

DISCOVERING GOD'S FINGERPRINTS: WHY THE CHRISTIAN FAITH MAKES SENSE

INTRODUCTION

Is religion wishful thinking?

Depends on who is wishing!

Christianity has a God who:

Needs nothing, so we cannot earn his favor

Sees most righteous as deserving punishment

Holds those who know him better to higher standard

Will forgive worst who repent, condemn most righteous who depend on selves

Easy to see why atheists wouldn't want a God who:

Will judge all their actions and thoughts

Restricts their behavior and condemns their sins

Is religion a crutch?

Better to have a crutch than not walk!

Look at all the problems in society today:

crime, poverty, abortion, AIDS

TRANSITION: God exists and He has actually provided quite adequate evidence of His existence for those who really want to know

THE EXISTENCE OF THE UNIVERSE

Sketch recent developments in cosmology

Steady-state (Bondi, Gold, Hoyle) vs big-bang => big-bang

Oscillating (Sagan) vs beginning => beginning

Something from nothing? (Hawking) Not anywhere else!

Creator a far more adequate explanation

TRANSITION: What about evolution? Doesn't that remove need for God?

PROBLEMS WITH ATHEISTIC VERSIONS OF EVOLUTION

Origin of life?

Simplest life has info content = (100 million pages) 4,000 sets of
Encyclopaedia Britannica

How generate observed complexity without a Designer?

Mutation & natural selection as source of order?

Can't get this to work on computer

Lack of transitions in fossil record
Everywhere above lowest levels of biological classification scheme
Creator a more natural explanation

TRANSITION: This is more clearly seen in evidence for design in the inanimate universe

INANIMATE DESIGN IN THE UNIVERSE

Chemistry:

Carbon: unique in length of chains formed; C-O and C-H bonds about same energy as C-C

Water: unique in high heat capacity, universal solvent, expanding on freezing

Environment:

Earth: temp, water, oxygen level <25%,
grav: 1/4x: atm pr too low; 2x too much greenhouse

Sun: size 20% + or - fatal to life (too short lifetime or too little blue/too long day); variation of 25% over history too much except for action of plants on earth changing atmosphere

Basic Forces: fine-tuning is astonishing

expansion vs gravity: 10 to 60th at Planck time

e-m cancellation: to 1 part in 10 to 37th

Alternative Explanations:

weak anthropic principle: accident of observation

strong anthropic principle: backward causation

many universes: simultaneous or sequential

Creator a far more plausible explanation than any of these!

TRANSITION: OK, so there's a god or gods; why should we limit it to the God of the Bible?

FULFILLED PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE

Presence of real predictions fulfilled long after prediction written:
contrast Nostradamus

A few samples:

Tyre: Ezk 26:4,12: rock scraped, dust into sea

Babylon: Isa 13:19-22: no Arabs, no shepherds

Jer 51:24-26: stones not reused as stone

51:42-43: to become parched desert

Israel: Hos 3:4: w/o king, prince, sacrifice, pillar, ephod or teraphim for "many days"

JESUS CHRIST

Light to Gentiles: Isa 42:6; 49:6

Only Jew claiming to be Messiah who has founded a world religion

Messiah cut off at specified date, Dan 9:24-27

works out to 28-35 AD

Historical Reliability of Gospel accounts

if miracle ruled out in advance, appear unreliable

if miracle not ruled out, look very good

CHANGED LIVES & CHANGED SOCIETIES

What makes the "first world" different?

Science/technology => Christian roots

Personal freedom => Christian roots

Ironside story

Harry Ironside preaching in San Francisco, challenged to debate by popular socialist speaker; Ironside's counter-challenge re/ witness of people reformed by Xy vs socialism

Secular humanism/socialism don't change human nature

Christianity does

TRANSITION: So what does all this mean?

CONCLUSIONS

There is a God and He's the One revealed in the Bible

Human history does have significance

So do our individual lives: what we do with God will make the difference between whether our lives turn out to be a disaster or a joy beyond imagining

The place of Jesus in all this?

The one being in all universe who is both uncreated and created

As uncreated being, he alone chose to become created, so his obedience as creature not *owed* to God

As created being, his obedience as a human is the sort we should have given (but didn't)

If we trust in Jesus, his obedience counts as ours

As created being, his suffering for sins is human suffering

As uncreated God, he is able to take in a few hours what would take us forever to suffer

If we trust in Jesus, our disobedience is paid for by his suffering

When we trust in Jesus for acceptance with God, our sin is paid for, our righteousness provided, and God begins to change us from inside by coming to live in us

You, too, can trust in Jesus!

FOR FURTHER READING:

General Books on Christian Apologetics and Evidences:

Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. InterVarsity, 1994.
John Warwick Montgomery, ed., *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question*.
Probe/Word, 1991.

Origin of Universe:

Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God*. NavPress, 1993.

Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*. 2nd ed. Promise Publishing, 1991.

Origin of Life:

Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley, and Roger L. Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin: Reassessing Current Theories*. Philosophical Library, 1984; Lewis and Stanley, 1992.

Evolution:

Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. Free Press, 1996.

Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwin by Opening Minds*. InterVarsity, 1997.

Design:

J. P. Moreland, ed., *The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer*. InterVarsity, 1994.

Ross, *Fingerprint of God*, chapter 12.

Fulfilled Prophecy:

Montgomery, *Evidence for Faith*, several chapters.

Robert C. Newman, ed., *The Evidence of Prophecy: Fulfilled Prediction as a Testimony to the Truth of Christianity*. Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1988.

Jesus:

Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. InterVarsity, 1987.

Gregory A. Boyd, *Cynic Sage or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies*. BridgePoint/Victor, 1995.

Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson, *He Walked Among Us: Evidence for the Historical Jesus*. Here's Life, 1988.

Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*. Zondervan, 1995.