

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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ROMANS 1 v 18 – 23

In the UK at least, this year (2009) has seen a great increase in attempts to undermine historic Christian beliefs in the existence of God, the accuracy and authority of Scripture, and the coherence of biblical doctrine. The main causes of these latest moves towards a post-Christian and all-embracing materialistic worldview have been this year's Darwinian anniversaries (200 years since his birth in February and 150 years since the publication of his book *On the Origin of Species* in November). Additionally, the British Humanist Association and Professor Dawkins are making ever greater efforts to show biblical Christianity as dangerous "non-critical thinking" which children especially should not be exposed to. As I write (August 2009) The Times newspaper has just led a scathing attack on general creationist and biblical teaching, occasioned by the paper's support for Dawkins' latest book on evolution. In an interview with The Times, Dawkins encouraged those church leaders who deny the literal truth of the early chapters of Genesis to redouble their efforts to re-educate members of their congregations who still believe in Adam and Eve. Of course, as a non-theologian, Dawkins is completely silent on the theological implications of the denial of Adam and Eve, with the subsequent undermining of the whole reason for the Gospel. After all, without original sin there is no need for the cross, the integrity of the biblical system of truth is shattered, and Christianity is reduced to a set of moral guidelines at best. But perhaps Dawkins does realise this, and that is his real purpose, in which case any Christian leader adopting his ideas is doing his job for him!

There is no more pointed description in scripture of this whole situation than in this passage in Romans. Here we read that God gets very angry when the plain evidence of His invisible (i.e., outside the visible realms of nature) power and nature are ignored and denied. The evidence is plain from creation itself, and in the denial of God and His glory such people are left glorifying creation rather than the Creator and are no better than fools when they do so. To me, on this basis, the whole idea of evolution from one species to another, ultimately from hydrogen gas to fully intelligent and self-conscious humans, entirely on its own without any design, intent, or higher influence, is the most ridiculous and implausible nonsense. Foolish thinking indeed! It is a pity that evolutionists won't accept a bit of "critical thinking" in regard to their own beliefs and theories. But, of course, any criticism of the whole evolutionary idea is anathema in the highest reaches of academia, education, and the media today.

The Christian creationist movement is now producing many excellent resources, but for the encouragement of ordinary Christians who are hanging on to their simple and biblical faith I suggest consideration of three important areas of doctrine.

1. The existence of the spiritual dimension. Hebrews 11 v 3

This key verse shows that God, who is spirit (John 4 v 24), is outside and beyond the whole physical universe. He is "transcendent". From Him and the spiritual realms He inhabits, the whole of created matter

emanates. These spiritual realms are of a different order altogether, for they are eternal, without beginning and without ending. Although it is hard for mankind to grasp the enormity of the spiritual, we have a link within each of us, distinguishing us from other created orders (Ecclesiastes 3 v 11). We call this our own immortal spirit. This means each human is less than complete if the needs of the spiritual are not met, for we are body, mind, and spirit, and we see the effects of that spiritual emptiness all around us today. The view of atheistic science that there is no separate spiritual part of our existence has led, in my view, to the tragic collapse of our societies (as Romans 1 warns in verses 24 – 32). Such thinkers will one day be called to account for the social and personal devastation their philosophy has caused.

The central importance of our belief in the spiritual dimension is that it shows us the true nature and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. For in Him we have the essential and the only true link between the eternal spiritual realms and the created material realms. Hebrews 11 v 3 shows that the physical creation came about by the command of God (God's Word). Genesis chapter 1 bears this out by relating how every part of the creation process came into existence when "God said". But John, writing his gospel later on in the first century to counter the growing denial of the deity of Jesus, opens by grandly declaring that Jesus is the Word - with God, as God - and that nothing that was made was made without Him (John 1 v 1 – 3). In other words, every part of the physical cosmos - space, matter, energy - came about by God speaking it into existence and Jesus is the personification of that Word. Paul makes the same point in Colossians 1 v 16 and 17. In Jewish understanding the words we speak are an integral part of who we are; we cannot separate our words from our personality, for our words illustrate our very nature. Jesus, as the Word, cannot be separated from the Father, and as the Word He has vocalised the very heart, mind and will of the Father, in creation as well as in revelation. He came out from the Father. Hebrews 1 v 2 – 3 puts this into beautiful language. Through Jesus, God is immanent, present in every atom, for in Him is life (John 1 v 4). This unique role of the Saviour, manhood and deity, linking the spiritual with the material, underlies the forcefulness of John 14 v 6. Thus, the really amazing part of this truth is that the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us (John 1 v 14), enabling us to behold His glory. What condescension; this is our God!

2. The intervention of God in history. 2 Peter 3 v 3 - 7

A constant theme throughout scripture is the intervention of God in His creation. From the detailed description in Genesis 1 of the way in which God brought about the whole of creation initially, to the ultimate future release of that same creation from its "bondage to decay" (Romans 8 v 21) and the renewal of the heavens and the earth (Revelation 21 v 1 – 5), we see a God who interacts with the physical cosmos. He frequently interrupts the laws of nature and time, and this is illustrated on many occasions throughout the Bible. Peter tells us that in the last days scoffers will come with a certain line of argument. In other words, this particular form of scoffing will be yet another indication that the age is drawing towards its close. Of course, there have always been scoffers, but these will deny that there is any indication of God's presence, or intervention. The word "coming" (parousia) denotes presence just as much as arrival. Everything can be explained by natural means, they will say. We do not need the existence of a God, as the laws of nature have been in place since the beginning of time and there is no evidence of any divine intervention. Such thinking is intrinsic to modern atheistic science and has been foundational to Darwinian theory and its development over the past 150 years. Interestingly, liberal Christian theology has also been busy trying to explain away biblical accounts of God's intervention for much the same period of time.

God's intervention has been crucial to the main points of Christian faith and practice. The Old Testament is full of examples, and the future of the Church is also totally dependent on this happening again and again. The Rapture, the physical return of the Lord Jesus and His millennial reign, can never take place if the present laws of nature remain uninterrupted. Of critical importance to biblical belief are two major interventions, the virgin birth (Isaiah 7 v 14) and the bodily resurrection of Jesus (Ephesians 1 v 19b – 21). But our existence as children of God, each one of us, is only possible through God's intervention in our lives, each personally. Our being born again and living as a new creation is totally against the laws of human nature, selfish as they are. Ephesians 2 v 4 – 10 and 2 Corinthians 5 v 17 – 18, and many other references show that we each have become the beneficiaries of a divine intervention; just think what you might be now if such an intervention had never taken place.

3. The sense of human accountability. Romans 3 v 19 and 14 v 12

One essential feature of human life is the sense of conscience, and it is difficult to imagine any really successful human society without it. The demands of conscience distinguish the human race from animals, and any breakdown in social and personal conscience is instinctively seen as a breakdown in society and personal character. That way leads to the scourge of corruption, and ultimately to national failure, and it doesn't need a Christian perspective to understand all this. However, conscience cannot be simply the product of fear or of social conditioning, for it is far too deeply ingrained for that. It can only result from a need to feel accountable - an essential ingredient of what we are as human beings. If humanity is designed to be accountable, then there must be a higher authority to which we are accountable. Thus, we find in almost every expression of human society in history the recognition of a higher power, a god, and the whole structure of each society is geared towards meeting the sense of accountability. This is the basis of all law and custom. However, attempts to make the society itself the highest ultimate authority result in collapse, as no human power, individual or collective, is itself above accountability.

Hand in hand with this sense of accountability goes the recognition of human responsibility. You cannot have one without the other. Again, responsibility is such an essential part of what we are as humans it does not need Christian apologetics to justify it. What the Bible does do, however, is explain how responsibility came about. Adam was asked by God to look after His creation, and Psalm 8 expresses the whole position beautifully and succinctly. The present worldwide concern about climate change and the environment, whatever opinion we may hold personally, illustrates mankind's inbuilt sense of responsibility.

Responsibility and accountability are two foundational facets of humanity that atheistic evolutionary teaching cannot explain. History has proved repeatedly that in godless societies the recognition of personal responsibility and sense of ultimate accountability to a higher authority is totally undermined, with tragic consequences. Praise God we have in scripture a full understanding of the One to whom we owe these inbuilt properties, and what He has done to help us with the inevitable sense of guilt and failure. Without this amazing gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ having been clearly revealed, we would all end up as less than human, just another species in the selfish struggle for survival. What a glorious inheritance we have in Christ!