
INTRODUCTION

IT HAS NOW BEEN MORE than a decade since I wrote *The Limitations of Scientific Truth: Why Science Can't Answer Life's Ultimate Questions* (Brush 2005). That book was the result of many years of effort trying to harmonize biblical truth with scientific truth. I found that such linkages were not only possible but indeed plentiful, since the God who reveals himself through the Scriptures is the same God who reveals himself through the natural world which he has created, as both David (Ps. 19:1) and Paul (Rom. 1:20) have noted. Since Christians and non-Christians alike often find science to be a stumbling block to developing a deep faith in God, it was my desire to bring these two sources of revelation into agreement with each other. Many of the bridges I built between science and Scripture, however, would eventually collapse because science kept altering the shoreline on its side of the bridge. In other words, scientists' understanding of the natural world was constantly changing as more and more empirical evidence was acquired and new discoveries were made. This realization forced me to abandon my youthful dream of harmonizing Scripture and science, but it gave me a new question to ponder: Why does scientific truth continue to change? Moreover, if scientific truth was not fixed but instead, was in constant flux, how was it superior to philosophical truth or religious truth—as some scientists asserted? The end result of this line of research was a

book on the various limitations that keep science from arriving at absolute truth.

Although I failed in my initial quest to harmonize science and Scripture, it was my hope that by writing a book that delineated some of the limitations of scientific truth, I could free many of my fellow Christians from their fear of science and its pronouncements, since all scientific truths are provisional and permanently so. Why fear theories that are here today, but may be gone tomorrow? Instead of fearing and avoiding science, perhaps Christians, once they understood the limitations of scientific truth, would be more willing to examine current scientific theories and even participate in science research. Many Christians might thereby obtain a deeper understanding of the natural world that God has made, as well as the character of the God who has made it. Why should science, one of the most powerful methodologies for seeking truth ever devised by human beings, become the exclusive property of nonbelievers?

Many Christians who read my previous book were happy or relieved to learn about the limitations of scientific truth. Because of their faith in God, many Christians (including myself) had always believed that the Bible, being God's Word, was both superior and much more trustworthy than the ideas or theories of men. My book provided Christians with evidence, drawn from the writings of scientists and philosophers of science, that scientific truth had a number of significant limitations. Therefore, I concluded that scientific truth was not superior to biblical truth. After publishing *The Limitations of Scientific Truth*, however, I came to realize that theologians also shared the same limitations as scientists. Although the Bible was the Word of God, theology was not. Theology is the study of God and his relationship to humanity. It is a human discipline that attempts to understand and interpret God's Word. As a result, it has many of the same limitations that other human disciplines, such as science and philosophy, have. Moreover, it was obvious that some theological truths were not static, but were also changing over time—just like scientific truths. Indeed, many of the ideals

being advocated or the practices being condoned in churches today were rare or nonexistent in those same churches only fifty years ago. Although God does not change, nor does his Word, our theology—our understanding and interpretation of God’s Word—has changed in the past, is changing in the present, and will no doubt continue to change in the future. Many of the bridges I had previously attempted to build between Scripture and science had collapsed, not only because science kept shifting the shoreline on its side of the divide, but because theology was also shifting its shoreline as well. Theological truth is not superior to scientific truth; both are built on the shifting sands of human knowledge and understanding.

Instead of continuing to celebrate the limitations of scientific truth, therefore, perhaps it is time for Christians to carefully examine the limitations of theological truth. Why have our theological truths changed over time? What are the limitations we face as we try to understand the Bible? How is it possible that the church sometimes ends up with theological positions that actually run counter to the teachings of Christ? In this present book, *The Limitations of Theological Truth: Why Christians Have the Same Bible but Different Theologies*, I am going to argue that many of the limitations that scientists face in trying to understand God’s world are the very same limitations that theologians face in trying to understand God’s Word. The problem is not with the Bible: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The problem is with us, as fallen men and women: “All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him” (Isa. 53:6). Our theology is often flawed because we are flawed. When we fail to take this fundamental fact into consideration, we are vulnerable to a host of errors that may actually separate us from the God whom we are seeking to know better through our theological studies.

PART 1

THE HUMAN FACTOR QUEST

HUMAN DISCIPLINES AND THEIR HUMAN WEAKNESSES

ADAM AND EVE'S WILLFUL disobedience in the garden of Eden has impacted every aspect of our human experience. How can things ever be completely right in our lives or in the world around us when we are out of harmony with our Creator? The fallen nature of mankind pervades every aspect of our lives including our imaginations and intellectual pursuits. In this context, all human disciplines are flawed because the humans who work within these disciplines are themselves flawed.

I. THE QUEST FOR TRUTH

In my introductory classes at college, I point out to my students that we, as human beings, are on a quest for truth that began as soon as we became conscious of the world around us and will continue throughout our lives until the day we die. We seek truth in all aspects of our lives, including the places we live, the jobs at which we work, the hobbies we choose, our relationships with other people, or our own self-knowledge. For example: Is this city a safe place to live and raise a family? Does this job provide opportunities for advancement? Which team has the best players and is

most likely to win a championship? Will this man or woman be a good husband or wife? What career should I choose based on my talents and interests? For some, the most intensive period of this quest for truth will be during their college years when they have the opportunity to rapidly sharpen their intellectual skills and deepen their knowledge of the world around them. I also point out to my students that there are three basic approaches that humans have devised in their search for truth: religion, philosophy, and science. Of the three, religion is the oldest and science is the youngest. Unfortunately, the truths derived from each of these approaches often seem to contradict each other. Two of the primary reasons that the truths of one discipline are often out of harmony with the truths of another discipline are that each discipline confines its search for truth to a limited area and each discipline uses a different methodology in its search for truth within that area.

Scientists search for truth in the natural realm—the physical universe. The methodology they use is based on empirical evidence derived through the five senses: what we can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Scientists have also devised various instruments that enhance these senses, such as microscopes, telescopes, stethoscopes, sonar, etc. From the scientific perspective, what you apprehend with the five senses is all there is; or at least, all there is that is amenable to scientific research. Philosophy, on the other hand, seeks truth within the confines of the human mind. One can practice philosophy by simply sitting in a dark room and thinking about the meaning of life. The methodology of philosophy is based on rules for rational thought and various techniques for achieving this end, such as induction and deduction. Religion, however, seeks truth in the realm of the supernatural. A fundamental belief of most peoples and cultures down through the ages is that there is a deeper reality behind or beyond the physical realm in which we live. What you see or think is not all there is. There are hidden laws and deeper realities that govern the visible realm. Many believe that it is in this *supernatural* realm that ultimate truth resides. The problem is that we are confined to the natural realm and do not have direct physical access to the super-

natural realm. The only way to acquire truth from this realm is through revelation: these truths must be revealed to us by beings living in that other, hidden realm. Therefore, the methodology of religion is revelation, and all the great world religions are based on such disclosures of otherwise hidden and unknowable truths. Of course, all these revelations cannot be true since they often contradict each other. All religions, however, are founded on the *claim* that revelation has been received from the supernatural realm, just as all sciences are based on the claim that their theories are supported by empirical evidence.

In Hinduism, the most important scriptures are the *Vedas*, which were composed from the utterances of seers and sages who had received revelation from divine beings. In Islam, Mohammad heard a ringing in his ears that he came to realize was the voice of Allah speaking to him. He wrote down what Allah was saying to him and this became the *Koran*. In Judaism, the Ten Commandments were written on tablets of stone by the very finger of God before they were given to Moses. Knowledge of the law, and probably the early history of mankind and the Israelites, was also given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai and subsequently written down by Moses in the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis through Deuteronomy (Exod. 24:4; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:9; John 7:19; Acts 7:38). In Christianity, God's ultimate revelation to humanity was in the person of Christ, his only begotten Son. As Jesus said: "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak" (John 12:49). Through Christ, God entered the natural realm and dwelt among us. As Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Christianity is unique among all the world's religions because the Word (Christ) "became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). In other words, a door between the natural and supernatural realm was opened and God entered the natural realm of space and time in material form through his beloved Son. The existence of God could now be confirmed, not only through supernatural revelation, but also by empirical evidence: "What was from the

beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life” (1 John 1:1). Since Christ subsequently ascended back into heaven, we no longer have access to empirical evidence for God’s existence, although we do have the testimony of the apostles who were eyewitnesses: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

II. THEOLOGY: A HUMAN DISCIPLINE WITH A HEAD OF GOLD BUT FEET OF CLAY

Humans have devised various academic disciplines to aid them in their quest for truth, whether through science, philosophy, or religion. There are a number of academic disciplines within science that seek to study the natural realm, including astronomy, geology, and biology. In philosophy, some of these academic disciplines include metaphysics, logic, and ethics. The primary academic discipline within religion is theology. *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* defines theology as: “the study of God and his relation to the world” (Woolf 1981:1200).

After completing my book *The Limitations of Scientific Truth* in 2005, I subsequently came to understand that philosophy and religion shared many of the same limitations in their search for truth that I had previously identified for science, including temporal, logical, cultural, spatial, and empirical limitations. The common denominator behind these limitations in all three disciplines was the human factor. Science is an academic discipline devised by humans and practiced by humans; philosophy is an academic discipline devised by humans and practiced by humans; theology is an academic discipline devised by humans and practiced by humans—and all humans are flawed because of their sinful nature. Therefore, the ultimate reason that the truths of science are often difficult to harmonize with the truths of philosophy or religion is that all academic disciplines devised and practiced by humans are also flawed: they are composed of mixtures of truths,

half-truths, and falsehoods. If science, philosophy, or theology ever arrived at absolute truth, they would cease to change with time and would be in agreement with each other. Despite periodic bursts of optimism, this has not happened in the past, it is not happening today, nor will it happen in the future. Like the base of a rainbow, absolute truth always recedes beyond our reach every time we try to approach it through a human discipline.

The flaws in humans that practice these academic disciplines can be summarized in terms of three basic problems: (1) human ignorance—we don't have all the facts, (2) human error—we sometimes misinterpret the facts, and (3) human bias—we sometimes distort the facts. In my earlier book, I quoted from Stephen Jay Gould concerning the very human nature of the scientific discipline: "I criticize the myth that science itself is an objective enterprise, done properly only when scientists can shuck the constraints of their culture and view the world as it really is. . . . Rather, I believe that science must be understood as a social phenomenon, a gutsy, human enterprise, not the work of robots programmed to collect pure information" (1981:21). This same critique can also be applied to philosophy and religion. The idea that Christian theology, because of its subject matter (God) or its reliance upon divine revelation (the Bible), is somehow purer or less prone to error than other human disciplines is also a myth. Theologians, like scientists and philosophers, are also sinners, fallen humans who have limited knowledge about that which they study, who often make mistakes, and who all have their own unique set of biases. Although the focus of Christian theology is on the divine, it is nevertheless a very human discipline that is devised by humans and conducted by humans. As Witherington has noted, "It is time, indeed it is well past time, to recognize that 'theology' is what *we* do to and with the text" (2005:245). From this perspective, the academic discipline of theology is very similar to the troubling image that King Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream:

The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its

feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Dan. 2:32–35)

Like the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the book of Daniel, the discipline of theology may have a head of gold, the study of God and his Word, but it has feet of iron and clay. We are the feet of iron and clay that can easily be crushed, causing the entire structure to come crashing down into a pile of dust. Thus, Christian theology is subject to the same human limitations that afflict all human disciplines. These limitations are not in God's Word, but in ourselves. I believe that the Bible is God's Word, perfect, complete, and able to accomplish all things for which God made it. On the other hand, I do not believe that our understanding of the Bible is perfect or complete. Theology is a human discipline and the weak link in all human disciplines is the humans who practice those disciplines.

III. THEOLOGY'S IMPERFECTIONS MANIFESTED: A HOUSE DIVIDED

One of the most glaring examples of the limitations of theological truth is highlighted by the difference between *what* Jesus prayed that his church should be, and *what* the church has actually become. After the Last Supper, just before he left with his disciples for the Mount of Olives where Judas would betray him, Jesus concluded his prayer for the disciples with this request to his Father: "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20–21). Far from being of one mind and one heart, a

pure mirror with no imperfections that clearly reflects the love of the Father and the Son, the church has shattered into dozens of different glass shards. As we see in the writings of Luke and the apostle Paul, dissension within the church arose shortly after its founding on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 6:1, 15:1–2; Rom. 16:17–18; 1 Cor. 1:10–11, 11:18–19). Although these early arguments were settled by the authority of the apostles, similar theological disagreements and doctrinal squabbling within the church would punctuate church history for the next 2,000 years.

During the early part of the first millennium, a number of theological arguments arose within the church that ultimately had to be settled by the calling of major church councils, such as the Council of Nicaea over the Trinitarian Controversy. In this controversy, Arius contended that Christ, being the only begotten Son of God, had a beginning and was therefore not like God who had no beginning, whereas his bishop, Alexander, argued that Christ was coeternal with God and therefore of equal stature (Latourette 1953:152–153; Walton 1986: Chart 14). The Council of Nicaea decided in favor of Alexander and out of this council was forged the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance [*ousias*] of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance [*homoousion*] with the Father, through whom all things came to be, those things that are in heaven and those things that are on earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and was made man, suffered, rose the third day, ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead. (Latourette 1953:155)

Arius was wrong, however, not only because of the decision of the Council of Nicaea, but because of what Christ had testified concerning himself: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.’ So the Jews said to Him, ‘You are

not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.’ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple” (John 8:56–59). The reason the Jews were ready to stone Jesus was that he used the very same words, *I am*, to describe himself as God had used to describe himself to Moses: “Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you”’” (Exod. 3:13–14).

Another division that arose within the early church was concerning the dual nature of Christ, being both the Son of God and the Son of Man, with some elements within the church stressing the divine character of Christ, while others giving more weight to his human attributes. Several church councils were held over this controversy, concluding with the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which resulted in another statement of faith, the Creed of Chalcedon: “Following the holy fathers we all, with one voice, define that there is to be confessed one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, of rational soul and body, of the same substance [*homoousion*] with the Father according to the Godhead, and of the same substance [*homoousion*] with us according to the manhood, like to us in all respects, without sin, begotten of the Father before all time according to the Godhead...” (Latourette 1953:171). Other controversies arose in the early church over issues such as whether sins that were committed after baptism could be forgiven, whether those who had denied their faith during periods of Roman persecution should be allowed back into the church (the Donatist Controversy), or whether we are all born without sin, or into sin because of Adam’s transgression (the Pelagian Controversy). Although these and many other theological controversies led to the shedding off of many small groups of dissenters from the main body of believers, the church was able to

preserve its overall integrity through councils where these theological disputes were settled and doctrinal unity maintained.

The first great schism in the church did not occur until A.D. 1054 when the Eastern Church in Constantinople and the Western Church in Rome went their separate ways after Pope Leo IX of Rome and Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople excommunicated each other from the church. This split between the Orthodox Church and Catholic Church was due to a variety of factors including cultural differences between the Greeks and the Romans and political differences between the Byzantine Empire and the Holy Roman Empire, but it also involved several theological controversies, such as: (1) the Filioque Controversy over whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (Eastern Church) or from both the Father and the Son (Western Church); (2) the Iconoclastic Controversy over whether statues should be prohibited in worship (Eastern Church), or permitted (Western Church); (3) celibacy of the clergy; (4) the use of leavened or unleavened bread in the Eucharist; and (5) different emphasis on the divinity and humanity of Christ (Latourette 1953:571–572; Walton 1986: Chart 22). After this division, the Patriarch of Constantinople's control over the Orthodox Church would be weakened by the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by a Muslim army and the city's subsequent incorporation into the Ottoman Empire, as well as later, in 1472, when Ivan the Great of Russia attempted to assume the role of protector of the church. The Orthodox Church subsequently fragmented along national lines into fourteen different autocephalous (self-governing) branches, each with their own leader or leaders, including the Eastern Orthodox Churches of: Albania, Bulgaria, Czech and Slovak Republics, Georgia, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Serbia; the Oriental Orthodox Churches of: Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Cyprus, Greece, and Jerusalem; and the Orthodox Church in America.

The Catholic Church would also be subject to further fragmentation, such as during the Great Schism of the papacy between 1378 and 1417. From 1309 to 1378, because of political unrest in Italy, the popes had chosen to live at Avignon (which is now located in southern France). Italians sometimes refer to

this period as the Babylonian captivity of the papacy. Then, after some sixty-nine years, Pope Gregory XI (1370–1378) moved his residence back to Rome in 1378, but died shortly thereafter. In an attempt to break the power of the French over the papacy, the Italians elected a pope from among their members, Urban VI (1378–1389), but the French Cardinals rejected this choice and elected their own pope, Clement VII (1378–1394). After failing to overthrow Urban VI and recapture Rome after three years of warfare, Clement VII moved his residence back to Avignon while Urban VI remained in Rome. Thus, for the next thirty-one years the Catholic Church had two popes. Then in 1409, the Council of Pisa appointed their own pope, Alexander V (1409–1410). The three popes and their successors in Avignon, Rome, and Pisa vied for power over the next eight years. The papacy was finally restored to Rome in 1417 when the Council of Constance in 1414 and 1417 deposed all three contenders and named Martin V (1417–1431) as the new pope at Rome (Chadwick 1995:175–176; Walton 1986: Chart 29). Many other divisions, both theological and political, threatened the Catholic Church during the latter half of the first millennium and the first half of the second millennium, but the church was able to maintain its integrity, perhaps in part by allowing limited forms of dissent through the growth of various monastic orders such as the Knights Templar, Teutonic Knights, Benedictines, Augustinians, Carthusians, Carmelites, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits. These orders, while emphasizing certain ideas or behaviors, nevertheless remained within the broader fold of the Catholic Church. The more radical theological excursions of other groups, however, such as the Cathari, Waldensians, Lollards, and Hussites, were not tolerated by the Catholic Church, and these groups were subject to persecution and even death (Walton 1986: Chart 28).

The second great schism within the Catholic Church would occur in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany, thereby ushering in the Protestant Reformation. In this document Luther attacked the clergy's abuse in the selling of indulgences for the

remission of sins. For this action, the pope requested that Luther come to Rome to answer to the charge of heresy, but Luther's friends managed to keep him safe in Germany. In 1520 Luther published five tracts that set forward his theological positions: (1) *Sermon on Good Works*, (2) *The Papacy at Rome*, (3) *The Address to the German Nobility*, (4) *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and (5) *The Freedom of the Christian Man*:

In these tracts were set forth the convictions which became distinctive features of Protestantism—justification by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, the authority of the word of God as contained in the Scriptures, and the right and duty of each Christian to interpret the Scriptures. Some of these convictions had been foreshadowed in groups which had been cast out of the Catholic Church in the centuries before Luther. Yet, as compared with them the emphasis was new, especially the basic affirmation, justification by faith. Luther and his fellow-Protestants maintained that they were simply reasserting historic Christianity as it had been before its corruption by Rome. (Latourette 1953:715)

For these theological positions, Luther was excommunicated from the Catholic Church by Pope Leo X in 1521.

With the growing use of the printing press, following its introduction into Europe by Johannes Gutenberg around 1440, the writings of Luther were soon being printed and disseminated throughout the Holy Roman Empire. The impact of Luther's theology was first felt in northern Germany, but it soon spread to the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Scotland, and England (Chadwick 1995:202–203). Moreover, beginning with the printing of the Gutenberg Bible (in Latin) in the 1450s, Bibles were also becoming more readily available to the general populace across Europe, and translations of the Bible into the languages of the various countries made the Scriptures even more accessible to the common people. In the fourteenth century alone, translations of the Bible, or the New Testament, into Russian, German, English, French, Icelandic, Finnish, and Spanish were completed. Unfortunately,

the growing availability of the Bible, along with Luther's advocacy for the priesthood of all believers, also led to a proliferation of individual interpretations of the Scriptures. Without the authority of apostles, a pope or patriarch, a Christian emperor, or large church councils, the Protestant Reformation rapidly splintered into a multitude of denominations—each with its own distinctive structure and theological emphasis. In fact, over the past two centuries this fissuring trend seems to have accelerated, and this is not factoring in all the various types of Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc. (see Table 1).

| Table 1: The Proliferation of Protestant Churches | |
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| 1500s | Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Congregationalist |
| 1600s | Baptist, Dutch Reformed, Quakers, Amish |
| 1700s | Church of the Brethren, Moravians, Methodist, Episcopalian, Shakers |
| 1800s | Mormon, Disciples of Christ, Holiness Churches, Seventh-day Adventist, Salvation Army, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Church of God, Evangelical Free Church, Church of God in Christ |
| 1900s | Church of the Nazarene, Assemblies of God, United Church of Christ, Foursquare Church, Vineyard Fellowship, Calvary Chapel, International Church of Christ, Potter's House, Willow Creek |

Looking on the bright side of 2,000 years of church history, one might argue that the church has shown great resiliency and vitality down through the ages. Just when the Christian faith seems to be stagnating, bound in the fetters of human traditions and institutions, it breaks out anew in fresh manifestations of religious fervor and devotion, returning once more to its first love, the Lord Jesus. (Latourette 1961:542) From this perspective, the plethora of denominations and branches within Christianity provides strong evidence that the message of the gospel is still very much alive in the hearts and minds of men and women. On the other hand, one

has to wonder how much stronger our witness to the world would be if the church had remained one body as the Lord had prayed it would, instead of letting our various theological disputes, often over quite trivial matters, get in the way. Indeed, not only are we divided by our theologies, we often use these theological differences to judge one another, even to the point of stating who is and who isn't saved—a direct violation of what Jesus commanded during his Sermon on the Mount: “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you” (Matt. 7:1–2). If the church had remained one body, rather than many, if we had not allowed our theological interpretations to split us apart, then our witness to the world would be far stronger and much more effective than it is today. As the Lord prayed: “that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21).

In conclusion, theology is very much a human discipline with all the flaws and limitations inherent in any enterprise undertaken by fallen humanity. Although we are dealing with the infallible Word of God, our knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of that revelation is far from perfect. Church history is strewn with the wreckage of theological positions that were once thought to be true and unalterable but which were later abandoned or discredited. Therefore, we must prayerfully and continuously reexamine our theological positions to make sure we are indeed building on the solid rock of God's Word and not the shifting sands of human knowledge, human traditions, and human biases. In the next five chapters we will examine some of the limitations that may impact the accuracy and validity of our theology.