

The Laws of Nature in the Natural Versus Spiritual Mind

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Introduction

Math is more than just formulas and equations... it's logic... it's rationality... it's using your mind to solve the biggest mysteries we know.

~ Numb3rs TV Series (CBS, 2005-2010, click to view video clip)

This quotation from the popular TV series Numb3rs is a reflection of the popular belief that there is something special about math. In particular, math is perceived as powerful in that it is used to “solve the biggest mysteries.” It is perceived as transcendent in that it is not merely formulas on paper, but “logic” and “rationality” itself. This is a radical claim, related to another radical claim made by the Apostle Paul two millennia ago, “For since the creation of the world, God’s invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made (Rom 1:20).” How have the invisible attributes of God been seen? This paper suggests that one way is through mathematics – its power and transcendence, as described by the Numb3rs quote. Furthermore, mathematics is the language used to describe the laws of nature. The laws of nature, or natural laws, are part of “what has been made,” and therefore also reveal God’s invisible attributes. So then, God’s invisible attributes, that is His divine nature, is said to be revealed through both mathematics and natural laws.

The title of this paper is gleaned from 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things....” Here we find two types of people, those who have put their faith in Christ and experienced regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5)—spiritual mind—and those who do not—natural mind. These two phrases and groups will be used throughout. I will attempt to show that (1) the divine nature is so impressed upon the world that the natural mind recognizes it, but (2) the spiritual mind obtains a deeper understanding, and (3) is even beckoned to become a partaker of it.

Before stating the thesis of the paper more formally, a few preliminaries need to be covered. A fundamental assumption of this paper is that natural law is a reflection of God’s nature. By the assumption I mean that the orderliness seen in the world by scientists and described by mathematical equations is not only due to the purposeful design of the Creator, but this design is itself a revelation of the nature of the Creator. “Creator” and “God” will be used synonymously throughout this paper. The terms “God’s nature,” or “divine nature” delineate the classical attributes of deity such as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, goodness, and so on (Erickson 1998, p. 291ff.). Direct biblical support for the premise comes from Romans 1:20, quoted above (cp. Moo, p.105). Psalm 19:1 suggests an indirect argument for this premise: “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” One of God’s attributes is that He is glorious. Psalm 19:1 says creation points to this glory.

Other attributes of God are revealed in creation as well: God is good (Ps 34:8), and what He made was good (Gen 1:31). God is a God of order (1 Cor 14:33), and He put order into the creation (Gen 1:14). God has a particular image, and He put His image into His creation (Gen 1:26-27). God is beautiful (Ps 27:4), and He has made everything beautiful (in its time, Ec 3:11). Other attributes could be added, but this suffices to demonstrate examples of the attributes of God affirmed as present in creation.

Some might object to the above assumption. They might argue that natural evil arises in the world as a result of the natural laws, which contradict the above claims about God's nature. This is a form of the problem of evil and has been well addressed by Christians over the centuries. The attempt to show the compatibility between God and the apparent (natural or moral) evil in the world is referred to as a theodicy. There are two major approaches to theodicy which have been advocated by Christians (see Peterson 1988 for an overview). The Augustinian theodicy argues that there is no actual substance of evil, but that it is a privation of good, resulting from the free will of humans and angels (see Geivett 1995 for a modern formulation). The Irenaean theodicy argues that God permits evil for the purpose of obtaining the greatest good (see Swinburne 1998 for a modern formulation).

This paper is based on a presentation made at the 2011 ACMS conference. The presentation was designed to be more of a contemplative experience than an intellectual acquisition. The primary tool in this regard was the use of quotations, both biblical and secular, many of which are retained. As such, the Scriptures cited in support of the thesis are intended to be understood as their plain meaning, i.e., where commentators generally agree. The Scripture version is usually NASB, except where more literal renderings of the text are inserted. To keep the paper compact there are no lengthy expositions of Scripture and supporting references to commentaries are supplied only when necessary. All quotes intend to support the following three premises of the main thesis, alluded to earlier:

- (1) The divine nature is so impressed upon the world that the natural mind both recognizes it, and seeks to understand and use it for gain.
- (2) The spiritual mind obtains a deeper understanding of the divine nature, namely its origin and identity.
- (3) The spiritual mind is even beckoned to become a partaker of the divine nature.

If my argument is successful, the implications for mathematicians, computer scientists, and other scientists, are profound. One implication is that contemporary science pretends to be neutral with respect to natural law. However, this is not possible. The reigning scientific paradigm of natural law – regarding its origin, nature, and relationship to humanity – bears significant relation to the knowledge status of spiritual truths in the culture. Contemporary science has come to assume the existence of natural laws while secularizing their origin and nature and thereby relegating spiritual truths to second class knowledge at best, and an oxymoron at worst. A second implication is that the Bible is not neutral with respect to natural law. The origin, nature, and relation of natural law to humanity can be known. A third implication is that the reductionistic paradigm of contemporary science has stripped the Creator from science. This often results in the Christian scientist unwittingly having a slice of his personal spiritual life severed – because he conforms to the imposed paradigm. In this paper, I seek to restore this severed part by linking (1) natural law in the created order to (2) its identity as Christ-Wisdom, and ultimately (3) union with Christ. This is the practical application of the three-fold thesis.

The paper is structured as follows: sections (1), (2), and (3) develop and support premises (1), (2), and (3) of the thesis. Section (4) summarizes the argument. Section (5) illustrates the three-fold thesis using the natural law of gravity. In section (6) I give my concluding thoughts. In the spirit of the original presentation, the reader is urged to read prayerfully. In none of the first three sections should anything be entirely new, yet it is hoped that these three waves, when taken together, will provide an invigorating splash of life to your perspective on the natural law of the LORD as it underlies the created order.

Let us begin premise #1 by considering quotations about the divine nature from thinkers throughout history.

1. The Natural Mind: Recognition, Understanding, Use

Thesis premise #1: The divine nature is so impressed upon the world that the natural mind both recognizes it, and seeks to understand and use it for gain.

*The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness,
which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree.
~Aristotle (384-322 B.C., Metaphysics)*

The ancient Greeks clearly recognized an order in the world, particularly through mathematics. Using this knowledge, they developed tools useful for mankind. This is exemplified in the work of Archimedes, who is attributed with developing the Archimedean screw, which dramatically reduced the cost of bringing up water. He also used his knowledge of mathematics to construct weapons of warfare (such as the ‘siege-engine-lift-and-dropper’) to defend his beloved Syracuse from the invading Romans.

*How can it be that mathematics, being after all a product of human thought which is independent of experience, is so admirably appropriate to the objects of reality?
~Einstein (1879-1955, Geometry and Experience)*

*There is indeed no justification for the analogy between natural variation [the bell curve] and instrumental error [error in measurements], unless we invoke a supernatural agency.
~Lancelot Hogben (1895-1975)*

In modern times, scientists such as Einstein (deist) and Hogben (atheist) recognize that reality and mathematics correspond so well that it begs the question “How can this be?”

Within metaphysics, there are two competing theories of Laws of Nature. On one account, the Regularity Theory, Laws of Nature are statements of the uniformities or regularities in the world; they are mere descriptions of the way the world is. On the other account, the Necessitarian Theory, Laws of Nature are the “principles” which govern the natural phenomena of the world. That is, the natural world “obeys” the Laws of Nature. This seemingly innocuous difference marks one of the most profound gulfs within contemporary philosophy, and has quite unexpected, and wide-ranging, implications.

Some of these implications involve accidental truths, false existentials, the correspondence theory of truth, and the concept of free will. Perhaps the most important implication of each theory is whether the universe is a cosmic coincidence or driven by specific, eternal laws of nature. Each side takes a different stance on each of these issues, and to adopt either theory is to give up one or more strong beliefs about the nature of the world.

~Norman Swartz (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 'Laws of Nature,' 2009)

Also, in modern times, our philosophers recognize that there are two dramatically different conceptions of natural law: a completely natural-mind conception where the laws are mere descriptions of the world, and an either natural or spiritual-mind conception where the laws reflect some form of order, possibly but not necessarily from God. Our secularized society has gone to great lengths to remain neutral on this issue, recognizing the natural laws and exploiting their power in our sciences, while at the same time ignoring the metaphysical implications.

Often those who understand the mathematics and concepts well enough to understand the essence of the physical laws also feel that they possess an inherent intellectual beauty. Many scientists state that they use intuition as a guide in developing hypotheses, since laws are a reflection of symmetries and there is a connection between beauty and symmetry.

~Wikipedia ('Laws of Nature,' 2/26/12)

Wikipedia's quote affirms the existence of natural laws, but fails to point the reader to the deeper philosophical implication. This is typical. If, as a scientific society, we educate our citizens in underlying mechanisms (e.g., gravity), then why not educate on the debate regarding the mechanism for the origin of natural laws?

In summary, from ancient to modern times, the natural mind has clearly recognized a beautiful and orderly correspondence between reality (natural laws) and mathematics (describing natural laws), which has been utilized in scientific endeavors to benefit mankind. This establishes thesis premise #1. Let us move to premise #2, the spiritual mind in the Old Testament. We will consider quotations from Job, Jeremiah, and Proverbs which answer key questions about the divine nature.

2. The Spiritual Mind (Old Testament): Deeper Understanding, Origin and Identity

Thesis Premise #2: The spiritual mind obtains a deeper understanding of the divine nature, namely its origin and identity.

*Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,
Or loose the cords of Orion?
Can you lead forth a constellation in its season,
And guide the Bear with her satellites?
Do you know the statutes of the heavens,
Or fix their rule over the earth?*

~Job 38:31-33

The Hebrew word for *statutes* (*chuqqah*) means “something prescribed, an enactment, statute” (Brown, et al, 1906, p. 349). It usually refers to special revelation, that is, commands given by God to man (Gen 26:5; Lev 20:22; Deut 6:2; 2 Sam 22:23; 1 Ki 2:3; Ps 119:16; Jer 44:10; Ezk 5:6). However, Job uses it to refer to general revelation, i.e., the lawful order observed in astronomical phenomena, which is one form of natural law. The sun, moon, and stars were created by God as signs for this purpose, which reveals their origin (Gen 1:14-19). (For a discussion of the concepts of general and special revelation, see Erickson 1998, p. 178ff.)

Jeremiah also uses the word *statutes* to refer to natural law, particularly in 31:35-36. In 5:24, Jeremiah uses *statutes* to refer to the God-given weeks of harvest. In 33:25-26, he steps closer to natural law in general,

Thus says the LORD, ‘If my covenant for day and night stand not, and the statutes of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and have mercy on them.’
~Jeremiah 33:25-26

In this passage, Jeremiah also uses the word *covenant*. While normally a binding agreement between two agents, whether God and man, or man and man, Jeremiah uses it of God and nature. We find here a profound expression of natural law in the mind of a biblical author.

In another Old Testament book, the author of Proverbs describes the very origin of natural law, commenting on the relationship between God and nature.

¹²*I, Wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And I find knowledge and discretion....*
²²*The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.*
²³*From everlasting I was established,
From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.*
²⁴*When there were no depths I was brought forth,
When there were no springs abounding with water.*
²⁵*Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills I was brought forth;*
²⁶*While He had not yet made the earth and the fields,
Nor the first dust of the world.*
²⁷*When He established the heavens, I was there,
When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,*
²⁸*When He made firm the skies above,
When the springs of the deep became fixed,*
²⁹*When He set for the sea its boundary,
So that the water should not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth;*
³⁰*Then I was beside Him, as a master workman;
And I was daily His delight,*
³¹*Rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in the world, His earth,*

And having my delight in the sons of men.

³²*Now therefore, O sons, listen to me,
For blessed are they who keep my ways.*

³³*Heed instruction and be wise,
And do not neglect it.*

³⁴*Blessed is the man who listens to me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at my doorposts*

³⁵*For he who finds me finds life,
And obtains favor from the LORD.*

~Proverbs 8:12, 22-35

This passage details the character of Lady Wisdom and her role in the creation of the world, which reveals both the origin and identity of the divine nature impressed upon the world. There are four straightforward points I would like to draw out of this text. First, Lady Wisdom bears a peculiar relation to the LORD. On the one hand, she was “possessed” by Him at the “beginning of His way (22).” On the other hand she was simultaneously “beside Him” in creating the world (30-31). The language used of her is both internal and external to the LORD. While the passage is poetic, it is consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity (see Murphy 1998, p. 280).

Second, she was pre-existent. That is, she existed prior to the creation of the world (23-29). While it is not mentioned whether “world” includes the angelic host, Lady Wisdom is presumably not one of the angelic hosts. She was “established” from “everlasting,” which is to say she had no beginning, because in the beginning she was there (23). She has been for all time. She was “brought forth,” but not created (24-25). Therefore, she represents a curious being, one who is described independently of the LORD, and involved in creation, yet herself uncreated.

Third, Lady Wisdom was involved in the creation of the world (30, cp. 24-29). In 30 she is described as a “master workman,” which connotes a craftsman or artisan (Murphy 1998, p. 48). This workmanship refers back to her role in creating the depths, springs, mountains, hills, earth, fields, dust, heavens, deep, skies, boundary of the sea, and sons of men – which is sufficiently comprehensive to connote the entire created order, alluding to Genesis 1-2. Critically, Lady Wisdom did not merely bring the world into being, but is poetically described as setting its parameters (27-29). Setting the boundaries of the sea, the foundations of the earth, and so on, goes beyond merely making the world. It implies specifying its boundary conditions, or parameters.

Fourth, Lady Wisdom is seen to be a source of life (35). Verse 35 is part of the conclusion of this lengthy climactic summons of Lady Wisdom to the reader set in contrast to the summons of the Adulteress in 7:6-23. (Their final contrast occurs in chapter 9.) Wisdom offers life (8:35) while the Adulteress takes life (7:23). The context indicates that the life referred to is primarily physical life on earth. Nevertheless, the identity and power of Lady Wisdom hint at a deeper dimension to the life offered...

In summary, the Old Testament contains the concept of natural law. Its concept is that the natural laws have their origin in God as part of the created order, as seen through the application of the word *statutes* to astronomical phenomena, the LORD making a covenant with nature, and the role of Wisdom/the LORD in specifying the world’s parameters. Furthermore,

the identity of the divine nature whose characteristics are impressed upon the created order is foreshadowed with Lady Wisdom. This establishes thesis premise #2. Let us continue now to the New Testament and explore premise #3, how the divine nature is unveiled in Christ. In so doing, we will discover not only the fuller picture, but even how this blessed nature can touch our personal life and work.

3. The Spiritual Mind (New Testament): Partaker

Thesis Premise #3: The spiritual mind is beckoned to become a partaker of the divine nature.

¹*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

²*He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.*

~John 1:1-4

In this section, I will attempt to show that not only does the New Testament affirm the rich Old Testament foundation of God's design of natural law in the created order, enjoyed by mankind as previously stated, but it goes much further. First, it makes explicit that the identity of the Creator who imprinted His divine nature upon the world is Christ. This teaching was foreshadowed in the Old Testament through Lady Wisdom. This will be argued in the first subsection directly from John 1:1-4, 3:16, 17:3, and 17:25-26. It will be independently supported in a subsection on Paul (Eph 3:9-19; Col 1:15-27) and another on the General Letters (Heb 1:1-3; 2 Pet 1:4).

Second, the New Testament goes further by showing the believer to become a partaker of the very nature of the God by which the world was created, that is Christ. Becoming a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) will be described as both a single event and an ongoing process. In the event of conversion, the believer's soul is mystically united with God in such a way that their identities remain distinct (contra pantheism), yet they become one, as typified in marital union (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31-32). In the process of sanctification (maturing in Christ), the believer's soul (mind, will emotions, character, and so forth) progressively takes on the communicable attributes of the divine nature (goodness, holiness, etc.), including the "mind of Christ," (1 Cor 2:16; cp. Rom 12:1-2), which is the spiritual mind. One result of this union of the believing scientist with Christ can be a more profound motivation for and inspiration in their work.

The preceding is a summary of the argument of this section for thesis premise #3. In it we explore a sacred, yet exciting, trail....

John: Eternal Life

John supports the premise that believers have a share in the divine nature by explicitly saying that Jesus was the agent through whom all things were created, and the source of the life of men.

In John 1:1 (see Table 1), The Word refers to an order independent of the world, existing prior to creation, and therefore divine. Indeed, The Word is directly identified with God Himself, and therefore is in full possession of the divine nature (Beasley-Murray 1999, p. 11).

John next identifies The Word as the source of the life of men. In what sense is He their source of life? John makes it explicit in the following verses:

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. (1:4)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (3:16)

And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. (17:3)

O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me; and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them. (17:25-26)

“Life,” as used by John, is not merely the state of a soul living forever in heaven. Rather, it is the entrance into a personal relationship with the Creator (17:3). The crux, though, is that the relationship is not merely external, as between two beings, separate from one another and communicating with one another through such means as speaking and body language. Rather, the relationship culminates in the internal relation where the Creator Himself comes to be “in them (17:26).” That is, God’s Spirit enters the spirit of man in a way such that a union between the two occurs. These two relations, internal and external, will be indicated throughout this section and explained in section (4). The infusion of the life of God into the spirit of man brings eternal life, which was lost to mankind in the garden (Gen 3:3, 6-7; cp. Rom 5:12).

| Proverbs 8 | John 1 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 22. <u>The LORD possessed me at the beginning</u> of His way, Before His works of old. | 1. <u>In the beginning was the Word,</u> and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. |
| 23. From everlasting I was established, <u>From the beginning,</u> from the earliest times of the earth.... | 2. <u>He was in the beginning</u> with God. |
| 30. Then I was beside Him, <u>as a master workman</u> ; And I was daily <i>His</i> delight, Rejoicing always before Him... | 3. <u>All things came into being through Him,</u> and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. |
| 35. For <u>he who finds me finds life</u> And obtains favor from the LORD. | 4. <u>In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.</u> |

Table 1: Comparison of Lady Wisdom of Proverbs 8 with the Word of John 1. The four consecutive parallels reveal an association between the two characters that goes beyond accident. The two are the same.

This teaching of John is grounded in the Old Testament. In Table 1, Lady Wisdom of Proverbs 8 is set in parallel with The Word of John 1. There are four specific, consecutive points of strong comparison, one point per row. Taken together, this implies that John, who is writing of Jesus, was aware of the parallel. There are four features found in parallel. First, Lady Wisdom and The Word bear the internal and external relation to God. The Word was simultaneously with God, and God. Second, Lady Wisdom and The Word were pre-existent. In their existing prior to creation, they must therefore be either God (John 1:2, cp. 1:18), or an aspect of God (Prov 8:10). Third, Lady Wisdom and The Word were involved in creation, which was a unique event accomplished by only one being, namely God. Fourth, Lady Wisdom and The Word are the source of life for men. The identity of the divine nature which created the world is therefore more fully revealed – it is Christ, the second person of the Trinity. As an aside, it is striking to note this image of Christ in the Old Testament is female.

The primary kind of life Proverbs 8 was referring to is physical life on earth, whereas John was referring to spiritual life. This provides a strong example of a New Testament affirmation-and-amplification of an Old Testament concept. Taken together, the four parallels provide a type / ante-type (Lady Wisdom / Christ) exemplifying God’s progressive revelation in support of the thesis premise #3.

The New Testament later supports both the identification of Christ with Wisdom, and the internal relation to God. In 1 Corinthians 1:24 Paul writes, “To those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the ... wisdom of God.” A little farther he adds, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God (1 Cor 1:30).” This is the external relation to Christ. In the same passage, he then says, “[W]e have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16),” which is the internal relation to Christ. While I am arguing that John and Paul are relating Christ with Wisdom, I am not arguing for a precise definition of the relationship. My argument does not require a tightly defined relation, only that both an external and internal relation are referred to in the Bible. See Schwab (2009, p. 519) who discusses this relationship and rightly warns not to conclude Christ and Wisdom are identical.

Paul: Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.... The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

~Colossians 1:15-17, 26-27

In Colossians 1:15-17, Christ is called “the first-born of all creation,” who “is before all things.” In so being, He is “the image (*eikon*) of the invisible God”, and “by Him all things were created.” The implication is that Jesus, as the image of God, created the world according to God. O’Brien writes, “The very nature and character of God have been perfectly revealed in [Christ]; in him the invisible has become visible (1982, p. 43).” The person of Jesus Christ, dwelling with man is the external relation (See also John 1:18; 2 Cor 4:4; and Heb 1:1-3.)

The second part of John's message in the previous subsection regards the internal relation. O'Brien continues, "*eikon* is employed by Paul on a number of occasions not only with reference to Christ as the image of God (here and 2 Cor 4:4), but also regarding the corollary of the increasing transformation of the people of Christ into that same image by the power of the indwelling Spirit (2 Cor 3:18; cf. Col 3:10; Eph 4:24) (1982, p. 43)." In other words, mankind in Adam who was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), sinned and marred this image (Rom 5:12-14), which is now being restored through the sinless Christ-as-the-image-of-God (Rom 5:15-17; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10), who is our head (Eph 4:11-16, 23-24). Paul proceeds, in 1:26-27, to say that the manifestation of God's long-hidden mystery is "Christ in you," the internal relation to God.

... to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; ...that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.
~Ephesians 3:9-10,16-17,19

In Ephesians 3, Paul again affirms the proposition at hand, namely that the Creator expressed Himself in creation, the fullness of which will only be realized by dwelling *in* the believer through a profound internal relation. As in Colossians, this concept is referred to as the "bring[ing] to light" of a mystery. The revelation of this mystery is an extension of the Old Testament revelation and therefore an affirmation of the third premise of this paper (O'Brien 1982, p. 84).

Note that the more common language for the post-ascension relationship between God and the believer is of "the Spirit" (third person of the Trinity) *in* the believer in some sense. Some uses are, "baptize you in the Spirit" in the Gospels (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 24:49; Jn 20:22), "filled with the Spirit" in Acts (2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52) and "walk-by/live-with the Spirit" in Paul (Rom 8:9-17; Gal 5:16-26). I have not emphasized these passages more strongly because they tend to be familiar and are often interpreted in an external way. To be explicit, the external interpretation would be to 'walk by the Spirit who is with me.' The internal interpretation would be to 'walk by the power of the Spirit living within me.' There are many such passages. The interpretation leans different ways, depending upon the passage. Indeed, this has been the subject of an entire book. See *God's Empowering Presence* (Fee 2009) which exhaustively treats all New Testament data and concludes Paul's primary use is the internal relation.

General Letters: Partakers of the Divine Nature

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.
~Hebrews 1:1-3

Hebrews 1:1-3 makes explicit the fact that God revealed Himself progressively, i.e., not all at once. "Long ago" God spoke through messengers, "in these last days," God spoke through

the Son (1:1). This concept is found elsewhere in the New Testament. The gospels describe the forerunner John the Baptist followed by Jesus' words, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand (Mark 1:1-4, 14-15)." Paul writes of the unveiling of God's mystery, "with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ (Eph 1:10)." This shows that the New Testament teaching is an extension of the Old Testament, affirming the progressive nature of the three premises of this paper.

The second point I would like to make from Hebrews 1:1-3 is that the author of Hebrews here affirms the first part of what John and Paul affirmed in the previous two sections, as taught in the Old Testament. That is, Christ, as the representation of God, created the world. Concomitantly, the language used, "[Christ] is the radiance of His glory" and "the exact representation of His nature" shows that Christ is not of some other kind than God, but that He is, in some sense, the very expression of God Himself. Thus, again, Christ is seen to be related to God both internally and externally.

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature ...
~2 Peter 1:4

The word *partakers* is the plural of the Greek *koinonos*, which is related to the commonly known word *koinonia*, often translated "fellowship." *Koinonos* means 'one who takes part in "something" with someone (Bauer, 1979, p. 439).' A look at every use in the NT helps convey the breadth of its usage. The "somethings" taken part of are: "shedding the blood of the prophets" (Mt 23:30), "the fishing business" (Lk 5:10), "the altar" (1 Cor 10:18), "demons" (1 Cor 10:20), "suffering" (2 Cor 1:7), "the work of the ministry" (2 Cor 8:23), "everything" (absolute sense, "partner," Phm 1:17), "persecution" (Heb 10:33), "the glory that is to be revealed" (1 Pet 5:1), and "the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4).

The context of 2 Peter 1:4 is profound. He writes of intimate knowledge of God and Jesus, divine power being granted supplying life and godliness, thereby escaping the corruption of the world. In this, believers are said to share in the *divine nature*. The implication is that believers receive something of the *divine nature*, with God and Jesus and one another, in a strong enough sense that it supplies what is necessary for spiritual life and character transformation, but not in the sense of a "pantheistic absorption into God (Bauckham, 1983, p. 180)."

The above three subsections establish thesis premise #3. The identity of the Creator who imprinted His divine nature upon the world is Christ. Believers have the potential to enter the fulfillment of the mystery of God's plan to become one with Him. This is seen through the relationship of eternal life (John 17:3, 26), through "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27), and by becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). Let us now attempt to summarize the argument.

4. Summary

The argument of this paper may be summarized as follows. In section (1) we argued that all people, natural and spiritual mind alike, recognize the divine nature in the world. One major manifestation of this is the beautiful correspondence of mathematical formulas to the laws of nature. A great part of science consists of employing these natural laws in the service of

mankind. In section (2) we argued that mere recognition and use of natural laws was incomplete. In the Old Testament the origin of natural law is revealed to be an intentional act of God. Furthermore, the identity of this Creator God is somewhat mysteriously revealed to be both the LORD, the one true God of the Bible, but also that He worked in conjunction with Wisdom. One implication of this revelation is that it provides a theological and philosophical answer to the question of origins which contradicts, at least on the surface, the contemporary scientific explanation of the origins. In section (3) we argued that the mysterious Wisdom who played a role in creating the world and its natural laws is the person of Jesus Christ. The resolution to how both the LORD and the Christ could co-create the world is found in the classical doctrine of the Trinity. But it gets deeper. The ultimate manifestation of the plan of the triune God is that He wants to be united with mankind in a divine union. This union consists of both an external and internal relation. The divine nature which created the world is to be in man and this participation in the divine nature holds keys of untapped power for the contemporary mathematician and scientist.

The argument of sections (1), (2), and (3) included mention of the Trinity and the “external and internal” relations of man to God. In the following two subsections I would like to show how the three-fold thesis can be summarized from the perspective of these two concepts.

Three-fold Thesis Summarized Through the Trinity

The thesis of this paper expresses a Trinitarian view of the progressive revelation of God in history. It is in accord with the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (Nicene Creed A.D. 325). First, the Father’s nature was revealed through creation (i.e. natural law), although this could be expanded (for example, through other aspects of creation such as mankind, or beauty). Second, in the fullness of time, the Son was revealed in the incarnation. Third, the Spirit is given to the one who believes and repents. This three-premise thesis was argued for primarily through quotations in support of each premise in sections (1), (2), and (3) of the paper, respectively.

Let us focus on the language of “nature” or “divine nature.” There are three relevant passages which the NASB translates this way. Each uses a different word or words, which are rare in the NT, to make their point. In all cases the meaning is sufficiently clear, since the words are sufficiently illuminated in extra-biblical literature. For the record they are: Romans 1:20, “his eternal power and divine nature” (theises); Hebrews 1:3, “the exact representation of His nature” (upostaseos); and 2 Peter 1:4, “you have become sharers of the divine nature” (theias phuseos). Romans 1:20 directly states that throughout history, the “divine nature” has been able to be apprehended by mankind on the basis of creation. Hebrews 1:3 says that at a certain point in history, Christ was revealed as the expression of God’s “nature (being)” to mankind. 2 Peter 1:4 says that believers themselves gain a share of the “divine nature.” These three verses in canonical order reveal the progressive revelation of God, in affirmation of the three components of this paper’s thesis:

- (1) Romans 1:20, The revelation of God is generally expressed through creation
- (2) Hebrews 1:3, The revelation of God is specially expressed through Christ
- (3) 2 Peter 1:4, The revelation of God is specially received by believers through the Spirit

The arguments made in support of the thesis are summarized in Table 2. The three premises are the three rows after the heading. The second column contains the main quotations adduced in support of the three premises within each section. The third column cites the quotations from the independent argument for the thesis from the “divine nature” concept. The fourth column cites the quotations from the independent argument for the thesis from the “image

of God” concept. Lastly, the fifth column states the name of the person of the Trinity corresponding to each premise.

| | Section Quotes | Divine Nature | Image of God | Trinity Relation |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | <i>Natural</i> Numb3rs, Aristotle, Swartz, Wikipedia, Einstein, Hogben | <i>Rom 1:20</i> “[God’s] divine nature [has] been clearly seen through what has been made” | <i>Rom 1:20</i> “God’s invisible attributes ... have been clearly seen through what has been made.” | <i>Father</i> |
| 2 | <i>Old Testament</i> Job 38:31-33; Jer 31:35-36, 33:25-26; Prov 8:22-35 | <i>Heb 1:3</i> “[Christ is] the exact representation of His nature” | <i>Col 1:15</i> “He is the image of the invisible God” | <i>Son</i> |
| 3 | <i>New Testament</i> John 1:1-4, 17:25-26; Col 1:15-17, 26-27; Eph 3:9-10, 16-17, 19; Heb 1:1-3; 2 Pet 1:4 | <i>2 Pet 1:4</i> “You have become partakers of the divine nature” | <i>2 Cor 3:18</i> “[W]e all...are being transformed into the ... image [of God]” | <i>Spirit</i> |

Table 2: Summary of the arguments of the paper for the three premises (by row). Each column summarizes the three stages of a particular line of reasoning. The final column shows the relationship between each stage and the corresponding person of the Trinity.

I admit that some liberty was taken in aligning the three premises of the paper to the three sections of the paper and the three persons of the Trinity. You may wonder whether the “identity” of the divine nature is sufficiently revealed in the Old Testament, or whether it would have been better to adjust the second section or premise to fit better. The motivation was to relate the different dimensions of argument in a simple and memorable way, as summarized in Table 2. The argument for premise two stands, whether it is completed in the section (2) as a type or in section (3) in the incarnation.

Three-fold Thesis Summarized Through the Internal Relation

At several places in this paper I have referred to the internal and external relationship of Christ to God, namely Lady Wisdom of Proverbs 8, The Word of John 1, and Christ in Colossians 1, Ephesians 3, and Hebrews 1. Following the above explanations, it is now appropriate to elaborate. In an expression of Wisdom (Prov 8), God created the world by His Word (John 1). This is premise one. Through the mystery of the incarnation, God manifested Himself as a man. The invisible divine nature was made visible. This is premise two. The first two premises constitute the external relation, which is God revealing Himself to man, separate from man. Then, through the mystery of the gospel, God makes available what in spiritual theology is referred to as union with God. While I have here attempted to sketch a biblical basis for union with God, it goes beyond the scope of this paper to explain the details. For a classical and sophisticated elaboration of the concept, see the passages in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* cited in the glossary entry “Union” (1991, pp. 776-777). For a practical discussion of the concept see the French mystic, Jeanne Guyon (c. 1680, pp. 125-138). The intimacy and profundity of this dimension of the gospel has been largely overlooked in much contemporary

Christianity (see Edwards 2005 for a discussion). It is my hope that, by showing the link between the divine nature in (1) natural law in the created order, (2) through Christ, (3) to union with Christ that my fellow mathematicians and scientists will be inspired to boldly press further both in their technical work and in their experience with God.

There is no technical term which all of the New Testament authors use to convey the concept of the internal relation. As such, it is a concept referred to in various ways. This is consistent with the thesis and manner of argument of this paper. If there were such a single expression, then the discussion would focus exclusively around those particular texts, and would be easier to narrow them down and expound. Since there is no such expression, an argument on the level of the concept must be made, drawing on all relevant passages, irrespective of the language.

5. Example

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the three-fold thesis with the example of the natural law of gravity. Each premise of the thesis is illustrated with a quotation.

Newton's famous equation describing the force of gravitational attraction between two bodies is

$$F = G \frac{m_1 m_2}{d^2}$$

where G is the gravitational constant, m_1 and m_2 are the masses of the two bodies, and d is the distance between the two bodies. In itself, this equation gives the force exerted on a body by another body and the precise functional relationships between the two.

Thesis premise #1. To the natural mind, this is used to explain phenomena in the world (e.g. the rotation of the moon about the earth, the ocean tides, and the apple falling on Newton's head). Such are, in turn, used to invent devices for the benefit of mankind (e.g. the rocket thrust and fuel quantity needed to launch a satellite). The natural mind may see the convergence of the simplicity of the equation and the expansiveness of its applicability, but its eyes remain on the natural implications. Its questions are about the mathematical or physical aspects and it does not trace the law to the Creator. The following quote illustrates this point.

Today scientists describe the universe in terms of two basic partial theories—the general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. They are the great intellectual achievements of the first half of this century. The general theory of relativity describes the force of gravity and the large-scale structure of the universe, that is, the structure on scales from only a few miles to as large a million million million million (1 with twenty-four zeros after it) miles, the size of the observable universe.

~Stephen Hawking (1988, pp. 11-12)

Thesis premise #2. To the spiritual mind, further insight is gained. Where does gravity come from? It is created, not the result of a purposeless process. This allows greater understanding. Why gravity? God is a God of order. Gravity reveals a profound order in the universe. It is part of the system of the Grand Engineer. A universe without any useful sort of

gravity could exist, perhaps resembling space with objects projecting around. Another possibility would be a random gravitational ‘constant’ (G), such that objects on planets would sometimes float and sometimes be crushed. The spiritual mind tends to see the convergence of the simplicity of the equation and the expansiveness of its applicability and gains a sense of awe of the creator, recognizing His divine nature. The following quote illustrates this point.

It is inconceivable, that inanimate brute matter should, without the mediation of something else, which is not material, operate upon and affect other matter without mutual contact... That gravity should be innate, inherent, and essential to matter, so that one body may act upon another at a distance, through a vacuum, without the mediation of anything else, by and through which their action and force may be conveyed from one to another, is to me so great an absurdity, that I believe no man who has in philosophical matters a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall into it. Gravity must be caused by an agent....

~Sir Isaac Newton (1693, pp. 212-213)

Thesis premise #3. The partaker of the divine nature has a further dimension added to their thought and understanding of gravity. They may be moved to worship, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands (Psalm 19:1).” They may have spiritual vision granted whereby they can begin to ‘read’ the language of God, inscribed in nature, using the symbols of mathematics. See the typological writings of Jonathan Edwards (1744, p. 150-151) in this regard.

79. The whole material universe is preserved by gravity, or attraction, or the mutual tendency of all bodies to each other. One part of the universe is hereby made beneficial to another. The beauty, harmony and order, regular progress, life and motion, and in short, all the well-being of the whole frame, depends on it. This is a type of love or charity in the spiritual world.

~Jonathan Edwards (1744, p. 81)

They may have a phenomenological experience of God in which it is natural for them to use the laws of nature in attempts to describe spiritual principles derived from their ineffable experience.

The center of anything always exerts a very powerful drawing force. The fact is even more true in the spiritual realm. On the one hand, there is a drawing force in the center of your being; it is powerful and irresistible. And on the other hand, there is also a very strong tendency in every man to be reunited to his center. The center is not only drawing the object away from the surface, but the object itself tends toward its center! As you become more perfected in Christ, this tendency to be drawn within to the Lord becomes stronger and more active.

~Jean Guyon (c. 1680, p. 55-56)

The above items are no longer reasonings of the mind, but they are motions of the heart: worship, the perception of the spiritual signification of physical realities, and the experience of God Himself. In no way does this exhaust the possibilities! These examples are provided merely to illustrate some of the dimensions of what the New Testament experience of “partaking

of the divine nature” could look like. As each person is different, so will their experience of God be. As God is infinite, so will His revelation of Himself be.

A similar approach could be taken with the innumerable other natural laws which have been discovered over the years and catalogued in our modern science textbooks. The purpose here has been merely to offer the reader an example of one famous natural law and try to distinguish how the three different viewpoints might see it. The discussion was meant to be illustrative, rather than prescriptive.

6. Concluding Thoughts

Contemporary science, in many ways, prides itself on being neutral with respect to the deeper philosophical issues underlying natural law, such as its origin, nature, and relationship to humanity. However, in practice this presumed neutrality is not neutral at all. A corporate effect is that science is viewed as a realm of knowledge independent of God, and the knowledge status of spiritual truths is weakened (Willard 2009). A personal effect is that a living fountain of motivation for, inspiration in, and understanding of science remains separated from the one who keeps from connecting God to the world of scientific inquiry. Dangerously, the general public and even the church have picked up this supposed neutrality regarding science.

In this paper I have attempted to expose the aforementioned separation and point the reader to a more biblical path. The Bible is not neutral to natural law. Rather, the explanation of its origin in creation and its nature of law-like order flowing from the nature of God for the benefit of mankind provides an intellectually satisfying and inspiring platform from which to do science. Indeed, this is the kind of womb from which modern science was birthed (Percy and Thaxton 1994). This explanation is available to believing and unbelieving scientist alike insofar as it is true and science is the pursuit of the truth about the natural world (Rom 1:20). While this explanation is available to unbelievers, in practice today the spiritual implications often drive many to cut it off and remain ‘neutral’ (Rom 1:21-23). Let this serve as a warning to those of us who believe: Do we see the connection between the role of the Creator and our scientific discipline (whether mathematics or computer science or otherwise)? Is the connection clear? Is there room for us to grow in it? Does it inform our work? What insights do we gain that are not found from the ‘neutral’ view? Does the connection inspire us? Does it motivate us? Does it cause us to worship God more?

In much popular preaching today the gospel is reduced to a formula which, if followed, will lead merely to forgiveness of sins and entrance into heaven in the afterlife. The transformation of character and life of spiritual power described in the New Testament are relegated to another era. However, as shown in this paper, the deeper dimension of the gospel is profoundly intimate knowledge of the Creator of the universe whom we love to study with science. This does not diminish the forgiveness of sins and entrance into heaven, but it impregnates life with meaning now, as the One-Who-Revealed-Himself-in-Nature would have us discover in our science – and practice in our lives.

The central point of application for me is regarding what I have here termed the external and internal relations to God. To move from one to the other is to straddle the profound mystery of the gospel, and I have attempted to articulate it in such a way as to pique the curiosity of the scientist and whet the appetite of the follower of Christ. As scientists we are keenly aware of the fingerprints of God whether it be in the mathematics or the physics, etc. I have then tried to

emphasize the closeness of Christ, whom we know as Christians, to creation. But in linking Christ with creation, we see Him nearer to our work. But not only nearer our work, but even becoming a part of our work to the extent that we realize “the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16),” or “become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4),” and so on. I pray you are now better equipped and inspired to pull the thread of God’s divine nature from creation to the historical Christ through to your current Christian experience—and that the LORD unites them freshly in your heart.

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