

“In the long perspective of four thousand years, the Western world has developed or invented only two master . . . narratives of high explanatory power. . . . The sequence of Hebrew covenants followed by the New Testament Redemption story offers an account of things bestowed on us from on high by a single God. . . .” The other is a new “story of life emerging uncreated from the primal slime and finding its way upward by natural elimination.” (*Forbidden Knowledge*, 302)

That new story is not the same as the scientific theory of evolution. Most people, including most educated people are as ignorant of the scientific theory of evolution as they are of the scientific theory of relativity. I ask especially the scientists present here not to hear what I say as an attack on evolutionary science. It is not.

My target is the unscientific story that has grown out of the real science and passed off as real science. It isn't. It is a story, a mythology, a philosophy; in fact, it is a confession of secular faith as surely as the Apostles' Creed is a confession of Christian faith. I want to tell that story with help from C. S. Lewis and place it side by side with the Christian account of reality with help from Ephesians. I want you to feel the difference.

The difference between them frames the fundamental choice we must make between the City of Man and the City of God. It is not a question of one side trying to force its view on people. Each side tries to persuade all human beings to believe and live by its view of the meaning of human existence.

### **The City of Man**

In the City of Man “Evolution’ . . . is the formula for all existence. To exist means to be moving from the status of ‘almost zero’ to the status of ‘almost infinity.’ To those brought up on (evolution) nothing seems more normal, more natural, more plausible, than that chaos should turn into order, death into life, ignorance into knowledge. . . . It is one of the most moving and satisfying world dramas which have ever been imagined.

“The drama proper is preceded . . . by the most austere of preludes; the infinite void and matter endlessly, aimlessly moving to bring forth it knows not what. Then by some millionth, millionth chance . . . the conditions at one point of space and time bubble up into that tiny fermentation which we call organic life. At first everything seems to be against the infant hero of our drama; . . . But life somehow wins through. With incalculable sufferings . . . against all but insuperable obstacles, it spreads, it breeds, it complicates itself; from the amoeba up to the reptile, to the mammal. . . . This is the age of monsters: dragons prowl the earth, devour one another, and die. Then . . . as the weak, tiny spark of life herself began amidst the beasts that are far larger and stronger than {she}, there comes forth a little, naked, shivering, cowering biped, shuffling, not yet fully erect, promising nothing: the product of another millionth, millionth chance. His name . . . is Man: . . . He thrives. He begins killing his Giants. He becomes the Cave Man with his flints and his club, muttering and growling over his enemies' bones, almost a brute, yet somehow able to invent art, pottery, language, weapons, cookery and nearly everything else, . . . dragging his screaming mate by her hair . . . tearing his children to pieces in fierce jealousy until they are old enough to tear him, and cowering before the terrible gods he has invented in his own image.

“But these were only growing pains. In the next act he has become true Man. He learns to master Nature. Science arises and dissipates the superstitions of his infancy.

More and more he becomes the controller of his own fate. We follow our hero on into the future. See him in the last act, though not the last scene, of this great mystery. A race of demi-gods now {rules} the planet (in some versions, the galaxy). {Genetics} have made certain that only demi-gods will now be born: psycho-analysis that none of them shall lose or smirch his divinity: economics that they shall have to hand all that demi-gods require. Man has ascended his throne. Man has become God. All is a blaze of glory. . . . All this time Nature, the old enemy who only seemed to be defeated, has been gnawing away, silently, unceasingly, out of the reach of human power. The sun will cool – all suns will cool – the whole universe will run down. Life (every form of life) will be banished without hope of return from every cubic inch of infinite space. All ends in nothingness. ‘Universal darkness covers all.’ . . . The hero has swiftly fallen from the glory to which he slowly climbed . . . It brings us to the end not of a story, but of all possible stories.” (c. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, “The Funeral of a Great Myth, 86-88) Thus runs the central story in the City of Man.

### The City of God

Not so in the City of God. **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** (Genesis 1:1) Long before He did that, God decided to have a community on earth He could call “My people.” Love prompted Him to create this universe and that chosen people.

And so, He created man in his image and likeness. Male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26, 27) That’s how Man had the power “to invent art, pottery, language, weapons, cookery and nearly everything else.” God had given Man the spark of divinity we call freedom. He was free to love, and he was free not to love. He could even turn against His Creator. He did just that.

God would have to create His chosen people out of those who were **dead in transgressions and sins**. He planted Himself on the earth in a band of wandering Arameans, whom we later called Jews. He began with Abraham and promised that he and his descendants would bless all nations on earth. He shaped those descendants into His chosen people, because He loved them and kept the promise He made to Abraham. For 1500 years God made covenants with Israel and drummed into their soul that He is the only God, the Maker of heaven and earth. Other nations were excluded from the people of God, foreigners to God’s promises, without hope, and without God in the world.

In the fullness of time God the Son joined with Jewish flesh in blessed Mary’s womb and in His Manhood set about to emancipate all nations at great cost to Himself. Israel’s moment had arrived. The leaders of Israel missed it. They refused Jesus and had Him killed, thus unwittingly, ironically fulfilling God’s eternal of God and His promise to Abraham.

The New Testament never refers to that death as a tragedy or a travesty of justice but as an act of love. **God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** (John 3:16) Jesus’ death and resurrection emancipated His followers from guilt and lies and estrangement from God and constituted them as God’s chosen people, the Church.

A person joins the chosen people by faith. You believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you say publicly, “Jesus is Lord,” and you are baptized into His name. You have come alive spiritually. The Bible calls the process – from God’s

decision before the world began to the death of Christ to the most recent baptism and forward to the New Jerusalem – salvation. Jesus Christ saved Man from spiritual death.

An unexpected obstacle resisted God's eternal purpose. It wasn't certain Jewish leaders who contrived the death of Christ. It was the many other Jews who believed in Jesus, formed the first Church, spread the news about His resurrection, and but didn't want to tell anyone but Jews. God in person had entered the world through them, a holiday from the inevitable. Their Jesus had overcome death once for all and promised to judge the world with justice, and they thought they could keep that as a Jewish secret.

They thought they were obeying God. They were the chosen people. The Law of God with its more than 600 commands kept them pure of Gentile defilement. Why should the resurrection of Christ change that? The effort to retain Jewish purity is how the first Christians, all Jews, chosen by God, resisted God's decision to have a worldwide community He could call "My people."

Christ shattered the resistance. Christ **is our peace, who made** Jewish and Gentile Christians **one and destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility** between them. Something unprecedented began to happen in synagogues and house churches of the Roman Empire. Little bands of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus began meeting together to worship Him. It wasn't easy. They often disagreed about how believers should spend their time on the Sabbath, what food they should eat, and where they should buy their meat. They disagreed and could be disagreeable, but they worshipped together and tried to get along. The unthinkable was happening.

The wisdom of God began to emerge. There was not to be a Jewish Church and a Gentile Church. There is not to be a Black Church and a White Church and a Chinese Church. Those labels may be convenient shorthand for the ethnic make up of congregations, but if we aren't careful, and we have not been careful, convenience may kill the optic nerve of our spiritual sight, so that we can no longer see that "red and yellow, black and white," all Christians are **members together of one body**. There is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

The Church had broken out of its Jewish beachhead and begun to fulfill its high calling. In Christ the Church worldwide is **being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit**. The Church is God's dwelling place on earth. It is the flesh in which God shows Himself to the world. It is the "anchor that God has sunk into the soil of creation." (Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith*, 256) That is the Church's calling.

Then, in the teeth of demonic schemes, conflicting winds of teaching, darkened understanding, and unrestrained sensuality God lays on His people the burden and the joy of living in a way that is worthy of being His dwelling place on earth.

They all work together to grow the Church from its recurring ignorance and divisiveness into unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. They infuse the moral wisdom of humanity with new motives. They tell each other the truth, not so much because honesty is the best policy, as because they count on each other the way body parts have to work together. They are tender and forgiving with each other, not so much out of altruism, as out of the desire to imitate God and live a life of love.

They resist the devil by prayer and the word of God, by being truth tellers, by seeking to do what is right in God's eyes, being peacemakers, trusting God, and by rejoicing that they have been saved from spiritual death.

The Holy Spirit empowers the Church for this long journey. This Spirit-given, inner strength comes when Christ moves in, makes Himself comfortable in the Church, has the run of the house, so to speak, and makes necessary changes to the house and to the habits of the house. The Spirit fills our hearts and minds with light so that we learn the ways of God and know what we need more than our next breath – to know that Christ loves us.

And the ages accumulate, like leaves in autumn, and silently, surely, like seed growing in the earth from horizon to horizon, the Church spreads over all of the earth. Simultaneously, the Almighty inserts His hand into the glove of history, and a global economy emerges, technology shrinks the world, a United Nations, World Health Organization, and International Monetary Fund draw the nations together. Following the eternal counsels of His will, the Lord of all the earth is preparing the world for “the one far off, divine event toward which the whole creation moves:” **to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.**

Then, **“the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”** (Mark 13:24-25) “And, even as rafts float down a river, So shall the centuries drift, trailing like a caravan, Coming for judgment, out of the dark, to” Christ. (*Doctor Zhivago*, 559) **I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.** (Revelation 20:12)

**I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”** (Revelation 21:2-3) Man has been raised from the grave he dug for himself to the glory prepared for Him before the creation of the world. And so we come to the beginning not of a story, but of all possible stories. Thus runs the central story in the City of God.

### Take Aways

**This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life.** (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)