

Introduction to the Intellectual Basis of Christianity – 2, 7 pgs

It is my overall purpose to demonstrate that the biblical revelation provides the only intellectually sound answers to basic questions of life. What one believes is hugely important, but so is the reasoning underlying, supporting, and tying together those beliefs. Many people want teaching that is immediately practical and applicable to their situation. Yet the theoretical framework must precede the practical because the framework lays the foundation for the application. It is the same with the material world where characteristics of matter and energy together with the laws of physics and chemistry form the basis for specific applications.

This study expands upon the profound nature of the lostness of man and suggests a way to reach him with the truth. Applications come and go and change, but the underlying principles remain firm and serve as the source for new applications in a changing world. It will not do to turn the Bible's use to strictly pragmatic and utilitarian purposes. It satisfies our longing to know and to know why we can know with certainty what is right, good, and just.

Where has the logic of man's position [without the Bible] brought him by the end of the 1st lesson?

Man is out-of-phase with the rest of the universe.

Summary - Because man is inescapably caught in the machinery of the universe, he has been reduced to the impersonal + complexity. There can be no intrinsic [categorical] difference between man and non-man, so the loss of his humanity was inevitable. Yet he knows better because he is personal and therefore out-of-sync with the impersonal nature of the physical universe. So, he is lost because he does not know why Man has any meaning and he remains a zero. But because Christianity is true to what is there, man's personality and uniqueness remain intact. With respect to the question of existence or being, it is the Christian answer or nothing, not only for Man, but for the whole universe.

Discussion - We now come to the second fundamental area of thought, that of Man's moral dilemma. On the positive side, he is able to rise to great heights, there is something great about Man, something noble. He can be ingenious, creative, courageous, compassionate, etc. But he is also able to sink to great depths - he can be petty, intemperate, selfish, callous, and cruel. He may be gifted, skilled, intelligent, and knowledgeable in his discipline, and yet he may also be profoundly wrong.

What is the Christian explanation for this?

Man was not made this way, but became a split personality, estranged from himself, other people, and the whole universe through rebellion against God. In other words, in the Christian system, cruelty is not intrinsic to what Man is [not the way he was made], but is a symptom of all the ripples of abnormality he himself introduced into the world by his rebellion against his maker.

How does this discussion of Man's moral dilemma turn out for the man who thinks he arose from the random impersonal matrix?

Without the absolute authority rooted in the character of God and the **norms** [standards, patterns] of Scripture, there is no basis for law, and morals are an illusion because everything is relative and arbitrary – statistical averages or approximations, subjective preferences or “values.” There is no logical way to separate right from wrong or good from bad. It all merges into what is – therefore what-is has to be understood as right [the way it is supposed to be].

Our discussion has naturally brought us from a purely secular [non-religious] consideration to what is usually classed as a religious answer – Pantheism. **What is Pantheism?**

The submersion of the particulars into the everything. Where does one’s problem finally lie [What is the bottom line?] according to the Pantheist?

In the failure to accept one’s impersonality.

How is this different for man originating from the results of the randomly generated cosmos?

Ultimately it is the same. Pantheism is a semantic mysticism that involves deception through a linguistic trick – **theism** implies some Being, a god, but there is no someone there - no-one to worship, obey, or relate to. Once we strip it of its illusion, it becomes **pan-everything-ism**. The one we thought of as Man is submerged into and becomes part of the spiritual essence of the universe. The modern naturalistic form of science [scientism, philosophically driven science] likewise reduces everything to background radiation or energy particles.

In summary, the impersonal beginning leads us to a merging of morals and metaphysics [study of essential nature, real being, what is and its form, fundamental causes and processes] leading inexorably to the conclusion that whatever is, is right. But the personal beginning depicted in the Bible provides us with the possibility of keeping them separate, of having an objective basis for morals. Once again, it is the Christian answer or nothing. **Anything else is magic.**

Discussion - Our last area of inquiry involves **epistemology** – the theory of knowledge and certainty. All people whether they realize it or not, function in a framework of some concept of truth. Christians and materialists observe the same behavior, look at the same facts, have access to the same historical records, and can examine the same research. But **no record, fact, event, behavior, or data is without interpretation** because it is in our nature to try and understand, to make sense of things. We look for patterns and changes, experiment, propose theories, perform tests, and make predictions. We draw conclusions and apply what we have learned.

How then does the Christian differ from the person who has accepted that the universe is governed by natural causes only?

Christian and non-Christian perspectives are worlds apart because the framework of truth each has accepted controls his thinking. In some technical areas, such as material science [ie, development of new plastics or molding techniques], it doesn’t seem to matter due to one’s submersion in the details. In other areas, like biology, geology, sociology, or cosmogony [dealing with the origin of the material universe], non-Christian perspectives surface more often. **There is no totally objective observer**

because each of us feeds information through his own suppositional grid [filter, notions one has already accepted as true or false that together form the basis for his acceptance or rejection of new information].

What is the situation for us as Christians in this area of **epistemology**?

God has revealed truth about himself, mankind, history, and the world to men in propositional [discussable] communication which has been preserved in written form. God's character and the norms of Scripture form the basis for understanding and differentiating not only right from wrong and good from bad [the moral categories we just discussed], but true from false, reality from fantasy, and reasonable from unreasonable. He has made a correlation between the observer and the thing observed, the subject and the object. He has spoken truly, but not exhaustively so there is much for man to explore, and He has given us a rational means to construct categories [classifications allow us to group and order information, like a filing system] for organizing the information.

Discussion – Part of every person's struggle is the attempt to have answers, meaning, and purpose. Man, if he starts as an autonomous finite being, has no sufficient reference point for ascertaining the dependability or certainty of knowledge. Random generation of being leaves no possibility of any rational answers to the big questions, the ones that have to do with what life means. Our plea to people to come to Christ is not some form of a leap of faith contrary to reason. We're not inviting people to have a religious experience to help relieve the tension of living in a world they are alienated from. **The Christian answer gives a reason for the universe having a form that is comprehensible**, that functions non-arbitrarily, and for man's uniqueness. The Bible is not a religious book in the modern sense because it is rooted in verifiable space-time history and speaks of the totality of reality.

To further explore these 3 fundamental areas of life and thought, I recommend *TRILOGY* by Francis Schaeffer.

Consequences [excerpts from A Christian Manifesto, Chap.1 - 3] - *The basic problem of the Christians in the US in the last 110 years or so, in regard to society and in regard to government, is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals. They have very gradually become disturbed over permissiveness, pornography, the public schools, the breakdown of the family, and finally abortion. But they have not seen this as a totality - each thing being a part, a symptom of a much larger problem. They failed to see that all of this has come about due to a shift in world view - that is, through a fundamental change in the overall way people think and view the world and life as a whole. More recently Marxist philosophy has wormed its way through our society and touted as politically correct critical theory by foolish and ignorant people. It addresses issues like race, wealth, law and others in an attempt to destroy our society from within.*

This shift has been away from a world view that was at least vaguely Christian in people's memory toward something completely different - toward a world view based upon the idea that the final reality is impersonal chance. They have not seen that this world view has taken the place of the one

that had previously dominated Northern European culture, including the United States, which was at least Christian in memory, even if people were not individually Christian. **These two world views stand in complete antithesis to each other** not only in content [how they understand the nature of reality and existence], but in their natural results – including sociological and governmental results, and specifically in the area of law, **p.17-18**.

The divergent results of the two total concepts of reality [the Judeo-Christian and the humanistic world views] have been especially open to observation in the areas of government and law, **p.24**. **The Judeo-Christian consensus gave greater freedoms than the world has ever known while at the same time containing those freedoms so that they did not pound society to pieces, p.44-45**. This balance between form [in acknowledging the obligations in society] and freedom [in acknowledging the rights of the individual] embodied in the American constitution is not natural in the world, **p.25**. **The character of the country has changed; the Christian base that gave rise to the constitution has eroded among the population and been replaced with humanism.**

What is an adequate base for law so that the human aspiration for freedom can exist without anarchy and yet provide a form that will not become arbitrary tyranny, **p.27**? The materialistic concept of reality that has taken over which could neither produce nor maintain the form-freedom balance, has consequently destroyed it. **Humanists push for freedom, but having no Christian consensus to contain it, that freedom leads either to chaos or to slavery under the state [or some elite]**. Humanism with its lack of any final base for values or law always leads to chaos, then naturally to some form of authoritarianism to give a semblance of order. **Having produced the sickness, humanism gives more of the same kind of medicine for a cure**. With its mistaken concept of reality [seeing the origin and nature of the universe as undirected material/energy interactions], **it has no intrinsic reason to be interested in the individual**. The human as a unique personal being having value is an incongruity. **Humanism talks much of Man with a capital M, but says hardly anything about the individual man**. Its natural interest is the **two impersonal collectives**: the **state** as an organization and **society** as an aggregate, **p.30**.

Why have the Christians been so slow to understand this? There are various reasons but the central one is a defective view of Christianity. This has its roots in the Pietist movement under the leadership of P.J. Spencer in the seventeenth century. Pietism began as a healthy protest against formalism and a too abstract Christianity. But it had a deficient, “platonic” spirituality in the sense that Pietism made a sharp division between the “spiritual” and the “material” world. **The totality of human existence was not afforded a proper place**. In particular it neglected the intellectual dimension of Christianity.

Christianity and spirituality were shut up to a small, isolated part of life. **The totality of reality was ignored by the pietistic thinking**. Of course in one sense Christians should be pietists in that Christianity is not just a set of doctrines, even the right doctrines. Every doctrine is in some way to have an effect upon our lives. But the poor side of Pietism and its resulting platonic outlook has really been a tragedy not only in many people’s individual lives, but in our whole culture, **p.18-19**.

We are very far down the road toward a totally humanistic culture. The law (government) and especially the courts have become the vehicle to force this total humanistic way of thinking upon the entire population. *We live in a secularized society and in secularized sociological law [law that has no fixed base but is that which a group of people arbitrarily decides at any given moment].* Law constituted on this basis can only mean brute force, **p.49.**

Basic Christian Content – The **Bible** is a most efficient structured book for fallen Man: it is what God has to say to fallen men from the Fall to the 2nd coming of Christ; the **OT** gives the history from the creation of the material universe [initiation of the space-time continuum] to the 1st advent of Christ; the **NT** gives the history between the two advents of Christ culminating this age [and termination of the continuum?]. **The Gospel of Jesus Christ** is not a message to fallen man in a vacuum. It **comes to us in a carefully structured way:** (1) historically - the Bible begins at the beginning and goes through to the end. There isn't anything like this (the Koran for example). The Gospel is rooted in the flow and context of history; (2) as **a perfect system that is both logically internally consistent and empirically consistent with the external world.** Christianity is the only system that doesn't contradict itself or leave things out. Pantheism for example gives an answer for unity, but not for diversity. In Christianity one need not be ashamed because there is nothing that is inconsistent or that sticks out like every other system in the world.

Genesis 1:1 is not speaking of an absolute beginning. There was something there before the space-time continuum of the external corporal universe. God was already there and willed the universe to come into being. This is expressed in a corresponding passage that equates Jesus (called the Word) with God.

*In the beginning already was the Word and the Word was God. He was already in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him nothing came into being that has [since] come into being. **Jn.1:1-3***

God exists on the high order of Trinity - love and communication marked the fellowship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit before the existence of the world. Now it makes sense, this aspiration all men have toward love and communication. But the tragedy is that in their desire for these, modern people can find no meaning in them because their concept of origins is all wrong. **Answers and categories are always related to the beginning – origin determines results.** **Begin with an impersonal energy particle and you end up with a universe where love and communication are and must be abnormal to that which is.**

Christ and the Gospel are in the setting of a personal universe. Therefore the aspirations of love and communication are rooted in what has always been there. The creation is real history. Most times in the Bible **when the Jewish teaching was being presented in contrast to other religions, it began with an absolute creation rather than with their coming out of Egypt** - **Idols are made by men, but God made the world.** In each of the three places where materialism has no answer, the 1st chapter of Genesis has an answer. It uses the word *bara* to refer to creation (1) out of nothing, (2) of conscious

life, and (3) of Man. Then it does something incredible – it uses the word 3 times in a single verse to stress the value and emphasize the uniqueness of mankind.

So God created Man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

When Adam disobeyed God he became a sinner, a rebel against his maker. Nevertheless, though he is lost by his separation from God, Man is not a zero – he is someone who has value on the basis of creation. He is, like me, made in the image of God. **With the taking over of this other worldview**, we have not only lost the basis of objectivity in science, man has been set adrift, alone and lost in the indifferent silent immensity of the impersonal universe.

God created man non-programmed, perfect, and complete with an infinite reference point [God himself], but **at some tick of the clock, non-programmed man had rebelled**. There are no answers if this is absent. **Man's problem does not lie in his finiteness** [is not because he is little, limited, or dependent]. God told Adam what the consequences for disobedience would be and so it came to pass for he is true to his word and just. Since he could not simply ignore man's rebellion, **God took the extraordinary and counterintuitive action of sending his own son to bear the penalty for man's transgression**. The Gospel is to be given in this structure as the culmination of many prophesies in the flow of history.

To further explore the results of the secularizing of the US and Christian response, I recommend *A Christian Manifesto* by Francis Schaeffer (revised ed. 1982), 157 pgs.

Meditation on the Gospel from Lk.17:20-18:17

Jesus in answering the Pharisees inquiry about when **the kingdom of God** would come (Lk.17:20) told them that it would not have a physical presence as they expected. He went on to instruct His disciples about the future. His suffering, rejection (v.25), and physical absence (22-24) were just mentioned. Mostly He spoke of the coming judgment and calls it the Son of Man's day - when He is revealed (24, 30-31), a swift destruction that overtook people in the midst of normal life as in the time of the flood and of Sodom (26-32). **God has and will rescue His people from His hand of righteous judgment** (34-35). Jesus then tells two parables: a widow who persists in entreating an unjust judge until she receives justice to encourage His people who wait for Him to keep on seeking Him in faith (18:1-8); **a Pharisee and a tax collector illustrate conditions for acceptance with God** (9-14).

The time is either the morning or evening sacrifice at the temple and the scene was something like this: The lamb's throat has been slit and blood pumped out by its still-beating heart at the base of the altar. While the priest was burning incense out of sight in the inner courtyard, the circumcised Jewish men in the outer courtyard stood and offered their prayers. **Pharisees were highly respected as devout and righteous men of God because of their rigorously disciplined lives, separateness, and uncompromising adherence to tradition**. **The Pharisee in the parable** was used to seeing himself in this exalted light. He doesn't seem to have a clue what the sacrifice is about and approaches God as one pleased with himself expecting that God would be also.

Tax collectors, on the other hand, were seen as traitors to their own people because they collaborated with the despised Roman Empire which oppressed the Jewish nation. Amazingly, the tax collector in the parable understands his guilt before God and what the sacrifice represents. His abject address to God is the agonized beating of his chest and refusal even to look up. He prays not *God be merciful to me* as per most translations, but literally, *God be propitious to me, the sinner*. In an attitude of genuine contrition, he asks God to accept this sacrifice - on his behalf - to cover his sin in satisfaction of His justice. Jesus then goes on to explain that **reception of the kingdom of God requires this humble attitude and childlike trust to enter into it (15-17)**.

John the baptizer pointed Jesus out saying, *Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1:29)*! Come to him and be cleansed.