

Redeemed to make Jesus Visible

Holy Trinity, 26 April 2019
- prepared by Rev Gary Clover

1. The Commission of Christ

Today is the 2nd Sunday of Easter, known as “Low Sunday”, during which Jesus, first of all, showed himself and his wounds, to his disciples, locked in the Upper Room, and declared to them his commission to take their gospel to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit which he breathed on them., and a week later Jesus appeared to Thomas. Like the disciples, we, too, in our day, are called to take the Gospel to an unbelieving world.

On the evening of the first Resurrection Day, Jesus appeared to his disciples, huddled, fearfully, in the Upper Room, and said to them: (William Barclay transl.) *“Peace be to you. Even as the Father sent me, so I send you.”* Then, *“he breathed on them and said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you remit the sins of any, they are remitted; if you retain them, they are retained.’”*

Note: *“Peace be to you”* means far more than “May you be saved from trouble”, but, *“May God give you every good thing.”*

2. Thomas and belief

Thomas, the Twin (Didymus), on the first day of the Resurrection had declared to the disciples, upon them declaring that they had seen the Risen Christ, *“Unless I see the print of the nail in his hands, and put my finger in the print of the nails, and unless I put my hands into his side, I will not believe.”*

A week later on the Second Sunday of Easter Thomas joined the disciples in the Upper Room. When Jesus appeared in their midst, he invited Thomas to do exactly as he had earlier declared. But when he saw Jesus showing him his wounds, Thomas did not need to touch them. Instead, he fell on his knees and declared, *“My Lord and my God.”*

Interestingly, the other night on Daystar TV, Dr Mark Chironna, an American Christian psychologist talked about this very passage. He reminded his audience that Thomas was a “realist”, the only disciple, who, when Jesus earlier explained to them that he was about to die, believed Jesus at his word. (John 11:16). And in John 14:15, after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, and at the Last Supper talked to the disciples about going to his Father’s realm to prepare a place/way for them. To this, Thomas stated, *“We don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?”* To which, Jesus declared to them, *“I am the way, the truth and the life.”*

Chironna: Thomas, known as “Didymus”, was always called “the twin”, so he lived under the shadow of his twin. Lacking a rounded conception of his identity, though a “realist”, Thomas needed much re-assurance. And Jesus responded to this need of Thomas, inviting him not just to view his risen body, but to touch his wounds. But having seen, Thomas did not need to touch Jesus. Seeing, Thomas believed!

As a twin, myself, I have much sympathy toward Thomas. And having been schooled in the world view of today, that of materialist positivism, I have also needed during my walk of faith, much re-assurance. I agree that doubt is often presented as being the opposite of faith. But, in my experience, often my doubts have been the way my faith has grown, as I have explored, re-assessed, and re-evaluated different meanings and understanding for myself, and come to my own conclusions.

Now, I want to encourage you here, our world, today, throws many reasons at us to not to have faith. It is to be expected that, at times, we all will have times of doubt, as a result. To have honest doubts is not necessarily a bad thing, or unhealthy. On the contrary, our questions and doubts can be pathways to renewed faith and revised hopes. We need to be continually learning about reasons to have faith. For our faith to grow, often it needs revising according to new understandings and new circumstances.

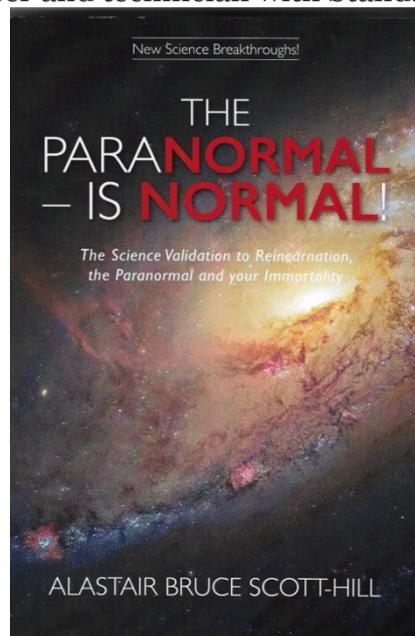
And so it has long been for me. For example, my faith has struggled over how Christian faith and scientific discoveries can be reconciled. A particular problem for me has been about how I might reconcile Genesis chapter 1 and Darwinian evolution. I am an academically trained historian. University has taught me to not lightly put aside objectively researched and laboratory-repeated scientific research. I cannot believe that Genesis 1 is a scientific text book. And I could not take the easy way to reconcile the Genesis account with Darwinian evolution by declaring that Genesis's one day is an aeon of thousands of years of time, because, the Hebrew word used, "yom" means precisely a 24 hour day.

(I now understand the Genesis 1 account as metaphorical. 30 years ago on a six month stay in Israel, on a kibbutz trip to the Sinai and St Catherine's monastery, with my fellow NZ kibbutz workers, I climbed Mt Sinai before dawn, and had an epiphany. There, I came to understand Genesis 1 is a narrative poem of how the beginning of one natural, 24 hour day, follows exactly the very unfolding of a new day as described in Genesis 1, and confirmed for me that God is behind and upholding Creation from its beginning as it progresses through evolution!)

3. Quantum Physics and Faith

Well, I have been reading - about how quantum physics may actually confirm some of the areas of our Christian faith as they apply to the supernatural. Quantum physics may help us to explain how miracles may be scientifically actually happen!

One book I have been reading is ***The Paranormal is Normal: The Science Validation to Reincarnation, the Paranormal, and your Immortality*** (2016) self-published by a Nelson author, Alistair Scott-Hill, a now retired telecommunications engineer and technician with Standards NZ.



Scott-Hill is dedicated to using “solid” science – ie, documented, replicated science experiments - for promoting the validity of psychic phenomena such as reincarnation, the paranormal, ESP, and the possibility of an after-life and an immortality of consciousness, also of a creator – and I would suggest, of Christ’s resurrection and immortal body, too! Scott-Hill explores the big questions of life, particularly whether our mind, and soul, and senses can survive death, whether evolution is scientific fact or fiction, and whether life could exist before the Big Bang, even whether a timeless after-life is scientifically feasible.

He confirms a case for a creator God as a designing intelligence before the Big bang. He writes about how an universe-wide zero-point field may explain phenomena such as the non-physical independence of the mind from the brain, of consciousness, of immortality, and how instantaneous quantum communication (PCAR) links all life through the existence of a zero-point field throughout the universe (eg, thus allowing for real ESP, and psychic communication with mediums).

Even stranger, consciousness might actually be an interaction with a quantum field. Physics has proven that reality is made up of fluctuations in quantum fields. That’s what particles are, (not little solid things we tend to think particles are), but, actually energy vibrations in an energy field. And every fundamental particle, like photons or electrons, quarks, quasons, or photons, have their own field. So there’s an electron field, an up-quark field, and a photon field. And that’s what reality is.

In 2012 physicists discovered that mass is really just an interaction with the Higgs-Boson particle’s field. (The Higgs-Boson particle found by the Swiss-French CERN collider, is a fundamental particle called by some, the “God Particle”, so it too has its own field.) Think of mass, not as substance, but as like an electron charge, or as a magnetic field. And, that inter-action with the Higgs-Boson field is mass. Which is how you can have things with negative mass - like you have a negative electron field. But photons, the particles of light don’t inter-act with the Higgs-Boson field, so they do not have any mass at all.

So physicists are wondering if consciousness, human and animal, is like this, from inter-acting with a Quartile Field. And that inter-action with the Quartile Field is what makes up physical consciousness – ie, as different from the spirit or the soul.

Not satisfied with just accepting Scott-Hill’s “evidence”, I explored further, and came up with the following article:

Quantum Physics And Faith - *Jim Gerrish*

The Word of God Today www.wordofgodtoday.com/quantum-physics-faith/

EINSTEIN AND THE BEGINNING OF THE QUANTUM ERA

The twentieth century ushered in the age of quantum physics, often called quantum mechanics or quantum theory. Until that time, the world had run happily on Newtonian principles of physics, perhaps illustrated best by the law of gravity. But by the beginning of the twentieth century the atomic age was being introduced and physicists were realizing that the tiny sub-atomic particles did not react according to the laws of Newton.

The physicist Max Planck is credited with introducing the Quantum Era in 1900. He realized that light energy came in discreet packets (*quanta*) and not just in waves. Thus the wave-particle duality of light became known. However, it was really Albert

Einstein who made many of the basic discoveries in the years of 1905 and 1916. It was Einstein who was later called the most famous scientist of the twentieth century. It is interesting that the Quantum Era began with studies concerning light (Peat p.1). It is also interesting that as our quantum age has progressed, many of our discoveries and inventions relate to light in some way. Without the understandings of light in the quantum sense there would be no computers, copiers, lasers and hundreds and perhaps thousands of other “light-based” inventions. In 1921 Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize for his correct explanation of the photoelectric effect (Wolf p.71).

QUANTUM ENERGY

There is no doubt Einstein’s most famous discovery was his formula $E=mc^2$. Most of us have heard this formula all our lives but probably few of us could describe what it means. One of Einstein’s greatest insights was his realization that matter and energy are different forms of the same thing and that they are interchangeable. Thus, matter can be turned into energy and energy can be turned into matter. In Einstein’s famous formula the “E” stands for “energy.” The “m” stands for mass and “c” stands for the speed of light in a vacuum. Obviously, this formula helped usher us into the atomic age where small amounts of fissionable material could produce gigantic explosions through the means of atomic bombs.

Marcus Chown elaborates on this saying: “The physicists’ symbol for the speed of light, “c,” is a big number – 300 million meters [186,000 miles] per second. Squaring it- multiplying it by itself- creates an even bigger number. Applying the formula to 1 kilogram of matter shows that it contains 9×10^{16} joules of energy- enough to lift the entire population of the world into space!” (Chown pp.114-115). By this formula the energy in the mass of an average human being would amount to that released by a 1,000 megaton nuclear bomb. This would be approximately 100,000 times the energy that was released by the bomb that fell on Hiroshima (Tipler p. 38).

When we bring this down to the Bible and to the creation of the world we must realize what an astounding amount of energy it took to create from nothing the world and the universe. The Son of God as the agent of creation spoke the whole universe into existence. We are awed by the vast and incredible power display of the word of God both to create the universe and to sustain it to this present moment (Jn. 1:3; Heb. 1:3). In the Hebrew language, “word” is “*devar*” and “things” are “*devarim*.” After all these centuries “word” and “created things” have a very close connection. When God speaks, things happen.

SPACE AND TIME

With the introduction of the Quantum Era our understandings of space and time necessarily had to change. We are now told that we must understand the two as a space-time continuum since they form a unity. For instance, if we could approach the speed of light we would see time lose its relevancy. In fact, a person would age slower as the speed grew faster. Chown remarks at this point how science becomes much stranger than science fiction (Chown vii). It also makes the eternal life that God has promised to those who believe in him seem not so far-fetched after all.

The matter of space-time and the speed of light have bearing on how we interpret the six days of creation mentioned in the Bible. Gerald Schroeder reminds us that the “time” described in the Bible creation account is not the same as we know time today. He also reminds us that time only began when matter was formed (Schroeder 42, 52, 56). We should note also that there were no natural lights (sun, moon and stars) until the fourth day (Gen. 1:14-19). Long ago, “St. Augustine gave an answer that

should deeply impress modern cosmologists. He said that there was no time 'before' the Beginning" (Sitzer p.19). We can see, then, that some understanding of quantum physics (including cosmology and relativity) would end the old arguments about the earth being created in six natural 24-hour days.

Einstein was once quoted as saying: "For us physicists, the distinction between past, present, and future is only an illusion" (Chown p.104). The Bible's understanding of our living in this present age while we partake of many advantages of the age to come (Eph. 1:3) makes a little better sense as we look at it through the eyes of quantum physics.

NON-LOCALITY

Quantum physics has turned up many weird and strange things. It has been proven that atoms can do several things at once. This is the basis of the idea for a quantum computer that supposedly can do numerous tasks and calculations simultaneously. The physicists now know that atoms can penetrate impenetrable barriers. Physicists have actually demonstrated these weird performances in the lab (Chown pp. 25-27). Perhaps now the miracle of Jesus walking through closed doors (Jn. 20:26) will not sound so strange to the skeptics.

There is also a very peculiar connection within the vast universe itself. Although parts of the universe are separated by millions of light years, yet there seems to be an instant response between these parts, in what appears as a total violation of the speed-of-light barrier. Chown compares it to a couple in love, that no matter how far they are apart they remain somehow connected (Chown pp. 53, 56).

How is it possible for the far reaches of the universe to respond together immediately? In the scripture we see the morning stars singing together (Job 38:7). On one occasion small and beleaguered Israel was compelled to go to war against a heavily armed despot by the name of Sisera. Amazingly, Sisera, although he had many chariots and a vast army, was totally and miraculously overwhelmed. The Bible tells us why. In Judges 5:20 it is said: "*From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.*"

THE UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

Quantum physicists tell us that we cannot know the velocity and location of a particle at the same time. The very act of determining the velocity makes the location uncertain (Chown p. 40). Because of this Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, and other seeming mysteries like it, we cannot be too certain about the universe in which we live. Richard Feynman, who was probably one of the most outstanding physicists of the twentieth century once said: "I think I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics" (Chown p.72).

Even the atom itself is full of mystery and uncertainty. The world is made up of atoms but they are exceedingly small. It has been calculated that it would take about ten million atoms to reach across a period. Also some 99.999999999999 per cent of the atom is almost completely empty since its nucleus is so tiny. Chown says that atoms are "no more substantial than a ghost" (Chown p. 12). Fred Alan Wolf pictures the atomic nucleus like a single grain of rice in the middle of a football stadium with electrons somehow whirling around through the open space (Wolf p.75). Strangely, when sub-atomic particles are alone they act in weird ways but when they clump together to make an object they act normally as they do in classical Newtonian physics. This is called the Principle of Correspondence.

David Peat has summed it up saying “Quantum theory introduced uncertainty into physics; not an uncertainty that arises out of mere ignorance but a fundamental uncertainty about the very universe itself” (Peat p. 24).

Perhaps God has designed the universe in just such a way as to keep scientists and the rest of us humble. God says that the wisdom of man is foolishness (1 Cor. 3:19). The Bible also says in 1 Corinthians 13:12, “*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*”

A BEGINNING FOR THE UNIVERSE

Starting with the Greeks and continuing through much of the twentieth century scientists generally believed in a static, eternal universe. Einstein by his own theories proved that the universe was in motion. Einstein was himself a paradox and some have called him the last of the classical physicists. He was actually so upset with his findings that he built into his formula a “fudge-factor” to show the universe as remaining static. Later the astronomer Edwin Hubble corrected Einstein by showing that the universe was flying apart like cosmic shrapnel. Einstein had missed one of his greatest discoveries and he later called it the biggest blunder of his life (Chown p.144). In order to satisfy the changing information on the universe scientists formulated the Big Bang theory in the 1960s. They explained by this theory that somehow the universe began with a massive explosion. Since that time, physics has been left with the task of also explaining what or who caused this Big Bang. As far back as the Greek Parmenides it has been known that “from nothing, only nothing comes” (Spitzer p. 45).

Amazingly though, “From the time of Aristotle, 2,300 years ago, scientific theory held the universe to be eternally existing. Through the early 1960s in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, two thirds of leading U.S. scientists surveyed still believed in this. Yet for 3,300 years, since the revelation on Sinai, the Bible denied it, steadfastly claiming there was a beginning to our universe” (Schroeder p. 22). HOW recently has science caught up with religion!

The great Nobel Prize winning physicist Arno Penzias remarks about this quantum quandary saying: “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, and delicately balanced to provide exactly the conditions required to support life. In the absence of an absurdly improbable accident, the observations of modern science seem to suggest an underlying...supernatural plan” (Spitzer p. 13).

RELATIVITY

Einstein’s theory of 1916 has been called the General Theory of Relativity. This was not Einstein’s choice of names and in some ways it has been unfortunate. In the permissive twentieth century many people assumed that Einstein’s relativity applied to almost everything, even to their morals or lack of them.

The General Theory of Relativity has changed the way we look at space and time. “Space and time are ‘inextricably bound together.’ The Universe we see ‘out there’ is not a thing that extends in space but a thing that extends in space-time” (Chown p.103).

Albert Einstein did not ascribe to the Jewish faith into which he was born and neither did he ever really join the Christian faith. He was however a deeply religious person. He once said, “science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind” (Jammer p. 120). Einstein held to what he called his “cosmic religious experience”

and once called it “the strongest and noblest driving force behind scientific research” (Jammer p. 80).

In Einstein’s wake we are left with a universe that is mysteriously bound together and even more mysteriously held in place. It is a universe that had a cause and was

CONCLUSION

Many contemporary physicists such as Arno Penzias, Roger Penrose, Owen Gingerich, John Polkinghorne, Fred Hoyle, and Paul Davies now feel that our universe had a designing intelligence behind it (Spitzer p. 49).

We Christians seem to be in a unique place to submit our humble answer to the great puzzle of modern physics – how did the universe begin? We can answer with all confidence in the words of Colossians 1:16-17: “*For by him [Jesus] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*”

Publication 2011

Marcus Chown, *The Quantum Zoo* (Washington D.C.: Joseph Henry Press, 2006).

Max Jammer, *Einstein and Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

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Robert J. Spitzer, *New Proofs for the Existence of God* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010).

Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Christianity* (NY: Doubleday, 2007).

Fred Alan Wolf, *Taking the Quantum Leap* (Grand Rapids: Harper & Row, 1989).

4. Being redeemed to make Jesus visible

I encourage anyone who is interested to have their faith blown wide open, to Google up Quantum Physics and Faith. Start with: www.wordofgodtoday.com/quantum-physics-faith/

[William Barclay:] There is something very loveable, very admirable, about Thomas. Faith was not an easy thing for him. He was a man who had to be sure, who had to count the cost. But once he was sure, and once he had counted the cost, he was the man who went to the ultimate level of faith and obedience.

A faith like Thomas’s is better than any glib profession, and an obedience like his (which took him to India to found the Thomasite Church and to die there as a martyr), is better than any easy acquiescence which agrees to do a thing without counting the cost and then goes back upon its word.

For us to be like Thomas and to live his style of faith, is to be redeemed with the task to, likewise, make Jesus visible.