Wouldn't You Love to Know? Towards a Christian View of Reality

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We live in a strange world, and things one group of people take for granted can be quite opaque to another. I've heard it said that in Germany everything is forbidden except that which is permitted, while in Russia everything is forbidden *including* that which is permitted; meanwhile in France everything is permitted except that which is forbidden, while in Italy everything is permitted *including* that which is forbidden. In the UK, of course, we know that everything is either forbidden or permitted, but we're not sure which is which because we are waiting to be disentangled from *the European Court*. (There has to be a whole raft of similar reflections in the midst of our puzzles about Brexit and indeed about the UK, but I leave those to your imagination.)

I have been asked to talk this evening about how we know things – more specifically, about our present confusions on what we know and how we know it, and particularly about the continuing stand-off between supposedly *scientific* ways of knowing things and *faith-based* ways of knowing things. My title reflects my underlying argument, which is that beyond the split world of supposedly objective and supposedly subjecting 'knowing', there is a deeper mode of knowing which has to do with that vital but elusive quality we can call 'love'. Thus, *Wouldn't you LOVE to KNOW* (a title kindly supplied by the former Moderator, Angus Morrison).

A friend asked me what on earth I was going to be speaking about at 9 o'clock on a Thursday evening after my hearers had eaten a good dinner, and I replied 'comparative epistemology'; to which the only reply was that he hoped the hotel would be paying me a royalty on all the extra whisky that would be consumed as a result. Well, as A. E. Housman put it in *A Shropshire Lad*, 'Malt does more than Milton can to justify God's ways to man'; so if such extra justification be required I'm sure our hosts can rise to the challenge. But my own less liquid contribution is to sketch where our present confusions have come from and to suggest how we might not just avoid them but use the present moment as a springboard to fresh insight, fresh teaching, fresh wisdom. That is my prayer for

the splendid *Grasping the Nettle* project to which these reflections are a small contribution.

I confess that when I heard about this project I was surprised. Hadn't we got beyond the old stand-off I remember from my schooldays? Wasn't it C. P. Snow in the 1950s who named and shamed the 'two cultures' divide? Had we learnt nothing? Well, many voices in the last generation have shown that, in the words of Jonathan Sacks, religion and science ought to be a 'great partnership', in which 'science takes things apart to see how they work, while religion puts things together to see what they mean'. Many leading scientists, such as John Polkinghorne in this country and Francis Collins in the USA, have articulated not only their well-thought-out Christian faith but also their views on how science and faith belong firmly together. One might have supposed those battles had been won.

But, it seems, this ain't necessarily so. Earlier this week I received two unsolicited emails within a few hours of each other. One was from a zealous 'new atheist', urging me to inspect a website which showed that God was a delusion, a book which proved that Jesus never existed, and an article which demonstrated that religion was bad for your health. The other was from a zealous American fundamentalist railing against the compromises of people like myself who believe in evolution though not evolutionism (I'll explain that later), in science but not scientism, and insisting that when Genesis said six days it meant six days. If anything, I fear that the tone of both my uninvited correspondents was more shrill than it might have been in the days of my youth. In today's culture wars, electronic road rage is, well, all the rage. People rant at their computer screens in ways they might not do if their target was sitting there beside them.

Both approaches are of course highly rationalistic. Fundamentalism, whether supposedly scientific or supposedly Christian, is a rationalist parody of what true science and true faith might look like. Just as Maggie Thatcher declared that the Socialist Workers' Party on the one hand and the National Front on the other were actually 'the left and right boots of fascism', so the ranting atheists and the ranting six-day creationists are the left and right boots of a fundamentalism which is, ironically, more about the subjective quest for certainty in a confusing world than about any actual objective truth. And the

question for us is, How can we leave behind these sterile antitheses and reach out towards fresh, creative and reconciling wisdom?

At this point people often say three things which are important but which I think don't go far enough.

First, as I've already said, many world class scientists not only believe and practice Christian faith but articulate sophisticated accounts of how science and faith actually go together. One might couple this with the reflection that modern science has deeply Christian origins, and that for many generations science and faith were seen as complementary.

Second, people often point out that science is never simply the objective collection of neutral data. It always involves imaginative leaps to hypotheses and the quest for an elegance of explanation which goes beyond the normal rationalistic assumptions by involving the knowing subject as a subject. Conversely, Christian faith is never simply believing a bunch of impossible things on no real evidence. It involves hard-nosed engagement with the world of history, specifically the history of Jesus, and with the real and often perplexing world of one's own day. Real science and real Christian faith are much more like one another than many people suspect. Again, fair enough but not far enough.

Third, people often point out that science can neither generate nor measure many of the most important things in the world – justice, spirituality, relationships, beauty, freedom, truth. All these contain deep paradoxes. Wise human flourishing means wrestling with those paradoxes rather than sweeping them aside in favour of this or that type of fundamentalism.

In fact, the wisest of scientists will draw lines and insist that their discipline will take them thus far and no further. Once when I was in debate with an agnostic Australian astrophysicist – now there's a good phrase to try after a couple of shots of Talisker – he quite properly insisted that his brief did not extend to questions of morality or spirituality. I am reminded of a dinner years ago in Downing College Cambridge where we were served small roast guinea-fowl. One of the guests turned to the Master of the College, Professor Sir John Butterfield. 'Master,' he said, 'You're a medic: how do I begin to cut into this?' 'You're asking the wrong person,' replied the Master. 'I'm not a surgeon; I'm a

physician. I can tell you what it died of!' And of course there would be other questions too, such as why we eat some birds and animals and not others . . . which might call for different specialisations. Life is highly complicated. You can't reduce it to things you can measure in a test tube or a bank balance, or indeed to a few shibboleths of faith, however true in themselves, is bound to fail. So how can we proceed? How can we get beyond the false either/ors that trip us up in the media, in education, in public policy?

I have two answers for you tonight. The first is that we must understand more clearly where our present dilemmas have come from. The second is that there are resources within the Christian tradition itself through which we can articulate a better way, a better way of *knowing*, the 'more excellent way' of love itself. I turn at once to the first of these: how did we get into this odd position?

I have discussed elsewhere the brilliant recent account by Iain McGilchrist in his famous book *The Master and his Emissary*. McGilchrist, both a brain scientist and a literary critic and hence straddling the 'two cultures' divide, argues that modern western culture has exhibited large-scale symptoms that correspond to the schizophrenia in which the brain's left hemisphere dominates and the right hemisphere is under-used or screened out altogether. He insists that this is deeply unhealthy, since the right hemisphere, which handles metaphor, music, imagination, poetry and indeed faith, is designed to take the lead ('the Master'), and the left hemisphere, which crunches the numbers and works out the details, is designed to back it up ('the Emissary'). The take-over bid by the left brain produces, in a culture, the same effect as when the bean-counters take over the business. That's not their job. The beans need to be counted, of course. But that must serve the larger purpose, which can never be glimpsed by merely counting beans.

I take McGilchrist's analysis for granted and move to a different though related point, central to all my reflection on how we've got where we've got as a culture. We have inherited the Enlightenment's assumption of a split world which has produced new definitions of the key terms 'science', 'faith' and 'religion' themselves. This split-world assumption, though, is itself rooted neither in science nor in faith. It is a philosophical take-over bid which has distorted each element in the picture, and has deliberately generated the false either/or of which we have spoken. The split world in question comes partly

from Deism, but more particularly from its older and more rigorous cousin Epicureanism, an elite philosophy in the ancient world which taught that even if the gods exist they are a long way away and never concern themselves with our world, and that our world simply makes itself as it goes along, evolving under its own steam. Ancient Epicureanism was a protest against ancient paganism; fifteenth-century Epicureanism was a protest against western mediaeval theology; Enlightenment Epicureanism was a protest against the perceived errors of the ongoing western church. Here is the joke at the heart of our problem: that people imagine that we in the 'modern' world have suddenly discovered 'evolution', and that this has suddenly made life awkward for believers. What actually happened was that some seminal eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers believed passionately in Epicureanism for quite other reasons, and seized upon the signs of biological evolution as apparent evidence for it – producing what I've called 'Evolution*ism*'. This is a classic 'enlightenment' project, resulting in the implicit belief of western Europe and north America that we are the world's elite, the enlightened ones, able to look down on all other civilizations from the supposed height of our new wisdom. We had 'discovered' that a sharp division existed between the hard facts of this world, which does its own thing without divine intervention, and the vague fantasies of 'religion', which were unprovable, unreliable, intolerant, and unhealthy.

In part this was, as I said, a reaction to a church that had become dogmatic and out of touch. But the Epicurean revival of the Enlightenment was, more importantly, in the service of political agendas. It produced, of course, the French Revolution; but, more insidiously perhaps, by kicking God upstairs and insisting that the downstairs world of 'facts' could get on by itself, it paved the way for massive exploitation both of natural resources and of the conquered lands and peoples of the European empires. *The split between science and religion is one aspect of a larger split between God and the world, affecting equally the question of faith and public life*. We can't understand the roots of the science/religion split unless we map it on to the much larger split and take into account the other areas where the same problem has taken hold, particularly in the political sphere. That is why the same rhetoric that Richard Dawkins uses about science and faith is found in those who are desperate to keep the church out of public life. And the language of this movement has been, again and again, about *modes of knowing*: the science studied, and the technology developed, were about 'objective' knowledge, whereas the world of faith and religion was

seen as quintessentially 'subjective' ('true for you but not for me', and so on). And since the western world had all these 'facts', including of course better weapons of war, it made sense to create new facts on the ground that would serve the interests of that same western world. And my case to you tonight is that this objective/subjective split must be, and can be, transcended when we realise that the highest form of knowledge is love.

There's another aspect to this which we must put on the table, though there isn't time to develop it. Once you have separated God and the world, then of course miracles become problematic. Indeed, the way we now hear the word 'miracle' itself is conditioned by these Enlightenment perspectives, so it now *sounds* as though it refers to a distant God, normally outside the world's processes, but just occasionally reaching in to do something bizarre and then going away again. The fact that many devout Christians think they have to defend just this shows how great a victory the Enlightenment has won. But the supreme 'miracle' is of course the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus; and the reason why the Enlightenment passionately rejects this is clear. It isn't just that Hume had declared that miracles don't happen. It is that if there is a living God who became human and was raised from the dead, then that must be, cannot escape being, the climax and turning-point of history. *And the whole point of the Enlightenment was that history reached its climax and turning-point in – the Enlightenment itself*. There cannot be two decisive moments. What we today perceive as the science/religion split, or the faith-and-public-life split, is the long outworking of the Enlightenment's self-serving and elitist claim that world history had turned its decisive corner, that humankind had come of age, when Europe and America suddenly opened their eyes. Subsequent history shows what this has meant: wonderful advances in medicine, technology, and travel; terrible disasters in warfare, genocide, and new forms of slavery. I do not want to be operated on by a pre-modern dentist (or a postmodern one, for that matter); but I do not trust world leaders who have swallowed the enlightenment's agendas wholesale, as most of them have.

Such a historical moment deserves a myth, and there are two which sharpen up the story: the myth of Faust, and the myth of Frankenstein.

The mediaeval legend of Faust, reused by writers like Marlowe, Goethe and Thomas Mann, has Faust making a pact with the devil. Faust will have limitless knowledge and boundless pleasures, but the devil will have his soul in the end.

There is one condition: Faust must not love. His heart and soul belong to Mephistopheles; true, deep love would be a sign that the world is after all the good creation of a good God. In Goethe's *Faust*, the crucial point is that Faust must never say, on pain of instant death, *Verweile doch, du bist so schön*, 'stay awhile, you are so beautiful'.

The legend remains popular, in theatre, cinema and elsewhere. It isn't just a good story. It is *our* story. Western culture has flirted with playing Faust: has banished God to a distant 'heaven' and has grasped at success, technological advancement, untrammelled pleasure, exploitation of the world's natural resources and its defenceless peoples. But there is a day of reckoning. For Thomas Mann, the astonishing success and the horrible downfall of Nazi Germany was such a moment. There might be others. And part of the point is that, as we saw earlier, godless culture-making, particularly godless science, cannot explain or contain love – or indeed justice or freedom or beauty. Take the latter: 'aesthetics' only became a distinct 'subject' in the eighteenth century. The word 'beauty' hardly occurs in the Bible, not because the biblical authors didn't believe in it or delight in it but because the beauty of creation is an integral part of everything else. The Psalmist says 'You make the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise you', referring to the evocative beauty of dawn and dusk, but for him this is not something other than the ceaseless worship offered by the glad creation to the good creator, and celebrated as such by God's people. That is the kind of epistemic unity which the Faustian pact carefully picks apart, and must not reassemble. The Romantic movement was in part a protest against this, but though Coleridge and others did their best its main thrust was to highlight the world of human feeling and emotion, not to join that back into the worship of the One God. There is much more we could say about that, but not here.

The other myth which has haunted our culture, and still reappears in movies, is Frankenstein. Once you cut science loose from its earlier context within faith and culture it can and will produce rampaging monsters. If ever there was a story for the twentieth century, there it is; and our question, a question even more urgent for western governments than that of Brexit or the refugee crisis, is: how to stop our home-made monsters pulling down the house on top of us. Once again there's more that could be said about that, but let me just comment that if I were devising an education programme for teenagers, trying to get them to think into our current global dilemmas, I would love to show them Faust and Frankenstein in the movies and get them to discuss not only the Holocaust but

9/11, nuclear weapons, multinational tax arrangements and so on with those myths in their minds. And then, with all those questions and resources still resonating, I would have them read the stories which have a radically different twist: Joseph in Egypt; Daniel in Babylon; and on to plays like *Measure for Measure*, poems like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, or indeed Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*; always circling back, with all aesthetic antennae fully operative, to the book of Revelation and ultimately to the gospels themselves. (We have allowed the Bible to be locked into a sanitized space called 'religious studies'; that is a classic post-Enlightenment way of making sure they can't come out and challenge the received folly.) There is a different story. We do not have to stay trapped in the Faust and Frankenstein myths. Once we realise how deeply we have sunk into the split-level universe, so that our current surface noise about science and religion is seen to be part of a much larger problem, we might be able to see ways in which the next generation may find its way into a wiser, more complete way of being human.

Of course, it should also go without saying that there are equally important mythological dramas about the way in which faith and religion has gone sour. The media and the movies can never get enough of ecclesial scandals. We in the church must acknowledge them with shame. I suspect I don't need to say more about that just now, but it has contributed to our current problem.

But here is the challenge of our times. When I became Bishop of Durham in 2003 somebody asked me at the opening press conference to summarize the task facing the church in our day, and I said, perhaps assuming too much, that our task was in prayer and faith to lead the way through postmodernity and out into the as yet undiscovered world of post-postmodernity. One of the journalists present, reporting this, commented that 'They talk of nothing else in South Shields'. It was a friendly tease and indeed he became a good friend; but I stand by the summary, even though of course it needed spelling out. Postmodernity, from Nietzsche to Derrida and beyond, has blown the whistle on modernist arrogance, but it can't stop it in its tracks. Politicians and journalists still go round the same, tired old loops of unresolved pragmatic secularism, assuming (as we all did with the so-called 'Arab Spring'!) that all you have to do is topple a few tyrants and freedom, flower-power and western-style democracy will automatically emerge. Half the population of Syria is today paying the price for our failed narrative, washing up quite literally on our shores. The horror of 9/11 was one dramatic actualisation of the failure of arrogant modernity; the present

refugee crisis is another. We have no idea what to do because the Enlightenment worldview gave us no story, no script, for such a moment. We make things, we sell things, we vote every so often, but we have forgotten how to love. The scientists can make very clever weapons for destroying cities but they can't make any to put communities back together again. The questions of science and religion are symptoms of a much larger problem. But the good news is that, though there is a long way to go, the gospel of Jesus, once liberated from its cultural captivity, from the exile of 'private religion' to which secularism has tried to banish it, has unparalleled power to transform the world. That is why the secularists, not least the eager advocates of atheist scientism, are so keen to keep it out of sight. Our job is to bring it back again. When we really grasp this nettle, we'll find that its roots go right down to the heart of our present dilemmas.

And now the question of knowledge finally comes into focus. The secular revolution has separated out knowledge into objective and subjective. The scientist, in this paradigm, has 'objective' knowledge, tested in laboratories, universally true. The artist, the poet, the theologian, has 'subjective' knowledge – dreams, fantasies, unprovable ideas – which are to be set aside when we (metaphorically and literally) get 'down to business'. You can see this in education: when the school budget is stretched, the head teacher is tempted to cut down on music, drama, art and so on. They are 'the pretty bit around the edge', a luxury we may not be able to afford. That is dangerous nonsense. Look at the Venezuelan Children's Orchestra. Look what happens when they take drama into prisons. Look at the way J. K. Rowling has taught a generation to read, to imagine, to dream. If you want true knowledge you have to love. And to learn about true love you have to hear, to smell, to imagine the story of the crucified Nazarene.

The point about love, at this level, is that it transcends the object/subject distinction. Of course it does: when I truly love, whether the object of my love is a planet or a person, a symphony or a sunset, I am celebrating the *otherness* of the beloved, wanting the beloved to be what it really is, greater than my imagining or perception, stranger, more mysterious. Love celebrates that mystery: in that sense, it is truly 'objective'; but it is also of course delightedly 'subjective'. Without the subjective pole, it becomes mere cool appraisal or 'tolerance'. Without the objective pole, the celebration of the other *as* other, it is simply lust, cutting the beloved down to the size of my desires and projects,

whether it be sexual lust exploiting another human being or industrial lust exploiting raw materials for profit despite the consequences. A colleague of mine put his finger on the first of these, speaking of 'the decline of sex', and explaining, 'We all know how to do it but we've all forgotten why.' That is exactly the same as the second, the Frankensteinian scientism of our day: we *can* do it, so why not and who's to stop us? And this is where Jonathan Sacks's aphorism comes in again: science takes things apart to see how they work; religion puts things together to see what they mean. And sometimes the meaning tells you to stop pulling them apart. It's a crisis of *meaning* that we face in our day, and a crisis of *knowledge* that brings that into focus; and the answer to the false antithesis of objective and subjective, which has been throttling our culture for too long, is a full-on reawakening of *an epistemology of love*. We have had enough of the Faustian pact in which we merely 'tolerate' one another; 'toleration' is an Enlightenment parody of love. It is time for the dangerous gospel notion of love to make a comeback in our culture.

Once we glimpse this possibility we discover that it is written all through scripture, emerging at key points but bubbling along under the rest. Paul challenges the Galatians: what matters is not your knowledge of God but God's knowledge of you, and that knowledge is revealed in God sending the Son and the Spirit. He challenges the Corinthians: if you think you 'know' something in your own way, you are merely puffed up and don't really 'know' at all; but if you love God, you are known by God – once again, the God revealed in the crucified Jesus. Paul was addressing the 'knowledge' systems of his day with a new kind of knowing, a knowing rooted in the love of God. How does this work?

It works because humans are made to reflect the wise, loving creator into his world. Our knowledge and speech are designed vocationally to do two things which reinforce one another: to worship him by telling the story of creation and covenant, of new creation and new covenant, and then to bring his wonderful purposes to fruition in the world. That is what it means to be made in God's image; we are angled mirrors, designed to reflect creation's praises to the creator and the creator's wisdom into his creation. The science/religion split is a symptom of the distortion that comes about when the mirror gets twisted so that it simply reflects the world back into the world, generating idolatry instead of true worship and a false, Faustian 'success' instead of genuine human flourishing. We all know First Corinthians 13: love is patient and kind, if I don't

have love, I am nothing, and alongside faith and hope the greatest of these is love. But the fact that we often read it at weddings lures us into hearing those great words as a recipe for a detached romanticism which leaves the wider world untouched. (That reaction means we are also belittling weddings, but that's another story, though closely related.) For Paul, all this is explosive: we know in part, we prophecy in part, but with love we are already engaging in the mode of knowing that will last into God's new creation, when we shall know as we are known.

Where do we start with this? In worship, of course – a worship constantly renewed through fresh scriptural reading, prayer, good liturgy of whatever kind. A worship consciously and conscientiously bringing the praises of the whole creation before the creator, articulating in human speech the powerful allegiance of the farthest planet and the smallest particle and everything in between. (When I was Dean of Lichfield we hosted a West Midlands 'Industrial Harvest Festival', encouraging local industries to display their products, and their craftsmanship, in the Cathedral for a week and ending with a great service.) But then we need preaching and teaching, with the teaching flowing out quickly into public discourse whether broadcast, journalistic, parliamentary or in schools, in which we challenge the latent Epicureanism of western culture at its root by speaking of – and particularly by living out – the powerful healing and recreative love of the creator God, who is not the Deist's distant faceless bureaucrat, nor yet the Epicurean's totally detached being, but is known, and is dangerously present, in Jesus and in the Spirit.

The 'Jesus' bit of that demands that we do history. A central part of Christian discipleship is that we constantly go back to the first century and discover more and more what was actually going on in that explosive and world-changing moment, refusing to be fobbed off with the pseudo-history which tried to fit Jesus onto the eighteenth-century Procrustean bed. History itself, especially the history of Jesus, is in fact one of the theatres in which the epistemology of love matters most, paying absolute attention to every scrap of evidence as it is in itself and at the same time constantly delighting in the play of explanatory hypotheses in which we glimpse more and more of the actual motivations of Peter, of Pontius Pilate, of Jesus himself. The more we realise just how mysterious the whole world is, just how puzzling justice and beauty and love itself really are, the more we should delight in seeing the puzzles and paradoxes rushing together in the story of Jesus, and supremely in his death and

resurrection. I deeply regret that these historical questions are usually relegated to a sub-sub branch of curricula in schools and colleges, a small corner of a 'religious studies' syllabus which then is itself played off against 'science', rather than finding their way into the heart of literature, drama, and global history itself. Historians have focused on the so-called 'axial age' of the last centuries BC, but the truly remarkable story is not about the pre-Christian transformation of ideas but the Christian-initiated transformation of society in the first centuries AD. Against much misinformation, we must tell and teach that story as if our lives depend upon it, because actually they do. It is not simply a knowledge-story, a history-of-ideas project. It is a love-story, the story of ordinary, often frightened, but faithful men and women who went out to bring healing, education, freedom and hope to a world where such things had before only been available to a tiny minority, and who did so because they were following Jesus. And in that love-story new knowledge emerged, not simply because of the great thinkers, though they matter as well, but because the followers of Jesus were opening up new ways to be human, were *loving* in order to *know* and then finding that deeper knowledge led to deeper love. What we are about, after all, is *new creation*. Nietzsche derided Christianity as 'platonism for the masses', but that's because he was looking at the platonized western church which had downgraded the resurrection and with it the whole biblical project of new creation. Fascinatingly, it was Ludwig Wittgenstein who said 'It is *love* that believes the resurrection'; and that works both ways. A spurious pseudo-objectivity looks at the world and says 'resurrection is impossible', and mocks as fantasy any attempt to reimagine it. Love looks at the God revealed in Jesus and says Yes; and believing in the resurrection, as has been shown time and again, awakens a love which is not simply the romantic antithesis of rationalism but which frames and energises an integrated project of knowledge in every sphere.

I've had to compress the big picture into a very small frame for this evening. But I hope I have at least stimulated you to realise that the presenting issue for 'Grasping the Nettle' takes us right to the heart of the gospel challenge to our culture. I am very much aware at this time of night of the old Anglican line about the priest who dreamt he was preaching a sermon and woke up to find it was true, and I hope that you, having done me the honour of staying awake, will sleep all the sounder as a result. Let me leave you with three very quick 'so what' suggestions. I have already mentioned new possibilities in the teaching of culture and of history: we need fresh integration and the schools are a vital place

to start. In churches too, however, we need to ratchet up our teaching ambitions, for adults as well as young people, to set out the Christian worldview in terms of creation and covenant, of new covenant and new creation, in such a way that the Bible isn't just a strange vaguely Christian version of Aesop's Fables but rather tells the story which the western world has all but forgotten, the story of an integrated world in which science and music and history and art and politics and philosophy come rushing together into new syntheses under the impetus not of a detached 'knowledge' but of a delighted 'love'. That is a teaching agenda we could all pursue in our own contexts.

Second, we might try the experiment I played out once or twice in Durham. I used to get local churches to host meetings to ask the question: what would this town look like if God was in charge? People find that question scary because it conjures up visions of mad theocratic clergy bossing people around. That image has been central to the secular resistance to the gospel message of the kingdom of God – a resistance with which the churches themselves have often colluded. In places like Darlington we invited the mayor and the council, the prison workers, hospital administrators, social workers, and the like, and addressed this question head on: What would Darlington look like if God was in charge? – in a cheerful atmosphere with drinks and nibbles and no holds barred in questions. It opens up new discussions and in my experience can facilitate new partnerships – and in such work completely outflanks the silly secularism of the science/ religion divide.

Third, we need to explore new ways of praying. Many spiritual guides have gone further down this road than I have, and there is always the danger that if we simply try to bolt on some spirituality to the outside of the present scientific or indeed political world it looks just like that – something incongruous stuck on the outside, easily detached again. For those with the opportunity, however, I think it would do us all good to wonder what it would look like to celebrate the kingdom of God in the world of the laboratory, the observatory, or the council chamber. Partly of course it would be by doing well, faithfully and lovingly, what we are called to do as scientists, as government officials, as teachers or journalists or whatever. But there are ways of interweaving patterns of prayer into all of life which go much deeper than the bolt-on kind, and I would love to see us develop those as central to the whole strategy.

And so ‘The greatest of these is love.’ We have lived for too long in the split-level world of Enlightenment fantasy. The voices from left and right that want to keep us there must be answered. This is a big nettle to grasp, and I’m glad we are taking our courage in both hands to do it. Where will it take us? How will we do it? I answer with my title, as a question for all of us tonight: ‘Wouldn’t you love to know?’

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