

Biblical Framework Part 1

Who And What God Is & Creation: The Buried Truth of Man and Nature

Review

Remember our challenge:

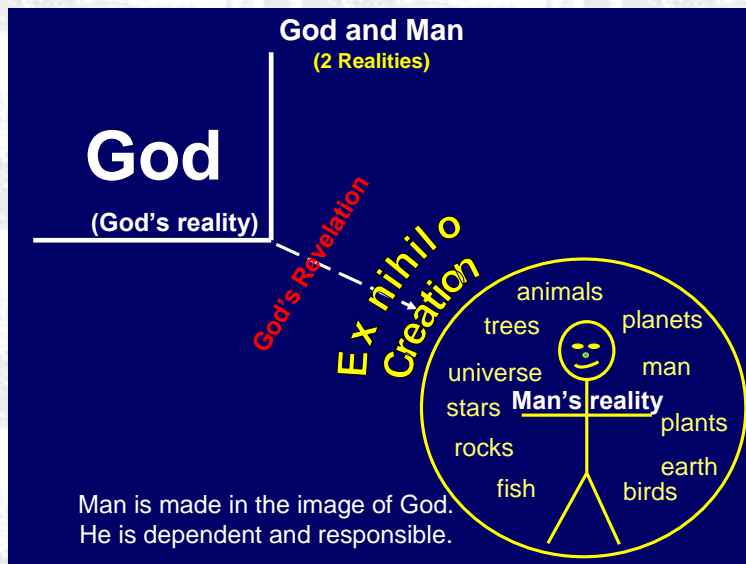
Framework Series Basics

Remember:

Either
you will let the Word of God interpret the world
around you,

or
you will let the world around you interpret the
Word of God.

Let's review and recall:



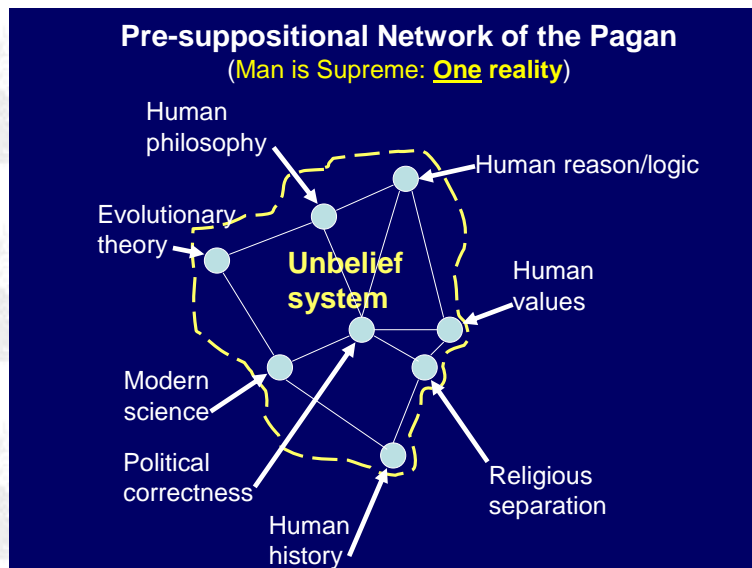
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That God has His Own Reality.

That an Infinite-Personal Creator spoke creation into existence in 6–24 hr days.

That we have our own reality, but it is dependent upon God’s Reality.

Also in review, we want to keep in mind what the pagan mind looks like as we try to clear away the layers of debris and deception forced upon us.

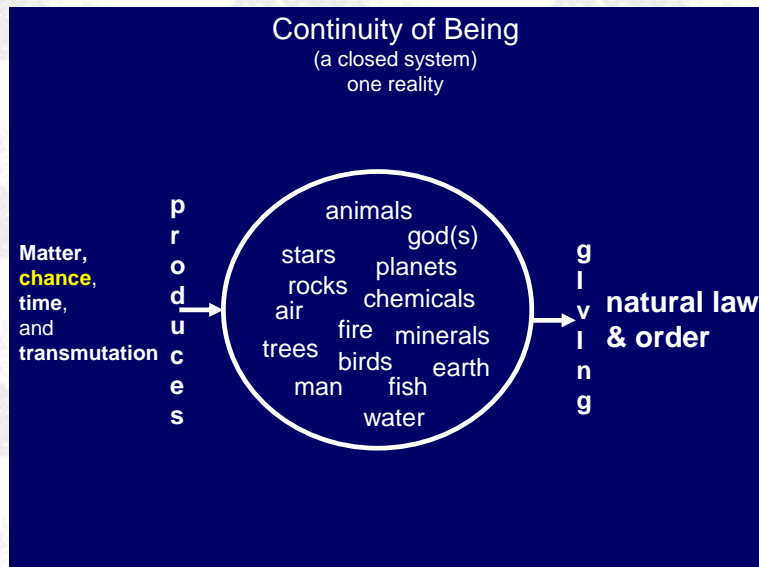


As we looked at the presuppositional network of the pagan mind, thinking as it does on one level of reality, we remember that we still have to be careful as we think our way through some problem that we are not influenced by our pagan environment - - deeply embedded in human logic and reason, believing, or accommodating evolutionary theory, believing that religion has its place, but not in the scientific world, but political correctness is important so that we don't offend any group. Truly, this is one reality living. Autonomous man trying to accommodate other autonomous men in the pursuit of doing what seems right in their own eyes. It is here that we swing from licentiousness to tyranny, then back and forth again, never finding the balance between the two.

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I was part of this “accommodating” crowd. Why? Because I had no solid biblical truth to stand on. When asked a serious religious question the reply would be: My tentative, tenuous, subject to change answer at this time, is:(my weak answer).....

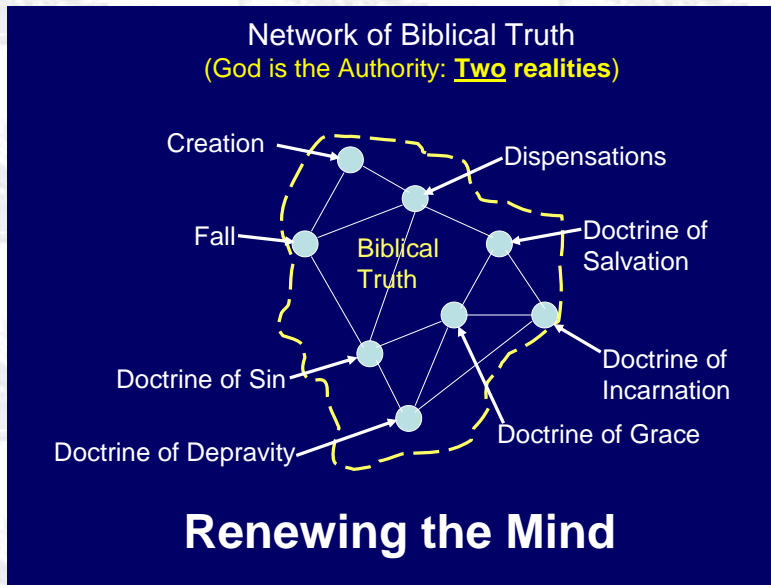
This is relativism at its best. This is probably the same slippery exchanges that occur at emerging church movement “conversations”, where no one has *the* truth, but they try to arrive at a consensus of what the truth *might* be.



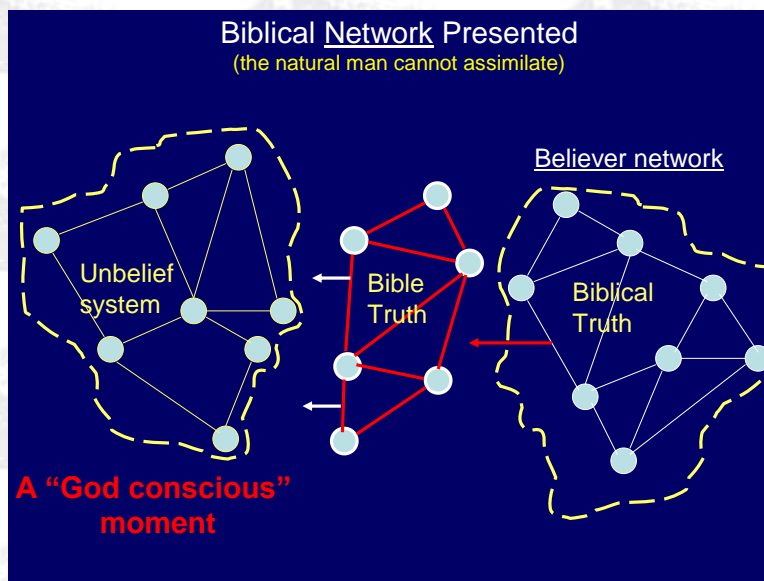
Evolutionary theory in a nutshell.

Spontaneous generation: something from nothing. Then everything evolves from something, based on time, impersonal chance, and transmutation.

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Enter God's Word – Scripture (the Bible), inspired, inerrant, the final authority in which we have been graced to believe! Here, we find another whole Reality, explained to us in Genesis. God has His Own Reality! And we, as created creatures, have our (dependent) reality. Here's where the truth is unveiled and God tells us of our history from creation forward.

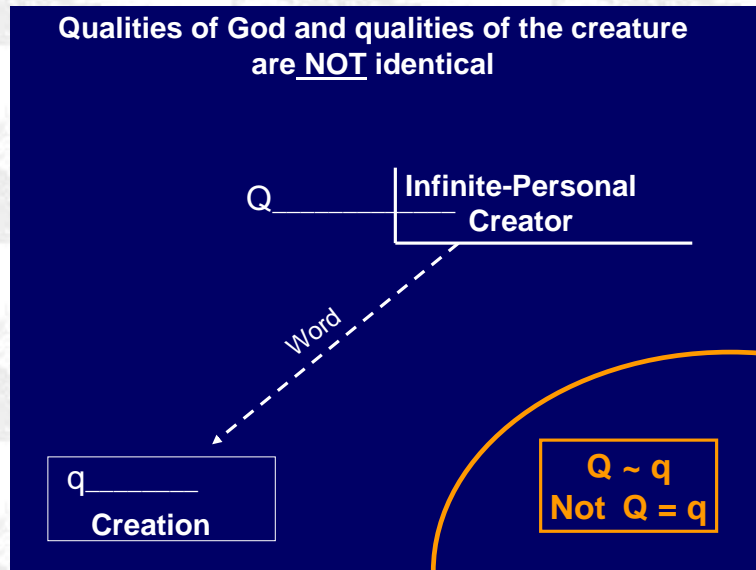


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As we replace deception with biblical truth, doctrine by doctrine, we are better prepared to present a network of biblical truth to the pagan mind that produces a “God conscious” moment – an uncomfortable moment – but one that touches the innermost part of his being that says, “Yes, there is an Eternal God”. So, Romans 1:19-20 are true. “because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

Finally, last time, we were coming to an understanding that the Qualities of God are not identical to the qualities of creation. Why? Because before there was creation, God existed. He is eternal, infinite, and He has His own reality before the creation began. He was before creation and by His Word He created from nothing. He didn't start with some dust or slime and a mix of DNA. There was nothing, then there was something – we call that “ex nihilo” (from nothing) creation. Evolutionists say the same thing – from nothing came something, but they call it “spontaneous generation” or a bit of Luck or Chance along the way, a fantasy evolutionists put forth in hopes you will buy it, but which never happened or will ever happen.

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Here, we see:

That we have qualities similar to God, our Maker: $Q \sim q$

That our qualities are not identical to God's Qualities: **Not $Q = q$**

Class 6 begins.

Today, we want continue to look at:

WHO AND WHAT GOD IS

To begin, here is a mnemonic device for remembering just nine of the many characteristics of God, or what are termed His "attributes".

It is: SRJLOOOIE ('Sir J Louie').

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SRJLOOOIE ('Sir J Louie').

(Q)ualities of God

S O V E R E I G N	}	H O L I N E S S
R I G H T E O U S		
J U S T		
L O V I N G		
O M N I S C I E N T		
O M N I P O T E N T		
O M N I P R E S E N T		
I M M U T A B L E		
E T E R N A L		

To know God means at least that we can speak of His nature in some way. We saw that when we speak of the (Q)ualities of His nature, we must speak analogically not comprehensively. Let us stand in awe of His incomprehensiveness! God cannot, and will never be fully understood. Thus, He cannot be “boxed in” by the human mind to perform in the same way His creatures do!

Anthropomorphic vs. Theomorphic

Anthropomorphism:

Describing God in human terms, as if He had hands, feet, eyes, arms, and so forth.

Theomorphorism (Theo = God):

Describing man being made in the image of God and being given (q)ualities similar to His (Q)ualities.

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Each (Q)uality or attribute of God we know from creaturely experience with His revelation in the Bible and in the world. Some would call them "anthropomorphisms", analogies with (q)ualities in our lives. So we speak of "the mighty arm of God", or "the eyes of God were upon them". This is how we creatures try to comprehend and speak of our Creator. However, from the record of Gen. 1:26-27, telling us how we were made in God's image, we can say that we are "theomorphic", because of our having been created by a loving God Who gave us (q)ualities similar to His (Q)ualities.

Man in the Image of God	
Similar qualities but not identical	
(Q)ualities of God	(q)ualities of man
S OVEREIGN	c hoice
R IGHTEOUS H OLINESS	r ighteous c onscience
J UST	j ust
L OVING	l oving
O MNISCIENT	k nowledge
O MNIPOTENT	e nergy
O MNIPRESENT	s pace
I MMUTABLE	m utable
E TERNAL	t ime

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COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

Some Communicable Attributes of God

Sovereignty

Holiness { Righteous
Justice

Love

Omniscience

First, **sovereignty**, this is the attribute of God that has given more people trouble over the history of the church than anything else (cf Prov 16:4; 21:1; Isa 46:8-13; Rom 11:36; Eph 1:11).

When we're talking about God as sovereign, it doesn't just mean that He is sovereign over the universe, it means that He always willed what He willed from eternity, even His own nature within the Trinity. His self-will is at once "necessary" because of His nature and "free" because undetermined by anything outside of Himself. Please notice that. His self will is at once necessary and it is free; it is necessary because He is a willing God, He is a God who exercises sovereignty. That's part of His nature. He wouldn't be God if He wasn't sovereign. But He's also free, because His will is not determined by anything outside of Himself.

God has sovereign (complete) control over everything in creation (man, nature and history). Scripture declares that God is working out His sovereign/eternal plan of redemption for the world and that the conclusion is certain. He does this, not by putting man and God together as a sort of team that rules history. History is not run by committee, but by an all-loving, all-caring Creator God.

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Our “(q)uality” is choice, the ability to decide on or select from several possibilities. As an example pertaining to this course, we can choose to accept or reject the proposition that the Bible is God’s Word. We can choose to accept or reject the general revelation of God in creation and our own conscience.

The attribute of **holiness** means that God's character is perfectly righteous and just. By *righteous* is meant that His moral character is a flawlessly consistent law unto itself (Exod 9:27; Jer 12:1; Rev 16:5-7). He never acts contrary to His character. And His character is the standard throughout the cosmos for what is right and wrong. His character is the standard for right and wrong, not society, not somebody’s opinion. By *just* is meant that His attitude of judgment upon evil is uncompromising regardless of who might be involved (Deut. 4:24; Ezk. 18:4; Rom. 2:11). Our experience of conscience, moral judgment, revulsion over evil, and need for law is something like His (Q)uality of Holiness.

The attribute of **love** means that God gives to whom He loves. Only with the biblical Triune God can there be an eternal attribute of love in this sense: the Father eternally loves the Son (John 17:24). Toward the creature, God has revealed His love supremely in coming to this planet to redeem us (Exod. 20:6; Deut. 4:37; John 3:16). Our experience of the personal and at times passionate *love* is a finite replica of His love.

The attribute of **omniscience** means that God has total knowledge of Himself as well as knowledge of all creature things, actual and possible (I Sam. 16:7; Matt. 11:21-23; Heb. 4:13; I John 3:20). His knowledge is immediate and perfect. Our experience of being aware that there is a standard of truth, that real knowledge must be somehow universal, that we know by coming to know our mental perceptions of reality, and that we can create in our imagination is something like the (Q)uality of omniscience.

Some Incommunicable Attributes.

The attribute of omnipresence means that God is completely present at every point in space (I Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7-12; Isa. 41:10; Matt. 28:20).

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However, His omnipresence is not identical to creature space. He is not partly here and partly there. Don't be like the Hindu worshipers tapping on trees and stones, whispering, 'Are you there? Are you there?' hoping to find their god residing within. God is everywhere. He is the One in whom we live, move and have our existence. God is within and outside the universe.

The attribute of omnipotence means that God can do anything compatible with His character (Exod. 15:2-10; Pss. 33:6-9; 104; 136; Isa. 41:10; Jer. 32:17,27; Eph. 3:20; Rev. 19:6). Our experience of physical work and personal influence is something like the (Q)uality of His omnipotence.

The attribute of immutability means that God's character is forever perfectly stable. He is the fixed reference point for all trust, discussion, and measurement (Mal. 3:1-6; Heb. 6:17; Jas. 1:17). Note that this (Q)uality refers to His nature, not to every statement He makes in the Word of God. For example, in Exodus 32:12, 14 and Amos 7:3, 6, God threatens judgment from which He "repents" (changes His mind) in response to prayer! Our experience of unusually stable and conservative personalities or of what are called "natural laws" and "constants" in science is something like the (Q)uality of immutability. They are finite replicas of it.

The attribute of eternity means that God has always existed; He has no beginning or end (Gen. 1:1 cf. John 1:1; Isa. 43:10; 44:6; Ps. 90:1-4; John 8:56-58; Rev. 1:8). Our experience of historical duration is something like the (Q)uality of eternity. The (q)uality of time or history is a finite replica of the Creator's eternal nature.

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Creation: The Buried Truth of Man and Nature

We've already observed that the event of biblical creation clearly defines the Creator-creature distinction against the pagan Continuity of Being belief. It also opposes paganism with another distinction: the man-nature distinction. As parts of the created universe, man and nature both are sharply distinguished from the Creator, but they are also distinguished from each other.

This distinction is crucial for everything that follows early Genesis in the Bible. So important is this distinction to God's plan that paganism suppresses it like it does the Creator- creature distinction. In the fleshly mind, these spiritually vital distinctions have been buried underneath the Continuity of Being doctrine.

Differing only in degree, not in kind.

god(s) > man > animals > rocks > chemicals

According to that old pagan doctrine, **God, man, and nature differ only in degree, not in kind.**

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God's Description of Man's Creation

What is Man?

Let's start with the narrative in Gen. 2, looking at the data. You may not think of this as data but Gen. 2 is an eyewitness piece of data. What we want to look at is evidences in this data for the miracle of man's creation. Gen. 2:7, "The LORD God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." So, we see the Biblical view of man as:

Body + Spirit = Soul

God says He miraculously formed man from the earth. The term "dust" in this context is sometimes interpreted by those following an accommodationist strategy as metaphorical for man's upward development from primates. They think by so doing they can accommodate the Genesis narrative to the evolutionary worldview. Unfortunately for this approach, the term "dust" in this context is used for literal earth particles of bodily decay after death (Gen. 3:19). Clearly, at death man does not revert back to his supposedly previous primate existence! The narrative, therefore, speaks of a literal, instantaneous creation of man.

The Unique Design of Mankind (a biblically correct "self-image")

1. Man is an image of God in both body and spirit
2. Through his body, man rules nature
3. All humans are made from Adam's single body
4. Man through his spirit chooses, judges, loves, knows

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The Unique Design of Mankind. Man's design is fundamentally related to God's plan for the universe. Want a biblically correct "self-image"? Lay hold of these four truths that define the man-nature distinction!

Truth #1 - Man is an image of God in both body and spirit.

This central truth is the foundation for all revelation, including the Incarnation of God the Son. Yet it suffers from two opposite distortions. On one hand, there is the distortion of Mormonism which holds to the belief that "as man is God once was, and as God is man one day shall be." Holding to the traditional pagan notion of the Continuity of Being, Mormonism erases the Creator-creature distinction. God the Father, in Mormonism, is not only the archetype of our body but He actually has a physical body Himself (and procreated children with His wives!).

On the other hand, to avoid idolatry Christians usually restrict the "image" to the invisible, immaterial part of man, leaving it utterly unrelated to the form of the body. But that would not be the case. It has directly to do with the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. When God the Son came into the world, He spoke of the human body to the Father, "A body You have prepared for me" (Heb. 10:5). Thus through a human body God could "fully" be contained (Col. 2:9) and seen (John 14:9). Through a human body, the Son rules forever (Heb. 1:3). Thus in his body and spirit man is a theomorphism, utterly unlike any other creature.

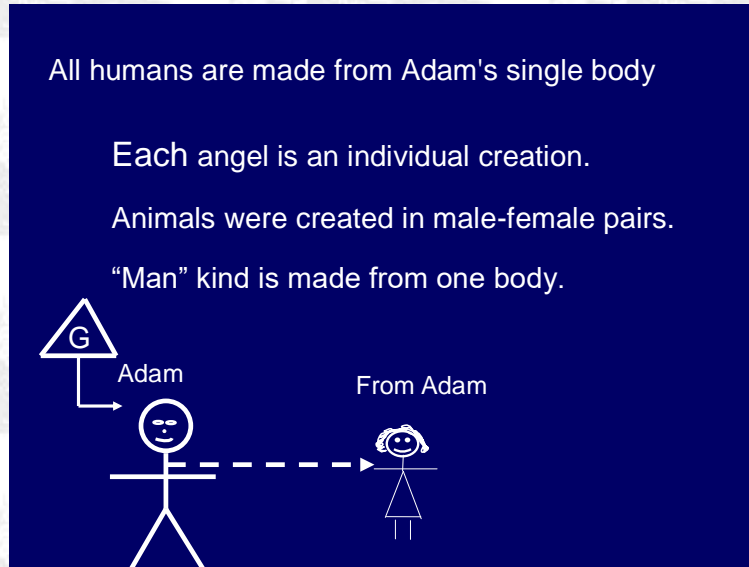
Truth #2 - Through his body, man rules nature.

Unlike bodiless angels, man's spirit directly rules nature beginning with that part of the earth that makes up his own flesh. Thereupon, he can reach out with his brain, mouth, and hands to name nature and subdue it.

Man's dominion rule is fulfilled by God only through the Incarnation in Christ (I Cor. 15:24-28; Heb. 2:5-9). At that future day, man's dominion rule will extend over even the angels (I Cor. 6:2-3; Heb. 2:5)! All of nature awaits this glorious moment (Rom. 8:19-22).

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Before then, however, every man must be spiritually perfected through the exercise of ruling, starting with his own flesh and working outward. Even the sinless Son of God had to be perfected in this manner of exercising human dominion (Heb. 2:10; 5:7-9).



Truth #3 - All humans are made from Adam's single body.

Unlike angels, each of whom are individual creations, and unlike animals which were created in male-female pairs, mankind is made from one body. In a unique way, the woman was taken out of the man. Thus the genetic composition of the human race originated in that body of clay in Eden.

Why the special treatment for mankind? Because man is central to God's plan of showing forth His glory. God will one day need to save men from their sins. The entire race must be designed to be "redeemable" so that one Savior (the last Adam) can somehow die for the many (Rom. 5:12-19; I Cor 15:21-22). The woman must derive from the man if the man is to be the central head of the original human race in sin and salvation. This marks off mankind from all animals, angels, and pagan concepts of what man is.

Truth #4 - Man through his spirit chooses, judges, loves, and knows.

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The creation narratives report that the first man was faced with the moral choice of obedience or disobedience as well as the task of knowing and naming. Far from some grunting primate, the first man was fully capable of rapid learning (Gen. 2:19), conversing with God (Gen. 2:16-17), and singing a love song (Gen. 2:23).

These reports have stunning implications!

Choice, conscience, love, and knowing reveal the presence of the human spirit. Man's spirit as part of the image of God is what enables him to be a responsible, conscious knower (Prov.1:23; I Cor. 2:11). It provides man with these finite versions of God's "communicable" (Q)ualities of sovereignty, holiness, love, and omniscience. Interestingly no one doubts these qualities exist yet they cannot be measured, touched, tasted, or seen--precisely the very same features unbelievers claim make them doubt God's existence!

a. **Choice**. Because man is created with his own spirit fashioned in God's image, he can never escape the Presence of God in the depths of his heart. He has to submit to Him with a heart of faith and the presupposition of the Word of God, or he has to rebel against Him with a heart of unbelief and the presupposition of autonomy. Here is why man, unlike animals, is held ultimately responsible for his eternal destiny. As the "lord" of nature, man alone has the (q)uality of choice that corresponds but is not identical to the (Q)uality of God's sovereignty.

Regardless of which response he makes, however, his thoughts and speech will always betray his chosen presuppositions. As manifestations of his spirit, man's thoughts and words reveal its basic orientation toward God. This is why God judges us by our words (Matt. 12:34-37).

b. **Conscience**. Although man knows that he himself fails, he can never restrain himself from making real moral judgments ("that is wrong", "you ought to. . ."). These judgments are not intended merely as opinions or likes and dislikes; they intend to appeal to some transcendent moral authority. Where is the authority for such judgments? It cannot come from experience with nature because whatever is the state-of-affairs, isn't necessarily what is right.

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"Rightness" is not an arithmetic mean.[4] Moral authority cannot come from other people or from society. History shows that entire societies are judged as wrong. Only two sources of moral authority for such judgments are available: the self or God. Whichever is chosen, everyday moral judgments reveal the chosen authority of man's spirit.

Moral judgments show the human (q)uality of conscience as derivative of God's (Q)uality of holiness. Being relative to one's spiritual growth and experience of revelation (I Cor. 8:7; Heb. 5:14), man's moral judgments are not always correct in content, but they show inherent awareness of the moral authority of the absolute Person.

c. **Love**. Another evidence of the human spirit made uniquely in God's image is love. Love requires the existence of another human spirit for it can never be truly exercised apart from a personal relationship. It is not good that anyone be alone, even Adam in Eden (Gen. 2:18). All men acknowledge directly and indirectly throughout their entire life their need to be loved. Simultaneously, all men thrive when they love one another with significant giving of their self. Real love is not limited just to the parent-child or man-wife relationship. Love is the deepest and only authentic motive behind ethics.

Yet the (q)uality of human love can never be identical to the (Q)uality of God's love. God's love depends upon nothing in the universe for it pre-existed creation within His triune nature. Human love, by contrast, remains fragile, always dependent upon creature existence. To exist human love requires an environment in which man's existence is unthreatened so that it is "safe" to give. This environment cannot be supplied by the pagan worldview because it has no Infinite Personal Creator Who loves with sovereignty and omnipotence. Paganism can only produce fear and self-protective schemes. Real human love, in other words, presupposes biblical creation and sets man off from nature.

d. **Knowledge**. Perhaps the most studied characteristic of man is his capacity to reason, to think conceptually, and to speak his thoughts in language. While pagan thinkers today try very hard to explain human knowledge on the basis of evolutionary development from

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animals, the Bible clearly draws a line between man and the animals in this regard (e.g., note use of *aloga* meaning "unreasoning" in II Pet. 2:12) "But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge...". The (q)uality of knowledge emanates from man's spirit and is a finite form of the (Q)uality of Omniscience.

In both body and spirit, therefore, man is uniquely designed in the image of God and set apart from the rest of the universe. Such a special creature needs special social structures to which we now turn.

Genesis 1 & 2: God's Three Institutions

1. Responsible labor (Dominion)
2. Marriage
3. Family

The attacks of Satan come against all three of these institutions because of his hatred toward God.

The Divine Institutions. The term "divine institution" has been used by Christians to speak of those absolute social structures instituted by God for the entire human race—believers and unbelievers alike. Though modern paganism views them as by-products of man's psychosocial evolution, the Bible insists God Himself installed at least three of them at creation.

1. The first divine institution is responsible dominion (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15-17; Psa. 8:3-8). Although the earth and its produce is the Lord's (Psa. 24:1), mankind was assigned to manage it under God's authority.

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Here is the biblical doctrine of creative labor. The first picture of God in the Bible is as a laborer. He expresses His character in His work ("glorifying Himself") and, as He finishes each part, He evaluates and enjoys it. In similar fashion God assigned labor to Adam. God let Adam investigate and create names for natural objects (Gen. 2:19). In so doing Adam was evaluating (imputing value to) the objects (Gen. 2:20).

For some today, it is a radical message that labor was instituted **before** the fall! Labor, whether manual or intellectual, expresses the spiritual character of the soul. It beckons evaluation.

2. The second divine institution, marriage, is defined in terms of the first. The woman was brought to Adam specifically as a "helper". Why did he need help? Because of his calling before God to rule nature. Unlike animals, mankind's so-called sexual differentiation is not merely for procreation; it is also for dominion. The "one flesh" relationship, while truly romantic and sexual, occurs inside the larger context of the first divine institution. That marriage is the chief means of dominion is seen in the New Testament. The man-woman distinction typifies the Christ-Church distinction (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7-8) in which the Church completes Christ in His calling.

Mankind cannot express God's image except as both "male and female" together (Gen. 1:27). This is because God has certain characteristics that are "feminine" in nature (e.g., Matt. 23:37). Moreover, the woman's role as "helper" in Genesis 2:18 is not meant to be a demeaning, secondary one. The term used for "helper" elsewhere is used of God Himself (Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7). (Contrary to contemporary propaganda that the Bible is "patriarchal", it reveals the equal value of the woman as no other document in the ancient Near East.)

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Undeniably, however, the Bible places emphasis upon the man as the one who receives his calling from God which then shapes his choice of wife. She is not only his needful helper; she is his "glory" (I Cor. 11:7-9). The man defines himself in terms of God and of his wife. Together in a division of labor man and wife separate from their own families to build a new one (Gen. 2:24). Only in a nuclear family, in contrast to an extended family, does a young man have to face full leadership responsibility directly under God.

Opposed to this biblical picture are the usual media male role models of the comical stumbling father-fool or the adventurous, unmarried gun-slinger, both of which emphasize male irresponsibility and immaturity.

3. The third divine institution is built upon the first and second. Marriage normally leads to dominion through a family. In the Bible it is the family, not the individual, that is the basic unit of society (property, for example, is titled under Mosaic Law to families). When God sent His Son, He sent Him not to a church, not to a state, not to an isolated existence; He sent Him into a family.

The family is the human's first school, first church, and first state. The family is the training ground. There man first learns of authority, love, and responsibility. In response to his parents, he discovers humility under authority--either voluntary or enforced(!). To support this family function, the Mosaic Law eliminated children (stoned them to death) who learned neither (Deut. 21:18-21). A successful society requires successful families.

Today, these God designed institutions of responsible labor, marriage, and family, have been replaced by social "convention", that is, whatever the common thinking is or whatever has been adopted by the majority, is taken as the norm. Where marriage is dishonored and where families are broken, society collapses. No amount of laws, programs, or "redefinitions" of marriage and family can save the day. This is the pagan mind denying ultimate responsibility and replacing it with individualism – "individual rights" trump responsible labor, marriage, and the family!

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WHAT IS NATURE?

By "nature" we include all of creation that is not man--rocks, water, plants, animals, angels, and stars. The first lesson taught to the first man was that nothing in nature fits his need for a personal relationship (Gen. 2:18-20). In his present mortal state man is temporarily lower than the angels and is confined in some way to the local part of nature which we now call planet earth (Psa. 8:3-8). It is with this local part of nature that we will devote most of our attention.

We begin with a look at the overall design of nature in distinction from the design of man. Then we will deal with man's relationship with nature through the exercise of his dominion. There are four very significant universal limitations on this dominion that doom all carnal dreams of rebellion against God.

Limitations on Man's Dominion

Design of Nature

Man's Limited Power over Nature

Man's Limited Rights over Nature

Man's Limited Knowledge of Nature

a. Mental limitation.

1. Reason
2. Experience

Design of Nature.

Whereas Adam could not find a speech-laden, personal relationship with any part of nature, he could and did receive revelation about God from nature. Natural (or general) revelation is spoken of everywhere in the Bible (e.g., Job 38-41; Psa. 19:1-6; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:18-20). The creation is said to "glorify" its Creator. But if nature doesn't personally speak to us, if it is "dumb", then how can we learn about God from it?

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How, without language, can information be transferred from nature to our minds? How does nature "glorify" God?

Nature contains patterns and forms that we recognize as products of a thinking, speaking, spirit-mind, similar to our own. It is precisely the meaning of these patterns and forms that modern paganism (in its evolutionary form) denies by ascribing them to chance.

To show the difference between merely saying a pattern is observed and saying the pattern carries meaningful information to our minds, imagine looking at a series of apparently random dots and dashes arranged in a sequence. As your eye looks along the sequence, you notice a pattern (. . . _ _ _ . . .).

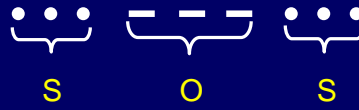
Patterns Can Carry Meaningful Information

• • • _ _ _ • • •

If you are knowledgeable of Morse Code, you immediately see the pattern as containing a message, "S.O.S.", the international sign for help.

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Patterns Can Carry Meaningful Information



"Save Our Ship"
"Save Our Souls"

International distress call

You and the originator of the pattern must share a common language: Morse Code.

If you are not knowledgeable of the Morse Code "language", you merely notice an interesting pattern but do not see any message in it. To "get the message" or for the pattern to be meaningful, you and the originator of the pattern must share a common language.

In much the same way nature is filled with forms and patterns noticed by all men everywhere. The Bible insists that such patterns actually are carrying meaningful messages about the Creator. They contain information about His character, that He plans and purposes. They "glorify Him" and "show His handiwork".

Simply because the design of nature does glorify God, the carnal mind must somehow falsify it. The information that natural designs convey about their Creator must be shut off. The easiest way to bury this information can be inferred from the Morse Code illustration above. By denying (or suppressing or forgetting) the Morse Code language rules, the "S-O-S" pattern loses all meaning. In like fashion, by suppressing the human spirit's sense of eternity (Eccl. 3:11) and the personal God of eternity, paganism shuts off reception of the information coming to it from nature (Rom. 1:21), and fabricates meaning for all the natural design it observes (Rom. 1:22).

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Man's Limited Power over Nature. Adam's dominion over nature was limited to the earth. Someday his dominion will extend over all nature into the very heavens through Christ, but not yet. Not only was Adam limited as to space, but also as to time. Adam was created mortal, that is, subject to possible death. Compared to the future resurrection body, his original body was mortally vulnerable; he could self-destruct. Here is the physical aspect of man's limited dominion.

Starting with that part of material nature closest to him, his own fleshly body created from the earth (I Cor. 15:42-49), he could work outward over all the earth. The first divine institution, responsible dominion (or labor), is to produce workmanship and projects that God will one day judge the value of. Only if man remains in communication with the Designer of nature, will such labor produce acceptable fruit.

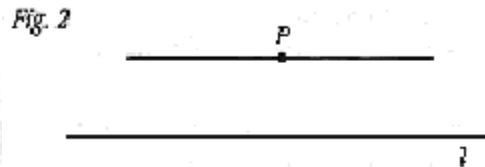
Man's Limited Rights over Nature. Man's dominion over nature is also limited morally. The Bible has a very powerful doctrine of ecology although pagan environmentalists regularly attack the Bible as a chief, if not the source of our present environmental problems. Clearly in Genesis 1:29-30; 2:15-17, 19 God determines what Adam "ought" to do with nature. These are morally-based environmental regulations.

Later in the progress of revelation God gives more such regulations involving limits on working animals (Exod. 20:10; 23:12), on planting the soil (Exod. 23:10-11), on damaging fruit-bearing trees in war (Deut. 20:19), and on killing and capturing animals (Deut. 22:6-7). The moral order is that the Creator is ultimate owner of nature, not man; man is merely an underlord and steward.

Man's Limited Knowledge of Nature. Besides the physical and moral limitations on man's dominion over nature, there is the widely ignored mental limitation. Although man as a spiritual knower recognizes some of the information God's Spirit put into the design of nature, man always must live with the Creator-creature distinction. God's Spirit is incomprehensible, and His thoughts toward us and nature are incomprehensible. Man's knowledge of nature, therefore, can never be complete because the ultimate wise plan behind every fact lies nowhere in man or nature itself; it lies with God. This mental limitation has two parts: reason and experience.

Biblical Framework Part 1

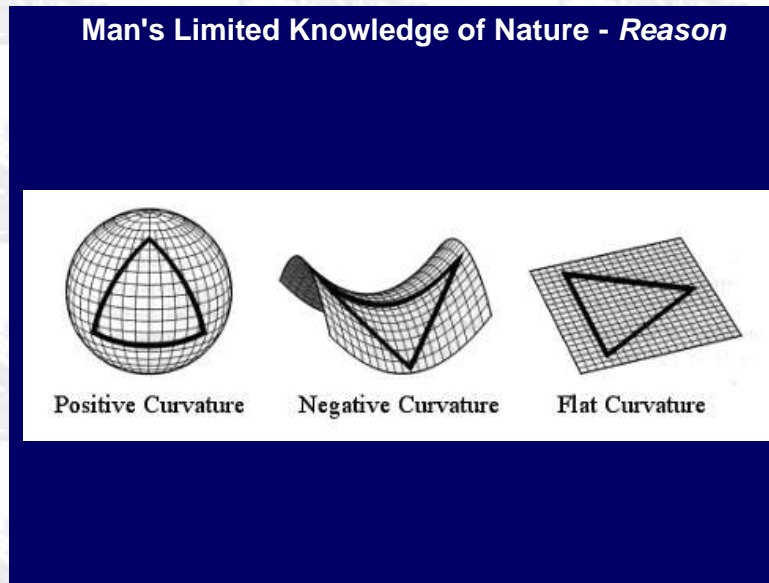
1. Reason. In our discussion of man's knowledge as a finite version of God's omniscience, we noted the limitations of man's logic, language, and thought. Let's look at one very important example. Until the 19th century, it was thought that man's thinking was so wonderful that he could intuitively establish principles that were self evident (axioms) and reason the way to truth about the world outside of his head. And it was very successful. Out of Euclid's geometry there were 10 axioms, and the fifth one said this: if I have a straight line, and I have a point not on that line, I can draw one and only one parallel line.



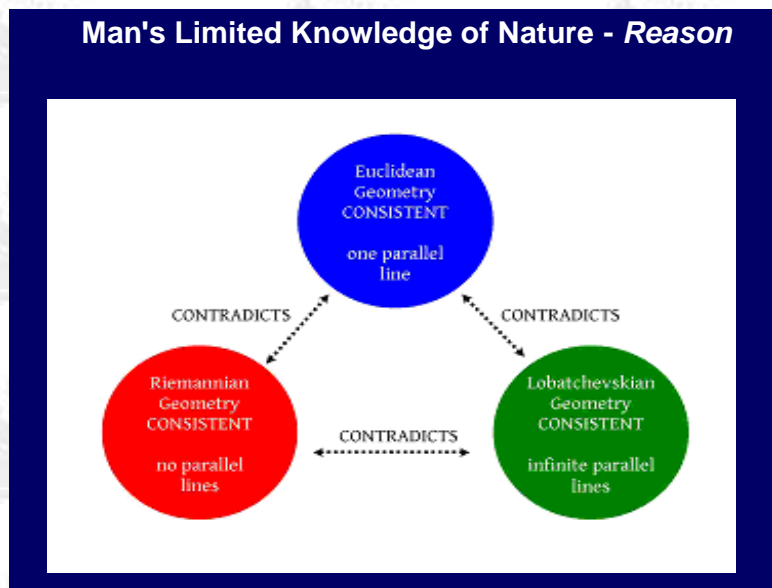
The problem came up when mathematicians began to look at this particular axiom and said “Uh-oh, something's wrong, this axiom is different than the other nine,” because all the other nine are self-evident, what a straight line is, a period, circles, that kind of stuff. It bothered mathematicians that that axiom was saying something that was a guess about what happens on the far left and the far right.

There were two schools of mathematicians in the 19th century that examined this axiom and found problems with it. This axiom will work in two dimensions, but not in three. It will not work on the surface of a sphere nor will it work on a convex surface.

Biblical Framework Part 1



By the time the mathematicians got through, there were two more geometries beside Euclid's; Spherical geometry and Convex geometry.



The problem was that these alternate geometries were all internally consistent, but they contradicted each other and by about 1900-1910 they began to ask, "Which geometry is the real one?" If reason is such a powerful tool, how come it invented three different contradictory geometries, all internally consistent? This was a shock.

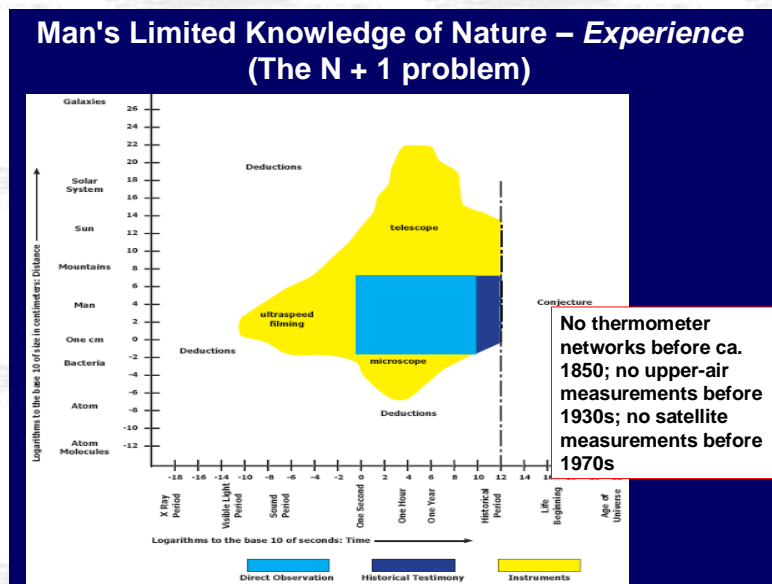
Biblical Framework Part 1

They discovered that human logic did not necessarily fit with the physical world.

Morris Kline, a professor of mathematics at New York University for almost 40 years notes the despair that resulted: "The appearance of non-Euclidean geometries ... led scientists to question whether man could ever hope to find a true scientific theory. ... Even more devastating to philosophy was the realization that man can no longer be sure of his ability to acquire truths." Yet you never hear this mentioned.

Such despair is a paganistic over-reaction to the limitations on reason. Paganism insists on an all-or-nothing agenda. If the carnal mind can't have God-like omniscience, it denies knowledge can exist at all. By way of contrast, the Bible-believing Christian rests in God's omniscience as perfectly rational, not his finite version, and so does not plunge into this sort of despair.

2. Experience. The other part of man's mental limitation is easier to appreciate. As the following diagram shows the N+1 problem.



Biblical Framework Part 1

Regardless of how much man extends his direct observation through instruments and historical observations of the past, his still has limited experience. He can extend his data-collection into space with telescopes and into the microworld with microscopic techniques. He can study very small intervals of time with ultraspeed filming, and, to extend his observation of the past, he must rely on historical records of other men.

The problem is that no matter how many pieces of data and experiences man has, he always faces the next unknown piece of information which could change all the information he has collected. Experience is always local in time and space. In both experience and reason, therefore, man's dominion over nature is mentally limited.

To exercise his dominion in a godly fashion, man must submit to the authority of God's directly-spoken Word (special revelation = the Bible). God told Adam how He made the world, what He named in it, and what Adam was to do with it. Because of His plan for man to exercise dominion, we can rest assured that our reason and experience, though limited, is sufficient for the task. Sufficient, that is, if we worshipfully and obediently go about the task. We express our obedience when we proceed intellectually within the biblical framework allowing His interpretation to control our interpretation of nature.

A Special Limitation in Constructing Histories of Nature.

Today, of course, a major attack on biblical faith comes from evolutionary cosmology. How do you construct a history? Look at the diagram of man's limited knowledge. Past events cannot be directly experienced. They can be known through direct observations of people who were there, or we can make conjectures (speculations) about the past. For example, how can man really know which geometry fits nature one billion miles away (universalizing space-wise)? Or how can man really know that radioactive decay constants never change (universalizing time-wise)? There is no direct method of verification! To build natural histories, therefore, the pagan mentality has to set forth carefully-chosen universals or constants such as "c", the speed of light. Unless something is constant there can be no knowledge or history whatsoever. The setting forth, however, by definition cannot be on the basis of experience; it has to be by faith.

Biblical Framework Part 1

Now the Bible-believing dominion-man doesn't have to root his knowledge in such hypothetical constants of nature. He locates his constants elsewhere, in the Creator's immutability and omniscience. For example, 5 minutes after God created Adam, how "old" would Adam have appeared to an observer who did not witness Adam's creation --20 years, 30 years? The "normal" physiological processes weren't constant in this case. They were radically interrupted!

The Bible-believing natural historian is in no hurry to universalize his local experience as the pagan is. When he attempts to reconstruct natural history, he remembers God's question to Job ("where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"--Job 38:4) and is humbled.

Next time, we'll look at the buried truth of the origin of evil.