this obligation in morality is admittedly obscure, but perhaps the most reasonable explanation of it is the religious one that we owe an obligation to a personal God.

(e.) There is something other-worldly about morality at its highest. It has already been suggested that the immortality promised to believers by many religions gives a new significance to morality, by making the moral struggle worth while and by making it reasonable to attribute great intrinsic value to each human personality. Morality is at the same time other-worldly in a different way. The good man has his affections set not on the things of this visible world and on the satisfaction that can be obtained from material things, but in a realm that is in some sense more spiritual. It is true that we know this spiritual realm most readily as it embodies itself in material things, in the truths expressed in words, in the beauty of nature and of art, and in goodness expressed in noble deeds.

Yet in all these things as we know them there is an incompleteness which leaves our highest aspirations imperfectly satisfied. Bradley thought that morality by its very nature implied an unsolved contradiction between self-realisation and altruism, and Spinoza in his "Ethica" found the highest level of morality in the intellectual love of God, a level where morality has been transformed into religion. It is the faith of the religious man that this incompleteness which characterizes every human endeavour in art and in philosophy as well as in morality is not the whole of the story. This life is related to the life of eternity, which is known however dimly in religion, as the "arc to the perfect round"." (page 307 - 308.)

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A good solution in the area of "faith and reason" not only helps to establish the truthfulness of a certain religious outlook, but also helps to establish the moral standard which is associated with that religion.

And, seeing that our knowledge of God, and of the moral standard, operates on the same general basis of human knowledge as the rest of our knowledge of life and of the world, we will be able to start applying this moral standard to every area of our lives.

The Method of Ethics.

The method of ethical thinking follows the same steps as need to be followed in each of the other disciplines.
(a.) The ethical thinker first assumes a world-view, or starts to use one that he has adopted more or less unconsciously, that he or she has learned by Schaeffer's "catching the measles" method, as we noticed in an earlier chapter. This world-view will substantially determine what kind of moral standard, if any, it is possible for the person to believe in.

(b.) The thinker then develops theories at two levels.

The more basic level involves developing ideas about the moral standard, its basis, and its general characteristics.

The other level is that ideas will be developed about how this moral standard will be applied in particular situations.

(c.) Although the person may become attached to some of these ideas with a great degree of determination and rigidity, all of these ideas are, nevertheless, provisional, open to revision, partial, based upon limited human insights, the same as all other aspects of human knowledge.

(d.) There also ought to be some method of testing the truthfulness of our ideas, at both levels, if at all possible, in order to reduce the scope we have for being radically mistaken.

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Evangelical Christian Ethics.

So far as evangelical christian ethics is concerned:-

(a.) The world-view that is assumed, adopted or taken to be established by reasoned argument, has to be one which includes our knowledge of God, and of Christ, and which includes our ability to rely upon the New Testament as a true Word from God.

These are the basic features of the moral standard, and the sources of our information about it.

(b.) The more basic level of theory will then consist of:-
-the various things we can know about the character and purposes of God,
- our obligations and responsibilities to Him,
- the methods of interpretation that we are using in order to understand what the Scriotures are saying to us,
- our understanding of the ways in which the Holy Spirit can give us the wisdom we need to decide how to apply the moral standard in daily situations.

The world-view may also allow us to get some guidance from the history and traditions of the church, and from the advice of fellow christians. But these will be secondary factors .
(c.) The other level of theory consists of the ideas which we develop, on the basis of what has been said already, about what we think God wants us to do in specific situations and relationships. These decisions should all be made on the basis of moral principle, and not on the basis of our feelings.

(d.) It must be emphasised that all these ideas and beliefs are provisional, just as is all human knowledge.

God alone is absolute. The Scriptures are given to us by God to be our guide from Him, but the Scriptures are also in many ways human documents.

Our efforts to understand the nature of God, the Scriptures, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and every other step in ethical thinking, involve human thinking, which is open to revision as we have found all other human thinking to be.

The Authority of the Moral Standard.

The moral law has authority because it is God's law. It has the authority of God behind it.

Many moral philosophers have tried to develop their ethical theories without reference to God, or to religion. These ethical theories can only produce a RELATIVE moral standard. Because God alone is absolute, His moral standard is also ABSOLUTE.

Lillee discusses various factors about relative moral standards, and then has this to say.

"The consequences of believing that there are no absolute moral standards are such that it is difficult to believe that any sane person can accept them. (a.)We not only judge actions by our own moral code, but we judge that one moral code is better than another, for example, that the moral code of the ancient Israelites was better than the code of a cannibal tribe on a Pacific island. If there is no absolute standard in morals we have no right to make such a judgment, for there is nothing in respect of which we can compare the two codes. The ethical relativists that we judge moral codes

that are like our own to be superior to moral codes that are unlike our owm, so that our preference is simply a matter of prejudice. This hardly seems to be the case, as there are people who prefer some other moral code to that of their own society, although it is possible to argue that they are influenced by some other prejudice. Yet it is hard to believe that the moral code of one of the higher civilizations, of the Roman Stoic or the Christian, for example, is not superior to tribal codes that permit cannibalism or the blood feud.

(b.) If there is no moral superiority of one code over another, there can be no such thing as moral progress or moral decline. This is possibly the case, but it is opposed to one of the most common beliefs of the modern age.

(c.) As no moral code is better than another, and no moral progress is possible, moral effort becomes meaningless. Ethical relativists deny this by saying that a man shown try to be true to the code that he himself or his society professes. If this code, however, has no superiority to the scheme of conduct dictated by his appetites, why should anyone make the strenuous effort needed to obey the moral code?

(d.) The logical conclusion of ethical relativity would be that no man is better than another, for every man has a certain moral outlook, however vague, which determines his actions and character. The man who sees society as an object to be preyed upon cannot be regarded as morally worse than the man who sees society as something to be loved and served, if one code is no better than another. (Hitler and the IRA are no worse than Mother Theresa.)

Most ethical relativists would say that this argument is unfair to their theory because while they deny a universal moral standard, they accept what we may call local moral standards, rules that hold for limited groups of people. But no relativist has shown how the limits of such groups are to be determined, or why the arguments that make moral standards relative to the circumstances of a particular community should not be used to make moral standards relative to each particular individual. To do so of course means that there are no standards at all. Ethical relativists are however right in holding that the ordinary moral rules which men commonly accept are not really the ultimate, unchanging, absolute principles which distinguish right from wrong. Ordinary moral rules are the applications of these principles to particular circumstances, and the ultimate principles themselves are neither perfectly known nor perfectly embodied in any existing moral code." (Pages 105 - 106.)

Lillee also shows that moral standards which are claimed to be based upon the findings of the natural sciences, upon evolution, or upon introspection in psychology, cannot function as satisfactory standards. (Page 116.)

Uses and Abuses of Casuistry.

Casuistry is the science of working out how a moral standard will be applied in detailed situations.

Lillee speaks of it in the following way:-

"Casuistry is a legitimate but an extremely difficult science. It is a reasonable extension of the province of ethics to examine how its principles work out in the actual circumstances of the moral life. There is indeed an advantage to the purely theoretical study of ethics in examining such applications. The engineer in applying to actual materials - steel, concrete and the rest - the principles of dynamics, which he has studied in his theoretical textbooks, is likely enough to find defects in the formulation of these principles, and may be led to new theoretical discoveries.

Similarly, the moralist, in applying his stanards to actual cases, may find that these standards lead to contradictions, which suggest a revision of his statement of the moral standard.

The fact that casuistry was misused at one period of history is no argument against it, any more than to say that it is an argument against the discoveries of science that they have been misused for purposes of human slaughter. A great many of the objections that have been made to the "Casuistry" of the Jesuits are really objections to the doctrine of "Probabilism" which they used in their moral arguments. Probabilism held that an action could be justified by the production of the opinion of one Christian doctor in its favour. "In matters of conscience on which there was some disagreement among authorities it is lawful to follow any course in support of which the authority of one recognised doctor of the church can be cited." (Oxford English Dictionary.) The introduction oh such an arbitrary standard is not an essential part of casuistry; indeed, a valid casuistry would accept its standards only from an established system of ethics.

There are certain objections to casuistry. The subtleties and sophistries into which the Jesuits are alleged to have fallen are to some extent an inevitable consequence of the nature of casuistry itself. In the moral life it is better to direct our attention to the broad principles of morality and to let the details look after themselves. The man who is fussing all the time about insignificant details in matters of honesty is not likely to be as good a man as the man who is so strong in principles of integrity and generosity that he does not need to worry about the honesty of particular transactions. The latter in most cases becomes so sensitive to the right thing in matters of honesty that he knows directly what to do with no casuistical calculation. The true business of the casuist is to make the larger moral principles stand out clearly from the mass of complex details in the actual situation with which they are concerned.

Other objections which have been made to casuistry as a science are the following. (a.) Moral situations are so complex that they cannot be analysed This is equal to the assertion that casuistry is very difficult, but other sciences, medicine for example, do not give up in despair because they are confronted with situations that are extremely complicated. (b.) It is not scientific to deal with particular cases; science deals with universals. The answer to this objection is that casuists themselves have always realised that they are dealing with CLASSES of cases. (c.) If casuists are dealing with classes of cases they cannot deal with particular moral cases, each of which is unique and does not repeat itself. This may have some measure of truth, but the casuists would maintain that actions may so resemble one another in one particular respect that they can be considered under one rule. The general intuitions of common-sense morality certainly imply that actions are sufficiently like one another to be so classified as, for example, when it is held that all lying is wrong. (d.) Common sense is as likely to be right as a casuistical argument in discovering the rightness or wrongness of an action in a particular situation. This criticism denies that experience improves the capacity for making judgments, a view that is accepted without question in most spheres of life; the casuist is the man experienced in deciding the rightness or wrongness of actions. (e.) The casuist requires to know not only the principles of ethics, but the details of the sphere of life in which an action takes place; for example, in judging the rightness of an airman engaged "in low flying" he needs to know the technical details of aviation. Here again the objection states that casuistry is extremely difficult, not that it is impossible. (A jury often has to make decisions that are difficult like this in a criminal trial.) (f.) The casuist takes a legal view of morality and tends to ignore the freedom and creativeness which characterise the higher forms of morality. This really another form of the general objection made (before point (a.).), which appears to be the one valid objection against casuistry.

There will always be some thinkers who find their chief interest in purely theoretical ethics, just as there are chemists who find their chief interest in purely theoretical chemistry. There will be other thinkers who find their chief interest in the concrete applications of ethical principles in practical

life, just as there are chemists whose chief interest is in the applications of their science and the new inventions made through them. The danger of the theorist is that of making theories which are not true to the facts; the danger of the practical man is that of losing sight of the principles involved, in attending to the complexities of the details; but both have a useful service to render in any science. In the history of philosophy many of the most able theorists, such as Plato, St Thomas Aquinas, Bentham and J. S. Mill, have had a deep interest in the practical applications of ethics, and have regarded ethics as a practical subject. (Page 225 - 227.)

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Legalism.

This is a danger open to all kinds of people, and christians have not been any more free of this problem than any others.

Christians usually associate it with the Pharisees in the New Testament, but it has appeared many times in the history of the church, especially amongst enthusiastic people.

It can generally be described in the following way.
A person becomes keenly involved in a certain life-style, or in certain types of behaviour, because they believe it to be morally right, or because obeying certain rules help them in pursuing what they see as obedience to God. As a result, they take upon themselves certain rules of behaviour.

This is completely acceptable morally, but legalism appears when these people begin to force these same rules upon other people who do not view moral actions in the same way as themselves.

Forcing moral rules on others can be done by passing laws to that effect. In some cases this is acceptable (such as laws against murder), but, in other cases, it is not an acceptable course of action (such as "prohibition" laws, and laws against adultery.)

In other instances, legalism takes the form of forcing others to follow one's moral rules of life by means of peer group pressures, or by having moral rules of a church or other organisation which restrict the freedom of members. Again, there sre instances where this may be an acceptable thing, but there will be other situations where it is unacceptable, to some, at least.

Wisdom is always needed in situations where power is being exerted on others over moral issues, in order to avoid the undesirable effects of legalism, whilst using power responsibly to serve proper legal and moral ends.

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Chapter 15 - The Theory of Value

The theory of value is one of the ways that questions about morality and ethics can be approached, and it is an approach which lends itself very much to christian ways of thinking.

The New Testament provides a standard of intrinsic value, just as readily as it provides a moral standard, and for the same reasons.

Obvious statements from the gospels which support a valuational approach are found in such verses as:-

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the other things will be added to you as well."

"Fear not those who kill the body but after that have nothing that they can do to you. Rather fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Many other texts could also be given which reflect very powerfully thoughts about the value of things, and which prompt us to our moral responsibilities.

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Amongst recent Christian theologians who have contributed well in the area of Christian ethics is the American Lutheran theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr.

He is mentioned in this chapter because his ethical thinking has been set out in the form of a theory of value.

Niebuhr distinguishes himself completely from great Christian ethical thinkers like Saint Thomas Aquinas by rejecting totally the metaphysical basis provided by Aristotle that Aquinas used in developing his great synthesis.
Regretably, Niebuhr waited until his retirement in order to write largely upon his ethical thought, but he did not live to enjoy much retirement, and so much of his thought was either never written, or is known only fragmentarily. His published works are of great interest.

Niebuhr's emphasis is on the radical and absolute nature and position of God, and of the unified nature of man in making our response to God.

In his book "Christ and Culture" Niebuhr emphasises the priority of thinking in terms of relationships - man to God, and man to man before God. "One finds a statement of the necessity of speaking about ethics in relation to a particular religious and historical standpoint. There is a simple statement of his relational value-theory - "worth is worth in relation to God" (p.18.) He sets forth the place of love within faith and hope and in terms of the love of God." ("The Responsible Self." Page 10.)
In his Introduction to "The Responsible Self", James M. Gustafson tells us that "In "Radical Monotheism and Western Culture" he gave us his most extensive exposition of how to think and to live in terms of the relative authority of all human and cultural forms, while acknowledging them to

be under the sovereignty of the One God. Included in that book is one particular essay that is indispensible for a more technical understanding of Niebuhr's ethics, namely "The Center of Value", in which he develops his relational or social theory of value. In a response to a critique of an earlier version of that essay he discloses something of his own intellectual self-understanding in the sphere of ethics. "Philosophically, it is more indebted to G. H. Mead than to Aristotle; theologically, it is closer, I believe, to Jonathan Edwards (consent of being to being) than to Thomas Aquinas" (also page 10.)

Niebuhr makes this concluding statement as part of his essay, "The Center of Value."

"For the polytheistic theologies of value, usually called philosophical, which confine themselves to two or three of these relative systems, and then become involved in questions about their inter-relations, monotheistic faith substitutes, first, a central value theory and then the recognition of an infinite number of possible, relative value systems. Its starting point, its dogmatic beginning, is with the transcendent One for whom alone there is an ultimate good and for whom, as the source and end of all things, whatever is, is good. It may indeed use a sort of psychological relativism at this point, since it cannot say that God has need of any being external to himself; hence it may be able only to say that whatever is exists because it pleases God. But whether is to need or to desire, in any case the starting point is that transcendent absolute for whom, or for which, whatever is, is good. Such faith no more begins by asking what God is good for than humanistic or vitalistic ethics begins with the inquiry what man or life is good for. But it has the great advantage over humanism and vitalism that it does not offer an evident abstraction of one sort of finite being from the rest of existence with the consequent appearance of arbitrariness in the selection of finite centers of value that from any disinterested point of view have no greater claim to centrality than any others.

With this beginning the value theory of monotheistic theology is enabled to proceed to the construction of many relative value systems, each of them tentative, experimental and objective, as it considers the interaction of beings on beings, now from the point of view of man, now from the point of view of society, now from the point of view of life. But it is restrained from erecting any one of these into an absolute, or even from ordering it above the others, as when the human-centered value system is regarded as superior to a life-centered system. A monotheistically centered value system is not only compatible withsuch objective relativism in value analysis but requires it in view of its fundamental dogma that none is absolute save God and that the absolutising of anything finite is ruinous to the finite itself.

There is room within the objective relativism of monotheistic faith for the recognition of the value of ideal essences for minds, and of minds for ideal essences, but none for the absolutising of such essences or such minds as good in themselves. There is room here for the recognition of the value of man for the ongoing community of life and vice versa, but none for the dogmatic choice of life or man as the absolute centers of value. When it turns to human ethics theocentric value theory inevitably will become relatively man-centered, yet tentatively so and never with forgetfulness of the question of what man is good for in his relations not only to the transcendent One but also to the other existent beings.

Hence it is not monotheistic faith that is uncritically dogmatic in its construction of value theories. Uncritical dogmatism is the practice of those explicit or disguised relational systems of thoughtabout the good which arbitrarily choose some limited starting point for their inquiries and either end with the confession that value is an irrational concept which must nevertheless be rationally employed because nature requiresthis, or otherwise rule out of consideration great realms of value relations as irrelevant. Critical thought based on theocentric faith has no quarrel with the method of objective relativism in value theory and ethics. It objects only but strongly to the religious foundations of their relativisms."

("Radical Monotheism and Western Culture." Pages 112 - 113.)

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Perhaps a few comments could be made to help those who found the passage from Niebuhr rather difficult to digest.

For Niebuhr, the absolute, transcendent God is not only the only truly valuable person or thing, He is also the only source of all other lesser values.

Neither man, nor any other part of creation, has any value in its own right. It is only valuable because of its relation to God.

Our value lies in what we are good for, in the sight of God.

A part of that good is that God has so made us that we are, or should be, good for each other, in a number of ways.

In those two points lies the basis of the two great commandments found in the Bible. This will include all other matters about which we need to respond to God.

Because man has no value apart from God's choice or pleasure, man has no natural rights in himself, apart from his relation to God. So, no humanistic theory will be able to provide a basis for any theory of human rights. (This point will be raised again later.)

Niebuhr uses the term "relativistic" or "relativism" to refer to the God-given values that we have for each other, and for society, and for life as a whole. None of these can ever be made into an absolute, because that would take the place of God, and would become idolatrous.

All our understandings of these values are provisional and open to review, like all human insights.

All humanistic ethical and value theories, and all ethical and value theories centred upon society or life in general, are guilty of turning a limited, relative goal into an absolute, and thus becoming a substitute for God. Not only are these views failures as ethical and value theories, but they are destructive toward the thing that is absolutised, and toward those who make the idolatrous mistake.

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Chapter 16 - Christian Theory of Human Nature and Sin

The theory of human nature is of pivotal importance in seeking to understand, or to deal with, any aspect of the human race and its problems, or anything to do with society.

The theory of human nature is an area of thought which is dealt with in philosophy, or in theology, or as a mixture of both.

It includes assumptions, and other considerations, which may be
purely speculative, or may be the result of a train of reasoning based in some other discipline of knowledge. So, the ideas may be partly the results of reflection upon observations about experience and life. Some of these views may be able to be tested to a degree, and others may not be able to be tested very much at all.

However, it is not difficult to prove that any theory of human nature that a person may adopt will have an enormous impact on the way we understand every other area of life which depends in any way upon these ideas. Not only will the results be greatly affected by whichever theory it is that is adopted, but different theories of human nature will produce vastly different results from one another in similar situations. Even apparently minor differences in theory can produce vastly differing consequences when put into practice over a period of time.

So, the basic components of a theory of human nature come from philosophical or theological considerations, although a person may have learned them from personal experience.

Faith and Reason.

From what we have already seen in the area of "Faith and Reason", a proper word from God has come to us in the New Testament. This word is embodied in Jesus Christ, and the New Testament is our record of this Word.

Furthermore, although many truthful insights may come from elsewhere, the particular test that we have used in our discussion of faith and reason has been associated with evangelical protestant theology and experience. People who wish to speak for other viewpoints will have to make their own statements on these matters.

As a result, most of the main insights that we use here relating to the subject of human nature will have to come from evangelical theology, although, of course, we will be free to accept any truthful insight that we can gather from any other source.

The person who has contributed most and best in recent times in this area of the Christian understanding of human nature is the American protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, brother of H. Richard Niebuhr whom we met in the chapter on the theory of value.

The main, over-riding aim in Reinhold Niebuhr's studies and writings was to expound, to deepen our understanding of, and to show the application of the Christian faith in relation to matters of social responsibility. To put it another way, he centred his thoughts upon the link between Christian love and the struggle for social justice.

As Reinhold Niebuhr studied these issues, he came to realise that differences in the theory of human nature were responsible for many of the mistakes that people of all persuasions were making in their

approaches to understanding and changing society, and in their attempts at practicing social justice.

He was not concerned so much about the mistakes of individual politicians, thinkers or social engineers, as about the types of outlook on society that these people represented. So, his analysis and attack was directed at types of theories (Marxist Communism, Secularism, various types of Christian theories, etc,.) more than at individual examples of any of these. So his analyses tended not to do proper justice to the intricacies of any individual's personal philosophy, but he nevertheless had a great insight into the basic questions involved. He had a special ability to penetrate to the core of an issue in this particular area which interested him most.

A large section of his literary output dealt with mistakes made by various systems of political or social thought as revealed by the actions of their practitioners, and the results they produced historically. In many instances he was able to show how these mistakes arose from, or were related to, some fault in their views on human nature.

Niebuhr's View of the Self.

Niebuhr's view of human nature is expounded in one of his later books entitled "The Self and the Dramas of History."

He saw two main contributing sources to our present understanding of human nature in the Western world, and the relative health of differing approaches to human nature could be judged from the way they balanced their expression of these two sources.
The two sources were (a.) Greek philosophy or Hellenism, and (b.) the Hebraic-Biblical sources of the Judaeo-Christian traditions.

Some approaches leaned heavily upon one source, and showed little dependence on the other. Other approaches took certain aspects from one or other of the sources, but neglected other vital aspects, or got them out of line, or out of the balance that Neibuhr thought that they ought to have.

Niebuhr's own view is strongly Biblical. He taught that the human self is a personal unit comprising body and soul. The term "spirit" is also used to apply to certain features of his description.

Whilst some people would define the uniqueness of any person in terms of genetic makeup, Niebuhr defines personal uniqueness in terms of the dialogues that the self has

(a.) with itself,
(b.) with others, and
(c.) with God.

One reason for defining uniqeness in this way is to emphasise the dynamic and historical nature of human personality, and that continual change is occurring.

A person's genetic makeup may or may not change, but, emphasis upon this side of a person tends to place stress on static factors. Whilst insights from genetics may be perfectly valid, and the influence of one's inherited features are undeniable, yet Niebuhr thought that a better understanding of human nature came from placing the emphasis elsewhere, and that it was more Biblical to do so.

Taking part in such dialogues also implies the freedom to do so.

(a.) Dialogue with one's self refers simply to the way we continually talk to ourselves within our own minds, and sometimes aloud. In these dialogues we can play many roles and adopt many

stances and relationships.

Niebuhr emphasised that this kind of thing showed that people could "transcend themselves", that is, they could mentally adopt an outlook external to what their actual situation in life was at the time. This allowed a degree of self-analysis and self-criticism which forms the basis of reasoning about one's situation, and, therefore, the basis of conscience.

The person could also exercise his or her will in adopting a certain course of action, whilst, at the same time, being aware of many others possibilities in the situation, and having the opportunity to choose one of the other options if the person so desired.

Here we see the foundations of all moral action within the person.
Other factors which Niebuhr recognised here were what he called "original sin". This he described as "The universal inclination of the self to be more concerned with itself than to be embarrassed by its undue claims." (p.30.)

This "tendency to consider ourselves whenever we rise to survey the whole human situation... expresses itself on many levels, so that its universality does not indicate a uniformity in human behaviour. It expresses itself in the action of the deserter, whose self-concern tempts him to evade the risks of war. But it is also revealed in the attitude of the brave soldier who may, upon enlistment in the army, anxiously speculate upon the possibility of attaining officer rank. A person may be thoroughly 'devoted' to a cause, a community, or a creative relationship, and yet he may, within terms of that devotion, express his final concern for his own prestige or power or security."

Consequently, this inherent selfishness cannot be explained by the orthodox idea of an inherited sinful taint, or by reference to a person's survival impulse or self-preservation instinct.

It constitutes a "bondage of the will" to the interests of the self. The sinner cannot choose unselfishly without the grace of God.

The fact that we can, by thought, transcend our present situation, creates all sorts of possibilities for our future choice and ambitions.

"Whether people have one house or three or five, and whether the house boasts of two or twenty rooms, is not determined by some logical principle or some primary need because human desires always transcend elementary needs. The scope beyond the primary need invariably includes cultural as well as purely physical values."

This "ladder of ambition and achievement", however, is inevitably accompanied by a ladder of anxiety. "The poor man is anxious lest he lack sufficient income to satisfy the basic needs of his family. The rich man is anxious that he may not be able to conform to the living standard of his neighbours. He is also anxious lest envy of his wealth destroy, rather than enhance, respect for his person. Human anxieties grow with achievement and the anxieties contain both concern for the adequacy of the social or artistic achievement and for the social prestige."

So, conscience will be just as variable as these other things he mentions.

Niebuhr does not believe that the ingrained and inordinate selfishness of humans can be easily controlled by such "rational" factors as education and by appealing to people's good-will or reason.
The human race has limitless desires "both for justice and for self-expression, both for self-realisation and for self-giving. But the limits are provided on the whole by the counter forces of history and of life." Law, institutions, and the shortness of life, can be very effective curbs to our

self-aggrandisement.

(b.) The dialogue between self and others is the basis for all relationships, and for most of our learning experiences.

The natural way of acting toward others usually embodies a kind of prudence in all our relationships in order to develop all the loving and friendly links with others that we need, without missing out on anything for ourselves. In this way we can seek our own self-fulfilment, along with the fulfilment of others.

The sexual act is the highest form of this type of relationship, where one person seeks self-fulfilment in the mutual fulfilment of another person.

"The paradox that 'whoever seeketh to gain his life will lose it but whoso loseth his life will find it' accurately and succinctly states the issue encountered in the dialogue between persons when each person is too intent to complete his life in the other in calculated mutuality." (p.44.)

"It is an obvious fact, which may be 'empirically' observed, that the self does not fulfil itself most fully when self-realisation is its constant aim. In the same way happiness and virtue elude conscious striving. In any event, prudent calculation is not powerful enough to draw the self from itself as the centre of its existence and to find a centre beyond itself."

The New Testament puts forward a new kind of love, called "agape", which is a self-giving kind of love where there is no thought given by the lover about his or her own fulfilment, but only to seek the best and highest interests of the other person.

"This (agape love) dimension of the dialogue between selves clearly transcends all canons of prudence; and reveals how the dialogue is enriched and sustained by viewpoints which are not directly derived from the ordinary level of mutuality."

In the dialogue between a self and its communities we see many levels in operation at once.

For example, the individual depends upon the community as the sustainer of his existence, and as the place where fulfilment will be found.

Yet the individual is also able to look down upon the community, and to be embarrassed because he does not see there the kind of moral standards that the individual wishes to practice privately. Niebuhr gives a number of examples of matters about which this embarrassment might be felt. Also, individuals can live in a number of different communities at the one time, which will vary according to which of the person's interests is being considered.

Communities do not have the ability to look down upon themselves, and to analyse their condition. This can only be done by people within it, as individuals.

(c.) The self is also in dialogue with God. This may seem hard for some to believe, but the Christian knows that we all have to deal with God. He is one of the other "selves", though not a human one, with which we deal, and with whom one can have the most profound relationships. That is a deep part of the purpose of our existence.

<u>Creator and Creature in Historical Drama.</u>

This double aspect of human selves is one which Niebuhr emphasises very heavily.

There are certain ways in which we do well to recognise that we are simply creatures - a part of creation, a product of our race and our society, and that we are affected by the things which happen around us.

There are other ways in which we can be creative, can affect situations for good or bad, and can introduce new factors.

Those in positions of power tend to forget the first of these, as do the rich, and the rationalists amongst us. Even when we do not forget it, we tend to think that our creative powers and possibilities are greater than they in fact are. Those who can manipulate situations or other people are prone to think they can do more than will be proven by the facts of history in the end.

Those with big ambitions, or with too much idealism about the changes that they would like to introduce, are also prone to this temptation.

The other possibility, of over-emphasising our creatureliness, is not so much a temptation for most of us.

So, the drive which so many of us have, to emphasise our abilities, is one of the forms of pride which is so ingrained into members of the human race.

The Search for Meaning.

Human selves seem also to have an ingrained desire for meaning. This not only applies to the desire we have to discover the meaning of our lives, in the sense of a meaning imposed upon us from outside of ourselves. But it also applies to us as a desire to create a greater meaning and apparent worth for ourselves by embarking upon projects which we think will make our lives more meaningful.

This, again, can be a source of pride and of an inordinate desire for self-fulfilment. The christian has to learn that neither of these types of meaning for our lives have any possibility or content apart from the gracious gift of our Creator God, who is Lord of all.

The meaning of our lives can, again, only be found by seeking the fulfilment of another - of God, and in losing our drive for self-fulfilment in serving Him. This is the meaning of the great commandments which we find in the Bible, and is the key to happiness that Jesus spoke of in the Sermon on the Mount.

So much of the economic and political theory of this present world operates on totally different lines, and in totally opposite directions from what the Bible teaches.

The Dramas of History.

It is what Niebuhr calls the dramas of history which provide the stage upon which the self conducts all of these dialogues, and upon which moral decisions of every kind have to be made. What he calls "dramas" are simply actions which we make in response to our situations and our dialoguing.

Cyclical or Linear?

The Greek view of history is that it was cyclical, whereas the Hebraic view of history was linear.

Both of these views have their degree of truth. The cyclical view is true in the sense that all the historical entities have a beginning, an end, and often there is a period of maturity in between. Niebuhr had a famous saying that history repeats itself, but that it is never quite the same. This reflects also the error of the cyclical view - that there is development in history.

The linear view comes from the Old Testament originally, and fits in with the Christian idea that history is heading toward a climax, involving the fulfilment of its God-given purpose in Jesus Christ.

But, what kind of development is there which takes place within history?

The historian, H.A.L.Fisher, confessed that he could see no plan in history, only that it lurched on from one crisis to the next. And this view is now commonly held as what can be gained from the academic study of modern history.

To describe the development one must hold religious or philosophical views which will provide the clue that academic history cannot provide.

Many secularists have believed that an evolutionary progress is taking place, where some greater goal is being achieved by a mindless kind of evolution.

Perhaps it is science and technology which is the clue? Although it is hard to justify choosing the good results of technology as the clue to the meaning of history rather than the bad and destructive things.

Marxism taught that history was progressing inevitably towards a classless society in which everone would use what they needed and contribute all that they could. So, selfishness would be gone.

Niebuhr held that all views which saw an optimistic progress in history were based upon a misunderstanding of human nature, and of what was happening in the world.

<u>Reformation Insights.</u>

He believed that Reformation theology gave us the insights that we need in order to view history more correctly, but that these insights were much more complex than many non-Protestants thought, and more complex even than many people in the Protestant tradition believed, because they had been misled by the secular and humanistic (Greek) ideas which were around in the world.

So, when Niebuhr thought about the way that the Gospel impacted upon the world, he did not see steady progress toward some future millenium.

For example: (a.) Christians might be forgiven, but they are still sinners. No matter how much improvement might be made by preaching the gospel, or by social action, every person in the world would still be a sinner. So all the problems of selfishness would either still exist, or could easily appear again.

(b.) History fulfils the Kingdom of God, but it also negates it.
Human history is the scene where the Kingdom of God has to receive all the fulfilment that it is

ever going to receive on earth. Yet, the real and complete fulfilment of the Kingdom is reserved for "the new heavens and the new earth" wherein dwells righteousness. So, while the Kingdom is here in human history, and this world is under God's rule, in another sense, it is not here. It is still to come.

(c.) God's grace certainly works within nature generally in many different ways, and is at work within human nature in particular. God is in the business of transforming both people and society in this world, and of bringing about more Christlikeness.

But, God's grace is also contradictory to nature. It cannot be fully realised here. Its real fulfilment can only take place in heaven. So, all attempts at utopia, or at perfect societies here, are doomed to failure as lasting enterprises, although they may be full of interest and value while they last.

(d.) The power of God IS at work in us. This is a time of grace and mercy. But, the power of God is also AGAINST us, because there is always God's judgment in the world. The world and human life will come to an end, and it is always subject to sickness and tragedy.

These dramas of history are the vehicles through which God deals with us here in this life. We are taught to pray for God's Kingdom to come, and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. These prayers must have an answer worthy of God within the realms of human history.

But, it will not be heaven on earth. We will still be sinners, imperfect, ignorant, immature, always growing, learning, becoming more like Christ. Each person having to learn the lessons for themselves. Each person having to know God for themselves. Each generation having to be redeemed. It will never be perfect here.

Perfection is only possible as part of the Christian Hope, which depends for its fulfilment on the promises of Christ, and which is possible only in heaven.

Dynamic Morality.

Another reason why Niebuhr spoke of the dramas of history as the scene for human moral actions was because he wanted to avoid the static moral laws arising from various theories of natural law, which had so often been taught as a part of Christianity.

Niebuhr recognised the basic norm or law of love (agape), but held that no list of pieces of advice could adequately tell us how to practice this norm in every conceivable situation.

The Christian faces a dynamic situation, where every situation in life is in certain ways unique. We each need God's wisdom to know how to be loving in each situation as it arises. In some instances there is help in the Bible, and we should respond to that, when it is available. But, in many situations, the Bible does not provide direct advice. So, we need to be even more prayerful and dependent on God.

There are certain qualities of character which ought to be the object of our prayers, for God to work these qualities in us. Humility and love are two that Niebuhr emphasised heavily.

Reinhold Neibuhr's doctrine of human nature provided the cornerstone of his views about current events in his day. Many of the magazine articles that he wrote were comments upon social, economic and political events, which he viewed on this basis. His whole social philosophy is enlightened by insights such as this.

Conclusion.

Whilst insights into human nature can and should be gained from many different sources, input of Christian insights are here largely drawn from evangelical theology, and not from other types of Chrsitian theology, because the verification test that we have used in the area of faith and reason speaks in favour of that particular kind of theology, and not the others.

Christian theology offers very high insights into human nature, as well as very low and pessimistic insights.

The high insights speak of mankind being made "in the image of God", able to "transcend himself" (Niebuhr), a creator, with great intellectual and moral capacities, and capacities for wonderful qualities of character. With God's grace, some short-term and long-term improvement is possible, but just how considerable that improvement might be is not yet known.

The low and pessimistic insights include that mankind is part of the animal kingdom, yet is a very peculiar animal. He has many waeknesses, and is deeply affected by finiteness. Human life is very uncertain, insecure and contingent.

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN.

Under this heading, we will again look at the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, as providing us with a very good starting-point.

"Sin" is a Christian term, and thus gains its meaning from its use within Christian theology.

It refers in a number of ways to the fact that we do not live up to the quality of life which is pleasing to God. It also includes the idea of the "guilt", or bad odour in the presence of God, which we gain as the result of our sins.

The Norm of Love.

The Christian standard against which our characters and actions are measured can be described in a number of ways. Each of these ways has its own strengths and weaknesses.
The standard, as described by Reinhold Neibuhr, is LOVE.

This understanding of love is a fine balance between two types of love which Niebuhr calls "mutual love" and "agape love".

Mutual love means seeking the highest interests of God, of other humans, and of all creation, in order to gain our own fulfilment, as well as the proper fulfilment of the other parties. We seek to fulfil ourselves by means of fulfilling somebody else - the one being loved.

Agape love means sacrificing one's own fulfilment in order to achieve the fulfilment of the one being loved.

The word "agape" has a number of different meanings in various parts of the New Testament, but this self-denying love is a normal concept in Christian theology arising from the teaching of the New Testament agape love. It is this concept that Niebuhr uses extensively.
Niebuhr presents many reasons why the Christian standard should not be either mutual love or agape love by itself, but has to be a fine balance of the two, held together. Neither of the two is sufficient by itself.

Our sin is not a necessary result of our nature and situation.That is, it is not a logical necessity that all people will sin because of our limitations and the peculiarities of our nature. This has been proved by the fact that Jesus was one of us yet did not commit sin.

But, the practical reality of our situation has become so affected by sin, for various reasons, that it has become inevitable that everybody will sin.

This sin takes two basic forms - will-to-power and pride.

(a.) "Man is insecure and involved in natural contingency; he seeks to overcome his insecurity by a will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creatureliness."

This is reflected in the Genesis story where the serpent tempts Eve with the words "If you eat of the fruit of this tree you will be like God." As is also the second form.

(b.) "Man is ignorant and involved in the limitations of a finite mind; but he pretends that he is not limited. He assumes that he can gradually transcend finite limitations until his mind becomes identical with universal mind. All of his intellectual and cultural pursuits, therefore, become infected with the sin of pride. Man's pride and will-to-power disturb the harmony of creation. The Bible defines sin in both religious and moral terms. The religious dimension of sin is man's rebellion against God; his effort to usurp the place of God. The moral and social dimension of sin is injustice. The ego which falsely makes itself the centre of existence in its pride and will-to-power inevitably subordinates other life to its will and thus does injustice to other life." (Nature and Destiny of Man. Vol.1., pages 190-191.)

Niebuhr's exposition of human sin in the two volumes of "The Nature and Destiny of Man" is very powerful and detailed, and cannot be adequately treated here in any short space.

Another Biblical word which is often used to apply to the ego's falsely making itself the centre of its existence is the word "sensuality". This arises from Saint Paul's description of sin found in Romans, chapter 1, and has been used also by many theologians since then.

It is easy to see from these two quotations that will-to-power and pride are the negation of love, as they describe how we seek to fulfil ourselves at the expense of others, or of creation, instead of fulfilling ourselves in the fulfilment of others, or sacrificing ourselves for the sake of the welfare of others.

Also, what actually is seen to constitute our own fulfilment will change, in these circumstances, into a very selfish and third-rate form of happiness and satisfaction, which will never be ultimately successful. So, sin also includes a degradation of ourselves, as well as of God, of others, and of all of creation.

Pride of Power.

"There is a pride of power in which the human ego assumes its self-sufficiency and self-mastery and imagines itself secure against all vicissitudes. It does not recognise the contingent and dependent character of its life and believes itself to be the author of its own existence, the judge of its own values and the master of its own destiny. This proud pretension is present in an inchoate form in all human life, but it rises to greater heights amongst those individuals and classes who have a more than ordinary degree of social power."

This "is particularly characteristic of individuals and groups whose position in society is, or seems to be, secure. In Biblical prophecy this security is declared to be bogus and those who rest in it are warned against an impending doom."

"Closely related to (the above pride of power) is the lust for power which has pride as its end. The ego does not feel secure and therefore grasps for more power in order to make itself more secure."

This "second form of the pride of power is more obviously prompted by the sense of insecurity. It is the sin of those who, knowing themselves to be insecure, seek sufficient power to guarantee their security, inevitably of course at the expense of other life." (Nature and Destiny of Man. Vol.1., Pages 201-204.)
So, man seeks wealth, health, property, or anything else which will increase his sense of security. But, this causes the uneven spread of all these things amongst people, and causes damage to the world in which we all live.

Intellectual Pride.

"Intellectual pride is confined neither to the political oligarchs nor to the savants of society. All human knowledge is tainted with an 'ideological' taint. It pretends to be more true than it is. It is finite knowledge, gained from a particular perspective; but it pretends to be final and ultimate knowledge. Exactly analogous to the cruder pride of power, the pride of intellect is derived on the one hand from ignorance of the finiteness of the human mind and on the other hand from an attempt to obscure the known conditioned character of human knowledge and the taint of self-interest in human truth.

The philosopher who imagines himself capable of stating a final truth merely because he has sufficient perspective upon past history to be able to detect previous philosophical errors is clearly the victim of the ignorance of his ignorance. Standing on a high pinnacle of history he forgets that this pinnacle also has a particular locus and that his perspective will seem as partial to posterity as the pathetic parochialism of previous thinkers. This is a very obvious fact but no philosophical system has been great enough to take full account of it. Each great thinker makes the same mistake, in turn, of imagining himself the final thinker." "Not the least pathetic is the certainty of a naturalistic age that its philosophy is a final philosophy because it rests upon science."

"Intellectual pride is thus the pride of reason which forgets that it is involved in a temporal process and imagines itself in complete transcendence over history."
"A particularly significant aspect of intellectual pride is the inability of the agent to recognise the same or similar limitations of perspective in himself which he has detected in others." (Pages 207 - 209.)

Moral Pride.

"Moral pride is the pretension of finite man that his highly conditioned virtue is the final righteousness, and that his very relative moral standards are absolute. Moral pride thus makes virtue the very vehicle of sin, a fact which explains why the New Testament is so critical of the righteous in comparison with 'publicans and sinners'." "When the self mistakes its standards for God's standards it is naturally inclined to attribute the very essence of evil to non-conformists." (page 212.)

Spiritual Pride.

One of the most interesting details of Neibuhr's exposition of pride is in what he says about spiritual pride (something of which any Christian is so easily guilty).

"The sin of moral pride, when it has conceived, brings forth spiritual pride. The ultimate sin is the religious sin of making the self-deification which is implicit in moral sin explicit.
This is done when our partial standards and relative attainments are explicitly related to the unconditioned good, and claim divine sanction. For this reason religion is not simply, as is generally supposed, an inherently virtuous human quest for God. It (religion) is merely a final battleground between God and man's self-esteem. In that battle even the most pious human practices may be instruments of human pride. The same man may in one moment regard Christ as his Judge and in the next moment seek to prove that the figure, the standards and the righteousness of Christ bear a greater similarity to his own righteousness than to that of his enemy.

The worst form of class domination is religious class domination in which, as in the Indian caste system, a dominant priestly class not only subjects subordinate classes to social disabilities but finally excludes them from participation in any universe of meaning.

The worst form of intolerance is religious intolerance, in which the particular interests of the contestants hide behind religious absolutes.

The worst form of self-assertion is religious self-assertion in which, under the guise of contrition before God, He is claimed as the exclusive ally of our contingent self. 'What goes by the name of religion in the modern world" declared a modern missionary, 'is to a great extent unbridled human self-assertion in religious disguise.'

Christianity rightly regards itself as a religion not so much of man's search for God, in the process of which he may make himself God, but as a religion in which a holy and loving God is revealed to man as the source and end of all finite existence against Whom the self-will of man is shattered and his pride abased. But as soon as the Christian assumes that he is, by virtue of possessing this revelation, more righteous because more contrite, than other men, he increases the sin of self-righteousness and makes the forms of a religion of contrition the tool of his pride."
(Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol 1., Pages 213 - 214.)

There are a great many passages in Niebuhr's writings upon this subject which are so eminently quotable.

Collective Egotism.

So far, Niebuhr has tried to make a clear distinction between the pride of individuals, and collective or group pride. This is because only individuals are moral agents.

Collective pride "is the fruit of the undue claims which (individuals) make for their various social groups."

Groups or nations can appear to have a moral life of their own which is different from that which operates on the individual level.

Collective pride has to be considered separately, however, for two reasons.
(a.) Though group pride has its source in individual attitudes, it "actually achieves a certain authority over the individual and results in unconditioned demands by the group upon the individual. Whenever the group develops organs of will, as in the apparatus of the state, it seems to the individual to have an independent source of moral life. He will be inclined to bow to its pretensions and to aquiesce in its claims to authority, even when these do not coincide with his moral scruples or inclinations."

(b.) "The pretensions and claims of a collective or social self exceed those of the individual ego. The group is more arrogant, hypocritical, self-centred and more ruthless in the pursuit of its ends than the individual. An inevitable moral tension between individual and group morality is therefore created." (Pages 221 - 222.)

The great Italian statesman, Cavour, said, "If we did for ourselves what we do for our country, what rascals we would be."

"The egotism of racial, national and socio-economic groups is most consistently expressed by the national state, because the state gives the collective impulses of the nation such instruments of power, and presents the imagination of individuals with such obvious symbols of its discrete collective identity, that the nation state is most able to make absolute claims for itself, to enforce those claims by power and to give them plausibility and credibility by the majesty and panoply of its apparatus. In the life of every political group, whether nation or empire, which articulates itself through the instrument of a state, obedience is prompted by the fear of power on the one hand and by reverence for majesty on the other. The temptation to idolatry is implicit in the state's majesty. Rationalists, with their simple ideas of government resting purely upon the consent of the governed, have never appreciated to what degree religious reverence for majesty is implicit in this consent."

"Sinful pride and idolatrous pretension are thus an inevitable concomitant of the cohesion of large political groups."
Nations can, of course, take a stand for worthwhile goals and values. The sinful pride of nations lies in the lack of balance and truthfulness with which these goals are pursued.

"The pride of nations consists in the tendency to make unconditioned claims for their conditioned values. The unconditioned character of these claims has two aspects.

(a.) The nation claims a more absolute devotion to values which transcend its life than the facts warrant; and

(b.) it regards the values to which it is loyal as more absolute than they really are.

Nations may fight for 'liberty' or 'democracy' but they do not do so until their vital interests are imperiled. They may refuse to fight and claim that their refusal is prompted by their desire to 'preserve civilization'. Neutral nations are not less sinful than belligerent ones in their effort to hide their partial interests behind their devotion to 'civilization'. Furthermore, the civilization to which they claim loyalty does not deserve such absolute devotion as the nation asks for it.

This does not mean that men may not have to make fateful decisions between types of civilization in mortal combat. The moralists who contend that the imperfection of all civilization negates every obligation to preserve any of them suffer from a naive cynicism. Relative distinctions must always be made in history. But these necessary distinctions do not invalidate the general judgment upon the collective life of man that it is invariably involved in the sin of pride." (Page 226 - 227.)

The Role of Prophetic Religion.

"Prophetic religion had its very inception in a conflict with national self-deification. Beginning with Amos, all the great Hebrew prophets challenged the simple identification between God and the nation, or the naive confidence of the nation in its exclusive relation with God. The prophets prophesied in the name of a holy God Who spoke judgment upon the nation; and the basic sin against which this judgment was directed was the sin of claiming that Israel and God were one or that God was the exclusive property of Israel. Judgment would overtake not only Israel but every nation, including the great nations who were used for the moment to execute divine judgment upon Israel but were equally guilty of exalting themselves beyond measure.

The conviction that collective pride was the final form of sin is possible only within terms of a religion of revelation in the faith of which a voice of God is heard from beyond all human majesties, and a divine power is revealed in comparison with which 'the nations are as a drop in the bucket.'"

This genius of prophetic faith enabled Augustine in the Christian era to view the destruction of the Roman Empire without despair and to answer the charge that Christianity was responsible for its downfall with the assertion that, on the contrary, destruction is the very law of life of 'the city of this world' and that pride is the cause of its destruction.

It is often true that those nations will survive best who mitigate their pride most successfully, and who manage to love God and practice justice to a better degree. The Old Testament promises to Israel seem to point in this direction.
The call of the Judaeo-Christian message from God is for a proper love for God, and for JUSTICE in our relations with people.

Any effort to make progress in this direction, however, will always have to include recognition that people will all continue to be sinners, and that national structures will always display the sin of pride.

The prophetic word from God must be given wherever it can; acts of agape love must be performed; the gospel must be applied to as many lives as possible; the fruit of the Spirit of God must be borne, in all humility; we must pray for each other and love each other in the trust that these loving deeds will affect future generations as well as our own; prayer must continually be offered for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth as in heaven, and we must expect to see the healing power of the Spirit achieve good things that nobody planned or foresaw.

Degrees of national sin must be clearly recognised. Some examples of sin are less disastrous than others.

The final form of this collective sin of pride mentioned by Niebuhr is, that there is a special form of culpability and guilt where nations will not listen to the prophetic voice which can be their salvation. Although all nations are guilty of pride, some will allow the prophetic word to exist and to be heard and responded to, whereas others will not listen, or will try to silence that voice. The ones that will not listen and who silence the prophets are clearly more demonic than the others.

This national type of rejecting the Holy Spirit could be seen, perhaps, as a national form of the unpardonable sin.

A thorough study of Niebuhr's writings will reveal many other aspects of the doctrine of sin.

MORAL VIRTUES OTHER THAN LOVE.

Many Christian thinkers, and some other thinkers as well, have considered love to be the basic, central, over-arching and all-inclusive quality of character which is the key to the moral standard which both ought to govern our behaviour, and by which our behaviour is judged.

This view is usually taken because of the central importance of love in the New Testament, and because it is possible to describe all of the other moral virtues either in terms of love, or as dependent upon love for their existence.

Love has appealed to non-Christian thinkers because they can see its practical usefulness in answering many of the problems of mankind.

We have seen that Reinhold Niebuhr was one who took the view that agape love, as described in the New Testament, is an adequate description of the moral standard.
However, there are many christians, including almost the whole of the Roman Catholic tradition, where separate emphasis is placed upon each of the moral virtues. Love may be considered to be the main virtue, but, the others are all considered to be of great importance.

Humility.

For many, humility has been thought to be the basic virtue upon which all the others depend, and without which the others cannot exist. Andrew Murray has been one who has taken this view about the central importance of humility, and it is a view with which I am very much inclined to agree.

Whilst saying this, there is no intention to belittle the importance or value of love, or of disagreeing with anything that Reinhold Niebuhr said about it, or about human sin.

It is meant merely to show that there are other ways of looking at the Christian moral standard, and that this moral standard is, if anything, wider than the way that Niebuhr portrayed it.

Andrew Murray's wonderful little devotional book on humility commences in this way:-

"When God created the universe, it was with the one object of making the creature partaker of His perfection and blessedness, and so showing forth in it the glory of His love and wisdom and power. God wished to reveal Himself in and through created beings by communicating to them as much of His own goodness and glory as they were capable of receiving. But this communication was not a giving to the creature something which it could possess in itself, a certain life or goodness, of which it had the charge and disposal. By no means. But as God is the ever-living, ever-present, ever-acting One, who upholdeth all things by the word of His power, and in whom all things exist, the relation of the creature to God could only be one of unceasing, absolute, universal dependence. As truly as

God by His power once created, so truly by that same power must God every moment maintain. The creature has not only to look back to the origin and first beginning of existence, and acknowledge that it there owes everything to God; its chief care, its highest virtue, its only happiness, now and through all eternity, is to present itself an empty vessel, in which God can dwell and manifest His power and goodness.

The life God bestows is imparted not once for all, but each moment continuously, by the unceasing operation of His mighty power. Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is, from the very nature of things, the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue.

And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil. It was when the now fallen angels began to look upon themselves with self-complacency that they were led to disobedience, and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. Even so it was, when the serpent breathed the poison of his pride, the desire to be as God, into the hearts of our first parents, that they too fell from their high estate into all the wretchedness in which man is now sunk. In heaven and earth, pride, self-exaltation, is the gate and the birth and the curse, of hell.

Hence it follows that nothing can be our redemption, but the restoration of the lost humility, the original and only true relation of the creature to its God. And so Jesus came to bring humility back to earth, to make us partakers of it, and by it to save us. In heaven He humbled Himself to become man. The humility we see in Him possessed Him in heaven; it brought Him, He brought it, from there. Here on earth 'He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death'; His humility gave His death its value, and so became our redemption. And now the salvation He imparts is nothing less and nothing else than a communication of His own life and death, His own disposition and spirit, His own humility, as the ground and root of His relation to God and His redeeming work. Jesus Christ took the place and fulfilled the destiny of man, as a creature, by His life of perfect humility. His humility is our salvation. His salvation is our humility.

And so the life of the saved ones, of the saints, must needs bear this stamp of deliverence from sin, and full restoration to their original state; their whole relation to God and man marked by an all-pervasive humility. Without this there can be no true abiding in God's presence, or experience of His favour and the power of His Spirit; without this no abiding faith, or love or joy or strength. Humility is the only soil in which the graces root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure. Humility is not so much a grace or virtue along with others; it is the root of all, because it alone takes the right attitude before God, and allows Him as God to do all.

God has so constituted us as reasonable beings, that the truer the insight into the real nature or the absolute need of a command, the readier and fuller will be our response to it. The call to humility has been too little regarded in the Church, because its true nature and importance has been too little apprehended. It is not a something which we bring to God, or He bestows; it is simply the sense of entire nothingness, which comes when we see how truly God is all, and in which we make way for God to be all. When the creature realises that this is the true nobility, and consents to be with his will, his mind, and his affections, the form, the vessel in which the life and glory of God are to work and manifest themselves, he sees that humility is simply acknowledging the truth of his position as creature, and yielding to God His place." (A. Murray. "Humility". chapter 1.)

So, in this manner described by Andrew Murray, and which many others have also described, humility has a definite logical precedence and foundational role amongst the Christian virtues.

Other Virtues.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the major virtues have been known as the "Seven Cardinal Virtues." These have normally been divided into two sections.

The first section consists of the four moral virtues drawn from Greek philosophy - prudence (wisdom), fortitude (courage), temperance (self-control) and justice.

The second section consists of the three "theological" virtues drawn from the New Testament - faith, hope and charity (love).

This list was widely used in the Middle Ages because of the synthesis which then operated between certain strands of Greek philosophy and Catholic theology. This represented the solution to the problem of faith and reason which was used at that time.
Generally, Catholic theologians have tried to maintain this approach to faith and reason, although this synthesis has not proved to be very suitable to our very different present modern age.

Wisdom is another virtue which can be described in such a way as to appear logically prior to all the other virtues.

It is the virtue which applies to the choosing of the goal which will govern how the other virtues will be applied, and the striking of the balance between other competing virtues and choices when these are to be applied to particular situations.
To this list of seven cardinal virtues should also be added many other virtues which are not so important as these ones.

The British Methodist writer, W. E. Sangster, in his book, "The Pure in Heart", chose to use the list of nine virtues which Saint Paul gave as the "fruit" or "harvest" of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament when he tried to describe the characteristics of Christian holiness. This list was chosen because a Protestant might wish to base his thoughts more completely on the New Testament than on a mixture of virtues, largely from Greek philosophy.

Using a mixture of virtues from two different sources like this tends to produce a list which is not a coherent whole.

This list of virtues from Saint Paul consists of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance.

Justice is also an extremely important virtue right through the Bible. It is the "social" virtue - the one which governs how our behaviour affects other people. So, it is possible to see justice either as a separate Biblical virtue of great importance, or as an important factor dealt with within each of the other nine listed virtues.

Again, a much longer list of other virtues can also be added.

So, whichever starting-point we may use in trying to understand the Christian virtues, and to apply them to our lives, there is a rich range of insights available, involving many characteristics and qualities, which should all be understood and applied in our lives, so that real and lasting improvement in human nature and in society can be experienced.

In conclusion, perhaps it should be repeated here, solely for emphasis, that virtues and qualities of

character need to be seen as the best way of defining the Christian moral standard, rather than commands, laws, rules and regulations.

As Niebuhr says, this is in order to have a dynamic morality arising from having to apply these qualities wisely, under the guidance of Scripture and of the Spirit of God, to an infinite variety of situations.

By other means it is too easy to have a frozen, static morality, which cannot be applied well to new situations, and which is too prone to legalisms.

BOOKLIST.

Books referred to in the text are:-

Andrew Murray. "Humility." various editions.

Reinhold Niebuhr. "The Nature and Destiny of Man" Two volumes.
London. Nisbet and Co. 1941 and 1943.

Reinhold Niebuhr. "The Self and the Dramas of History."
London. Faber and Faber. 1956.

W. E. Sangster. "The Pure in Heart." A study in Christian Sanctity. various editions. 1954.

A much longer list could be made which would serve the student of this subject well. Such a list would include:-

(a.) Some other titles by Niebuhr (with date of publication.)

"Does Civilization Need Religion?" 1927.
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A. Tanquerey. "The Spiritual Life." various editions. 1923.

Chapter 17 - Justice

Justice is the social virtue. It is the quality of character and action relating to the way people deal with each other.

Stalker defines justice as "the rendering to everyone of what is his due. It is the virtue of man, not as he stands by himself, but in his place in society; and, in order to understand his whole duty in regard to it, a man has to remember his relations to all other human beings - his superiors, inferiors and equals - and his connection with each circle of the social organisation - such as the family, the city, the nation and the church." (chapter 4.)

Stalker goes on to say that some people have included within the idea of justice our relations to the rest of creation here on earth - especially the other living things - animals and plants - and also our relation to God. Saint Thomas Aquinas emphasised heavily this last aspect of his conception of justice.

However, in this chapter we will use the idea of justice to apply only to human relationships.

Dennis Lloyd writes about "formal justice" in the following way. "Justice cannot mean that we are to treat everyone alike regardless of individual differences, for this would require us, for instance, to condemn to the same punishment everyone who has killed another person, regardless of such factors as the mental incapacity or infancy of the accused. What this formal principle really means is that like shall be treated as like, so that everyone who is classified as belonging to the same category, for a particular purpose, is to be treated in the same way. For example, if the vote is extended to all citizens of full age by the franchise laws of a given state, then justice requires that all persons qualified in this way shall be allowed to exercise his or her vote, but justice would not be infringed by the exclusion of aliens or infants from the list of voters.

In other words formal justice requires equality of treatment in accordance with the classifications laid down by the rules, but it tells us nothing about how people should or should not be classified or treated." (pages 119 - 120.)
This last paragraph from Lloyd is very important. Justice tells us how people should be treated, only after a package of rules or laws have been set up, or after a moral standard has been established.

If we are looking at justice as a MORAL principle or value, then we can only understand it and apply it after the rest of the moral standard is known.

If we are considering LEGAL justice, we can only apply it after the rest of the body of laws and rules have been set up.

In this chapter we are considering justice as a moral principle.

So, we will here need to return to what we have learned about the shape and content of the moral standard, in order to be able to proceed with a discussion of justice as a moral principle.

Justice and the Moral Standard.

The moral standard that we are thinking about here is that derived from evangelical Protestant theology. As we have already seen, this is because the verification test that we have used in the section on faith and reason supports this kind of Christian theology. It does not necessarily support other types of Christian theology, nor does it support ideas from the other religions of the world.

(Although this does not imply that nothing of value can come from those sources.)

Gordon Harland seeks to give an exposition of the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr on the nature and functioning of justice.

Justice is found to be very hard to define in any adequate way.
"Justice can ultimately be described only with reference to agape and the concrete situation." (page 55.)

"Justice is not an independent norm. It is the relative social embodiment of love which always stands under the criticism and the higher possibilities of love." (page 54.)

We have already seen a little of what Niebuhr said about agape love, and about its relationship to mutual love. This is the Christian moral standard. Agape is the heedless, self-sacrificing type of love for God, and for other humans. Mutual love, however, is somewhat more self-oriented. And theses two types of love have to be held together in a wise balance in order to form the Christian moral standard.

Justice is the best and wisest attempt to practice this love in all our social relationships. But it is always an effort which is only relatively successful, for various reasons that we will consider in due course.
Consequently, our efforts at being just are always subject to criticism and judgment, because a higher degree of agape love always stands before us, showing us that we have only been relatively successful. It does not necessarily mean that we could have done better within the prevailing circumstances, because the circumstances place conditions upon what we can do, and how loving we can be.

It may be that we have done the best we could, but, still, this will often be not good enough to satisfy agape love. So, there is a judgment and criticism hanging over whatever we have done.

On the other hand, it may be that we have NOT done the best we could in practicing justice, as the possibilities are conditioned by the prevailing circumstances. In that case, to that extent we have been unjust, and are morally blameworthy.

<u>Over-simplification in Understanding the Nature of Love.</u>

An important part of the development of Niebuhr's thought in this area came about because of the criticisms that he directed against the Liberal theology which was so common in his younger days. We will use this historical aspect in order to understand Niebuhr's more mature thought about justice.
According to Harland, the root of the criticism that Niebuhr had of Liberal theology at this point was that it was a sentimental, over-simplified moralism.

"The root of the sentimentality of the prevailing outlook was the conception that love is a simple historical possibility. If only more people would live by the law of love, then the nasty business of 'power politics' could be dispensed with, co-operation would supersede the need for coercion, class struggles would cease, and international peace would reign." (page 44.)

Of course, it is not liberal Christians only who are guilty of this kind of sentimental utopianism. Many evangelicals have been just as guilty of it, as have many other kinds of people.

Many evangelicals have said that if only the world could be converted, and submitted to Christ, all of our social problems would disappear.

The same kind of reasoning lay behind Niebuhr's attack upon pacifism, and behind his attack upon the perfectionism which is taught in many Protestant sects, as well.

Harland says that there are three reasons why these moral opinions are sentimental, and inadequate.

(1.) "The first is that it is unaware of the depth and power of sin. It does not understand the real condition of man, that he is a creature involved in a contradiction with the will of God and thus in a profound self-contradiction. Thus, as Niebuhr puts it in a reply to G. G. Atkins, 'It is not moral complacency of which liberal Christianity stands convicted but moral superficiality.' 'What is lacking,' he says elsewhere, 'is the realisation that even the best human will in the world has the corruption of sin in it.' Such moralism fails utterly to meet the deepest needs of the individual soul in its pilgrimage, and equally to be deplored is its failure to read the historical situation so as to provide the proper basis for justice and order. It is this superficial reading of the human condition, this tacit assumption that men do not fulfil the law of love because they have not heard it often enough or clearly enough, that leads moralism into such a sentimental approach to social issues." (page 45.)

Another way of describing this problem is seen in the fact that so many people believe that human beings are basically good, or that humans will choose the good and reasonable if only they can be told about it, and got to recognise it. Some educators assume that all children are basically teachable; that they naturally want to learn, and will recognise, and choose the truth, and live by it, if it can only be presented to them in the educational process. Theologically, people will turn to God, and away from their sins, if only they can be clearly shown their need.

All of the claims mentioned in the last paragraph, above, are factually wrong. Each claim is an expression of the same mistake that the liberals were making.

The fact is that people can know what is right and good, but still choose what is wrong. And even when people do choose what they see to be right, and try to obey the law of love, their actions are affected by sin and partiality in deep and serious ways. Especially is this true where our decisions and actions are part of the social fabric.

(2.) The second reason for the sentimentalism of these parts of liberal theology is that there has been a serious failure to grasp the religious heights of the gospel.

According to some of American liberal Christianity, all one had to do was to love God, and one's fellow man. This was all that God required.

There is little ability to understand the way Saint Paul struggled with the depths of sinful corruption within himself, and which he describes in Romans, chapter 7.

There is little ability to understand the height of agape love, and the ways in which agape love is greater than anything that we are ever able to do, no matter how well-intentioned we may be.

Liberal Christianity had lost touch with many of the orthodox doctrines of the church. This included losing sight of the doctrine of the atonement. So the ghastly nature of the sin which caused the crucifixion also tended to be underestimated. The need for and cost of forgiveness was not sufficiently appreciated. And the healing power of the atonement was also less understood.

So, although liberal Christianity talked much about love, it had really lost sight of the depths of God's love, and of the limited degree to which humans can express this love in their lives.

(3.) This leads us to the third reason, which resulted from the above factors - lack of political and social realism.

It is only when the full anguish and profound nature of human sin is seen, and the full depth and power of the gospel is appreciated, that we can hope to see political power and social justice in a more adequate light.

Another way of describing the criticism is that the liberals thought that if only love was practised, justice would not be needed, or it would be achieved as a natural result of love.

"It always substitutes ideals of love for the political necessities of justice. It wants people of changed heart to grant their fellow men love so that their fellow men will not have to demand justice. It always suggests that the brutal realities of politics are necessary only because people haven't heard of and been charmed by the ideal of love. It does not realise that if all men professed Christ and even if they understood his gospel so well that they felt under the tension of the commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', the fact of sin would still make political and economic coercion for the establishment ofjustice necessary. Moralistic preaching which makes love a substitute for justice merely increases the moral confusion of our day." (page 46.)

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FOUR FACTORS RELATING TO JUSTICE.

In Niebuhr's exposition of justice, there are four other closely related factors which we need to notice. According to Harland, these are the use of reason, political power, liberty and equality.

The Use of Reason.

Niebuhr saw that the powers of human reason had two great positive contributions to make to justice, and one negative contribution.

"The first great contribution of reason then is in delineating the principles of justice whereby our sense of obligation is widened. But this is not all. Reason also plays a significant role in the awakening of the conscience to the existence of social evil, and for the undermining of the reverence and pretension from which great inequities derive sanction and support." (Harland. page 50.)

Harland then quotes Niebuhr in the following way:-

"The force of reason makes for justice, not only by placing inner restraints upon the desires of the self in the interest of social harmony, but by judging the claims and assertions of individuals from the perspective of the total community. An irrational society accepts injustice because it does not analyse the pretensions made by the powerful and privileged groups of society. Even that portion of society which suffers most from injustice may hold the power responsible for it in reverence. A growing rationality in society destroys the uncritical acceptance of injustice. It may destroy the morale of dominant groups by making them more conscious of the hollowness of their pretensions, so that they will be unable to assert their interests and protect their special privileges with the same

degree of self-deception. It may furthermore destroy their social prestige in the community by revealing the relation between their special privileges and the misery of the underprivileged. It may also make those who suffer from injustice more conscious of their rights in society and persuade them to assert their rights more energetically."

But, there is also a negative contribution that human reason makes to justice. The key point is that any description of a problem, situation, need or answer will reflect the limitations and peculiar perspectives of the person who exercises his or her reason in this way.

This fact is enough to render inadequate any purely rational ethics.

"Reason does not transcend the particular intersts of the self nearly so much as rationalists generally suppose. It too is conditioned by history and tainted by sin."

Niebuhr wrote, "When all our modern rationalists learn that men are not logical, not because they do not know logic but because they are capable of standing outside, rather than inside a system of logic, and thus making it the servant of their interests."

"Reason then is limited by the fact that it can provide neither motivation nor a pure enough norm for truly responsible living."

"Since reason is always to some extent the servant of interest in a social situation, it is altogether naive to suppose that justice can be secured by purely rational persuasion alone. The corruption of interest means that power must be challenged by power." (Harland. page 51.)

Political Power.

This brings us to the second factor which accompanies our understanding of justice.

Niebuhr saw very clearly that because reason and the operations of power structures were always compromised by partiality and particular interests, as well as being affected by sin, it is necessary to have a balance of power so that those who are being treated unjustly can stand up against those who are being unjust.

Neither can justice be adequately achieved by the preaching or teaching of moral opinions, or the development of organisations or pressure groups to stand up for moral values or religious beliefs These, of course, have a special value, but they are never enough. Moralistic teaching, and gospel preaching, must be supplemented by specially devised power structures in order to have better success at achieving justice in a society.

It is necessary to have checks and balances in any system of social institutions so that a better standard of justice can be attained.

"All politics is power politics. The task of securing justice is a never-ending political task. It is therefore always involved in a contest of power." (page 51.)

It is one of the tasks of prophetic religion to point out where the power structures associated with any set of social institutions are not adequate in this regard, and to try to improve the situation.

Another task of prophetic religion is to point out the injustices which are currently being perpetrated, especially if those who are being treated unjustly cannot or will not do anything about it themselves.

"To acknowledge that justice is dependent upon a balance of power which always possesses the potential of overt conflict is to recognise how precarious is any achieved social harmony. And modern technology and mass communication serve only to exaggerate the tentativity of any such achievement. Moreover, a structure of justice based upon a balance of power is certainly very different from brotherhood, 'a community of love'.

It is right here, however, that the structure of Niebuhr's thought possesses its relevance. Agape is heedless, self-sacrificing; justice is discriminating, concerned with interests. Justice is further dependent upon power, upon an effective balance of the power of parties contending for their respective interests. The Christian then must hold clearly in view the norm of love and the power of self-love, the law of life and the other law in our members."

The Christian must remember not only the standard of love that he or she ought to exercise and practice. The power of sin must also be remembered, and the way this sin is buried deeply in what we are and in everything we do.

Harland quotes Niebuhr again to show the far-reaching consequences for our thinking if we do not remember both of these things very well, in all of their convoluted details.

"For to understand the law of love as the final imperative, but not to know about the persistence of self-love in all of life but particularly in the collective relations of mankind, results in an idealistic ethic with no relevance to the hard realities of life.

To know about the power of self-love but not to know that its power does not make it normative is to dispense with ethical standards and fall into cynicism.

But to know both the law of love as the final standard and the law of self-love as a persistent force is to enable Christians to have a foundation for a pragmatic ethic in which power and self-interest are used, beguiled, harnessed and deflected for the ultimate end of establishing the highest and most inclusive possible community of justice and order.

This is the very heart of the problem of Christian politics: the readiness to use power and interest in the service of an end dictated by love and yet an absence of complacency about the evil inherent in them. No definitions or structures of justice can prevent these forces getting out of hand if they are not handled with a sense of their peril."
(Harland. page 53.)

Equality.

The revolutionary Frenchmen preached about "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."

We have seen that "fraternity" is a poor substitute for "agape".

Equality and liberty must also be handled with care, and used to balance one another.

Niebuhr saw equality as a kind of middle position between justice and love. Equality enables us to treat others lovingly to a certain degree, but it does not have the feeling of love, kindness and compassion.

From another perspective, in one sense equality is the law of love because it treats others as we

would like to be treated ourselves. It gives to the other the same scope and liberty that we want ourselves.

But, in another sense, it is less than the law of love because equality "allows and requires that the self insist upon its own rights and interests in competition with the rights and interests of the other." (page 54.)

So, equality is one of the factors which helps us to be just, but it is not a fundamental part of the definition of justice. Justice has to be seen in terms of love, and of the details of the concrete situation in which we are called to be just.

Every higher justice will be a more equal justice.

Liberty.

However, equality without liberty is completely unsatisfactory. We can all be equal living under a communist dictatorship, but there will be no liberty, and also very little justice.

Liberty and equality have to be held in tension with each other.

"The tragedy of modern history has been that instead of existing together in tension they have been torn asunder. Both ... were considered to be self-evident by the Enlightenment, but liberty has been the war-cry of the middle classes and equality (has been the war-cry of) the industrial classes. It is indeed ironic that so much of our history has been, and remains, a fierce conflictbetween those (who emphasise liberty, and) insist that it will inevitably lead to equality; while those who exalt equality to an absolute norm hold out the promise of restoring man to the freedom of his essential nature."

"A more just order grants man liberty in a framework of increasing equality. But neither is an absolute social norm, (nor) a constitutive principle of justice. Both are expressions of love finding embodiment in the ideas and structures of justice, and in turn expressing within justice something of the tension between love and justice." (page 56.)

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Chapter 18 - Personal Piety and Devotion to God

Basic Point of the Chapter.

We have seen that all world-views depend upon their foundational ideas, which are religious or metaphysical in nature.

Christian world-views of the evangelical variety depend upon the nature of God, and upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. But this has to be understood in a double sense. Evangelical world-views require a certain degree of intellectual understanding of these matters, but also require a personal experience of God, and of Jesus Christ. Christian world-views are not simply philosophical systems of ideas. The religious foundation has a vital, essential feature of personal experience of God, and of worship, love, devotion and obedience toward God.

All conquest of evil powers, and all spiritual construction of the kingdom of God on earth, becomes possible only upon this double basis, and in answer to prayer.

The Great Commandments.

The key Bible passage relating to the matters being dealt with in this chapter is the two great commandments, mentioned first in the Old Testament in the Book of Deuteronomy, and later referred to by Christ and recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength (or mind). This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it. You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Everything in the Law and the Prophets hangs on these two commandments."

Here we have Saint Matthew's version of what Jesus said about it.

These commands have several very important aspects.

Firstly, there is the actual content of the commands which show us precisely what we are being told to do.

Secondly, we need to note which command comes first, and which is said to be the most important and fundamental. The second command is not as important as the first one. It is merely "like it". In one sense, the second command is independent and of vast importance in its own right, but, in another sense, it depends for its value upon the first command.

Thirdly, we are given a clue about the relative place of love of self, and of love of others.

What Is Love?

This question can be answered in several ways, depending upon the perspective we take, and the point from which we begin.

(a.) From a purely human, but Christian, point of view, we would need to say there are several elements to it.

Firstly, our view of love contains an element of understanding, so that we know what it is, and to whom the love should be directed.

Secondly, love involves an act of the will. A deliberate choice has to be made to love somebody or something. Especially is this so if the person to be loved happens to be unattractive.

Thirdly, love involves actions. The choice we have made has to be properly expressed in deeds, and usually in words, also. If love is not expressed in proper and suitable ways, then, it does not exist.

Fourthly, feelings of love may, or may not, follow.

(b.) In chapter 16 of this book we looked at Reinhold Niebuhr's definition of love. It must be remembered, however, that this definition has been made for a particular purpose, namely, to provide a foundation for our understanding of human sin, and within the context of understanding Christian insights about human nature. There may, or may not, need to be slight modifications to it if it is to be used for some other purpose.

Niebuhr's understanding of love is a fine balance between two types of love which he calls "mutual love" and "agape love".

Mutual love means seeking the highest interests of God, of other humans, and of all creation, in order to gain our own fulfilment, as well as the proper fulfilment of the other parties. We seek to fulfil ourselves by means of fulfilling somebody else - namely, the person being loved.

Agape love means sacrificing one's own fulfilment in order to achieve the fulfilment of the one being loved.

As noted in chapter 16, Niebuhr presents many reasons why the Christian standard should not be either mutual love or agape love by itself, but a fine and wise balance of the two has to be held together.

All of our actions are under God's judgment, because, even when we have done the best we could, and perhaps have sacrificed our own interests as much as we could, there are always higher vistas of agape love reaching out before us.

(c.) From the point of view of Christian theology, our understanding of love must begin with the love that exists within the Godhead, between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Then we can learn about the meaning and content of love by looking at the way that God has loved us. This second part is usually more obvious and open to inspection than the first part.

<u>Love Within the Godhead.</u>

The New Testament explicitly states many times that the Father loves the Son. Only once does it say that Jesus loved the Father, although there are other passages which imply that this is so. The kind of unity between Father and Son which is spoken of in John, chapter 17, certainly implies a high level of love.

The Spirit's love for the Father and the Son is implied by the fact that His work in the world is not to speak of Himself, but of Christ and the Father.

Quite an extensive study can be made of the relationship of love between the members of the Godhead, as this is revealed in the Scriptures. This provides the ultimate basis for our insights into the nature of God's love for us, and the kind of love which we are expected to show toward God, and also the love that is expected to exist between humans.

God's Love for Us.

The love of God for His creation, and for mankind in particular, is one of the most obvious things in the Bible.

James Moffatt comments upon the impact this fact would have had upon Greeks and Romans in the days of the early church.

"The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was presented as an inspiration to knowledge as well as to adoring love. Belief in a God who was loving, as Christianity taught it, was indeed a revelation to the first century. The Roman who often felt that the gods cared to avenge but not to save, the Greek who thought of divine love, if he thought of it at all, as either a cosmic impersonal force or as an expression of divine favouritism, the pious votary of the cults who was offered a set of sensations as proof of divine favour to hapless mortality in the shape of a deification here and now - these and others discovered in the teaching of the Church a truth which shone by itself. Here was a God who loved freely and widely, without favourites and beyond all racial restrictions, a God who could be depended upon, whatever happened, a God who had of His own will entered human life with a purpose that would not be defeated, a God with whom one had personal communion, a God who was both creator and redeemer, a God who was above Fate and the Stars, ruling men graciously instead of exposing them to caprice on His own part or to astrological cross-currents in the universe, a God, above all, whose love gave a meaning to life and history instead of leaving man to float in a welter of illusions or of casual vicissitudes."
(Moffatt. "Love in the New Testament." pages 55 and 56.)

All of the points made by Moffatt are important. Perhaps to increase the emphasis at a certain point, we need to add some words from Saint Paul, and from Saint John.

"Even for a just man one of us would hardly die, though perhaps for a good man one might actually brave death; but Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God's own proof of his love toward us." Romans 5:7-8.
"How great is the love that the Father has shown to us! We were called God's children, and such we are; and the reason why the godless world does not recognise us is that it has not known him. Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when it is disclosed we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." First Epistle of John 3:1-2.

"God is love; and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remdy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another."

"We love him because he first loved us." First Epistle of John 4:9-12, and 19.

Our Love for God.

Response by us to the love of God is one of the fundamental aspects of being a Christian, and obedience to the two great commandments is impossible without it.

Various Bible verses indicate that obedience to Christ's commands and teaching is a key part of loving God, or loving Jesus. Jesus said that if we love Him we must obey Him.

And love of others is also an essential part of our response to God's love for us. If we do not love others whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen.

It is at this point that Reinhold Niebuhr's definition of love becomes directly relevant to us.

But obedience is not the only fitting response. Worship, praise and adoration are also appropriate responses. So is the kind of prayer in which we cast our needs upon Him, express the humility of our position before Him, and pray about the work that He has given us to do, so that we may be guided and made effective in doing what He wants us to do.

Adoration will often involve verbal expressions of our love for God, as well as actions.

Loving Others.

But, as part of the proper expression of our love for God, there will be many words and actions which involve other people.

(a.) This will firstly include forgiving others where they have wronged us, and making restitution to others where we have wronged them, rectifying lies, returning stolen goods, and healing hurts, because of the way that we ourselves have been forgiven by God.

(b.) This will also involve loving other Christians in a self-sacrificing way. The new commandment given by Jesus, that we should love one another as Christ has loved us, cannot be obeyed by anyone who will not joyfully be part of a congregation of Christ's people, a part of the body of Christ here on earth.

(c.) Love of the neighbour involves seeking the highest interests of that person. This means realising that the neighbour's spiritual needs are of much more fundamental value than any other needs.

Certainly, there may be times when some of the other lesser needs (such as the needs for food, health and shelter) may require being met first before paying attention to the spiritual needs.

But, hearing the gospel, having and reading a Bible, knowing God, being forgiven and made right with God, being able to answer basic questions about the meaning of life, are much more vital and basic than any material needs that we may have.
And who is our neighbour? The neighbour is firstly anybody in need to whom Christ may call us to serve. Secondly, the neighbour is anybody else. Remember Christ's famous answer to this very question recorded in Luke, chapter 10:29-37.

(d.) But we must carefully remember that we must not serve others in a patronising way, where the superior helps the inferior, and where the one who possesses this world's goods helps the one who does not possess them.
The patronising form of help is not Christian service, and it is often very offensive to the person being served.

We must serve others in a humble and self-forgetful way, without display or drawing attention to ourselves. We must not simply fulfil ourselves by serving others, but sacrifice our own self-fulfilment so that others can be fulfilled. We must bear in mind the nature of agape love, and not practice mutual love only.

This final point is one that is highlighted in the book to which we must now turn in considering the next part of this subject.

The Doctrine of the Vision of God.

Up until the last few centuries, amongst all of the doctrines of Christian theology, the one which provided the core of our understanding of the role of personal piety and devotion to God was the doctrine of the vision of God.

Although it has fallen into some degree of neglect recently, this doctrine has traditionally provided the Catholic understanding of man's highest good, and has also provided basic insights into the Christian moral standard upon which the rightness or wrongness of all of our actions are to be judged.

The Catholic understanding of the vision of God has usually been linked to the practice of Christian mysticism or contemplation, in one form or another.

Protestants, in learning the practice of holy living, have often turned to the Catholic saints for help, although Protestants have their own rich heritage in devotional literature, as well. But, in pursuing this goal, Protestants have used meditation upon the Scriptures, and prayer, as the basis of the practice of holiness, instead of the psychological paths of mysticism.

A very important book which discusses these issues, and which also discusses the history of the way that these issues have been confronted down through the history of Christianity is "The Vision of God", by Bishop Kenneth E. Kirk. This book arose from the Bampton Lectures of 1928 in England, and the book has been published in two versions - the full text edition - and a shortened version which omitted lengthy footnotes and other ancillary explanations. It covered basically the main text of the lectures only.

Originally, I owned a paper-backed copy of the full-text edition. That was my introduction to Kirk, and one which I thoroughly recommend. Regretably, somebody borrowed my copy and did not return it, and the abridged edition is the only one I have been able to buy recently.

Definitions.

From the post-apostolic era there developed an understanding of the ultimate goal of the Christian life as seeing the Triune God as He is in Himself by a kind of direct awareness.

Irenaeus declared, "The glory of God is a living man; and the life of man is the vision of God."

This should be seen as primarily an intellectual experience, although emotion might follow. Some experts saw love and will as being of basic importance, as well.

This does not involve conceptual thinking such as we use normally, or thinking based in the use of

language such as we use when we talk to ourselves and describe our thoughts.

It is supposed to involve a direct awareness such as we could imagine might be experienced in heaven. Possible knowledge which might be gained in this way might not be able to be handled by means of our normal concepts, and which might not be able to be described within the confines of human languages. Note the difficulty that the writer of the Book of Revelation had in describing his visions of the heavenly world.

In pursuit of this high level of religious experience, particularly through the Middle Ages, there developed a number of forms of Christian mysticism or contemplation, where the person seeking to know God in this way would concentrate his or her mind for long periods upon God, upon His perfections, upon His majesty, upon His character (or upon the person of Christ, the Crucifixion, the Mass, or the Virgin Mary). The result of this effort at mystical experience was intended to be an overpowering sense of being at one with God.

This sense of oneness with God has to be understood in the Christian sense, where there is always a clear delineation between the Creator and the creature. This is quite different from the kind of mysticism involved in all the Eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, where the sense of oneness is thought of as being a proper and real identity.

The question to be raised about mystical experiences of all kinds, and especially of the Eastern kind, is - whether the sense of oneness actually corresponds with anything outside of the mystic's imagination, or not. Does this sense of oneness mean that an actual oneness exists of the same order as that which has been sensed? This question is vital in the search for truth.

The ethical by-product of this search for the vision of God would be that this search would so dominate a person's life as to determine what is right and wrong in all thoughts and actions. The love, grace and power of God will hopefully express itself through the saint toward others.

Formalism and Rigorism.

The Catholic theology of the vision of God has pased through an historical or evolutionary process over a period of centuries, so it has appeared in many forms, and it has been defended from extremes and heresies on the right hand and the left.

Kirk explores two of these extremes, in particular.

Formalism "is a convenient word whereby to designate the tendency of moralists of all ages to express their demands by means of codes of duties, or lists of virtues and excellences; and to require the Christian to conform to these standards by the exercise of deliberate self-discipline."

From one point of view, any effort to impose rule or law would seem opposed to the freedom and promise which is so basic to the message of Christ. One of Christ's main activities was to expose the inadequacies of the rules and laws of the scribes and the pharisees.

"Yet it would seem absurd to maintain that the ideal of ordered self-discipline had NO place in the Christian life. Orderliness and spontaneity must somehow be brought into harmony with one another; but the manner and method of such harmonization are problems of real difficulty." (Kirk. page 4.) Kirk gives quite a lengthy description of some of the attempts to cope with this problem, and of some of the other problems which arose as a result of this quest.

The problem of rigorism is described in the following way. "If life is to be disciplined at all, of what fashion shall the discipline be? Amongst all the varieties of ethics which have sheltered under the

name of 'Christian', two in particular stand out in marked contrast. On the one hand there have been teachers and sects who have prescribed for their adherents, and individuals who have prescribed for themselves, a life of rigorous self-denial, self-mortification and other-worldliness. Puritanism, asceticism, rigorism - whatever we choose to call it - here is a well-marked type of thought and practice, which in all ages has appealed to the self-abnegation and cross of our Redeemer as its final example and justification." Regardless of how we might view this kind of life in the modern world, it would seem that no Christian life can be complete without at least an element of this kind of life-style.

"Against this rigorist other-worldliness must be arrayed a "this-worldly" code of ethics, which also appeals for its sanctions to the gospel. This 'humanist' code, if we may so call it, bids us enjoy life in due moderation, and realise the highest possibilities of every instinct and factor in the complex organism of personality. It prescribes positive social virtues as the ideal, and seeks to set up a new Jerusalem by steady evolution out of the existing world-order. It finds goodness in embracing the world and its joys, not in fighting against them; it looks for God in His creation, instead of seeking Him by spurning what He has made."

Of these two approaches..."Which of them is Christian and which non-Christian; or better still, if BOTH are Christian, how are they to be harmonised in a single code of conduct?" (pages 5-6).

The book gives lengthy discussions and expositions of these questions, and other related matters.

Kirk also points out some of the weaknesses which can often be seen in some of the Protestant ways of approaching the practices of Christian experience.

One of these weaknesses is that Protestants tend to swing too much from the passive extremes of contemplation to an over-emphasis on action.

In this Protestant approach, worship and prayer so easily become secondary concerns which are seen as not being so valuable or important as strenuous human activity. Determined human activity has the appearance of being an important part of our service of God, but, often this activity is really little more than ardent human enterprise. It is what Saint Paul would have called working in the power of "the flesh".

Protestants are especially good at loving their neighbour, and in imagining that they are thereby loving God. We forget that the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all the heart. This is something which may have been better achieved by the attention to prayer and worship that went with seeking the vision of God. More prayer would have made our activity more fruitful in the service of God, and more glorifying to Him.

Prayerless activity, or activity with an inadequate base in prayer and praise, is the curse of Protestantism.

Another factor which Kirk mentions is that, because of our emphasis on activity, prayer tends to become a means to an end, instead of being a vastly important end in itself.

Our prayer tends to have an over-emphasis on asking for things. God becomes a glorified slot-machine at our service. Even in our service for God, we ask Him to do things in such a way that we imply our area of service is the most important that there is.

We forget that God Himself is a much greater end than anything we created, or anything that we can ask for.

Prayer, as an end in itself, is the way for us to open up our lives to God. It is the key to worship and praise. It is the only way for our self-interests and our own selves to be removed from the centre of the stage so that God can be there, instead.

Such "disinterested" prayer is essential if we are to love God with all the heart, which includes loving Him more than we love ourselves.

Meditation upon God's majesty, perfections, love, purposes and character, arising from our study of the Scriptures, is the keystone to all personal and social holiness, and Christian maturity.

But, prayer is also a means to an end, once that end is determined by the will of God, and not by us. Prayer is the path by which God's victories are won in the work we do in His name.

Protestants are prone to assume that they know the will of God, and ask for Him to achieve victories within that framework.

We have continually to learn that intercessory prayer is the area in which we must win the battle before we go out in the name of Christ, and in His armour, to fight against all the forces of evil. But, this prayer battle can only be fought by us if we love God first - more than we love ourselves or even than we love the service that we are seeking to do for Him.

Our service is no more important than God sees it to be. Because we are at the centre of our service, we see it as more important than what it really is. That is a form of self-oriented life which does not suit the servant of God.

Another major problem that Protestants have to face on many occasions is the question of the relative place and value that should be given to the "inner light" of the inspiration and leading of the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and obedience to the letter of the Scriptures, on the other hand.

The Protestant Approach.

In the early pages of "The Kingdom of God in America", H. Richard Niebuhr discusses differences between the Catholic theology of the vision of God, and the kingdom of God, on the one hand, and the Protestant doctrine of the kingdom, on the other hand.

Niebuhr points out that both Catholic and Protestant theologies are full-orbed sets of ideas. The same headings would appear in each system. But some differences would occur in content, in flavour and in direction, as well as in the results flowing from practice of the different ideas.

"In describing the Protestant interest in the kingdom of God it is more important to regard the content of the idea than its form. Medieval Catholicism also used the concept of the divine rulership of God, but it thought of that rule as an articulated and hierarchical structure while Protestantism represented it as immediate and direct. According to the medieval theory, God had ordered all creatures into an harmonious organism in which the higher governed the lower and in which the church, as the representative of Christ and the agency of grace, was the last mundane governor of men. God's government was manifest in the beginnings and the endings, in the creation, in the incarnation, in the founding of the church, in the last judgment, in beatitude; but the intermediate stages of life were ruled by those who participated in his wisdom, according to the degree of their participation. Catholicism stood then as now for the planned society of which Plato's "Republic" was the great example. God had made the plan; reason discerned it in part, and revelation disclosed

what was impervious to reason. God executes the plan also, yet he does so by means of mundane lieutenants."

"As to the design of government, God governs all things immediately; whereas in its execution, he governs some things by means of others." (Aquinas).

Although God designs the government of all things, he "so governs things that he makes some of them to be the causes of others in government." (Also from Aquinas.)

"How this architectonic or perhaps organic view of life was used to justify the feudal and hierarchical order is well known. Under the circumstances the term 'kingdom of God' easily came to mean 'church-governed society'.

To this conception of the divine kingdom Protestantism objected.
Was not the plan which reason discerned in things suspiciously like the plan which human self-interest would have devised? Why was it that philosophers when they sought to think the thoughts of God after him found themselves thinking about a world in which philosophers were kings and in which the noblest kind of life was one of philosophical contemplation? Why did the reason of monks, priests and popes discover a divine plan which justified their claims to rulership and moral superiority over their fellow men? The identification of the rule of God with the rule of reason (and then identifying the rule of reason) with the rule of the church were both open to suspicion. The Protestant was no irrationalist; however hard the judgments which he passed on reason he also knew that 'the manifold agility of the soul' was 'one of the proofs of the divinity in man.' But he was almost as aware as are modern psychologists of man's penchant for rationalisation based not upon impartial truth but upon self-interest. Therefore he spoke of reason as corrupt and prone to error and saw that the plans which (reason) devised and defended for a divine government of the world were often inventions of the 'carnal mind' rather than discoveries of immortal truth. This was the negative part of the Protestant approach to the problem of the kingdom of God. It meant that no human plan or organisation could be identified with the universal kingdom since every such plan was product of a relative, self-interested and therefore corrupt reason.

The positive counterpart of this negation of all human sovereignty was more important. It was the affirmation of God's direct rule. He governed all things immediately by the word of his mouth, and to him all political organisations, churches and individuals were directly responsible. In place of the hierarchical structure in which the higher governed the lower, equals were all related directly, without mediation, to the ultimate ruler. In religious life this conception of the kingdom was expressed in terms of the priesthood of all believers; elsewhere it formed the implicit presupposition both of democracy and of nationalism, though in these areas the principle took a long time to work itself out. In any case, the confession of the sole rulership of God and the declaration of loyalty to his kingdom was an even more important element in the Protestant faith than was the rejection of mundane representatives of the divine rule." (Niebuhr. pages 21 - 24.).

Both Kirk and Niebuhr made a number of other comments about the different feeling and attitude between the Catholic doctrine of the vision of God and the Protestant doctrine of the kingdom, upon which ideas about the nature of the Christian life are based.

The following are a few examples.

Although the Catholic doctrine of the vision of God concentrates upon God so much, yet, basically it is seeking to state man's highest good in terms of the very highest form of man's religious experience.

The feeling that can be gained here is that the human seeker is the main actor (despite all that is said about the grace of God), and he is in pursuit of a changeless, perfect, but passive God. While this comment does not do much justice to the Catholic doctrine, it does perhaps point up one of the differences of emphasis between the Catholic approach and the Protestant one.

According to Reformation theology, man's highest good must be sought in terms of the sovereignty and supremacy of God Who takes the initiative and acts in human history to fulfil His own purposes. The fitting human response to this is that of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" Here we see the key as the grace of God Who breaks into our sinful situation in order to produce a new situation glorifying to Himself.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism's answer to Question One reflects this different emphasis.

"What is the chief end of man?"

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever."

In this context, to glorify God means not only to praise and worship Him, but to obey and carry out His purposes in the world as these are made evident to us. God is active, and this results in man's activity in God's service.

Perhaps the most difficult problem for Protestantism which arises from all this is - that because every individual is responsible directly to God and is directly under God's rule and judgment, what could the Protestant now say was to be the rule of life? How was society to be organised? What were to be its goals? Which economic or political principles were to be adopted? Which church organisation or leadership was to be preferred? Which theology or Biblical interpretation would be adopted? Which ideas about right or wrong were correct, or would be practiced?

Catholics made the charge that Protestantism led finally to anarchy. How was this charge to be avoided?

"The religious life needed to be organised, and mere reference to the divine Lord Jesus Christ as the ruler of the church seemed to leave the way open to every sort of individual inspiration, to all the wild plans of self-appointed spokemen for God. It was good to say that the Word of God alone should rule the church, but how was the Word of God to be understood, who was to declare it, when and where and to whom was it to be proclaimed, by whom enforced?" (Niebuhr pages 33 - 34.)

Clearly the Protestant principle does not allow any person, group, congregation, denomination, church, party or organisation, to set out its programme and then to claim that THIS is the path of the kingdom of God.

We must each seek to obey God, learning as best we can submission to one another, because of the presence of Christ in the other Christian, working together in unity of spirit and mind, having forbearance where we differ from each other, serving God and each other in all humility, and THEN allowing the creative power of the Holy Spirit to bring in the new creation, according to the will of God, as He sees fit, and not as we see fit.

Niebuhr's book "The Kingdom of God in America" seeks to outline how this has happened in American history, so far. Clearly, more books could be written about the same aspect of the American scene, and other books like this could be written about the kingdom of God in other parts of the world, as well. Let us hope that the authors who might attempt to do this, one day, will have the perception and understanding that Niebuhr had when he wrote his book many years ago.

I suppose that the difficulty of Protestantism is really that there is not nearly enough humility and love in any of us. We are all far too inclined to set ourselves up as authorities where we have no right to do so, and where our qualifications are so small.

The Gift of Reading and Prayer.

The Protestant quest for personal holiness - for personal piety and devotion to God - is built upon much Bible study and prayer, taught and illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

Learning from the Scriptures in this way must not be made subject to our learning from the writings of any other less inspired persons, no matter how august their reputation might be. We must never allow our reading and understanding of the Scriptures to be controlled through any "pair of spectacles" provided by some other person.

And the practice of prayer, in its many aspects, must not be subjected to, or made secondary to, any other aspect of life.

Quests for social holiness must always depend upon the devotional practices and depths that exist on the individual level.

But, here is another important recommendation.

Developing the habit of reading what the most saintly people have said about their walk with God, and seeking to hear what God might be saying to us through that means, can be a most valuable resource, and way of instruction and inspiration, in our growing in God.

In this way, Catholics can learn from Protestants, and vice versa. By thoughtful and prayerful reading and meditation, we can all learn much from each other.

Simply as an example of the spiritual wealth that exists throughout the church in its devotional literature, the following comments can be made about the writings of Andrew Murray. He was a South African Dutch Reformed minister, who ministered from around 1860 to the early years of the twentieth century.

His book on "Humility", for example, I find to be very valuable from a spiritual point of view, apart from being one of the very few really good books on this subject.

"Waiting on God" has been an inspiration to me on a great many occasions.

His books "With Christ in the School of Prayer" and "The Ministry of Intercession" are classics on this subject, and others like "The Prayer Life" and "The Inner Chamber" as also valuable.

He has many others on the devotional life. "Holy in Christ", "The True Vine", "Absolute Surrender" and "The Power of the Blood of Jesus" are well worth extensive study. And his devotional book about the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of Christ", is excellent reading.

Whether we read the Scriptures only, or whether we read the Scriptures as our basic resource from God, and then seek to benefit from the experiences of other Christians who are wiser than we are, and who know God more deeply than we do ourselves, our growth in the Christian life can only be had through Christ - through turning to Him, confessing our emptiness and inability to make any progress by our own efforts, confessing our sins and seeking cleansing and repentance, and asking

Christ to grow in us, by His Spirit.

Then the Spirit, who is the Lord of the harvest, will begin to use us as part of His work in making all things new.

Power to re-make people, and to re-make society and the world, comes from God alone. He has chosen to do this work through the prayers and obedience of His people. He has chosen to live with those who are humble and of a contrite heart, and to makeknown through them the mighty wonders which He alone can perform, for His own glory.

Conclusion.

As we approach the vital subject of the Christian transformation of society, in the next chapter, we must see that personal piety and devotion to God is the cornerstone in practicing the evangelical world-view, upon which all constructive work is to be based.

Without such personal piety, therefore, the evangelical world-view does not exist as anything else except a lifeless theory.
And, an evangelical world-view cannot change the world unless all progress is made by the free God, Who directs and uses the obedient actions of His people, and Who brings sinners to repentance and faith, and Who inspires His people to serve Him in such a way that society will be changed.

In some cases, the changes result directly from such obedience. But, by His creative power, He is also able to bring about changes in society which were neither planned or foreseen by His people.

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Chapter 19 - The Christian Transformation of Society

Evangelical Godliness in Society.

Introduction:

We will assume that everyone admits the need for improvement in our societies. Our considerations in this chapter will be divided up as follows:

(a.) The Goal of Change.

The direction and goal of the kind of change that we want to see is going to be determined by the world-view that we have adopted.

In this book, we see that an evangelical Christian world-view has good evidential support, and as a result, we look at the kind of changes which might be envisaged on that basis.

(b.) Fundamental Factors Relating to Change.

Evangelical theology provides us with a small number of necessary factors and basic means which can change society in the required way. These are absolutely essential, so far as this world-view is concerned.

These doctrines, or aspects of Christian practice, all arise from the decision, sovereignty and power of God. The Holy Spirit, who is described in the creed as "the Lord and Giver of Life", is the operative agent in all these things, so far as we are concerned.

Factors considered here are the atonement, prevailing prayer, the impact of the gospel and the resulting Christian maturity, and good philosophy and theology.

(c.) A Comment about Social Institutions.

Social institutions perform both static and dynamic functions. They both conserve the values of the past, and deny them at the same time. An understanding of their role provide very important insights into any useful understanding of social change.

(d.) Insights from H. Richard Niebuhr.

One of H. Richard Niebuhr's most important works, "Christ and Culture", will be considered here.

A. The Goal of Social Transformation.

Karl Marx was responsible for many famous ideas and sayings. One of great importance was that

the important thing is not so much to understand society, as to change it.

In fact, societies are in a constant state of flux, caused by the continual interaction of all the parts of the society - something which is unavoidable, and which is going on all the time.

Stability is very important. But stability can only occur like a ship which is stable as it sails across the ocean. The currents are carrying it in ways which may not be realised. Continual navigation is necessary if the people in the ship are to reach their destination safely.

Some changes come partly by design. Political leaders or economic planners or business leaders may take steps to introduce certain changes. It is rarely true, however, that all of the results of these efforts at change are foreseen or are predicted. Efforts at change usually result in unforeseen consequences. Especially is this true if major social institutions are removed, such as resulting from war or from a revolution.

Many other changes can occur to a society which are not thought of until they are recognised as happening, or until they have already happened.

Whither Social Change?

Our knowledge of what our society IS ACTUALLY LIKE, and our understanding of some mechanisms which might be used to change it in some ways, can be studied under disciplines like sociology and psychology.

But, our thoughts about what society OUGHT TO BE like are in the area of ethics and the theory of value. These matters we will have to discover from a study of many different subjects, one of the most important being Christian ethics and morality.

What one believes the PURPOSE of society to be must also be based upon the consideration of many issues. But evangelical theology will be a crucial source for necessary insights.

Evangelical Christianity has definite ideas about the purpose of human society, and in what directions it ought to develop. It is foolish simply to let society change in a haphazard way, without us making any attempts to understand it, or to mitigate bad features or to develop better features.

Evangelical theology is, naturally, a part of an entire world-view, such as we have been considering in this book. This world-view will ultimately determine our vision of the goal of change.

The Purpose of Transformation - The Kingdom of God.

The Biblical doctrine which is particularly applicable in these matters is the doctrine of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible teaches that humans, and human society, have been created by God for purposes of His own choice, and to fulfil His will. Obedience to God's will is the highest form of fulfilment that it is possible for us to know. God's purposes for us have been embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Kingdom of God relates to eternity. What happens within the entire history of this physical universe, or more especially within the realm of human history, is only a small aspect of eternity.

Mankind has been made for eternity. Man's relationship with God, and the question of an individual's salvation through Jesus Christ, are matters which far transcend the scope of mere human history on earth in their application.

So, while the Kingdom of God is a much wider subject and reality than human society, it is the particular application that the Kingdom of God has to human society that we will be considering here.

The Lord's Prayer expresses this where we are taught to pray that God's Kingdom should come, and that His will should be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Christian social philosophy is the expression and embracing of this goal, so far as it applies to human society. Thus, it includes the setting out more fully of what this goal involves, and ponders the question as to how we are to progress toward a greater fulfilment and realisation of this goal than we have achieved at present.

While many factors can contribute toward the development of human society in the direction of this goal, the Christian gospel provides the main bases, and the driving force, which can produce results in the desired direction.

There will be many dimensions to the pursuit of this goal, and it will need to be pursued in every area of life.

For example, there will be a SPIRITUAL dimension. We are to seek to grow into what Saint Paul calls "the full stature of Christ", and to one in heart and mind in our love for God, and in our service of God, and of each other.

Involved in this will be an ETHICAL dimension, in learning a fuller obedience to every aspect of the will of God.

There will also be an INTELLECTUAL dimension to this, as we seek to love God with all our minds.

There will also be a SOCIAL dimension to this growth.

Many other dimensions also exist, corresponding to many of the various disciplines of enquiry that people can pursue.

B. Some Fundamental Factors Relating to Change.

The source of power to transform society is - The Atonement.

The great, crucial fact within human history from which springs all the possibilities envisaged in Christian social philosophy is the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ through His death on the cross.

Christians will naturally want to see the flowering of the best potential which can exist in any discipline of enquiry, or area of human enterprise. But Christians will want to include at every point that extra fundamental dimension which comes from God, and which cannot be had on a purely secular basis.

The atonement is that work of Christ by which man has been set right with God, and whereby all the benefits of God's Kingdom are bestowed upon the believer.

It has arisen solely from the gracious love of God, and is not due to any worth or action of our's. We cannot add to this work of Christ in any way, but we are called upon to respond to it in repentance, faith and love. The optimism about human life and society which arises here is an optimism of GRACE, and not of human worth or effort.

The atonement involves God's desire that all aspects of human life will be willingly brought under obedience to Christ, and so this must involve all aspects of human society.

Human beings have limited capacities, and we are evil at a very basic level of our existence. So our capacity to practice this submission to Christ will be limited in this earthly existence. We will not be able to reach a state of final perfection within human history, but this earthly life must always be seen as a progressive thing which is always under review. It is always in progress toward its goal.

The application of the atonement to our situation will reach its finality at the consummation of all things in eternity.

Factors Which are Essential in Applying This Power.

God uses many things in causing a society to change. Generally speaking, there are certain aspects of Christian practice which God uses to an outstanding degree when He works through His people to bring healing and a better degree of godliness into any society. These will be considered here.

(1.) Prevailing Prayer.

It is plainly evident in the New Testament that God works out His purposes in His own time and way, but that this always only happens in answer to the prayers of His people, who have been made workers together with Him.

Therefore, prayer must be the foundation, from the point of view of human activity, of all understanding of Christian social philosophy, and of all progress toward its goal.

All activity of other kinds must be born as a result of our prayers to know the will of God.

All of our efforts in doing God's will must be carried out after we have taken the trouble to seek God's wisdom, and have asked to be saved from making mistakes about knowing His will.

Even then we must be humble about this knowledge, and never consider ourselves better in any way than others with whom we may disagree.

The effectiveness of what we do must be seen as coming from the power of the Holy Spirit which we have sought in prayer.

This power must never be seen as our own, or under our control. It is always the power of God, and is His to use as He chooses.

This power of the Kingdom of God is His own life that He gives to us as He gives us Himself.

(2.) Regeneration.

This is the fundamental and radical change of direction and qualities of character that is produced in a believer by the Holy Spirit as He works to conform us more fully to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

(a.) On the personal level, this change will affect increasingly every aspect and area of our lives whereby God becomes the centre about Whom our lives are oriented.

(b.) Every Christian is called to serve God in the world. Thus the Christian is called to express his or her obedience to Christ in whatever calling God has placed upon the Christian. And in this calling all the fruit of the Holy Spirit are meant to be evident. And the Christian's gifts are meant to be used in this service for God.

This regenerating power of the Holy Spirit is the actual driving force which produces whatever good results flow from the Christian's efforts to bring others to Christ or to improve society by means of his obedient and loving service.

This second point emphasises the ordinary workings of the Spirit in the life of a Christian.

(3.) The Creative Power of the Holy Spirit.

The emphasis in this third point needs to be seen as distinct from the previous point, in that we are here noting especially the extraordinary workings of the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life.

The Holy Spirit is not limited to working through the life and witness of the church. But the church is the main and ordinary vehicle that He uses to bring healing to the world.

Evangelical christianity adopts the view that, despite all of the time, effort and money that needs to be put into the welfare of society, unaided human effort is not enough to secure the healing of any nation or society.

Neither is the ordinary workings of the Spirit in the life of the believer sufficient to achieve the goals of social change that we have been speaking about.

The creative power of the Holy Spirit, applying the virtues of Christ's atonement, can operate in any number of different ways, and through a great many means. To limit the ways and means of the Holy Spirit is one of man's futile attempts to limit God.

Amongst the more notable ways in which this transforming work has happened is through the spiritual awakenings, outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and revival movements, which have occurred throughout the history of the church. The happenings on the Day of Pentecost, described for us in chapter 2 of "The Acts of the Apostles" is the paradigm case of this sort of thing.

Study of other instances in church history reveal how society has been transformed in a number of ways through these movements. As a result of revivals, societies have in some instances been changed in ways that people foresaw and for which people planned.
In many instances, however, society was changed in ways that no human intelligence planned, or could achieve, regardless of whether anybody managed to foresee what would happen, or not. In many instances, nobody realised that the changes were happening, nor did any human agent known about them until after they had occurred.

As in many other facets, the Holy Spirit is sovereign.

So, the study of spiritual awakenings and revivals should be seen as an essential aspect for the evangelical in studying and appreciating God's power to change society. And desire and prayer for such awakenings and revivals should be seen by evangelicals as one of their main resources for the transformation of society into a closer likeness to the gospel.

(4.) Good Philosophy and Theology.

If there is one thing which, I hope, has been re-inforced to the reader of this book, it is that a good and truthful world-view philosophy is needed to enlighten us about the nature and due proportion of all things; about the needs of the world in which we live and to which the gospel of Jesus Christ has to apply, and about the wisdom that must be exercised in seeking to change society in the direction of the Kingdom of God.

I believe this is a far greater need than most Christians have been willing to admit, or than many Christians have ever realised.
However, it does need to be emphasised that there are two levels at which good philosophy and good theology are needed in this process of change, and the first of these is far more fundamental than the other.

(a.) The evangelical transformation of society requires that those Christians who are involved in this work will have a deep and personal knowledge and experience of God, and of the power of prevailing prayer. In this process it is necessary for these people to have a very good working knowledge of the Bible, so that it controls their thoughts, prayers, character development, work for God, and indeed all of their actions.

People with this kind of knowledge and life-style can contribute greatly to the improvement of society, and undoubtedly this has happened on a great many occasions. It happens by their simple practices of devotion to God and love for their fellow men, and often without their knowledge of the effects of their actions.

Wonderful changes can take place in society without any widespread plans, simply by ordinary Christians seeking to obey God and serve Him as best they can, and by allowing their lives to be moulded by the personal qualities which we know as the fruit of the Holy Spirit

In many instances, this has been how evangelical religion has changed society in the past.
(b.) However, in some instances in the past, there has been more of a deliberate plan, at least amongst some evangelicals, and there can certainly be more deliberate planning about these matters in the future.

This is where good world-view philosophy and evangelical theology need to be able to work hand in hand, and where the quality of these intellectual enterprises need to be taken much more seriously.

At the beginning of a chapter entitled "The Christian Scholar's Task in a Stricken World" the American Evangelical scholar, Dr Carl F. H. Henry wrote,

"The West has lost its epistemic and moral compass. It has done so, moreover, at the very time when the world more than ever is aware of its intellectual and ethical diversity, and when a possibility of nuclear destruction overhangs the cultural crisis. Our awesome imperative as

(Christian) scholars is to address the civilizational turmoil of Euro-American culture."
(Henry. "Twilight of a Great Civilization" page 125.)

I submit that this is not just an imperative for Christian scholars, but for all Christians who have the ability to think about the needs of the world that we are called by Christ to serve.

Such intellectual needs include:

* Contributions to a philosophy of life from ALL disciplines.

* Multi-disciplinary solutions to situations and problems, where each discipline operates on the basis of ADEQUATE and WISE methodology, assumptions and perspectives.

* The reformation of education to help overcome the fragmentation, departmentalisation and specialisation which is the result of much education as it is presented today, so that knowledge can be seen as a whole, and taught as such.

* The cultivation of world-view philosophy, personally, and as a legitimate educational enterprise.

* From what has been said in chapters one and two of this book, especially in reflecting upon Albert Schweitzer's understandings of the philosophy of civilization, it can be appreciated that the widespread acceptance, understanding, and living by, a christian world-view philosophy, is of fundamental importance in the christian's ability to transform society and the world.

* The viewing of theology, and of the evangelical task of the Christian, in this kind of context.

Another way of describing what is needed.

Any philosophy of the transformation of society must draw insights from every area of life, and from every discipline of human knowledge. Such a philosophy must be as wide as all of reality.

It must not be primarily an economic theory or a political theory, or a religious ideology.

An evangelical philosophy of the transformation of society must, therefore, display a number of characteristics.

(1.) There must be an evangelical theology which is primarily concerned for the will and purpose of God, and for wisdom and truthfulness in humanity. It must be willing to embrace tests for truthfulness wherever that is possible. It must NOT be particularly concerned about the protection of partial insights or factionalism such as is often displayed by those who are seeking to promote or defend some particular type of Christian theology.

(2.) There must be candour about any and all truthful insights which can be gained from the various sciences, and there must also be displayed a reserve about possibly exaggerated claims by scientists, or by theologians.

(3.) The theory of human nature must be realistic about the depths of human evil at all levels of life, but also be continually open to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

(4.) The goals of society must be set upon a theology, a theory of human nature, and ethical theory, which can be shown to be true. The goals must contain a wise balance of idealism, and respect for

the limitations of human nature.

(5.) The evangelical gospel of Christ, spread in the power of the Holy Spirit, is the principle means of promoting quality of character and ethical responsibility, though all other forms of therapy must be allowed to make their legitimate contribution.

(6.) The actual achievements of positive transformation must be seen as the gift of God.

(7.) The philosophy of transformation must do justice to the proper worth of every aspect of life and every discipline of human knowledge.

(8.) The evangelical theology used within this framework must not only be wise enough to avoid the inadequacies, fallacies and half-truths which have, in the past, often been taken for good theology by some evangelicals, but must also be wise enough to include any truthful insights from any other sources.

C. Social Institutions.

Any modern society is composed of an enormous number of social institutions and associated features.

Any modern society produces many social movements. These movements both reflect the society, and can influence and change the society.

Any modern society is also affected more or less by a great many other factors which can best be studied in disciplines other than sociology, such as factors seen best in history, one of the sciences, technological subjects, philosophy or theology.

The social institutions of any society are very important, and they serve a number of functions.

Positive functions include the basic fact that they can create the stability that a society needs if a culture of quality is to develop. This stability can also have the result of curbing the less desirable traits of human nature.

If a society is in a state of collapse for some reason, or is approaching such a state, many of the social institutions will have become weakened or damaged in such a way that they are no longer able to produce this sense of stability, and people will be less likely to practice the gentler virtues of civilized life, because the people feel that they are in a struggle for their very existence, in the face of things which threaten them.

For example, when violence and anti-social behaviour has become wide-spread in a society, people will be less trusting of other members of society, and of the police, and will take many more and greater steps to protect themselves, and their possessions. If war engulfs the country, and the normal social institutions collapse, self-preservation can create enormous refugee problems where people have lost almost all their previous life-style. Their possessions may be reduced to little more than the clothes they are wearing, and many family members may have been killed.

Negative functions of social institutions, however, include the fact that institutions can hinder change. This hindering effect may be good, but can also mean that adaptation to necessary new factors can be slowed, sometimes with disastrous results.

From Romans 13, and many other Biblical passages, we learn that the free Spirit of God has freely

chosen to use human institutions to achieve a great deal of His work in the world.

Because of man's social nature and situation, society needs to contain all the social institutions that are necessary for the well-being of that society. These institutions will cover the entire range of his needs and interests. This will involve all the areas covered by the various disciplines of human knowledge and experience.
As a result, man must work to obey God through the human institutions of his society.

Not only are man's actions under God's judgment, but all these human institutions are under God's review, as well. As a result, we should judge ourselves continually, and be always ready to improve our institutions, where that is possible.

Human institutions need to be moulded in such a way as to serve man best in carrying out his calling to obey God, in that particular area of life's activities where his calling may be.
So, human institutions should be so devised as positive channels to encourage godliness. They also should provide "checks and balances" in order to help curb man's sinful nature.

Human institutions achieve worthwhile things, as indicated above, and help to conserve some of the valuable achievements in the past. But they also deny their proper role and what they are meant to conserve, because they have a static aspect to them which tends to deny the dynamic aspects of the society of which they are a part.

D. Insights from H. Richard Niebuhr.

We have already met in several previous chapters an outstanding contributor to this area of concern, Professor H. Richard Niebuhr.

His main efforts are found in his books "The Kingdom of God in America", "The Social Sources of Denominationalism", and "Christ and Culture."

"The Kingdom of God in America", which we studied in the previous chapter of this book, seeks to set out, as a minor theme, the understanding of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God which has appeared in America in earlier days. But, its major theme has been to describe the impact that the living reality of the Kingdom of God has had on American history down through the years.

"The Social Sources of Denominationalism" seeks to provide the other side of this coin, and to describe the changing impact that the social forces within American history have had upon the history of the churches in the United States.

So, the first book seeks to show something of the impact of the gospel upon the world. The second book seeks to show something of the impact of the world upon the gospel, or upon that social institution which has as its primary concern to proclaim the gospel. Both of these books are of major importance in studying this subject.
The third book, "Christ and Culture", seeks to explore the main different relationships or antipathies which have been thought to exist between Jesus Christ and human culture. This is explored by looking at the work of a number of representative figures down through the ages.

A lot of studies have been made in this area since Niebuhr's time, or in related areas, and some progress has resulted.

"Christ and Culture."

An early comment by Niebuhr will help to show how complex the situation is.

"A many-sided debate about the relations of Christianity and civilization is being carried on in our time. Historians and theologians, statesmen and churchmen, Catholics and Protestants, Christians and anti-Christians participate in it. It is carried on publicly by opposing parties and privately in the conflicts of conscience. Sometimes it is concentrated on special issues, such as those of the place of Christian faith in general education or of Christian ethics in economic life. Sometimes it deals with broad questions of the church's responsibility for social order or of the need for a new separation of Christ's followers from the world.

The debate is as confused as it is many-sided. When it seems that the issue has been clearly defined as lying between the exponents of a Christian civilization and the non-Christian defenders of a wholly secular society, new perplexities arise as devoted believers seem to make common cause with secularists, calling, for instance, for the elimination of religion from public education, or for the Christian support of apparently anti-Christian political movements. So many voices are heard, so many confident but diverse assertions about the Christian answer to the social problem are being made, so many issues are raised, that bewilderment and uncertainty beset many Christians.

In this situation it is helpful to remember that the question of Christianity and civilization is by no means a new one; that Christian perplexity in this area has been perennial, and that the problem has been an enduring one through all the Christian centuries. It is helpful also to recall that the repeated struggles of Christians with this problem have yielded no single Christian answer, but only a series of typical answers which together, for faith, represent phases of the strategy of the militant church in the world. That strategy, however, being in the mind of the Captain rather than of any lieutenants, is not under the control of the latter. Christ's answer to the problem of human culture is one thing. Christian answers are another; yet his followers are assured that he uses their various works in accomplishing his own. It is the purpose of the following chapters (of Niebuhr's book) to set forth typical Christian answers to the problem of Christ and culture and so to contribute to the mutual understanding of variant and often conflicting Christian groups. The belief which lies back of this effort, however, is that Christ as living Lord is answering the question in the totality of history and life in a fashion which transcends the wisdom of all his interpreters yet employs their partial insights and their necessary conflicts. (pages 1 and 2).

(1.) Niebuhr's first typical answer is called "Christ Against Culture", where Christian attitudes are seen as being antagonistic toward human culture in such a way that human culture must be rejected completely in order to obey Christ. Examples of this attitude are seen in certain passages of the New Testament, and Tertullian and Leo Tolstoy are used as exponents of this view. As with each of the other typical answers, this one has a number of strengths and weaknesses.

(2.) The second typical answer is called "The Christ of Culture." "In every culture to which the gospel comes there are men who hail Jesus as the Messiah of their society, the fulfiller of its hopes and aspirations, the perfecter of its true faith, the source of its holiest spirit." (page 83.)

This would seem to be almost the opposite of the first view. It sees that there is not really any great conflict between the world, at its best, and the gospel. Followers of this view really believe in their particular culture, and there is always a trap in the tendency to accommodate the gospel, or to modify it, so that it fits into the culture more easily. There can often, then, be a failure to see how Christ sits in judgment upon our society, and how He highlights its shortcomings.

In this view we see the importance of Christians being people of and for their age, and not people of the past, or people who belong to another world unrelated to this one.

The German theologians Freidrich Schleiermacher and Albrecht Ritschl are presented as examples of this view, along with the whole of the "modernist" tradition.

(3.) The third typical answer is called "Christ Above Culture." In this view, the world belongs to God, and man is obliged to be obedient to God. Man's obedience has to be worked out in the world. So, it is a view which cannot identify God's Kingdom with any culture, but neither can it reject the world.

This view represents a middle ground between the first two views mentioned above.

Niebuhr sees three different types within this approach, which he calls "synthesists, dualists and conversionists."

The synthesists want to believe in both Christ and culture, but not in the way that is followed in view number two. The synthesist recognises that an unbridgable gap exists between the ideals of the Kingdom of God and what we can achieve in this earthly scene. Perfection cannot be achieved here. Yet he tries to recognise what is valuable and useful in human culture as a gift from God, and to view Christ and culture in a single whole picture.

The exemplars of this view who are discussed by Niebuhr are Clement of Alexandria and Saint Thomas Aquinas, who seek to achieve this synthesis in somewhat different ways.

The views being put forward in this present book are also synthesist in a profound way.

The main criticism of this approach that Niebuhr sees is expressed in the following quotation. It is an extremely important point that he makes.

"When we reflect on the value to faith and to society of this way of dealing with the Christ-culture problem, it is difficult to avoid the judgment that it is a necessary approach to the question, and that the answer is a necessary affirmation of a truth or truths. That it is the whole truth and nothing but the truth is less evident. Apart from specific objections to specific formulations of the synthesis, Christians of other groups will point out that the enterprise in and of itself must lead into an error. The effort to bring Christ and culture, God's work and man's, the temporal and the eternal, law and grace, into one system of thought and practice tends, perhaps inevitably, to the absolutizing of what is relative, the reduction of the infinite to a finite form, and the materialisation of the dynamic. (With reference to Aquinas's view of natural law...) It is one thing to assert that there is a law of God inscribed in the very structure of the creature, who must seek to know this law by the use of his reason and govern himself accordingly; it is another thing to formulate the law in the language and concepts of a reason that is always culturally conditioned. Perhaps a synthesis is possible in which the relative character of all creaturely formulations of the Creator's law will be fully recognised. But no synthesist answer so far given in Christian history has avoided the equation of a cultural view of God's law in creation with that law itself."
(page 145.)

It is one of the aims of this present book to step in that precise direction of outlining a synthesis which takes with full seriousness the imperfect nature of all things human.

(4.) The fourth typical answer is the dualist's approach, which Niebuhr calls "Christ and Culture in Paradox."

The dualist starts from the same basis as the synthesist, but is even more impressed with the radical division between the aweful nature of human sin, and the wonderful grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Human civilization is a work of man. So, it is twisted and corrupted by sin to such a degree that it can never be straightened out or purified. In this regard, it is the same as any other work of man. It is always inadequate.

On the other hand, God's grace is found in Jesus Christ, who is sinless and pure. While the story of salvation aims to redeem mankind, it does not make man's works good enough to be holy, sinless and pure in the same way. So, it is misleading to try to put all of these things into the same picture, side by side. Man's works, and his sin, will pass away. The works of God alone will be eternal. Only God's picture needs to be considered, in the final analysis.

The dualistic motif is quite strong in Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, and even stronger in Marcion. It is strong also in Martin Luther, Roger Williams and Soren Kierkegaard.

The dualist view has many points of very great value, which Niebuhr describes. His main criticism of it is that its exponents tend not to be looking so much for the transformation of human society according to the gospel. They are looking instead for the disappearance of human society at the coming of Christ, and in the world to come.

Human society is so sinful that it cannot be redeemed in any meaningful way in this present age. So, dualists tend to be too conservative about the possibilities of improving society, either by the power of the gospel, or in any other way.

(5.) The conversionist view is presented under the heading "Christ the Transformer of Culture".

This approach starts in the same way as numbers 3 and 4, and shares many of their interests and insights. The conversionist recognises what the dualist says about the depths of human sin, but he sees that even in this fallen world we live under the rule of Christ and under the judgment of the Word of God. The world does not belong to the devil, it belongs to Christ. So, they have a more positive attitude toward human culture than do the dualists. "The Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, the Son who does the work of the Father in creation, has entered into a human culture that has never been without his ordering action." (page 193.)

The creation was declared to be good, and sin has not destroyed its value in the sight of God. The atonement has implications for all of creation, and not just for the eternal salvation of sinners. So, this world has a definite part in the benefits which flow from Christ's atonement. Human culture can be influenced by the gospel, and can therefore be used by God to glorify Himself in meaningful ways. This does not mean that perfection will be reached here, but it does mean that the creative power of the Holy Spirit is able to achieve many things within the limits of human society which will bring glory to God.

Niebuhr says that this conversionist motif is seen strongly in Saint John's gospel, in Saint Augustine's theology, and in the writings of F. D. Maurice.

In his conclusion, Niebuhr points out that when we seek to be Christians in our culture, our work will be "relative" in at least four different ways.

The conclusions that a Christian will reach individually will "depend on the partial, incomplete, fragmentary knowledge of the individual; they are relative to the measure of his faith and his unbelief; they are related to the historical position he occupies and to the duties of his station in society; they are concerned with the relative value of things." (page 234.)

Another concluding comment is about the situational nature of our decisions, and the need we have for faith and wisdom.

"There is another term we can apply to the decisions we must make as Christians in the midst of cultural history. They are existential as well as relative decisions; that is to say, they are decisions that cannot be reached by speculative enquiry, but must be made in freedom by a responsible subject acting in the present moment on the basis of what is true for him." (page 241.)

"To make our decisions in faith is to make them in view of the fact that no single man or group or historical time is the church; but that there is a church of faith in which we do our partial, relative work and on which we count. It is to make them in view of the fact that Christ is risen from the dead, and is not only the head of the church but the redeemer of the world. It is to make them in view of the fact that the world of culture - man's achievements - exists within the world of grace - God's Kingdom." (page 256.)

Niebuhr's many and varied insights need all to be borne in mind in considering this vast subject of the Christian transformation of society.

PRACTICAL PRIORITIES.

This section is intended to include, in order of practical priority, those things to which attention needs to be paid, in the order in which they need to be attended to.

1. Complete personal surrender to God.

2. Much prayer, praise and thanksgiving about absolutely everything and everybody. A mature prayer life.

3. Prevailing prayer for revival.

4. Prevailing prayer directed at each and all of the spiritual obstacles which prevent achievement of the goal regarding the kingdom of God.

5. Preaching the gospel, in obedience to God, and in the power of the Spirit. Teaching all things relating directly to it.

6. Christian world-view philosophy, and the list of other intellectual factors given above.

7. Organisational aspects.

8. There is also the PRAXIS of putting the needed ethical living into practice in both PUBLIC LIFE and in PRIVATE.

politics.
business life
economics
international relations
and in all other areas.

This can only be done by consistent study, reflection, search for wisdom, and much prayer by those who are in positions of influence. Supporting prayer, and, indeed, prevailing prayer, should be undertaken by other Christians, in prayerful support of those Christians who hold influencial positions everywhere.

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M. V. C. Jeffreys. "Glaucon."

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Ages Sanford. "Creation Waits.

Francis A. Schaeffer. "How Should We Then Live?"

Margo Todd. "Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order."

Chapter 20 – Revivals as a Transformer of Society

In speaking about evangelical revivals as a means of transforming society there is no intention to imply that such revivals are the only evangelical means of change, or that there are no other useful tools of change apart from evangelical ones.

Full credit is to be given to any method that is used by God to produce worthwhile change in society, in the direction of the goals that have been mentioned in relation to the Kingdom of God.

Evangelical Awakenings and revival movements are mentioned here because they are one of the main factors that God has used to bless mankind through the years, and, I believe, they contain great potential for the future.

Jonathan Edwards.

Amongst all the people who have been used by God in revivals in recent centuries, or who have tried to analyse the subject and write helpfully about it, Jonathan Edwards stands out like Mount Everest.

Edwards was a puritan gospel preacher in New England in the first half of the eighteenth century.

In the last fifty years there has been a great resurgence of interest in Edwards, including a new drive to publish all of his writings. He is currently recognised as the greatest American-born philosopher and theologian.

But, pre-eminently, he was a theologian of revival. Several of his most important and most influential writings were prompted by the Great Awakening in New England, in which he was heavily involved.

One of these contains a description of the revival which occurred in the town where he was pastor. It is called "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns."

Two others contain reflections upon this revival movement. These were "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God. Applied to that uncommon Operation that has lately appeared on the minds of many of the People of this Land." and "Some Thoughts concerning the present Revival of Religion in New England, and the way in which it ought to be acknowledged and promoted."

The most famous of his writings on revival is called "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections". It contains Edwards' contribution to the controversy which raged at that time about the nature of real religion. He said that real religion existed in the "affections", or the heart and will of a person. This view was opposed to those who said that "reason and judgment" were the basic areas of real religion.

The critics of the Great Awakening claimed that many of the problems which had arisen out of it were due to insufficient use of the reason. Edwards used his towering intellectual abilities to show a range of reasons related to the "heart" of a person which resulted in their professed conversions being real and lasting, or in their subsequent falling away.

These writings are all of landmark importance in the study of all aspects of revivals, and of

evangelical religion in general.

His last writing relating to revivals was called "A Humble Attempt to promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth."

One of the points that Edwards made quite strongly, and which has been echoed by some church historians since, is that periods of revival and awakening are the main times of the growth of Christ's Kingdom on earth, and that these times of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are the main means that God uses to achieve these ends.

Edwards expected that it would be by increased revivals of religion, in answer to the extraordinary and united prayers of God's people, that Christ's Kingdom would reach its fulfilment in earthly history. He tried to show how this very thing was prophesied on many occasions right through the Scriptures, and he urged everyone to press forward in that direction.

The works of Edwards are strongly recommended to all thinking Christian people.

Dr W. E. Sangster's Booklet.

In 1957, Epworth Press published a small booklet by the famous English Methodist preacher, W. E. Sangster, entitled "Revival - the Need and the Way."

In the first section on "The Need", Sangster commented on the social conditions in England at that time, as he saw them, and then tried to say something about what changes he expected to occur if a widespread evangelical revival took place. Remember, his comments refer to England in 1957, no matter how applicable we might think they are to today.

Sangster admits that many very important things can result from a great evangelical revival. It is only those results which effect changes in society that he discusses here.

"Our country is in rather a poor way. We have ceased to occupy the commanding place we once had in the world and we are haunted by the feeling that all our greatness is behind us. Wasn't it General de Gaulle who said that there are only two and a half great powers in the world today? We are the half! As head of the British Commonwealth, we like to believe that we are still a mighty force, but other nations do not seem to think so. Our youth are emigrating and many people have come to believe that this old country is played out.

The question is sometimes asked: 'What would a Revival of Religion do for Britain?', and a variety of answers are given.
Some people say: 'Nothing at all. Religion is completely irrelevant to these problems. If there is anything in religion, it does not affect economics.'

Others say (not believing much in religion themselves and inclined to snobbishness): 'It might be good for the "masses".' By implication they suggest that it wouldn't be good for them.

I will attempt to answer that question in all seriousness now. Revival would do more important things than buck Britain up, but, if that is the question, let us focus on that.

What would a Revival of Religion do for Britain?

It would do this:

1. IT WOULD PAY OLD DEBTS.

When a revival of religion came to Wales in the early years of the century, some people dismissed it all as a wave of emotional fanaticism. Then they changed their minds.

They changed their minds because they heard, wherever the revival went, that people were paying old and neglected and half-forgotten debts. A commercial traveller told me once of the scorn with which he and other business men heard the early reports of revival. But, when it began to pay debts that they had written off as hopeless, they looked upon it as a miracle and they criticised the revival no more. It might have that happy effect on some who think that it is only good for "the masses".

A lifting of common morality is an early and inevitable consequence of re-born religion.

2. IT WOULD REDUCE SEXUAL IMMORALITY.

From facts provided by the police and from independent research it appears that there are 10,000 prostitutes in London, 2,000 of then in the West End. Two hundred and fifty thousand men are estimated to make use of them every week in London alone - though that may be an exaggeration. Decent people, going about their normal work, can be ignorant of these facts and horrified when they hear them, but the figures compiled in 'English Life and Leisure' are there for anyone to read - disgusting reading though they are. A strong contingent of these harlots in the West End is from France. The maximum legal penalty for soliciting was two pounds, but periodical fines were regarded by these women as nothing but incidental expenses. Some have been fined as many as 150 times. It is too early yet to judge what effect our legislation will have on prostitution.

All this foul traffic is an offence to God and a deep stain on the life of this nation. But figures and complaints will do nothing about it. A revival of religion would. When men and women come to see that their sin is an insult to the purity of God, and that their bodies were meant to be kept in honour, something would happen. Our own women would be chaste. This stream of imported prostitutes would cease, and the lustful men, who are the chief cause of the women's degradation, would learn that there is power in God to obey the commandments of God.

3. IT WOULD DISINFECT THE THEATRE AND THE PRESS.

Religion has no quarrel with the drama as such. It uses it. The quarrel between religion and the drama arises over the all-too-frequent misuse of the stage for the deliberate inflaming of lust. It is an offence to God, and a sin against tempted man, to titivate vice and portray sexual looseness as though it were permissible and even praiseworthy.

You may think my language exaggerated, so I will quote a statement of Harold Hobson, the well-known theatre critic. He does not write from a religious angle. He can approve things I might condemn. But as a professional reviewer he said that for years past he has noticed this increasing tendency. "At one such venture not long ago I was filled with such contempt for the author's laborious filthiness of imagination that I took what is, for a member of my profession, an extreme and desparate step; I walked out of the theatre before the play was over."

When professional critics get to this extremity, ministers of religion may be forgiven for thinking that things are going from bad to worse. Yet the Lord Chamberlain seems unable to do much about it. He walks a knife-edge between opposing blasts of criticism. A revival of religion would lead the

people to turn from this filth in disgust, and the drama would be redeemed for its high and necessary use.

As for our newspapers, they include some of the best in the world - and some of the worst. Papers in this latter group are so completely sex-sodden that they do not stop short of pornography. And any attempt to suppress them would be regarded as an invasion of freedom.

There is no answer to it but a revival of religion.

4. IT WOULD CUT THE DIVORCE RATE.

The number of divorces in this country is returned in five-yearly periods. For 1876-1880 there were 1,385 divorces. In 1941-1945 there were 51,944. In 1946-1950 there were nearly 200,000. In 1951-1956 there were 146,186. When every allowance has been made for the war, this is terrible.

But the many people involved in these recent divorces are not the only ones affected. Children grow up without that sense of security so necessary to the forming of a well-knit nature and they suffer from its lack all their lives. Psychologists are not certain that it isn't better for children to hear a good deal of bickering and quarrelling in the home than for the home to fold up altogether. A noticeable number of juvenile criminals come from broken homes.

Moreover, the very texture of society gets flabby as divorce gets common. Young people actually enter marriage with their eye on the back door. 'Oh well, if it doesn't come off, there is always divorce.' People with their eye on the back door dart toward it more readily than they think they will.

A few months ago a friend of mine overheard a significant remark at a game of tennis. Two girls stood near him waiting for their turn and commenting meanwhile on the play of a young married couple on the court. One girl said to the other in wonder and envy: 'They've been married five years and they are still happy together. I'd like to think when I'm married that we shall be happy and together five years later.'

Yet what can you do about the problem? Some christians say: 'Divorce is never permissible." The community as a whole tends to make divorce easier and easier. People who give guidance on marriage know of folk who have been divorced two or three times but when they turn up for more 'guidance' it is always the other person's fault. I have known people on the edge of divorce awake to the reality of religion and fall in love with one another all over again.

Sound religion gives us new homes.

5. IT WOULD REDUCE JUVENILE CRIME.

The adolescent thug is a feature of our generation. If the percentage is small in the community as a whole, it is still too large. Nor must we use too much time in discussing the cause of juvenile crime: an overhang of the war? - bad TV? - uncomical 'comics'...? The young thug and the thief is there. What is the answer to this appalling problem? The police struggle valiantly against it. The Juvenile Courts seek to be firm without being savage. Parliament is perplexed.

A new tide of religion in our national life is the answer to the problem. It is a thing almost unheard of for a young thug to come out of a seriously Christian home. It can happen - but it hardly ever

does. Moreover, it is exceedingly rare for a juvenile criminal to be associated with church or sunday school at the time his crimes are committed. No one is safe in goodness unless he wants to be good. Then he will be good in the dark.

But what makes people want to be good?

Sound religion does it.

6. IT WOULD LESSEN THE PRISON POPULATION.

There are nearly 21,000 people in prison and Borstal in England and Wales at the present time. In some prisons they are sleeping three in a cell. The contrast with the pre-war period is informative. In 1938 the number of prisoners was 15,145; in 1956 it was 20,896. Is it only a coincidence that the generation which saw the churches empty saw the prisons full?

A man denied that connection to me the other day. 'The churches have been emptying,' he said, 'for more than a generation. Only of recent years have the prisons been over-full.'

I know the answer to that. The generation just past lived on the moral capital of its predecessors - a moral capital built up by the attendance at church, and respect for spiritual things. Now the capital is exhausted. The exhaustion of Britain's moral capital is more serious in some ways than the strain on her monetary capital. The bill usually comes in to the third generation. How often I have heard young people, going wrong, say in scorn of church: 'My parents were decent and they had nothing to do with church.' Was it any good pointing out to them that their parents were often living on the fine past of their forbears and that the account was now overdrawn?

'Decency may not be a great deal but it is much better than indecency and it needs support, a buttress, something to hold it up and give it authority.

That authority, buttress, and support are in religion.

7. IT WOULD IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND INCREASE THE OUTPUT OF WORK.

All economists seem agreed that we need in this country a higher output of work. Not so long since, ourhoardings were carrying the slogan: 'We work or want.'

But how can we make a man work who doesn't want to? How can you prevent a loafer living a parasitic life on the Welfare State and twisting noble legislation to ignoble ends? I heard a woman - the mother of many children - say not long since that the children's allowances nicely paid for the pools and her cigarettes! Eleanor Rathbone had a major share in securing those children's allowances. I knew her. It was never her mind that the money should go that way.

Real religion makes a radical difference to daily work. It does it this way. A man is taught that he does not work chiefly for wages, or the foreman, boss, shareholdres, state, or community. At the last, his work is rendered to God. He needs the wages, of course. The service to the community is a high expression of his chief loyalty. But his chief loyalty is to God.

It is bringing God into it which makes the difference to work. It must be done well; it is for God. It must be done without clock-watching and time-wasting; it is for God. Frankly, not even love of country or the hope of making a bit more for yourself is a motive sufficiently powerful to over-come the inertia of our nature in days of high taxation. It calls for the steel and granite of deep

religion. Men work to the uttermost who work for God.

8. IT WOULD RESTORE TO THE NATION A SENSE OF HIGH DESTINY.

The British people used to believe that they had a special and high destiny in the world. Some aspects of the idea were a little silly. The British Empire and the Kingdom of God got confused in their minds. Old memorial tablets in churches to generals and admirals leave the impression that whoever resisted British arms resisted heaven.

Most of the imperial pride has gone. God has a purpose for all peoples. The doctrine of the essential superiority of one race over others is false. Discerning people know that the only kingdom with a future is the kingdom of God, and no nation can count on tomorrow which does not aim to bring its purposes into harmony with the purposes of the Almighty.

Yet Britain could do that more swiftly than most peoples. She has a longer history and experience of self-government than any other large nation on the face of the globe. Her long enjoyment of civil and political and religious liberty has given her a maturity of judgment in all these fields which is still rare among men. Vast changes have come in Britain but no civil war for nearly 300 years. Tolerance, fair-play, and a freedom from frenzy mark this people. For all the spiritual disappointment of the times this nation has never deliberately turned its back on God. The mass of Englishmen may neglect the Church but they still want it there, and they want what it stands for in their soul.

If some forms of greatness have passed from England for ever, others remain. She can teach the family of men tolerance, fair-play, and civil and religious liberty. She can teach how these may be achieved without war. All war is civil war. Britain has a high destiny still.

Perhaps she could guide our race at the point of its greatest need - to make humanity rather than nationality the important thing, to wipe away all that is evil in class and caste and colour and creed, to make us willing to accept a lower standard of living till the hungry multitudes abroad can eat their fill as well.

But only a new tide of religion would give the vision this crusade requires.

9. IT WOULD MAKE US INVINCIBLE IN THE WAR OF IDEAS.

The real war behind the cold war is the war of ideas. The honest Communist and the honest Capitalist have more in common than they know. Whilst each would indignantly deny it of the other, the sincere devotees of these opposing ways of life honestly want a fairer distribution of things, a chance of a fuller life for all, a practical recognition of the brotherhood of man. Their screaming and sometimes filthy foaming against one another must not prevent men who think form seeking to pierce to the central ideas which are in conflict. Both creeds have their martyrs. Men only die for what they passionately believe.

Cancel out the lies that they tell to one another. Acknowledge in honesty any identity you can find of ultimate aim. What are the basic and, it may be, the deadly differences? What is at war in the war of ideas?

Is God there or is He not? Is man His child with a life after death - or just what he eats? Is the last explanation of the universe spiritual or material?

Communism tries to satisfy man's cravings for a spiritual purpose by pursuading him that there is none - that only materialism is real. But some people who profess to believe in the spiritual prove by their deeds that they also are materialists at heart. They don't deeply believe in Christianity. They just want to 'use' it. 'If it will pay debts, check the cosh-boys, and reduce the expense of prisons, let us have it. It will be good for "the masses".' This kind of religion will not dam the red tide. It doesn't deserve to. Only real religion will do that - personal and utter dedication, sacrifice till it hurts, the spirit of Christ in the day-to day contacts of life. The finest schemes fail on the selfishness of man. Christianity teaches a secret neither communism nor capitalism knows: how to die to self. The possession and practice of that secret would make us invincible in the war of ideas.

10. IT WOULD GIVE HAPPINESS AND PEACE TO THE PEOPLE.

The people are not happy and they see no prospect of peace. Look at the faces of people in the streets, in the buses, and on the trains. When their faces are in repose they do not look happy. The only hope of happiness that millions entertain is to win something big on the pools.

Real religion makes people happy, as happy as the day is long. They get up in the morning with brightness and go to work with zest. They have the answer to all the dark mysteries of life - suffering, bereavment, death. Nor is there any particular mystery about it. Anybody who was completely sure that the world is in the hands of a good God could be happy. Not even hydrogen bombs tossed about by half-mad men can damage the throne of God.

Real religion gives people peace. Nobody knows if there is going to be a Third World War; the Cabinet Ministers don't know, and the Commissars don't know, either. It could happen. The little care-free children could be growing up for that.

There is only one place where peace can be found today. Deep in the heart of those who have religion. It does not depend on circumstances; it depends on conviction and communion. Those who are waiting for peace until all men love one another will die disappointed. Peace is there to be taken and it can be taken now.

But it must be taken from God!

Britain has many needs but this is her greatest.

She needs a revival of religion."

Sangster goes on, in the second half of his pamphlet, to expound 2 Chronicles 7:14., and to enlarge upon how such a revival of evangelical religion might take place, which would achieve some of the social goals that he spoke of here.

How did he know that such social changes were possible? Partly because such things have already happened as results of revivals of evangelical Christianity, and partly because Christian holiness is a powerful force in this direction.

Other Needed Changes that Sangster Did Not Mention.

Some critics would say that Sangster's list betrays the evangelical prejudices of his day, and that he has omitted many other changes that are even more important than the ones he mentions.

The following list is only a sample of what needs to be included among the basic aims of Christian reconstruction in any society.

* Removal of oppression and injustice.
* Removal of poverty and hunger.
* Offsetting the catastrophic results of capitalism.
* Degradation of cities, and of life in cities.
* Serving the needs of the environment.
* Equality of opportunity world-wide.
* Honesty in public office.
* Response to population explosion and growth.
* The world's resource depletion.
* Racism.
* The manufacture and sale of arms.
* The use of nuclear energy for war and peace.
* The illegal drug industry.

Some of these issues will need to be dealt with on a different level politically from the level which applied to the issues about which Sangster wrote, but they are all of very great importance both now and for the future, and are issues which need to be confronted by the gospel of Christ, wherein the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit can work in individuals and in society.

Studies of Changes Resulting from Religious Revivals.

Many interesting examples now exist of historical studies into the changes brought about in various societies by the short-term and long-term impact of evangelical revivals.

Many other accounts of revivals have been published which provide more first-hand observations of some of these changes as they occurred.

Several of these publications will be noticed here.

However, in noticing these things we must be aware that we are dealing with the work of God amongst fallible, limited, sinful, and often very immature people, and therefore the good will be mixed with much that is unsatisfactory or wrong. More improvement is always needed.

Ian C. Bradley. "The Call to Seriousness."

The sub-title of this book is "The Evangelical Impact upon the Victorians." The story it tells reflects some of the things that Sangster wrote about.

Information about the contents of the book is taken (in part) from the dust-jacket, and goes like this:-

"Much of the piety, prudery, imperialistic sentiment, philanthropic endeavour and obsession with proper conduct that we think of as the distinctive characteristics of the Victorians can be traced back to the influence of the Evangelicals. This group of austere and high-minded puritans was the product of the religious revival in eighteenth-century England which had introduced the demanding

new creed of 'vital religion'.

The impact of Evangelicalism during the first half of the nineteenth century was devastating. As one historian has put it. 'Between 1780 and 1850 the English ceased to be one of the most aggressive, brutal, rowdy, outspoken, riotous, cruel and blood-thirsty nations in the world and became one of the most inhibited, polite, tender-minded, prudish and hypocritical.' By the 1850's piety had become the fashion, and dramatic conversions were all the rage. Overzealous Evangelicals were a favourite subject of Victorian novelists.

In his fascinating analysis of the effects of the Evangelical movement, Ian Bradley examines what made this call to seriousness so compelling to the Victorians, why their missionary zeal played such an important part in imperial policy, and how their crusade against vice transformed the public morals so dramatically."

One of the points he makes is that a good many of the converts went into the ministry, the army or the public service. So much was this so that the British public service became noted for its honesty, and in that way was the envy of many other countries.

Also, it is not difficult to see in such historical studies how the "moral capital", of which Sangster wrote, is established in one generation, is relied upon by the next generation or two, and so the spiritual bankruptcy of the following "third" generation becomes evident, if there are no other spiritual revivals following.

The Writings of J. Edwin Orr.

Edwin Orr was unquestionably the greatest historian of evangelical awakenings and revival movements during the middle of the twentieth century. His studies and writings have greatly deepened and widened our knowledge of these movements, some of which had been largely forgotten. And he has opened up new areas which will provide fertile ground for other people to study further at later times.
One of the areas which received much emphasis from him was showing the social impact of the various revivals about which he wrote. Although there are much more detailed studies of some of the areas that Orr mentioned, other areas that he mentioned have not been studied so much. He gives us a bird's-eye view of much of the impact on society that these historical revivals have exercised, by the grace of God.

The climax of his studies in this area appeared with the publication of eight books in the mid 1970's.

Amongst these eight books there are two sets. The first set contains three books. In "The Eager Feet" Orr tried to show the world-wide nature and impact of the period of revivals which began about 1792. "The Fervent Prayer" dealt in the same way with the revivals around 1859. And "The Flaming Tongue" dealt with the revivals in the first decade of the twentieth century, and which reached its most famous peak in the Welsh revival of 1904.

The other set of five books traces the evangelical awakenings during the last few hundred years in Africa, Southern Asia, Eastern Asia, South America, and the South Seas.

Together they make the nearest thing we have to a comprehensive history of revivals throughout the world in modern times.

George M. Thomas. "Revivalism and Cultural Change."

One of the most recent studies about how society is changed by the preaching of the gospel is to be found in George M. Thomas' book, "Revivalism and Cultural Change. Christianity, Nation Building and the Market in Nineteenth Century America."

The author uses a great deal of technical language and many terms which are not easy to understand. So, in order to explain what the book is about I will quote the description given inside the dust-jacket of the book.

"Recurring periods of emotional intensity, popular interest and political impact - periods, that is, of revivals or awakenings - characterise the history of Christianity in the United States. George M. Thomas here addresses the economic and political context of evangelical revivalism and its historical linkages with economic expansion and Republicanism in the nineteenth century. By combining elements from the sociology of religion and culture and from collective action theory, Thomas breaks new theoretical ground by constructing an institutional model of the relation of large-scale cultural change to social movements.

Large-scale change, Thomas argues, results in social movements that articulate new organisations and definitions of individual, society, authority and cosmos. Thomas uses this framework to empirically study revivalism in nineteenth century America. Drawing on religious newspapers, party policies and agendas, and quantitative analyses of voting patterns and census data, Thomas claims that revivalism in this period framed the rules and identities of the expanding market economy and the national polity. It expressed a cultural order centred on the individual as the prime mover, one in which rational moral action would establish a new national morality and transform American civilization. Thus, in the north and the mid-west, revivalism was the source of social reform and nation-building movements such as abolitionism, temperance and Republicanism.

Social movements, and especially religious ones, Thomas maintains, call for a new moral order and compete to have their vision dominate the moral-political universe. Thomas moves his institutional model beyond the Weberian emphasis on ethos to interpret social movements in terms of their theory of reality - their ontology. He asks, What is the content and structure of the cosmos a movement is trying to build? How is that cosmos related to cultural myths of social organisation? These questions force a new focus on the historical tradition of a movement and the place of that movement in large-scale cultural change.

This ambitious work makes original contributions to a number of areas of enquiry: to the theoretical literature concerned with constructing historical world-system explanations of social and political change by accentuating the significance of the cultural factor; to the literature in the historical sociology of American society through an empirically-grounded interpretation of ninteenth century revivalism, Republican nation-building, and market penetration; and, to the literature in the sociology of religion by analysing revivalism in a comparative historical perspective using theoretical and methodological tools that cut across the boundaries of the social sciences."

Let us now try to set out more simply some of the points mentioned in this summary.

(a.) The author is interested in what things form the basis of a society, and in what makes society change.

(b.) Religious movements can be powerful factors in forming the basis of a society, and in making widespread changes in a society.

(c.) In trying to understand what the religious movement will achieve, it is necessary to look at the

contents of its WORLD-VIEW. (Thomas calls this the movement's "ontology", its theory of reality. But, in fact it is the same as what we have been looking at throughout this book as a world-view.)

When a major religious movement has a powerful impact upon a society, it will cause a number of changes, and these can be very large-scale changes, at times.

These religious movements will produce other movements which can cause many of the features of the society to become re-defined in new ways - such as the view of the role and value of the individual, of authority, or of society itself. And it can cause new organisations to arise, which will achieve new goals, which will be further expressions of the world-view of the original religious movement.

Thomas' book looks at historical evidence in nineteenth century America in order to support these ideas, and he uses revivals, awakenings and the results of evangelism, as his case in point.

(d.) Naturally, there is an interplay of many factors in these situations. Movements which affect other things in society are affected themselves in return. And the changes which are produced primarily by one movement will be modified by other factors already existing in the society. So, there is a complex, interacting picture, which is very fluid, and in constant change in a way that may not be able to be foreseen or predicted by anybody.

For the purposes of this book, however, Thomas' study provides an interesting example of the kind of Christian transformation of society that we are seeking to understand and encourage.

Iain H. Murray. "The Puritan Hope."

Iain Murray has written a number of books which relate to the subject of revivals. One of the most interesting is concerned with the possibility that future revivals of religion may relate to the prophesies in the Bible which have not yet been fulfilled.

As we noted earlier, Jonathan Edwards approached this issue in his publication "A Humble Attempt..." He tried to show that the Bible prophesies indicate a much greater degree of success in the future as a result of the preaching of the gospel than has been achieved so far.

Iain Murray's book approaches this same issue in a slightly different way. The dust jacket of this book gives the following description..

"Views on the future prospects of the Christian Church in history have differed drastically during her life since Pentecost. In certain eras of darkness and chaos Christians have anticipated no future save that to be ushered in by the imminent Second Advent of Christ, while at other times conviction has gripped the Church that the gospel in which she believes is yet to be a world-transforming power. It is owing to the Puritans that the latter outlook became dominant in British Christianity for over two hundred years. How this occurred and how widespread was the influence of their hope is the subject of this volume.

After tracing some of the salient features of the Puritan revival age, the author goes on to show how their witness reverberated through the succeeding centuries. As late as 1874 John Richard Green could write: 'The whole history of English progress since the Restoration, on its moral and spiritual sides, has been the history of Puritanism.'

And beyond Britain, first in North America, then in India and Africa, the confidence which

stemmed from the theology of the Puritan school inspired the greatest missionary advance since the apostolic age.

Today the Church's hope in respect to her mission of discipling all nations is again in eclipse. The World gives Christianity no future and evangelicals themselves doubt whether the casue of Christ can ever attain to a greater triumph before his Second Advent. Must the prospects for succeeding generations be darker than those of today? Can we even expect any period of history to intervene before the Advent of Christ? How can readiness for Christ's coming be consistent with the belief that revivals are yet to be given to the Church? Such questions are brought to the fore in this book and the author, employing both exposition of Scripture and much historical and biographical material, sets out the case for believing that it is not 'orthodox' to indulge in gloom over the prospect for Christianity in the world."

In referring to the budding British missionary movement around 1800, Murray speaks of the way it was inspired by the Methodist revival and the previous Puritan movement, and quotes the church historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette, in the following way.

"This Protestantism was characterised by an abounding vitality and a daring unequalled in Christian history. Through it, for the first time, plans were seriously elaborated for bringing the Christian message to all men and to make the life of all mankind conform to Christian ideals. In the first century some Christian had believed it to be their obligation to 'preach the gospel to every creature'.... Never before, however, had the followers of any faith formulated comprehensive plans covering the entire surface of the earth to make these purposes effective." (p.142.)

Two Concluding Comments.

(a.) The Question of "the Millenium."

According to many Christians, but, by no means all, the Millenium refers to a period of 1000 years when it is thought that Christ will personally reign on earth.

The only Biblical passage which refers to it directly is Revelation 20. Those who believe in a literal 1000 years period have to interpret this chapter literally. This literal interpretation of the passage is questioned by those who choose to use symbolic interpretations for many of the other passages in this part of the Bible. It normally is not consistent to interpret one such passage literally, but not others.

According to some theories, the preaching of the gospel may not produce as many improvements as we would like to see, and to remedy this lack of success, the Millenium will be inaugurated by the Second Advent of Christ, and it will eventually finish with the battle of Armageddon and the end of history.

According to some other theories, the preaching of the gospel will steadily lead to improvements in the world until the Millenium is inaugurated. To what extent Christ is physically present during this period is not always clear. The 1000 year period will be brought to an end by the Second Advent.

It is this second theory which was upheld by the Puritans, as we have seen in Murray's book, and which was shared by Edwards, and by many of those involved in the American revivals up until about 1850.

In the early 1800's the impact of the revivals caused such great changes in society, and it seemed

that so much extra could be achieved by the same means in the near future, that some thought that the Millenium was just around the corner.

Iain Murray's book describes how this optimism disappeared during the period after 1850.

The point of this concluding comment is to point out that the views espoused in this present book on world-view philosophy embrace a view of human nature which includes the possibility of a good deal of improvement, but which hardly includes the scope for any kind of perfect society this side of heaven.

One of the purposes of the gospel is to bring about improvement like this, as far as that can be done.

If, therefore, the Millenium in Revelation 20 refers to a literal period, it would seem that it describes a situation substantially different from anything which is possible within the bounds of human nature as we presently know it.

Although I am quite willing to be corrected by the unfolding of history, I am not inclined to the view that a literal period is intended, and I believe that some other interpretation will turn out to be correct.

I believe that the gospel can produce many more changes of enormous value. I believe that this will happen, in due course, and that a great deal has already been achieved.

But, I do not believe in any perfect society this side of heaven, whether that is supposed to be produced by the preaching of the gospel, or by Christ's personal presence for 1000 years on earth.
I believe that those who are interested and involved in revivals must bear in mind that they should not promote the idea that the perfect Millenium can be achieved here.
Also to be rejected is the idea that a community can produce any kind of a perfect society, although communities, open or closed, can have a number of valuable possibilities.

Any kind of absolute personal perfection amongst humans here on earth must also be rejected.

(b.) National Destiny.

The impact of the gospel has on several occasions produced the idea that one nation or another has a special role to play under God within the history of the world.

Sangster refers to this in relation to Great Britain.

The concept of the "Manifest Destiny" of the American people is another version of this, and it has figured largely in the development of the American self-image since the times of the New England Puritans.

Cults, or distorted forms of Christianity, have arisen which emphasised these ideas, such as the British - Israelite movement, and the Mormons of Utah.

Also, these ideas of national destiny have been secularised, and have become linked with much less worthy ideas, and these have become part of the national ideology. They have supported both British Imperialism and the international influence of American democracy. They have promoted feelings of superiority and attitudes of paternalism.

As Sangster mentions, all nations have a role to play within the Kingdom of God, both as being reponsible for their own moral activities, and for the good that they can do in the world.

It is part of the gospel that nations should see that they have a role to play, and that this role should in fact be played.

It is to be hoped that national leaders can become humble, and at the same be servants, in the interests of the Kingdom of God.

The humility is of vital importance so that one's own national interests are never confused with the interests of the Kingdom, and so that things can be done for others at the expense of creating a sense of inferiority in others. Even less should the political or personal interests of such leaders be confused with the interests of the Kingdom. Certainly, the value of what any nation does for the Kingdom should never be over-valued in its own estimation.

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