

the Intellectual Basis of Christianity – 1, 5 pgs

Preface

Sophisticates of the world view Christians as poor, deceived, naive, and ignorant people who need a superstitious crutch. This lesson introduces the intellectual basis of Christianity, the utter lostness of Man, and his profound helplessness to tackle the 3 most fundamental areas of life: the question of being or existence; the area of morals; and the problem of knowledge and truth. The biblical answers to these questions are not merely the best, they are the only answers.

Introduction

When I say things like, “the Bible teaches” or says; the biblical position is; according to the Scriptures; etc., I don’t mean there are specific passages that say that – there may be, but I’m referring to the thrust of the Scriptures, what they are getting at. It seems to me that the Bible is written in such a way as to encourage us to draw conclusions. So by such language I’m referring to summaries and summations that gather in what the revelation is implying and how it treats certain subjects. All human thought falls into three classifications: metaphysics – the question of being, existence, the stuff that is there [the universe in its order and complexity and man as somewhat different]; morals; and epistemology.

PART 1: the question of being or existence – The first question is, *What is there [what do we find in the universe, it’s nature, and complexity] and what is its origin?* The Bible’s answer to the question of existence or being is in part:

DIAGRAM 1

There is a **Creator** – holy [separate, on a different plane, transcendent, in a class by Himself]; eternal; unchanging; infinite [greater than, unbounded, unlimited, inexhaustible]; **the Being is an intelligent designer.**

-----**(BREAK REPRESENTING THE SEPARATION)**-----

There is also a **creation** [the below categories include everything that is part of the **material universe**]

stuff - matter [stars, planets, oceans, solids, liquids, gasses, elements, plasmas, etc.];

energies [light, radiation, electricity, etc.];

forces [non-substantive or quantum influences - gravity, magnetism, quantum effects, etc.]

plants, animals, man ~ ~ ~ **ALL LIFE**

matter, energies, forces ~ ~ ~ **ALL NON-LIFE**

What does the existence of a deliberate creation imply?

That there is purpose and meaning in the existence of what the Designer has made.

What constitutes reality without the Bible’s revelation?

The unifying factor in non-Christian thought is rationalism or humanism where people absolutely by themselves try rationally to build out from themselves, having only Man as their integration point, to find all knowledge, meaning, and value. A humanist is a rationalist who thinks that Man can begin

with himself plus what he observes without information from any other source [such as the Bible], and come to final answers in regard to truth, ethics, and reality.

Therefore we are left with only **2 opposing explanations for the universe and its principles of operation**.

CHART 1

The Randomly Generated Physical Universe	The Holy - Infinite CREATOR
<u>stuff</u> – matter; energies; forces ALL NON-LIFE	<u>stuff</u> ALL NON-LIFE
<u>plants</u>	<u>plants</u>
<u>Animals</u> ALL LIFE	<u>animals</u> ALL LIFE
<u>man</u>	<u>man</u>

What answer is there to the question of origin without the Bible's revelation?

The current form and complexity of the physical universe and the way it functions resulted from the random interaction of matter, energy, forces, and influences [the origin of which is unknown] over time.

Discussion - Each inanimate particular behaves consistently according to its own nature, according to what it is. Under given conditions it will act the same way every time [predictably, automatically] as described by the laws of physics and chemistry. In other words, all such materials and energies exhibit specific built-in programmed characteristics and behave mechanically, like a clockwork machine. For example, a body at rest or in motion will not change its state of rest or motion unless it is acted upon by an outside force. In other words, without a sufficient cause, there will be no measurable change [reaction or effect]. The same applies to living organisms, though there is some variation from one to another of the same type due to biological and conditioning differences. This is the basis for all our understanding of the physical world - it undergirds all planning, design, manufacturing, and construction.

What does the existence of a spontaneously generated complex and intricate [interconnected, interwoven] universe imply?

A **randomly produced universe** implies that there is not nor can there be any purpose, meaning, or significance to the existence of any of it.

Discussion - In such a framework, the different categories cannot be maintained. There can be no real difference between mankind and animals ... or between plants and the machine [stuff]. Ultimately everything is caught in and part of the machine and their functioning is according to the same set of laws whose existence cannot be explained.

In fact, because everything exists by chance or is randomly generated, all definitions for distinguishing different categories are arbitrary and therefore lack sufficient intrinsic characteristics to maintain their uniqueness from everything else. After all, it's all merely stuff smashing into other stuff interacting

with energies and forces without any design or purpose but nevertheless having a universal consistency we call the laws of physics and chemistry. Ultimately **nothing can escape being part of the machine**, programmed and operating with mathematical certainty. Such an inevitable conclusion is completely unsatisfying and unlivable because man doesn't fit [belong, make sense] in this kind of universe. Man as Man [personal being with free will] is dead [dehumanized, he is a myth, such a man does not and never did exist]. Yet **everything in us cries out against this and forces us to find ways to relieve the tension**.

Man is caught between (1) what the logic of his viewpoint says he is in contrast to what he knows himself to be, and **(2)** what the logic of his viewpoint says the universe is contradictory to what the obvious designed characteristics of the universe imply. But **because this spontaneously evolving universe is his entire frame of reference, every attempt to relieve or resolve the tension results in just another way to deceive himself**. In the end, he is nothing more than a bio-chemical mechanism having the illusion of life, feelings, and freedom of choice in a universe having the appearance of design without a designer **and no criteria to distinguish between the two**.

Given our current understanding of physics, chemistry, and biology, how likely is it that this scenario of a randomly self-caused universe can or has occurred - What problems present?

Discussion - Cause and effect must necessarily be the basic principle by which a rational universe operates. In other words, **cause and effect is the underlying principal of rationality** [see **Cause & Effect in a Rational Universe**]. **And**, for every effect or result observed, only causes deemed firstly possible and secondly adequate may be posited. This means that every effect is caused and tracing the chain of causes and effects backwards means considering only causes sufficient to bring about the observed results. **Only free beings** such as Man and God can act contrary to natural cause and effect progressions. God determined the mechanics of the system and Man and God are able to interrupt it. **What would be an example of this?**

One example of the creator's interruption of the natural flow of cause and effect is Jesus saying *stretch out your hand* and the man's withered hand was made whole. Men may change the course of a cause and effect chain by forgiving an evil doer of wrongs against them.

Though **evolution** presents a model that can be **imagined**, it **overcomes none of the hurdles relating to existence with a viable explanation**: it fails to explain in terms of **(1)** proving that the existence of what we know to be part of reality (ie, the existence of stars) or that proposed changes are possible without intelligent manipulation from outside the system; and **(2)** that such changes (ie, from one kind of animal into a completely different type) actually happened as the means by which the current universe came to be.

What's wrong with the answer, *the universe exists, therefore it must have happened [ie, come about by chance]*?

It is circular reasoning [assumes what it seeks to prove - a chance-derived universe] which discounts the biblical position. It acknowledges only that the universe exists. It offers nothing by way of explanation or evidence as to what caused its existence or its universal adherence to the laws of physics and chemistry that points to a rational origin.

Some of the problems are:

origin of the universe [forces, matter, and energy] and governing laws;

existence of form and structures in the universe [galactic, planetary, and stellar systems];

transition from inanimate matter and energy to living entities;

transition from one type of living being to another [What is the purpose and function of genes - to serve as a mechanism for change from one kind of thing into a wholly different one? No - stasis: to maintain the distinctiveness of an organism while allowing adaptive changes to occur];

transition to mankind.

Each of these obstacles contains numerous barriers that likewise have not been explained in any sense of the word "adequate." For instance, the origin of living organisms requires the following biochemical mechanisms and controlling developmental and operational information and principles be present and functioning simultaneously: organism's composition and structure [such as selective membranes]; a safe place to live [Is a chemical soup safe?] without being destroyed by detrimental elements within its environment; the animating feature of life; food and a means to recognize and distinguish from poisons; a means to ingest it, metabolize it, including mechanisms for respiration and excretion; a means for growth, maturing, reproducing, and dying; etc.

PART 2: the Bible's answer to the first question, *What is there and what is its origin*, has a second part.

CHART 2

The Impersonal Physical Universe	The Personal GOD
Nothing to design, organize, and coordinate a rational universe	<u>Man</u>
<u>machinery</u>	<u>animals</u>
<u>All living things</u>	<u>plants</u>
Man is an illusion	<u>machinery</u>

What does this imply? that Man is not alone in the universe, there is someone there to whom he can relate. My existence has significance because I also can act into the creation and effect changes in an unprogrammed way. What would be an example of this?

By God's grace, I can alter the flow of the action and reaction cycle by forgiving a wrong against me or not retaliating in kind to a personal attack. And I can ask God to intervene because He can interrupt the natural laws and reverse my wife's infertility. I am capable of conceiving, designing, making, and building things that could not exist naturally. I can create mathematics, art, literature, and music.

What about **man without the Bible**? the impersonal beginning by chance interactions of energy particles and matter has, over time [the impersonal + time + chance], kicked man out of the cosmos, yet he is personal - he knows himself as being more than impersonal plus complexity. He has

aspirations, feelings, moral inklings that there is right and wrong, good and bad – this leads to a complete alienation of man from everything else. Hope, purpose, significance are ultimately unachievable. Those things that make him man, love, beauty, creativity, motions of morality, rationality, rational and logical communication, are meaningless. In such a situation, is man higher or lower than the algae on the rocks?

CHART 3

<u>The Physical Universe</u>	<u>CREATOR</u> as holy, infinite	<u>GOD</u> as personal
Unplanned, uncoordinated	<u>stuff</u>	<u>Man</u>
<u>machinery</u>	<u>plants</u>	<u>animals</u>
<u>All living entities</u>	<u>animals</u>	<u>plants</u>
Man as Man has disappeared	<u>Man</u>	<u>machinery</u>

Once one accepts an impersonal beginning, he cannot escape the conclusion that behaviorism and all forms of determinism [chemical, genetic, psychological, sociological] make free-will an illusion - Man has been reduced to less than man in his natural finiteness, even less than animal – he is a programmed machine. The only way he can relieve the tension between what he is and what the logic of an impersonal beginning says he is [in the midst of a universe that testifies to the existence of a designer/builder], is through immersing himself in the details of life [work, pleasure, interests] as a technician distracted from or avoiding the big questions of life, or by embracing some form of irrational optimism. He has no choice but to abandon reason. Such a man can only function as Man for an extended period of time by acting as if the logic of his evolutionary presuppositions was false and the logic of the Bible's presuppositions was correct.

Discussion –Francis Schaeffer describes these two positions as *the uniformity [consistent, dependable, unvarying] of natural causes [principles of operation, laws of physics and chemistry]*. Both systems recognize the consistency of natural cause and effect sequences that operate in a machine-like way producing a consistent and predictable cascade of reactions. But the non-Christian scenario takes place in a completely enclosed [self-contained, sealed] universe where there is no outside influence or cause and everything that exists is part of the machinery – *the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system*. The Christian understanding is that both God and unprogrammed man can introduce new cause and effect chains into the machinery - *the uniformity of natural causes in an open system*.

Next time we will look at the two remaining areas of human thought and the consequences of the shift in worldview that both feeds and arises from humanism.