

## Limitations of Nature to Lead Man to Ultimate Truth

- I. Preliminary thoughts.
- A. The created order is a data set that can be analyzed. The “stuff” of creation does not lie but conclusions about it and drawn from it are subject to limited power of investigation, faulty premises and biases, assumptions, inadequate sampling, etc.
  - B. The data of the creation is the same for both the unbeliever and the believer. The difference is in how the data is interpreted and processed.
  - C. If the created order is an equal witness to Scripture in finding ultimate truth (God), then what is the significance of Scripture?
  - D. Can a man with a functioning mind grounded in logic discover and concede ultimate truth (God) from the created order, or even from Scripture? Or is something more needed?
  - E. Can a regenerate man with a grasp of grammar and definitions of words be perfected from Scripture alone, or is Scripture inadequate to the task?
  - F. By what means has God determined to save believers: human wisdom or preaching?
  - G. Can man by logical analysis of available data alone be converted to the truth of the gospel?
  - H. Can regenerate man with a knowledge of Scripture be fully informed and formed in the image of Christ without preaching?
  - I. We ought not to glorify human wisdom nor human ignorance.
- II. To underscore his argument for hair length, Paul says, “Doth not nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?” (**1CO 11:14**).
- A. This reasoning is based upon the premise that the natural order of things is a weaker revelation that shames those who should be wise enough to know better than to erase distinctions between the sexes.
  - B. The brute creatures generally present clear differences in appearance and function between the sexes.
  - C. Paul's reasoning here is that the natural order of things contains a measure of instruction which should be given *qualified* consideration.
    - 1. Nature is under the bondage of corruption (**ROM 8:20-22**) and is therefore limited in its ability to instruct men as to what is right.
    - 2. This counters the faulty notion that some Christians affirm, to wit, that Nature is “...the 67th book of the Bible.”
    - 3. Nature is a broken, impure “book” overwritten with entropy/death but Scripture is unbroken, pure, lively, durable and only corrupted by man’s tinkering.  
**PRO 8:8; 30:5; JOH 10:35; ACT 7:38; PSA 119:89; MAT 24:35; 2CO 2:17.**
    - 4. The supreme standard by which right is determined is Scripture. **PSA 119:128.**
- III. Scripture speaks of things which men know naturally. **JUDE 1:10.**
- A. Those whose corrupt antics Jude condemns are “...as brute beasts...”
    - 1. They are defiling the flesh after the manner of the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah. **JUDE 1:7-8.**
    - 2. They are doing “...that which is *against nature*...” (**ROM 1:26-27**).
    - 3. This is why sodomy is such a repugnant sin: it violates the morality God has declared in the Scripture and also the witness of nature which predominantly demonstrates male-female sexuality.
  - B. Scripture speaks of the sin of being without *natural affection*. **ROM 1:31.**
    - 1. It is natural for men to have a desire for women, and vice-versa.
    - 2. It is natural for parents, particularly a mother, to tenderly care for offspring.

3. It is natural to have an interest in one's own health and life. **EPH 5:29.**
  4. It is natural to assume one has power over one's own body and therefore defend it.
- C. Mind that those things which men know naturally do not require the new birth or the light of God's word. Therefore,
1. the rejection of sodomy, etc. is not necessarily proof of regeneration or conversion.
  2. the pro-life cause is not necessarily proof of regeneration or conversion. The animal world has examples of pre-emergent protection of young.
- D. brute: Wanting in reason or understanding;....Of human beings: senseless, stupid; unintelligent, unreasoning, uninstructed; sensual.
1. The animals have not the capacity for rational or abstract thought; they do what they do by base instinct.
  2. The animals are not spiritual as man was made spiritual. **GEN 2:7; ECC 3:21.**
  3. The animals are not held morally accountable for their conduct.
  4. Is it any wonder that a God-rejecting world strives to equate men with animals?
- IV. Nature serves as a limited witness to men to which they are held accountable. **ROM 1:18-21.**
- A. The universe is a declaration of His glory and creative genius. **PSA 19:1-3.**
- B. The universe's existence can not be explained except by the recognition of the Laws of Thermodynamics being subordinate to the First Cause.
1. The universe did not spontaneously emerge from nothing.
  2. The universe is not eternal. The law of entropy denies this possibility.
  3. A Force greater than the universe must have brought it into existence.
  4. But even the ultimate explanation of the universe's existence depends on faith, not observation and reason of natural things. **HEB 11:3.**
- C. There is a profound order in the stars and their systems which He has named. **PSA 147:4; JOB 9:9.**
1. The heavenly lights are set for signs, seasons, days and years. **GEN 1:14.**
  2. They have distinct settings and courses (**JDG 5:20**) which demonstrate order and provide for navigation.
  3. They exert influences. **JOB 38:31.**
  4. A prophesied star was discerned by the Magi as heralding Christ's advent. **NUM 24:17-19 c/w MAT 2:2, 9.**
- D. The unique existence of life on earth, its dependence on the sun, and the careful balance of all things physical testifies of His special purpose for man.
- E. God corrected Job by pointing him to His genius in nature which Job could never duplicate or control. **JOB 38-41.**
- F. Nature provides all sinners with a profound proof of God's being, power, justice and the veracity of His written word: the fossil record which speaks of sudden, calamitous deposition and burial caused by a Great Flood. One has to be willingly ignorant to deny this record. **2PE 3:5-6.**
- G. There is no contradiction between the testimony of Scripture and the data set of the natural order.
1. Scripture declares the data set of the natural order to be corrupt and decaying, and the natural order is so.
  2. True science will accord with Scripture but not false science. **1TI 6:20.**
- H. Nature can not teach heaven nor heaven's spiritual truth. **2CO 4:18; 5:7; HEB 11:1.**
1. Observational reasoning obviously has limitations: it can only deal with phenomenon (a thing that appears or is perceived by any of the senses, or by the mind).

2. The things that are not seen (**2CO 4:18**) can only be known by special revelation from God Who is superior to the creation and has infinite knowledge not limited to the revealed order of things. **1CO 2:9-11.**
  3. The unobservable things of God revealed by the Spirit cannot be perceived by natural man who has not the Spirit, one who has not been regenerated spiritually. **1CO 2:14 c/w TIT 3:5.**
    - a. The carnal (not spiritual; material, temporal) mind is averse to God Who is Spirit. **ROM 8:7-9.**
    - b. (**JOH 3:6**) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
  4. Even the regenerate spiritual man is limited in his perception of spiritual things by a lack of repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. **2TI 2:25.**
    - a. Repentance is the first command of the gospel, even before faith. **MAR 1:15.**
    - b. Sin must be laid aside in favor of the sincere milk of the word. **JAM 1:21; 1PE 2:1-2.**
    - c. Genuine rational thought is an outgrowth of repentance: the mind being reconciled to God's sovereignty over human interests opens the door to sound thinking. **LUK 15:11-19; DAN 4:34-37.**
  5. The critical elements for ultimate truth are not from the natural order of things but are: spiritual birth from God, special revelation from God, repentance to the acknowledging of truth, faith to accept whatever God's word declares, and a humble, holy life which prevents one from being turned over to delusions. **2TH 2:10-12.**
  6. The way of holiness is such that "...the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (**ISA 35:8**).
    - a. A superior intellect is not needed, but rather a humble mind like Christ's. **PHIL 2:5-8.**
    - b. (**JAM 3:13**) Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.
- I. Therefore, phenomenon and intellect/reasoning alone cannot lead one to ultimate truth and may actually lead one to vain worship of an impersonal Force or to warped polytheistic idolatrous conclusions about deity. **ROM 1:22-23.**
1. "Life is the greatest mystery, and deity must therefore be life. All life depends on the sun. Therefore we worship the sun from which all blessings flow."
  2. "All observable life demonstrates a male and female principle. This principle must derive from male and female deities."
  3. "The sun is the manifestation of male deity which fertilizes mother earth with its light and heat."
  4. "Male-female intercourse flows through all, from the heavenly to the earthly."
  5. "This solar male-female principle goes through a repetitive cycle of birth, maturing and death (spring, summer, fall, winter), death being the last thing that revives the cycle of life back to spring."
  6. "The deity therefore is telling us that death is needed to invoke his blessing."
  7. "The highest form of observable life is man and there can be no better sacrifice therefore to please deity (and it is preferable to use an unsullied infant)."
  8. "We must honor the generative power of deity by sex and killing."
    - a. Pagan religions commonly featured both.
    - b. Mind how much this parallels a depraved culture today which affirms

- atheism as the highest expression of the human mind. There is not a huge difference between idolatry and atheism.
- c. The polytheistic idolater at least acknowledges a higher unseen power.
9. An alternative or adjunct to these previous points is amazement at the genius of the natural order which fosters a conclusion that human intellect is the supreme manifestation of deity and the “wisest” men are most god-like.
    - a. Of this inclination we must be cautious lest we exalt intellect or learning over Christ-likeness. **COL 2:6-9, 18.**
    - b. A little child of God by Scripture can be sufficiently wise. **2TI 3:15; LUK 2:46-47; 2KI 5:2-5; MAT 18:3-4.**
    - c. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God...” (**1CO 1:21**).
    - d. Athens was the citadel of human wisdom but also the citadel of superstitious idolatry (**ACT 17:16**). God called their wisdom *ignorance*. **ACT 17:30.**
    - e. Satan/Lucifer is “...full of wisdom...” (**EZE 28:12**) but not godly.
    - f. The things of greatest importance are hidden from the eyes of such wise ones. **MAT 11:25.**
  10. The Jews who had God’s oracles (**ROM 3:1-2**) displaced them by rabbinical wisdom and sophistry, making God’s word of none effect. **MAR 7:13.**
  11. The Greeks were enamored with the likes of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle: the great minds of reason. But Paul sets the cross and gospel over such. **1CO 1:17-25.**
  12. Catholicism was driven not by Scripture alone but by (among other things) *Scholasticism* (The doctrines of the Schoolmen; the predominant theological and philosophical teaching of the period A.D. 1000–1500, based upon the authority of the Christian Fathers and of Aristotle and his commentators.). Thomas Aquinas (*aka*, Doctor Angelicus) notably wedded Aristotelian logic to Christian faith.
    - a. Some of the best information on reason and logic may be found in the vast knowledge base of Catholic writers and teachers. But that system is largely built on a logical fallacy.
    - b. It does not hold that the truth of Scripture is the final authority but rather that the Church is an infallible institution of Christ which determines inspired truth through its leaders. The position may be summarized as follows:
      - (1) Christ established an infallible Church from which came the inspired Word.
      - (2) How did Christ establish this infallible Church? He did so through His Word.
      - (3) Why was this Word trustworthy to begin with? Because the infallible Church says so.
      - (4) This is *circular reasoning*, the logical fallacy of one assuming the truth of what he is trying to prove: his proof ends up being his assumption of the truth he is trying to prove.
  13. God’s people will suffer for lack of knowledge (**HOS 4:6; ISA 5:13**) not so much the lack of knowledge of temporal things but of Himself as revealed in Scripture. **2PE 3:15-18.**
  14. There are few things that perturb the intellectual elite more than to be caught in a logical fallacy by a simple, God-fearing man with good arguments. **JOH 9:30-34.**
  15. It is a sad thing to see a saint become enamored with intellect, wisdom, philosophy, etc. to such a degree that plain gospel truth is set aside in favor of the intelligence or

- wisdom of men.
- a. Paul's most prolific warnings against worldly wisdom are found in his letters to the Corinthians.
  - b. He was fitted by training to philosophize them better than Aristotle but he had seen the vanity of that approach and repented of it.  
**PHIL 3:7-8 c/w 1CO 2:1-5.**
  - c. He warned them about being corrupted from the *simplicity* (The state or quality of being simple in form, structure, etc.; absence of compositeness, complexity, or intricacy) *in Christ*. **2CO 11:3.**
16. Many have made shipwreck of their faith (or of others' faith) by the wisdom of men which masquerades as being superior to the wisdom of God revealed in Scripture. Consider:
- a. the "accommodation" theorist who vainly "bends and blends" Scripture to satisfy the intellectual peers whose Darwinist approval he craves.
  - b. the Christian psychologist who is enamored with the "self-esteem" theory which, in the absence of real scientific evidence, holds that the lack of self-denial is not the real barrier to abundant living.
  - c. seminaries and bible colleges which churn out highly-trained unbelievers who once thought they had God's word in hand.
  - d. "*When Christians unto Carnal Men give ear,  
Out of their Way they go, and pay for 't dear.  
For Master Worldly Wiseman can but shew  
A Saint the way to Bondage and to Wo.*"  
(John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 17)
17. Human wisdom, intellect, logic, etc. have their place and use but Scripture dare not be overruled by such. **ROM 3:4.**
- a. The lively oracles were Israel's chief advantage. **ROM 3:1-2; ACT 7:38.**
  - b. The Scriptures contained their wisdom and understanding. **DEU 4:6.**
  - c. Education's great goal should be to justify God's wisdom. **LUK 7:29, 35.**
  - d. Solomon's wisdom needed a great reset. **ECC 1:17-18; 12:12-13.**