
EASTERN / WESTERN THINKING AND WORLD-AND-LIFE VIEWS

*A Biblical Assessment of the Four
Great Hemispheric Traditions of Human Thought*



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Biblical Anthropology · Worldview · Cultural Engagement

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DEDICATION

“And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.”

— *Acts 17:26*

To every Christian who lives between cultures. May you find in Christ the ground that is deeper than East or West, older than civilization, and wide enough for all nations.

Soli Deo gloria.

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Preface

Every person I have ever met lives inside a way of seeing the world. We rarely notice it, in the same way that a fish does not notice the water. It shapes what we count as real, what we count as wise, what we are willing to give our lives for, and what we are content to leave alone. Most of us received this way of seeing from the family and the culture that raised us, long before we were old enough to examine it. Only when we cross a border, or sit at a table with someone raised on the other side of the world, do we begin to see that what we took to be simply “the way things are” is one way among several.

This book is an attempt to examine those ways of seeing in the light of Scripture. I call them world-and-life views, because each of them answers two questions together: what is the world, and how then shall I live in it? I have taken as my guide the four great hemispheric traditions of human thought, the Eastern, the Western, the Northern, and the Southern. I do not claim that these four exhaust the variety of human culture, and I do not claim that every person born in a hemisphere thinks as its tradition has taught. They are broad tendencies, drawn with a broad brush, and I use them because a broad brush can show a pattern that a fine pen would miss.

My conviction from the first page to the last is the one Paul gave the philosophers of Athens: the God who made the world “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Every tradition I describe belongs to the one human family, bears the one image of God, and answers in its own way to the one Creator. For that reason I have tried to write about each tradition with respect. For the same reason I have refused to treat any of them as the final word. Each has preserved something of the original human endowment, each has bent that endowment under the weight of sin, and each stands in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I write as a pastor and not as an anthropologist. I have no wish to rank the nations or to flatter any of them. My purpose is to help the believer who lives between cultures, and there are more such believers every year, to stand on the ground that is deeper than East or West. That ground is Christ and the whole counsel of God. From it we can receive the gifts of every people with thanksgiving, and we can correct the errors of every people, our own included, with humility.

I invite you to read slowly and to keep your Bible open. At the end of each chapter you will find questions for reflection, and at the close of the book a set of personal questions and challenges. They are meant to be answered in the company of other believers, because the Church is the one place on earth where the Eastern sage, the Western scholar, the Northern statesman, and the Southern villager are called to sit at the same table.

May the Lord use these pages to make us more thankful for the diversity He has made, more watchful about the distortions that sin has made, and more eager to see the day when people from every tribe and language and people and nation will worship together before His throne.

Introduction: Man Is Inherently God-Conscious

Texts: Genesis 10; Acts 17:24–29; Romans 1:18–32; 3:23; 2 Timothy 3:1–14

The most persistent fact about human civilization is its religiosity. Anthropology has not discovered a single human culture, in any era or geography, that was without some form of religion. This is not a coincidence or a cultural accident. It is a structural feature of human personhood. Man is inherently God-conscious. His psyche is constituted in such a way that the world around him registers as charged with meaning and with mystery, with what Rudolf Otto called the **numinous**, which is the sense that there is more than what meets the eye.

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.”

— Romans 1:19

This universal religiosity is itself a testimony to the **image of God** in man, the biblical teaching that every human being was made to reflect his Creator in a way that no other creature does: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him” (Gen. 1:27). However distorted by sin, however displaced onto idols, however intellectualized into philosophy or materialized into ritual, the human impulse to reach beyond the visible world is the echo of a creation-given orientation toward the living God. Solomon said that God “has put eternity into man’s heart” (Eccl. 3:11), and every temple, shrine, and sacred grove on earth is evidence that he spoke the truth.

Romans 1:18–32 is Paul’s most concentrated analysis of this phenomenon. The knowledge of God is present in all people, because “his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:20). That knowledge is what theologians

call **general revelation**, the disclosure of God to all people through creation and conscience. It is suppressed in unrighteousness, and it is displaced onto creaturely substitutes, for people “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). But it cannot be eradicated, because it is embedded in the structure of human consciousness itself.

The Bible also explains why this consciousness is spread across the whole earth in such varied forms. After the flood, the clans of Noah’s sons spread out “in their nations” (Gen. 10:32), and at Babel “the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth” (Gen. 11:9). Paul tells the Athenians that God did this with a purpose, that the nations “should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:27). Each tradition of thought is therefore, at its root, a long human search for God, conducted in a particular place and shaped by particular surroundings. Paul does not say that the search always succeeds. He says that the God who is sought “is actually not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).

Here lies the tension that runs through this whole book. The same Scripture that affirms the universal God-consciousness of man also declares that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Paul warned Timothy about people “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5), and religion without the power of the living God is the most common condition of fallen mankind. Religiosity is therefore never the same thing as salvation. It is a witness to what man was made for, and it is also an indictment of what man has done with it. A wise Christian will keep both truths in view when looking at any culture, and will neither worship it nor despise it.

This volume surveys the four great hemispheric traditions of human thought and culture, Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern, through the lens of this biblical anthropology. The goal is not cultural superiority or condescension but understanding. I wish to see what each tradition has preserved of the original human endowment, how sin has distorted it, and how the Gospel of Christ addresses and transforms it. Those three questions return in every chapter. They rest on the Reformed teaching

of **common grace**, the undeserved kindness of God toward all people, by which He restrains the worst effects of sin and gives gifts of wisdom, beauty, and order even to those who do not know Him.

A word of caution is in order before we begin. To speak of the Eastern mind or the Southern heart is to speak in generalizations, and every generalization has exceptions. There are mystics in Paris and rationalists in Beijing, and there are Christians in every hemisphere whose thinking has been formed far more by Scripture than by the soil. I describe tendencies and not destinies, and I describe them in order to understand, not in order to judge any individual person.

Chapter 1 considers the East, which I call mystical and intuitive. Chapter 2 considers the West, which I call materialistic and intellectual. Chapter 3 considers the North and the South together, the one imperialistic and the other social. The book closes with a summary of the four hemispheres in biblical perspective, a set of application questions, and a conclusion that gathers all of it under the Lordship of Christ. Throughout, Paul's words in Acts 17:24–29 are my companion, and Paul's example before the Areopagus is my pattern: to begin where the listener stands, to affirm what is true, and to proclaim the One in whom all truth is found.

Let us be clear about the destination. I am not leading you toward a blend of the best ideas from every culture. I am leading you toward Christ, in whom “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), and from whom every tradition has borrowed whatever truth it has.

CHAPTER 1

The Eastern Hemisphere: Mystical and Intuitive

“And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.”

— Acts 17:26–27

The great philosophical traditions of the Eastern Hemisphere, Confucianism (Kung Fu Tze), Taoism (Lao Tsu), and the ethical thought of Mencius, share a characteristic orientation toward the mysterious, the relational, and the intuitive. Where Western thought has tended to value analytical precision and systematic argument, Eastern thought has characteristically valued harmony, paradox, and the wisdom that goes beyond what words can carry. I begin with the East because a very large share of the human family has lived in it, and because Paul’s words in Acts 17:26–27 tell me where to stand as I look at it. The peoples of Asia were placed where they are by the same God, for the same purpose, as every other people on earth.

Christians should not forget that the Gospel itself was born in Asia. Our Lord was born in Bethlehem, and the first churches were planted in Antioch, in Damascus, and along the roads of western Asia. The Gospel also travelled east very early. A stone monument raised in the Chinese city of Xi’an in the year AD 781 records the arrival of Christian teachers in China during the Tang dynasty. The East is therefore not a distant mission field that the Church has only lately discovered. It is a land where the people of God have lived and suffered for many centuries, and where Christ is still building His Church.

Confucius (551–479 BC) articulated a vision of human flourishing grounded in the cultivation of virtue, in proper relationships, and in social harmony. At the center of his teaching stands **ren**, the Chinese word for benevolence or humaneness, the quality of a person who treats others as human beings worthy of respect. His ethical framework is not grounded in a personal deity but in the **Mandate of Heaven (Tian Ming)**, a transcendent moral order with which the virtuous person aligns herself through education, ritual, and filial piety. I recognize in this orientation an echo of the created moral order, the law that Paul says is written on the heart. Gentiles, he wrote, “show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness” (Rom. 2:15). A culture that has labored for twenty-five centuries to teach its children reverence, restraint, and duty has not been left without a witness.

The same observation applies to the Confucian honour for parents. The fifth commandment says, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you” (Ex. 20:12). The Chinese, Korean, and Japanese households that have taught their children to bow before their elders have preserved, in their own idiom, a principle that God Himself placed at the foundation of family and nation.

Mencius (c. 372–289 BC) carried Confucian teaching further by arguing that human nature is inclined toward goodness. He pointed to the instinctive pity that any person feels on seeing a child about to fall into a well, a pity that arises before any calculation of advantage. That pity is real, and it is a sign that the image of God has not been erased. But Mencius drew from it a conclusion that Scripture cannot accept, that the human heart needs only cultivation in order to flourish. Jeremiah answers with a different diagnosis: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). Paul says plainly, “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Conscience bears witness to the law, but it has no power to keep it.

I have arranged the Eastern tradition under two headings, the Mystical and the Personal. Under each I ask the three questions of this

book: what has been preserved, what has been distorted, and what the Gospel brings.

A. Mystical: Mostly Mysterious

Lao Tsu's Taoism takes the Eastern intuition toward the mysterious to its most developed philosophical expression. The **Tao** (the Way) is the unnamed, unnameable ultimate reality that underlies and flows through all things. It is explicitly beyond rational comprehension: "The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao." The Taoist sage therefore does not strive against the world but yields to its flow, the principle that Taoism calls *wu wei*, which means acting in harmony with the natural order and not against it. Such a vision has shaped Chinese landscape painting, poetry, medicine, and statecraft for more than two thousand years.

1. What Is Preserved

The mystical character of Eastern thought preserves something important, which is the recognition that ultimate reality is not exhausted by what human reason can contain. The Taoist approach is **apophatic**, a word that describes knowing God by what He is not rather than by what He is. It has parallels in the Christian tradition, and it rests on a truth that Scripture itself declares. The biblical God is indeed beyond full comprehension.

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

— Romans 11:33

The LORD says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Isa. 55:8). Moses told Israel that "the secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever" (Deut. 29:29). The Christian who has never felt the weight of these words has not yet understood what it means to worship. When I meet a Taoist who has learned to stand silent before something greater than himself, I do not meet an enemy of reverence. I meet a person who has seen a real thing from a long way off.

2. What Is Distorted

The distortion begins where the silence begins. In its philosophical form the Tao is impersonal. It does not love, it does not judge, it does not speak, and it makes no covenant. A reality that cannot be addressed is a reality that cannot be obeyed, trusted, or thanked, and mystery without a speaking God turns into silence of a very different kind. Paul describes the process exactly. Men “knew God,” but “they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:21). The knowledge was real, the thanksgiving was withheld, and the darkness followed.

Paul found the same pattern in Athens, where he discovered an altar bearing the inscription “To the unknown god” (Acts 17:23). The Athenians knew that they did not know, and they built an altar to their ignorance. The Eastern mystic has often done something similar on a grander scale. He has made the unknown itself the object of worship, and has called the failure of knowledge a kind of wisdom. This is the displacement that Romans 1 describes, in which the human impulse to worship is turned away from the Creator and settles on whatever stands nearest.

A second distortion concerns right and wrong. Because the Tao stands beyond all names and distinctions, the Taoist writers, and the philosopher Zhuangzi most of all, taught the sage to regard the difference between right and wrong, and between life and death, as relative and in the end illusory. The Bible cannot stand with this. The God who is holy has drawn the line between good and evil, and He takes it with the utmost seriousness: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isa. 5:20). A mystery that dissolves the difference between good and evil cannot comfort a conscience that knows the difference, and it cannot rescue a world in which the difference is a matter of life and death.

3. What the Gospel Brings

The Christian apophatic tradition is always grounded in a personal, covenantal God who has spoken. This is the decisive difference, and it

is the heart of the Gospel's answer to the East. "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1–2). The One who is beyond comprehension has made Himself known: "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" (John 1:18). His speech, the Word made flesh, is the beginning of genuine knowledge of ultimate reality (John 1:14).

To a person who has spent years learning to be silent before the Tao, the Gospel does not say, "Be less reverent." It says that the One before whom you are silent has spoken, and that His name is Jesus. The Taoist longs for the Way. Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The longing is not mocked by this answer. It is met. Reverence remains, but it is now the reverence of a child who has been welcomed into the house, and not that of a stranger standing outside a locked gate.

Scripture knows a holy stillness of its own, and the Gospel gives it an object: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). The stillness of the Psalm is not the emptying of the mind that Taoism seeks. It is the quiet of a creature who has been told who God is. The Christian who prays in silence is not listening to the void. He is listening to a Father.

B. Personal: Mainly Intuitive

Eastern philosophical thought characteristically prizes intuitive wisdom over discursive reasoning. The sage is not the person who can construct the most rigorous argument. She is the person who has cultivated the capacity to perceive reality directly, without the mediation of concepts. This intuitive dimension has profoundly shaped the cultures of Asia in their approaches to art, medicine, governance, and personal formation. It is also deeply relational. Confucian ethics is built on the five great relationships, which are ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. A person in the East is first of all someone's child, someone's neighbour, someone's elder, and only afterward an individual.

1. What Is Preserved

The biblical wisdom tradition has its own affirmation of wisdom as something more than discursive knowledge. Proverbs pictures wisdom as a person who was with God at the creation (“The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old,” Prov. 8:22), who calls aloud (“Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice?” Prov. 8:1), and who is recognizable to those whose hearts are rightly ordered toward God.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”

— Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is not merely an intellectual assent. It is a whole-person orientation that includes an intuitive attentiveness to the created order. The Eastern tradition’s emphasis on intuition can be received as a partial, culturally mediated expression of this created wisdom-capacity. In the same way, the Eastern insistence that a person is formed within a web of relationships agrees with the Creator’s own verdict at the beginning: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Western individualism has much to learn from a culture that has never forgotten this.

2. What Is Distorted

The distortion lies in the source and the goal of wisdom. In the Eastern traditions wisdom is something that the sage attains by his own cultivation, and the relationships that structure society rest on the authority of custom and of heaven in the abstract. There is no Creator whose fear is the beginning of the whole enterprise. Paul describes the result in one sentence: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). Intuition that has no word from God to test it cannot tell the difference between the echo of the image of God and the whisper of the human heart.

The Confucian pattern also tends toward self-improvement. The gentleman is one who studies, observes ritual propriety, and shapes his

character until he deserves the approval of heaven and the respect of his neighbours. There is much in this to admire, and a father who teaches his son diligence and courtesy does a good work. But the Bible says that no amount of cultivation can make a sinner acceptable to a holy God: “we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16). The danger of a morality of self-cultivation is that it breeds pride in those who think they have succeeded, and despair in those who know that they have not.

A further distortion can appear in the honour given to the dead. The fifth commandment calls us to honour living parents, and a Christian can honour the memory of departed parents with love and gratitude. But when reverence for ancestors turns into appeals to them for protection or favour, a duty to the family has become a worship that belongs to God alone. A missionary or a pastor who deals with such cases has to be both firm and gentle, for the family bond that is being redirected is a good gift of God.

3. What the Gospel Brings

The Gospel does not cancel the Eastern pursuit of wisdom. It names the One in whom the pursuit ends. Christ is the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Wisdom is not an inner light that the sage must discover or a harmony that the gentleman must produce. Wisdom is a person who has come to us, and He is the Son of God.

The same holds for harmony. The East longs for peace between ruler and subject, between parent and child, and between neighbour and neighbour, and the history of the East shows how hard that peace is to keep. Paul says of Christ, “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14). Harmony is not finally a technique. It is a gift, and it has a name. For the Eastern believer, this means that the deepest instincts of his culture, the reverence, the intuition, and the love of harmony, are not to be abandoned at the church door. They are to be brought to the feet of the One who made them, and to be put to work in His service.

Even the commandment about parents finds its fulfilment in Christ. In the hour of His dying, the Lord Jesus saw to it that His mother would be cared for, and “from that hour the disciple took her to his own home” (John 19:27). The Son who honoured His mother in His last agony is the pattern for every Eastern child who bows before his parents, and He is the One who gives that child strength to keep honouring them when it costs him something.

Reflection Questions: Chapter 1

1. The Eastern philosophical traditions, Confucianism, Taoism, and the thought of Mencius, reflect something of the created human capacity for moral awareness and reverence. How do you engage respectfully with Eastern cultural expressions of this awareness while also bearing witness to the God who has personally spoken?
2. Lao Tsu’s Tao is described as beyond naming and beyond rational comprehension. How does the Christian doctrine of general revelation help your congregation or fellowship affirm what is true in this intuition while correcting what is insufficient?
3. Eastern thought prizes relational harmony and communal virtue. How do these values resonate with the biblical vision of the human person as inherently social and made for community, and where do they fall short of it? Name one relationship in your own life where you can practise the peace that Christ has made.

CHAPTER 2

The Western Hemisphere: Materialistic and Intellectual

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.”

— Acts 17:24

If the Eastern tradition is characterized by mysticism and intuition, the Western philosophical tradition is characterized by its emphasis on rational analysis, material explanation, and the power of the human intellect to penetrate the structure of reality. It flows from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle through the Enlightenment and into modernity. It has produced the extraordinary achievements of Western science, technology, law, and political philosophy, and every person alive today, including the Christian, lives in a house that Western reason helped to build. I do not begin by complaining about this. I begin by giving thanks for it.

The best place to see how the Bible deals with Western thought is the Areopagus in Athens. Paul arrived in a city given over to philosophy, and Luke tells us that “all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (Acts 17:21). Paul did not run from that atmosphere, and he did not surrender to it. He took the city’s own altar, “To the unknown god,” as his starting point (Acts 17:23), and he proclaimed the Creator whom their philosophers had been groping toward. His method is the pattern for this chapter. I will ask what the Western tradition has preserved, what it has distorted, and what the Gospel brings, under two headings: the Materialistic and the Phenomenal.

A. Materialistic: Mostly Legendary

The Western philosophical tradition from Aristotle onward has been increasingly preoccupied with the material world, with understanding its structure, predicting its behaviour, and harnessing its energies for human purposes. The great Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and Bacon, transformed this preoccupation into a systematic method: empirical observation, mathematical description, and experimental testing. The results have been spectacular, from the printing press to the telescope, from the vaccine to the satellite, from the steam engine to the computer.

1. What Is Preserved

The first thing to say is that the Christian faith has nothing to fear from the careful study of the material world, and a great deal to celebrate in it. Scripture itself calls God's people to such study: "Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them" (Ps. 111:2). The Creator pronounced His own work good, for "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31), and He placed man in the garden "to work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). The scientist who investigates the structure of the cell or the orbit of a planet is, whether he knows it or not, carrying out the task that the Creator gave to man.

The pioneers of modern science understood this. Kepler, Newton, and Boyle were professing Christians who regarded the study of nature as the study of God's handiwork, and they expected to find order in nature because they believed in an orderly Creator. John Calvin spoke of the created world as the theatre of God's glory. The Bible's own word for this is plain.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."

— Psalm 19:1–2

Every discovery of science is therefore a verse in the sermon that creation has been preaching since the beginning. Wherever Western

science has been honest, it has served the glory of the God who made what it studies. A believing student of chemistry or medicine or engineering is not a person who has left the Church for the laboratory. She is a person who has been given a share in the Creator's own delight.

2. What Is Distorted

But the spectacular achievements of Western science have come at a cost. Alongside them has grown the tendency to treat the material world as all there is, and to dismiss as “legendary” or “mythological” any account of reality that cannot be submitted to empirical investigation. This materialistic **reductionism**, the view that the real is only what can be measured, is not a conclusion of science but a philosophical prejudice that shapes what science is allowed to look for. No microscope has ever found the absence of God, and no telescope has ever been built that could. A method that by its own rules can only see matter will, of course, report that it sees only matter. That is a discovery about the method and not about the universe.

The same reductionism has a practical form that is older than any laboratory, and the Lord Jesus warned against it: “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). A culture that measures everything by what it can count will end by measuring human beings the same way, as units of production and consumption. It will find that its people have everything and are starving for something that it cannot explain. Jesus answered the tempter in the wilderness with the words of Moses: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

The tragedy of materialism is that it is blind to what it already stands on. Paul says that God's “invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:20). The material world is not silent about God. It is the loudest witness to Him that exists, and the materialist is the man who has trained himself to hear only the noise and not the words.

The word *legendary* deserves its own comment, because it is the favourite label of the materialist for the claims of the Bible. Whatever cannot be repeated in a laboratory is set aside as a story that the credulous have told. But the events of history are never repeated, and no one concludes from this that the Battle of Hastings did not happen. The apostles knew the charge, and they answered it: “we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). Luke likewise tells Theophilus that he had written “an orderly account” so that he might “have certainty” (Luke 1:3–4). The Christian faith rests on events that were witnessed, reported, and recorded, and it invites investigation of them.

3. What the Gospel Brings

The Christian **cosmoscope**, the way of seeing the whole created order through the lens of Scripture, insists that the material world is real and good but not ultimate. It refuses both errors, the Eastern error that matter is an illusion to be escaped and the Western error that matter is all there is. The author of Hebrews gives the believer’s ground in one sentence: “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Heb. 11:3). What is seen has its source in what is not seen, and Paul adds that the Son holds the whole of it together.

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

— Colossians 1:16–17

This is the Gospel’s reply to the legend. The Word who made the world “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), and He entered the material order in a real body, died a real death, and rose again with a real, glorified body. Christianity is therefore no enemy of matter, and it has no quarrel with the study of it. What it denies is that matter is the whole story. It places the whole of creation under a Lord, and it calls the

scientist to do his work as an act of worship. For the Western believer, the call is to hold the microscope in one hand and the Bible in the other, and to be ashamed of neither.

B. Phenomenal: Mainly Intellectual

The Western tradition's emphasis on the phenomena, the appearances of things as they present themselves to rational investigation, has produced both its greatest strength and its characteristic weakness. Its strength is precision, the capacity to analyze, categorize, and explain the structures of the natural world with extraordinary accuracy. Its weakness is the tendency to confuse the description of appearances with the explanation of reality.

1. What Is Preserved

The Greeks gave the world the love of wisdom, and the habit of asking why. They taught that arguments must be tested, that definitions must be clear, and that conclusions must follow from premises. These are gifts, and the Church has used them for two thousand years in the writing of its creeds, the defence of its doctrines, and the instruction of its pastors. The Lord Himself commands the use of the mind in the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37).

The Church was also the mother of the Western university. Bologna, Paris, and Oxford grew out of cathedral and monastic schools, and their first teachers were men who believed that to study the world was to study the work of the Creator. That the modern university has often turned its back on its Christian origins does not make those origins any less real.

Plato saw the limits of mere appearances and sought to move beyond them through his doctrine of **Forms**, the unchanging, eternal realities of which material things are imperfect copies. The Christian tradition finds in this Platonic intuition a partial, culturally mediated reflection of the biblical distinction between the Creator and the creation. There is indeed

a reality more fundamental than the material world, and it is the mind of God, the Logos through whom all things were made.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

— John 1:1–3

The Greek philosophers were reaching for what John declares, that the rational order of the world has a personal source. They did not find Him by reason alone. But their reaching was not in vain, and Paul was able to quote their own poets to them: “In him we live and move and have our being” and “For we are indeed his offspring” (Acts 17:28).

2. What Is Distorted

The distortion enters when the intellect is enthroned. The Enlightenment gave this error its most confident form, the belief that human reason, working alone and without any appeal to revelation, can establish the truth about God, man, and the world. Paul says of such confidence, “Claiming to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). Elsewhere he asks, “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Cor. 1:20). Reason is a created faculty, and it shares in the effects of the fall as every other faculty does. It works best when it works under the authority of the God who gave it.

Solomon states the alternative in a way that no university has improved on: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Prov. 3:5–6). To lean on one’s own understanding is not to use it. It is to make it the only support. The mind that acknowledges God in all its ways is not weakened by that acknowledgment. It is steadied, like a surveyor who has finally been given a fixed point from which to measure.

There is a quieter version of the same distortion, and it can be found inside the Church. It is the habit of treating the Christian faith as a body

of information to be mastered, and not as a Person to be known and obeyed. A man can pass an examination in theology and be a stranger to the God of whom he writes. The Western church has often been brilliant in its doctrine and thin in its devotion, and it has sometimes mistaken the ability to explain a truth for the possession of it. Paul warned the Colossians, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col. 2:8).

3. What the Gospel Brings

The Gospel does not ask the Western mind to stop thinking. It asks the Western mind to think under the Lordship of Christ. Paul’s own phrase is worth a long pause: “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Every thought is to be taken captive, and none is to be destroyed. The scholar does not leave his scholarship at the door of the church. He brings it in, and he places it in the service of the One who made his mind.

The Western student who reads Proverbs will find that the book begins exactly where the Gospel begins. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). The order matters. Reverence does not come after the research as a pleasant addition. It stands at the head of it, and every discipline, from philology to physics, is better done by the person who begins there.

The Gospel also confronts the Western mind at the point where it is weakest, which is the claim that reason can finish the work alone. “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:22–24). The cross is a scandal to the philosopher because it comes to him as a gift and not as a conclusion. But it is the wisdom of God, and the philosopher who bows before it discovers that every good question he ever asked had an answer waiting.

Paul's own address on the Areopagus ends with a proclamation that no philosophy can supply: God "has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Here the Western believer finds the ground for his confidence. He has not only an argument but an event, a resurrection that happened in history, and the God who raised Him now "commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Reflection Questions: Chapter 2

1. Western thought has produced remarkable achievements in science, technology, and political philosophy. How do you affirm these achievements as expressions of the human capacity to explore and steward creation, without granting science the authority to define all of reality?
2. The Western tendency toward materialistic reductionism dismisses what cannot be empirically measured. What are the most important dimensions of reality, personal, moral, and spiritual, that are lost when this reductionism is applied consistently, and how can your church bear witness to them in the community around it?
3. Paul's address to the Athenians (Acts 17:22–31) is the New Testament's most direct engagement with Western intellectual culture. What can you learn from his approach for your own engagement with the secular Western academy or workplace? Choose one conversation this month in which you will practise it.

CHAPTER 3

Northern and Southern Hemispheres: Imperialistic and Social

“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.’”

— Revelation 5:9

The civilizational traditions of the Northern and Southern hemispheres have shaped human history in ways that are often less philosophically articulated than the Eastern and Western traditions but no less significant for the development of human culture, politics, and society. The North has characteristically been associated with political power, imperial expansion, and the organization of societies around the mastery of nature and neighbouring peoples. The South has characteristically been associated with animism, community cohesion, and a positive contentment with the social and natural environment.

I treat the two together because they are best understood side by side. The one looks outward, toward the conquest and arrangement of what lies around it. The other looks inward, toward the life of the people who share a place. Between them they hold two halves of the human calling, to rule the earth and to love one another, and each tradition tends to forget the half that the other remembers. I am aware that I use the words Northern and Southern in a broad and rough way, and the reader should hear them as I do, as pointers to tendencies and not as fences around peoples.

The same three questions guide the chapter: what has been preserved, what has been distorted, and what the Gospel brings. The scene of Revelation 5:9 stands over both of them. A day is coming when the Lamb will be worshiped by people from every tribe and language and

people and nation, and the North and the South will be in that crowd together.

A. The Northern Hemisphere: Surrounding-Oriented and Imperialistic

The great imperial civilizations of northern and central Europe, the Germanic tribes, the Norse, the Slavic peoples, and (in a different register) the empires of Central Asia, have been characterized by a preoccupation with the conquest and organization of their surrounding environment. The uncivilized north, as the ancient world called it, was the domain of warrior cultures whose world-and-life view was shaped by the dynamics of survival, expansion, and dominance. Out of such soil came, in later centuries, the nation-state, the parliament, the market, and the modern corporation, which are all ways of ordering the surroundings by organized power.

1. What Is Preserved

The Northern instinct to organize the surrounding world is not in itself sinful. It is the instinct of Adam, set in the garden and told to work it and keep it (Gen. 2:15). God made man to arrange, build, and govern, and a people that has learned to do this well has received a real gift. The government of a nation, the rule of law, and the courts that protect the weak from the strong are not accidents of history. Scripture calls them ordinances of God.

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”

— Romans 13:1

Peter tells the churches to “honor everyone,” and in the same breath to “fear God” and “honor the emperor” (1 Pet. 2:17). Solomon says, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). The Northern traditions have produced constitutions that limit the power of rulers, courts that bind even the king, and a long habit

of political debate, and the Christian can thank God for these as common grace at work. Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian and statesman whose thought has shaped my own, saw that Christ is sovereign over every square inch of human life, the political and the economic included. A Christian does not stand outside politics and economics. He stands in them as a servant of the King.

The Northern gift is also economic. Out of the same instinct to arrange and improve the surroundings came the guild, the trading company, the factory, and the bank, and with them a rising standard of living for millions of people. Work done well is honoured in Scripture: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (Col. 3:23). A believer in business, in manufacturing, or in public administration is not doing a lesser thing than a missionary. He is doing his own work in the place where God has put him, and he is doing it before the Lord.

2. What Is Distorted

The distortion appears when ordering the surroundings becomes ruling over the neighbours. The oldest picture of this sin is Babel, where the builders said, “let us make a name for ourselves” (Gen. 11:4). The tower was a monument to human power, raised against the purpose of God that the nations should fill the earth. Every empire since has been a Babel of one kind or another. The warrior cultures of the North conquered their neighbours, and the empires that followed them, however refined their administration, carried the same spirit.

The Lord Jesus describes this spirit exactly, and He forbids it among His people.

“You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant.”

— Mark 10:42–43

I must add a confession, because honesty requires it. The nations of the North have sent missionaries to the South and the East, and they have also sent soldiers, traders, and administrators. Sometimes the cross went in front of the flag, and sometimes the flag was carried behind the cross. The Church must not pretend that this did not happen, and it must not allow the failures of Christians in power to hide the faithfulness of the missionaries who suffered and died to bring the Gospel. We can say both things together, with sorrow for the one and gratitude for the other.

3. What the Gospel Brings

The Christianization of these peoples, beginning in earnest in the early medieval period, did not erase these cultural patterns but subjected them to a new Lord. Paul had already named the Scythians, a people from the northern steppe whom the Greeks counted as barbarians, among those to whom the Gospel comes, for in Christ “there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:11). The history of Christendom in Northern Europe, with its cathedral builders, its monastic movements, and its Reformation, is the history of tribal vitality being brought under the discipline of the Gospel and producing, in the process, some of the most extraordinary achievements in art, music, theology, and political thought that the world has known.

The Gospel also gives the Northern believer a pattern of rule that Babel never had. “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The King who commands the nations has shown what kingship means, and He has done it by taking a cross. The Northern Christian is therefore free to hold power, as Joseph did and as Daniel did, but only as a steward who will give an account. And the end of the story is not the fall of every empire but the redemption of what was good in them: “By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it” (Rev. 21:24).

B. The Southern Hemisphere: Self-Oriented and Community-Minded

The cultures of the Southern Hemisphere, the indigenous peoples of Africa, South America, and Oceania, have characteristically been organized around the dynamics of communal belonging, spiritual attentiveness to the natural world, and a positive social contentment that Western modernity has often failed to appreciate. When I call this orientation self-oriented, I do not mean selfish. I mean settled, a people at home with itself and with the place that it has been given, without the restless drive to conquer that marks the North. **Animism**, the belief that the natural world is inhabited by spiritual beings and forces, is the characteristic religious expression of the Southern cultures.

1. What Is Preserved

The first thing that the South has preserved is the sense that a person does not exist alone. The Southern African concept of **ubuntu**, which Archbishop Desmond Tutu did much to introduce to the wider world, is often summed up in the words “I am because we are.” It captures a dimension of the biblical vision of communal personhood that Western individualism has often obscured. The Bible says it in many ways, and Paul says it with the image of the body.

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”

— 1 Corinthians 12:12

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor. 12:26). The believers of the first church in Jerusalem “had all things in common” and distributed what they had “as any had need” (Acts 2:44–45). A village that stops its work to bury a neighbour, or that shares a harvest with a family in need, has kept something that wealthy cities have lost. The Psalmist said, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” (Ps. 133:1).

The South has also preserved a spiritual attentiveness to the world. The animist is not tempted to think that the world is a machine. He

knows that it is alive with meaning, and that human beings do not stand alone before it. “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Ps. 24:1). The Southern believer who hears this verse hears it as a native speaker, and the Western believer, who has been taught to see only dead matter, may need him as a teacher.

The South has preserved something else that the Bible commands, which is hospitality. In a village where a stranger is welcomed to the fire and fed before he is asked his business, I see the habit that Paul urges on the Roman believers: “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality” (Rom. 12:13). Cities that lock their doors have often forgotten what a village that leaves them open has never needed to be taught.

2. What Is Distorted

The distortion of animism is that the spirits it honours are not the Creator. Where the Eastern mystic honours an impersonal mystery and the Western materialist honours nothing at all, the animist honours many invisible powers and lives in fear of them. Paul and Barnabas met this at Lystra, where the crowd tried to sacrifice to them as gods, and they answered, “turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15). The cure for the fear of many spirits is not a clever argument but the knowledge of the one true and living God, who is greater than every power that frightens the heart.

“So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

— Romans 14:12

A second distortion is more subtle. A community can become so strong that the individual conscience is lost in it. The tribe decides, the elders speak, and the person who sees things differently is silenced. Scripture honours the community, but it also teaches that every person stands alone before God, and no village, family, or tribe can answer for him on the last day. A third distortion is that contentment can harden into

resignation. A people who have been taught to accept what they are given may be slow to protest when what they are given is injustice. Biblical contentment is never the permission to leave the poor in want.

3. What the Gospel Brings

The Gospel has spread with remarkable vitality through the Southern hemisphere in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, partly because the worldview of animism is more explicitly spiritual and therefore more directly addressable by the Gospel than the materialism of the West. The Southern believer does not need to be persuaded that the unseen world is real. He needs to hear who rules it. The Gospel does not destroy ubuntu. It grounds it in the community of the Triune God. The Lord Jesus prayed “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us” (John 17:21), and the unity of the Church is therefore a reflection of the life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Gospel also gives the Southern believer a better word for contentment. “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). The community that bears burdens is the community that Christ has formed, and it will not let a person starve or suffer alone. Paul, who wrote the great chapter on contentment, wrote it from a prison cell.

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.”

— Philippians 4:11–12

This is contentment in Christ and not in circumstances, and it is available to the poor and the rich alike. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). The Southern believer, who has long known how to be content, can teach the rest of the Church how to be content for the right reason.

A Concluding Summary: Four Hemispheres in Biblical Perspective

I draw the four hemispheric traditions together in a closing summary. Ancient and Eastern cultures are instinctively religious. Progressive and Western cultures are technologically advancing. Economic and Northern cultures are politically minded. Stewardship-minded and Southern cultures are positively social in their contentment. In each of these descriptions there is something that God gave and something that sin has bent. The instinctive religion of the East is the echo of the God-consciousness that Paul found in Athens, and it is bent when it worships the unknown. The technological progress of the West is the fruit of the creation mandate, and it is bent when it forgets the Maker. The political mind of the North is a gift for ordering the world, and it is bent when ordering becomes domination. The social contentment of the South is a gift of love and gratitude, and it is bent when it bows before powers that are not God.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not destroy culture. It redeems it. It receives what is genuinely human in every tradition and subjects it to the Lordship of Christ, not erasing the distinctive gifts of Eastern intuition, Western precision, Northern energy, and Southern community, but liberating them from the distortions of sin and consecrating them to the glory of God. Each tradition therefore has something to give and something to receive. The East can teach the West reverence, and the West can teach the East to reason with care. The North can teach the South to build, and the South can teach the North to belong. The Church, which is the one body of Christ spread over all the hemispheres, is the place where these exchanges are meant to happen.

Reflection Questions: Chapter 3

1. The North has shown both the gift of ordered government and the sin of domination, and the South has shown both the gift of community and the danger of spiritual fear. How does the biblical doctrine of

common grace help you to honour what God has given to each without excusing what sin has done?

2. The history of Northern missions includes both costly faithfulness and painful complicity in conquest. How should a church from a Northern culture, and a church from a Southern culture, speak honestly to one another about that history while holding together in Christ?
3. Where in your own life do you tend to rule your surroundings, and where do you tend to settle into them? Name one habit of the opposite orientation that the Lord is asking you to learn.

Application Questions

1. Are we non-denominational Christians, able to receive the gifts of the whole Body of Christ across traditions and cultures, without demanding that others conform to our particular cultural expression of the faith?
2. Are we open to the insights of technological and scientific progress, received within a biblical framework that acknowledges both the goodness of creation and its subjection to the curse of sin?
3. Are we genuinely democratic and politically engaged Christians, people who exercise our citizenship for the common good while maintaining our primary citizenship in the Kingdom of God? “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20).
4. Are we positively, sociably, and biblically content, people who have learned, in whatever state they are in, to be content (Phil. 4:11), without either grasping for more or despising what they have been given?

Conclusion

The four hemispheric traditions of human thought and culture, Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern, are not competitors for the title of the true human worldview. They are four expressions of a single human nature, created in the image of God, distributed across the face of the earth by the providence of God, and shaped by the particular geographical, historical, and spiritual forces that have formed each people. By **providence** I mean the continual care by which God upholds and governs all that He has made. Paul puts it in a sentence: God “determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Acts 17:26).

The Christian is not called to choose between these traditions or to transplant one into the soil of another. She is called to receive the gift of each, the mystical depth of the East, the analytical precision of the West, the political energy of the North, and the communal warmth of the South, and to bring each under the Lordship of the One in whom, as Paul says, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). In that new humanity, “Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:11). The unity that Christ gives does not flatten the differences. It places them in a single family.

I have tried throughout this book to keep two things together that the world tends to separate. The first is respect for every people, because every people bears the image of God and has heard something of His voice. The second is the unshakeable conviction that no people has found its way to God by its own wisdom, and that the Gospel is the only road by which East, West, North, and South can reach Him. If I had given only the first, I would have written a book of flattery. If I had given only the second, I would have written a book of contempt. The Gospel gives us both, and it gives them in love.

The diversity of human culture is not a problem to be solved. It is a gift to be received and a mission field to be engaged. The risen Lord has commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19), and He sends us to peoples whose ways of thinking differ from our own. That is why a missionary must learn the language and listen to the thought of the people to whom he goes, as Paul listened in Athens. We do not go empty-handed, and we do not go empty-headed either.

The God who made from one man every nation of the earth is the God who, at the end of all things, will receive worship from a vast crowd: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). That eschatological vision, the biblical teaching about the final consummation of all things, should shape the missional imagination of the church in every generation. In that day the Eastern sage will have found the Way, the Western scholar will have found the Word, the Northern ruler will have laid his crown before the King, and the Southern villager will sit at a table large enough for every neighbour.

Until that day, let us receive one another, correct one another, and serve one another, and let us bring every tradition we have inherited to the feet of Christ.

Soli Deo gloria.

Personal Questions and Challenges

On Man's God-Consciousness and the Witness of Creation

1. When you consider that every culture on earth has some form of religion, what does that tell you about your own neighbours who do not profess faith in Christ, and how does it shape the way you speak to them?
2. Romans 1 teaches that God has shown Himself plainly through creation, and that the knowledge is suppressed. In what ways have you seen this suppression in others, and in what ways have you seen it in yourself?
3. Choose one ordinary object or place that you see every day. This week, give thanks aloud to the Creator each time you see it, and write down what it teaches you about Him.

On Eastern Mystery and Western Reason

1. Where do you find it easier to stand in silent reverence before God, and where do you find it easier to analyze and explain Him? What would you lose if you kept only one of the two?
2. How have you seen the Church overvalue either intuition or intellect, and what has that cost the members of your congregation?
3. Set aside fifteen minutes each day this month for two practices in order. First sit quietly before the Lord, and then read one passage of Scripture slowly and ask what it teaches about Him and what it requires of you.

On Northern Power and Southern Community

1. Where have you seen authority exercised in a way that serves, and where in a way that lords it over others? What marks the difference in the light of Mark 10:42–45?
2. Who in your congregation is carrying a burden alone, and what would it take for you to share it with them?
3. Choose one concrete way this month to use whatever power or influence you have for the good of a person who cannot repay you, and one concrete way to join a neighbour in a sorrow or celebration of theirs.

On Living Between Cultures in Christ

1. Which cultures have formed you, and which of their habits do you hold more tightly than the Scriptures themselves?
2. Which brother or sister in your church comes from a background different from yours, and what could you learn from them about how Christ is seen in their tradition?
3. Make one change in the way you live this month so that someone from another culture feels more welcome at your table, in your home, or in your church.

Glossary

Animism: The belief that the natural world is inhabited by spirits and spiritual forces, and that these powers must be honoured, appeased, or avoided.

Apophatic: Describing God by what He is not, such as unlimited or beyond understanding, in order to guard His greatness. In the Christian tradition it never replaces what God has plainly said about Himself.

Common Grace: The undeserved kindness of God toward all people, by which He restrains the worst effects of sin and gives gifts of wisdom, beauty, and order even to those who do not know Him.

Cosmoscope: The Christian way of seeing the whole created order, its origin, nature, and purpose, through the lens of Scripture.

Eschatological: Having to do with the last things, the final return of Christ, the judgment, and the new heaven and new earth.

Forms: In the thought of Plato, the unchanging and eternal realities of which the things we see and touch are imperfect copies.

General Revelation: The disclosure of God to all people, in every place and age, through the created world and the human conscience.

Image of God: The biblical teaching that every human being was made to reflect his Creator in a way that no other creature does, in his reason, his moral awareness, and his capacity for relationship.

Mandate of Heaven (Tian Ming): In Confucian thought, a moral order that stands above rulers and people, and with which a virtuous person is called to live in harmony.

Numinous: The sense of an awe-inspiring presence or mystery greater than ourselves, a word made well known by the scholar Rudolf Otto.

Providence: The continual care by which God upholds and governs all that He has made, and directs it to His purposes.

Reductionism: The view that only what can be measured or explained by physical processes is real, and that everything else is an illusion or can be reduced to physical processes.

Ren: The Chinese word for benevolence or humaneness, the central virtue of Confucian ethics.

Tao: In Taoism, the Way, the unnamed and unnameable source and pattern of all things.

Ubuntu: A Southern African word for the truth that a person becomes a person through other people, often summed up as “I am because we are.”

World-and-Life View: The whole way in which a person or a people understands what the world is and how life ought to be lived in it.

Wu Wei: In Taoism, acting in harmony with the natural order and without forcing it.

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Romans	<i>13:1</i>	<i>Chapter 3</i>
Romans	<i>14:12</i>	<i>Chapter 3</i>
1 Corinthians	<i>1:20</i>	<i>Chapter 2</i>
1 Corinthians	<i>1:22–24</i>	<i>Chapter 2</i>
1 Corinthians	<i>12:12</i>	<i>Chapter 3</i>
1 Corinthians	<i>12:26</i>	<i>Chapter 3</i>
2 Corinthians	<i>10:5</i>	<i>Chapter 2</i>
Galatians	<i>2:16</i>	<i>Chapter 1</i>
Galatians	<i>3:28</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Galatians	<i>6:2</i>	<i>Chapter 3</i>
Ephesians	<i>2:14</i>	<i>Chapter 1</i>
Philippians	<i>3:20</i>	<i>Chapter 3</i>

Philippians	4:11	<i>Chapter 3</i>
Philippians	4:11–12	<i>Chapter 3</i>
Colossians	1:16–17	<i>Chapter 2</i>
Colossians	2:3	<i>Introduction; Chapter 1</i>
Colossians	2:8	<i>Chapter 2</i>
Colossians	3:11	<i>Chapter 3; Conclusion</i>
Colossians	3:23	<i>Chapter 3</i>
1 Timothy	6:6	<i>Chapter 3</i>
2 Timothy	3:1–14	<i>Introduction</i>
2 Timothy	3:5	<i>Introduction</i>
Hebrews	1:1–2	<i>Chapter 1</i>
Hebrews	11:3	<i>Chapter 2</i>
1 Peter	2:17	<i>Chapter 3</i>
2 Peter	1:16	<i>Chapter 2</i>
Revelation	5:9	<i>Chapter 3</i>
Revelation	7:9	<i>Conclusion</i>
Revelation	21:24	<i>Chapter 3</i>

About the Author

Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar is a Pastor Emeritus who holds the degrees of Th.B. (Bachelor of Theology), A.B. (Bachelor of Arts), and D.D. (Doctor of Divinity). He has devoted his life and ministry to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the rigorous theological formation of God's people, and the equipping of pastoral leaders for faithful and effective ministry in church and society.

Pastor Bal served for many years as a pastor and theological educator, and has been a central figure in the work of Holistic Enhancement for Lay-leaders and Pastors (HELP, Inc.) — a parachurch ministry committed to equipping the whole people of God for faithful service across every sphere of life. His monthly theological lectures to the HELP, Inc. fellowship have addressed the most foundational questions of the Christian faith, and these studies, expanded, deepened, and formatted for print, have shaped the theological works he continues to write.

His theological formation reflects sustained engagement with the whole of the Reformed and evangelical tradition. Among those whose thought has most shaped his own are Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, Louis Berkhof, Benjamin B. Warfield, Oscar Cullmann, Herman Dooyeweerd, Karl Barth, Paul Jewett, Francis Schaeffer, R.C. Sproul, and Ravi Zacharias. He reads every theological question through the lens of the whole counsel of God, and has spent a lifetime teaching others to do the same.

The present work, *Eastern / Western Thinking and World-and-Life Views*, represents Pastor Bal's engagement with the great civilizational traditions of human thought, evaluated through the lens of biblical anthropology and the Reformed worldview. It is a book for every believer who lives at the crossroads of cultures and seeks a biblically coherent framework for understanding human diversity.

Other theological works by the author:

Spiritual Unity and Personal Diversity in Christ · Why God Did Decree and Allow Evil to Exist · What the Christian Church Should Be · The Reformed Theological Paradigm · The Holy Loving Triune Lord God · The Truth of Divine Election · Biblical Christian Cosmoscope · Cosmological Arguments for the Origin of the Universe · The Epistemological Thinking for Christians · The Progressive Parallelisms in the Book of Revelation · The Seventy Weeks of Daniel · The Five Solas · The Threefold Understanding of Salvation · The Thinking Process of the Christian Mind · Millennium in the Bible · The Seven Loci of Christian Theology · Six Calvinistic Schools on Soteriology · Paul's Summary of His Message in the Ministry · Doctrines of Divine Grace Part II · Biblical Salvation · The Work of the Holy Spirit · The Reformed Theological Summary of Life · The Five Illustrations of Divine Truths · Our Attitude Towards Wealth · The Main Subjects of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses · The Seven Churches of Revelation · In Everything, Give Thanks to God · Divine Election unto Salvation · Comparing and Contrasting Calvinism and Arminianism · The Athanasian Creed Understood by Faith · Vital Words Related to Salvation · The Seven Loci of Dogmatics

He lives with his beloved wife, Estrella. He is the father of Dr. Ellazar and Zarelle Grace. He continues to preach, teach, write, and intercede for the reformation and renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ, until the day when faith gives way to sight and the knowledge that is now partial becomes the knowledge that is full.

Soli Deo gloria.