



"Now that we live in a scientific age, haven't we outgrown Christianity?"

James May

In days gone by simple village folk might have discussed the mysterious beings that lived beyond their own realm of experience. The edge of the forest was a dark and fearful place, where all manner of monsters concealed themselves. Today, however, we have a tool, which in theory at least, has mapped out not just the forest, or merely the great oceans, but the entire universe to the very edges of space-time. Empirical (sensory experience based) science has shown that far from there being mysterious powers lurking around every dark corner, that there is an extraordinary uniformity to the way the whole universe behaves. There are regular laws of gravity and motion which describe both the fall of an apple and the movements of the stars. It was as if Isaac Newton had in a moment of brilliance switched on the lights in the universe.

With more than a little pride, humans began to feel that every mystery could be solved, and that all knowledge and power was within their grasp. Such is the apparent power of science that it appears to be able to answer all questions. However, the principle problems of life throughout the ages, the questions of who we are and how we should live our lives have been sidestepped. Science does not address these questions, and they have therefore been viewed as irrelevant, with pragmatic rather than meaningful solutions.

Thus it is not so important to understand pain, as to take a paracetamol, prozac or pot.

So is that it? Have all monsters been banished and all questions solved? Alarmingly the first

sentence of 'Science: A History' by John Gribbin reads, 'The most important thing that science has taught us about our place in the Universe is that we are not special.' Science can both make us proud of our achievements and at the same time reduces us to specks of dust in the corner of a vast universe. But science has not really 'taught' us this. The philosopher Wittgenstein once wrote, 'We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched.' Questions about meaning and purpose are philosophical or theological, but are definitely outside of the scope of empirical science.

As an accumulated body of knowledge about the physical world, science is a magnificent tool, but as a description of the human condition it is clumsy and inadequate. Isaac Newton himself believed that science revealed the majesty of God's created order. There may not be any 'monsters' in the forest, but it is another question to try to remove God as creator, and to destroy human value, morality and significance. Knowing how a clock works does not tell us the time. We may be able to describe life's mechanisms, but what does it mean?

It is an error to read the creation story in Genesis through our modern eyes as primarily a scientific account of how the world came into being. It is rather a description of who made it, and why humans have a special place in it. Many Christian scientists therefore see no intrinsic disagreement between the biblical creation narrative and evolution as a possible description of the process God used during creation, though many doubt that evolution has the explanatory scope that is often claimed for it.

The Bible reveals what science is cannot explain: the origin of all matter created out of nothing, the basis of human value and purpose, and the reason human beings make such a mess of the world. Most importantly of all, it reveals the justice and mercy of the loving God who created the whole universe and then revealed himself within it, in the historic person of Jesus Christ.