

DAVID K. BERNARD

The background of the cover is a perspective view of a wooden plank walkway. The planks are made of weathered, dark brown wood and lead from the bottom of the frame towards the top. On either side of the walkway, there are blue-painted metal anchors or bolts that hold the planks in place. The overall scene is brightly lit, with a soft glow at the end of the path.

ANCHOR
POINTS

ESSAYS IN APOSTOLIC APOLOGETICS

CONTENTS

Preface	9
ANCHOR POINTS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE..	15
Introduction	17
1. Faith in God.....	21
2. God's Word, the Bible	29
3. Jesus Christ, the Revelation of God	33
4. The New Birth	37
5. Life in the Spirit.....	41
6. The Pursuit of Holiness	45
7. The Promise of Eternal Life.....	51
DEFENDING THE APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW	55
8. How We Know: An Apostolic Epistemology	57
9. Interpreting Scripture: An Apostolic Hermeneutic..	67
10. The Sinful Nature.....	87
11. Why Is There Suffering?.....	91
12. Problems of Atheism: The Self, Will, Beauty, Truth, Good and Evil	95

13. Creation and Evolution	107
14. Oneness Theology and Karl Barth.....	117
15. Salvation and Judgment.....	129
THE CHURCH	
IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.....	151
16. Your Pastor, Your Bishop	153
17. Communion and Footwashing.....	159
18. Christian Giving.....	163
19. The UPCI's Racial and Ethnic Affirmation.....	167
20. Growing a Multicultural Church	179
21. Black Pioneers in the UPCI.....	185
22. Slavery, Racism, and the Gospel.....	189
23. The Ministry of Women in a Family Context	205
24. A New Birth of Freedom	215
25. The Church and Politics.....	221
26. A Biblical View of Human Sexuality	225
27. From Fear to Faith	249
28. But We See Jesus!.....	261
29. A Wide-Open Door.....	273
Notes	283



1

FAITH IN GOD

In the previous chapter, we discussed seven anchor points for our spiritual life. The first is faith in God. The Bible's first verse introduces God as the Creator of the universe (Genesis 1:1). The Bible doesn't try to prove that God exists; it assumes His existence as fundamental. We accept God's existence by faith (Hebrews 11:6), but it is a reasonable faith, not a blind faith. When we ask why there is something rather than nothing, the most sensible answer is God.

The Creator

Creation itself bears witness that there is an intelligent, all-powerful, loving Creator (Psalm 19:1–4; Romans 1:20). There can be only one of three explanations for the origin of the universe: (1) it has always existed, (2) it came into existence by its own power, or (3) God created it. Accepting any of these alternatives requires faith that transcends scientific proof. It is more plausible to believe in a rational, omnipotent, eternal Creator than in the self-creating ability of nonrational, undesigned matter.

Chapter 1

Let's consider the alternatives. If the universe is eternal, it must essentially be static. Otherwise, if it were contracting, it would have already collapsed. If it were expanding, it would have already dissipated. If it were oscillating (which no known force could cause), it would have already run down.

If the universe is infinitely old and static, however, it must be infinitely large. In an eternal but finite universe, gravity would eventually cause everything to implode. Only an infinite number of stars could evenly counterbalance the pull of gravity on each one. If the universe were infinite, however, the night sky would not be dark but bright. Stars would exist at every position in the sky, and light from each would eventually reach the earth.

Moreover, an eternal, static universe would contradict the second law of thermodynamics, which says entropy (unusable energy, disorder) increases over time. For example, no star can burn forever. Heat flows spontaneously from hot to cold bodies, not vice versa, so that the universe is gradually sliding toward thermodynamic equilibrium, or heat death, where all temperatures even out. To avoid this outcome, an eternal universe would have to be eternally creating new mass/energy out of nothing. (Albert Einstein's famous formula, $E=mc^2$, demonstrates the equivalence of mass and energy.) An eternally self-creating universe would contradict the first law of thermodynamics, which says mass/energy is neither being created nor destroyed.

In fact, there is a scientific consensus that the universe is not eternal and static. Both the equations of Einstein and

the observations of astronomers have established that the universe is expanding. We can thus extrapolate backward in time to a point where the universe had a beginning. This insight has led to the Big Bang, which is the standard scientific theory today. It holds that the universe began with a powerful explosion from an infinitesimal point, which created matter, energy, space, and time.

Who or what caused the Big Bang? Did the universe create itself? This idea violates the first law of thermodynamics. Some speculate it began as a “quantum fluctuation,” but this theory presupposes an existing energy field with physical laws. No scientific theory explains how something can originate from absolutely nothing. Moreover, science cannot study or explain anything “before” the Big Bang. Instead, we can understand the Big Bang as a scientific description of God’s creative action and perhaps more specifically the first day of Creation: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (Genesis 1:1, 3).

The orderliness and design of the universe require a designer. To their amazement, scientists have discovered that the physical laws and initial conditions of the universe are fine-tuned for the existence of human life. If the fundamental laws and constants of physics were altered by minute amounts, we couldn’t exist.

In *Just Six Numbers*, astronomer Martin Rees describes six fundamental constants in physics that must fall within an extremely narrow range. For example, the number that measures how firmly atomic nuclei bind together is 0.007.

Chapter 1

If it were 0.006, protons would not bond to neutrons in the nucleus of an atom, and the universe would have no chemical element but hydrogen (because its nucleus consists of one proton). If the binding force were 0.008, two protons would bind together directly without a neutron, thus prohibiting the existence of hydrogen. Without hydrogen, there would be no fuel for the sun and no water. In short, this number must fall between 0.006 and 0.008 for there to be a universe capable of sustaining human life. Thus, physicist Richard Morris calculates, “We exist in a very improbable kind of universe, one that was fine-tuned to an accuracy of . . . one part in 10^{50} [one followed by fifty zeroes]” (*The Edges of Science*, 54–55). More recently, philosopher Alvin Plantinga reports an estimated probability of less than one in 10^{100} (*Where the Conflict Really Lies*, 197–198). Some explain the low probability by saying there are trillions of universes, but they can’t explain the origin of this “multiverse,” which is even more improbable.

As this brief survey shows, the Bible stated the truth long ago. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

The Lawgiver

Creation testifies not only to God’s existence but to God’s power and divine nature. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Romans 1:20). The physical world

operates according to fundamental laws that scientists can state mathematically, such as Newton's laws of gravity and motion. If God doesn't exist, then the universe is a meaningless accident. Why, then, should it conform to laws? Why should abstract mathematics, invented by humans, be able to describe it? The order and intelligibility of the world reveal that there is a divine designer and lawgiver.

We have a choice between two metaphysical beliefs: theism (faith in God) or naturalism (denial of the supernatural and spiritual). If naturalism is true, then humans come from random, unguided evolution based on "survival of the fittest." But metaphysical beliefs and abstract mathematics don't confer any survival or reproductive advantage; they would be accidental developments. In that case, why should they conform to reality? Naturalism is self-defeating because it gives us no reason to think it is true.

According to naturalism, everything is determined by physical laws. If so, everything that makes us human would be an illusion: consciousness, free will, love, truth, beauty, humor, abstract reasoning, morality, spirituality. All would be purposeless, chance products of chemical and electrical actions in the brain. Then why should we think any are true, valuable, or worthwhile? Of course, no one can live by such a philosophy. In short, naturalism can't explain the most meaningful aspects of human identity and provides no basis for human life and society.

The incredibly complex design of the natural world—from thirty trillion cells in the human body to one septillion stars in the universe—shows there is a designer. The human

Chapter 1

brain contains one hundred billion neurons (nerve cells) with 150 trillion synapses (junctions between neurons), meaning there are more possible states of the brain than particles in the universe. Our brain conducts five trillion chemical operations per second. Virtually every human cell contains a full blueprint of the body—the human genome (DNA). It is a “word” of 3.2 billion chemical “letters,” equivalent to 1.5 million printed pages. Science describes how such information gets transmitted and changed, but it can’t identify the source. This information is nonmaterial, and we must conclude that it comes from an intelligent source, namely, God.

Unlike animals, every human has a moral nature, and despite cultural differences, every society has a moral code. “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them” (Romans 2:14–15). Just as fish swim and birds fly, so humans develop a conscience and distinguish between right and wrong. Children know they should play fair. Adults know they should care for children. Every society has laws against murder and theft. By contrast, we don’t think it immoral for one animal to kill or eat another. Even unrepentant criminals have “guilty knowledge.” They try to justify their actions and want others to treat them morally. In short, humans are more than highly intelligent animals; we are moral beings.

What is the source of our moral sense? Evolution cannot produce morality, for its premise is survival of the

fittest and “might makes right.” We are rational, moral, spiritual beings because we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

Even when humans deny moral law, it still operates. Sin separates us from the holy God. Rejection of God’s plan for marriage, sexuality, and family has detrimental physical, emotional, social, and spiritual effects. The problems of our society stem from violations of moral law and attempts to evade its consequences. Nonetheless, we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7–9).

Naturalism cannot explain the origins of the universe, life, rationality, consciousness, language, aesthetics, morality, and spirituality. Science couldn’t function without the assumptions of order and regularity, which imply not only an intelligent designer and lawgiver but also a divine sustainer (Hebrews 1:3).

Philosopher Blaise Pascal proposed that we should live as though God exists; we should “bet” on God and not against Him. If God doesn’t exist, we will lose very little by trying to follow Him; but if God does exist, we will receive infinite gains and avoid infinite losses in eternity. Pascal’s wager doesn’t prove God’s existence, of course, but it shows we are wise to seek Him.

The existence of both physical and moral laws reveals that there is a divine lawgiver. God’s grace has appeared to everyone (Titus 2:11)—at least through the two witnesses of creation and conscience. Moreover, He always rewards the diligent seeker (Hebrews 11:6). If we respond to His

Chapter 1

grace, God will reveal Himself to us and lead us to truth and salvation.

Pentecostal Life, March and April 2021

For Further Study

- J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide* (natural moral law)
- William Dembski and Jonathan Wells, *The Design of Life: Discovering Signs of Intelligence in Biological Systems*
- Gregory Koukl, *The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important That Happens in Between*
- John Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?*
- Richard Morris, *The Edges of Science: Crossing the Boundary from Physics to Metaphysics*
- Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*
- Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces That Shape the Universe*
- Richard Simmons III, *Reflections on the Existence of God: A Series of Essays*
- Lee Strobel and Jane Vogel, *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God*