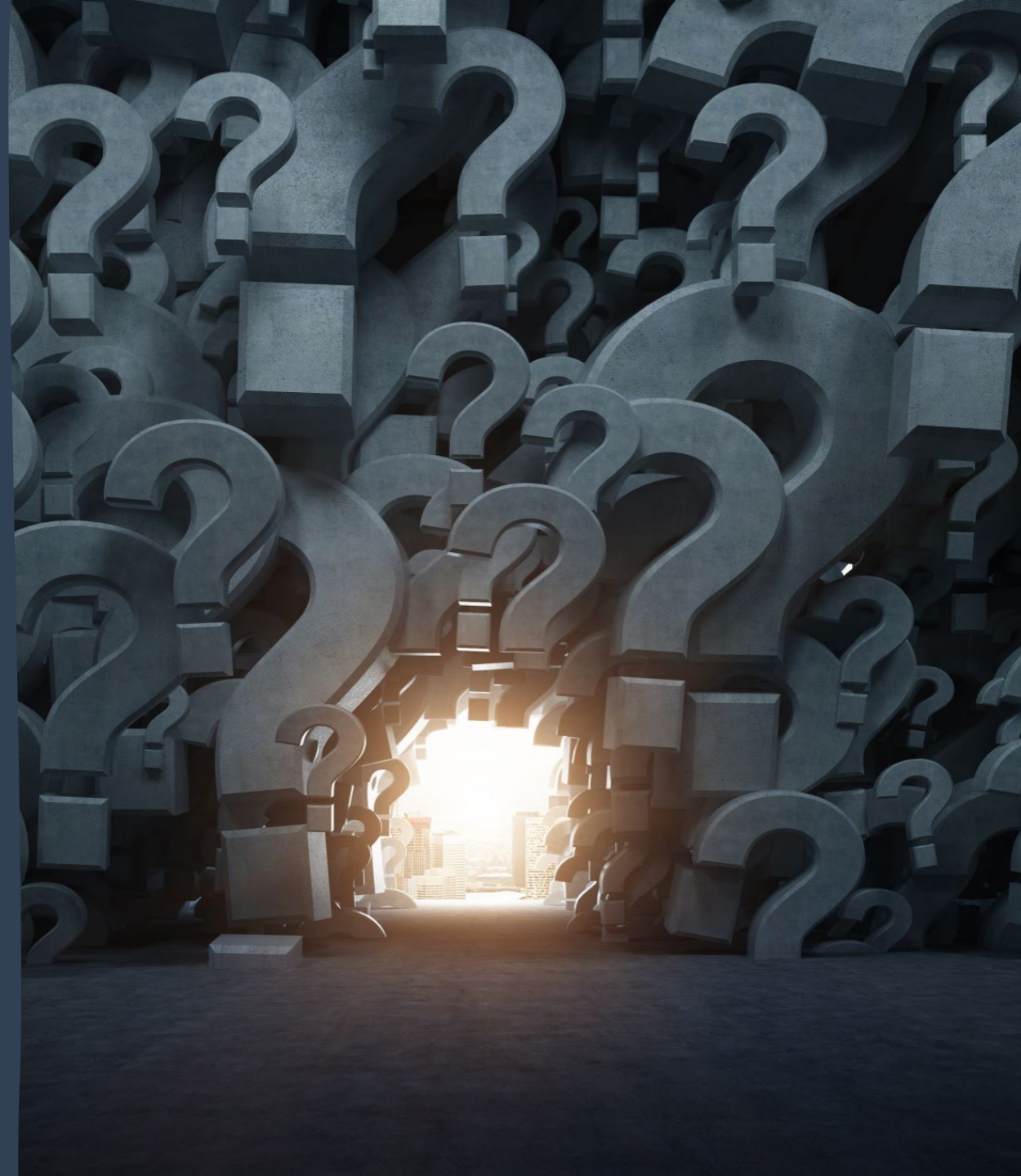


The Clues of God

Faith Explorers Class



The Mysterious Bang - or why is there something rather than nothing?

- The scientific community is united (as united as it gets) in the belief that the universe is contingent - that it had a cause outside itself.
- Skeptics reply that just needing a cause doesn't get us to the God of the Bible.
- True, but the clue here is that something besides the material world does exist.

The Cosmic Welcome Mat

- This is the "Anthropic Principle," that the constants of the physical world appear to be "fine tuned" to allow for life.
- Speed of light, nuclear forces, gravitational and cosmological constants,
- The most common rejoinder is that there may be trillions of universes and we are of course only seeing the one where these conditions prevail.
- There is, of course, not a shred of evidence for any other universes.
- This is a perfect example of rejection of evidence (or lack thereof) to preserve a philosophical assumption.
- Remember the story of the man and the firing squad that all missed!

The Regularity of Nature

- Science cannot prove the continued regularity of nature - it can only take it on faith!
- [In fact, we cannot prove that mathematics works!]
- It is increasingly understood that modern science arose, not out of freeing people from the oppression of the church's unscientific positions, but from religious people who believed that God created and sustained an orderly universe.
- The list of believing scientists at the inception of the "modern" era is truly impressive.

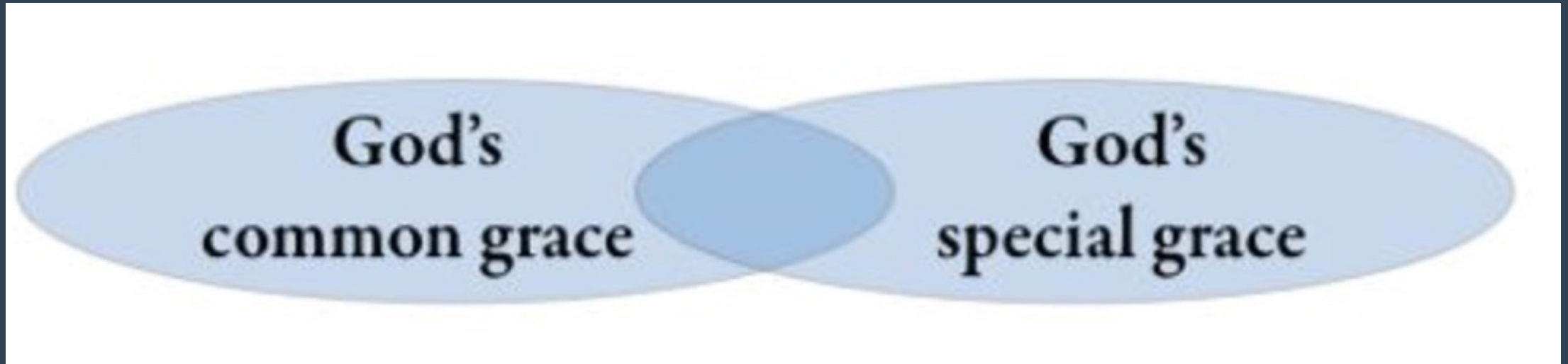
The Clue of Beauty

- In the presence of great art, or even great natural beauty, we have the inescapable feeling that there is more to the world than its physical reality.
- This is true even if we admit that we can measure physiological responses to such scenes on our instruments.
- But it is more than feeling. We feel a NEED for this feeling.
- As far back as St. Augustine, this felt need was seen as a clue to God's existence.
- With every other need we feel, there exists something to satisfy it.
- So how do we understand the need for meaning and beauty? Is it God?
- Interestingly though many people reject the cartoon version of heaven (angels playing harps on clouds), what the Bible promises is a renewed earth and renewed bodies. Who wouldn't want to live on a perfected earth?

Cognitive Survival Skills

- Evolution can only be trusted to give us cognitive faculties that help us live on, not to provide ones that give us an accurate and true picture of the world around us.
- But if our cognitive faculties only tell us what we need to know to survive, not what is true, why trust them about anything at all?
- The famous Darwin's Doubt says: if man's mind is risen from the lower animals, how is it that we can trust it? They apply their skepticism to our beliefs about God, but exempt their belief in evolutionary science!
- The power of reason is based on its independence of the physical world.

Clues of God as Divine Grace



Common Grace

- Common grace is a theological concept in Protestant Christianity, developed primarily in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Reformed/Calvinistic thought, referring to the grace of God that is either common to all humankind, or common to everyone within a particular sphere of influence (limited only by unnecessary cultural factors). It is common because its benefits are experienced by, or intended for, the whole human race without distinction between one person and another. It is grace because it is undeserved and sovereignly bestowed by God. In this sense, it is distinguished from the Calvinistic understanding of special or saving grace, which extends only to the elect, those whom God has chosen to redeem.

Components of Common Grace

One: Providential Care in Creation

- God's sustaining care for his creation, called divine providence, is grace common to all. The Bible says, for instance, that God through the Son "upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:2–3; John 1:1–4).
- God's gracious provision for his creatures is seen in the giving of seasons, seedtime and harvest. |
- God's providential common grace "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).
- We see evidence of God's common grace in the establishment of various structures within human society such as the family.

Components of Common Grace

Two: Providential Restraint of Sin

- In the Bible, Paul teaches that civil authorities have been "instituted by God" (Rom. 13:1) to maintain order and punish wrongdoing. Although fallible instruments of his common grace, civil governments are called "ministers of God" (Rom. 13:6) that should not be feared by those who do good.
- God also sovereignly works through circumstances to limit a person's sinful behavior (Gen. 20:6, 1 Sam. 25:26).

Components of Common Grace

Three: Human Conscience

- The apostle Paul says that when unbelieving Gentiles "who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, ...They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them" (Rom. 2:14–15, ESV).
- By God's common grace fallen mankind retains a conscience discerning the moral value of doing good over evil. This may be based on the fact that human beings, though fallen in sin, retain a semblance of the "image of God" with which they were originally created (Gen. 9:6: 1 Cor. 11:7).

Components of Common Grace

Four: Providential Blessings to Mankind

- Human advancements that come through the unredeemed are seen as outcomes of God's common grace.
- For example, medical and other technological advancements that improve the lives of both the redeemed and unredeemed are seen as initiated by common grace.

Common Grace Summarized

- In summary, common grace is seen in God's continuing care for his creation, his restraining human society from becoming altogether intolerable and ungovernable, his making it possible for mankind to live together in a generally orderly and cooperative manner and maintaining man's conscious sense of basic right and wrong behavior.
- Opponents agree that such phenomena appear at work in civilizations, and cannot operate outside God's providence, but to call this "grace" leads to a diminution of saving grace in the same way undue emphasis on General Revelation diminishes the ultimate authority of Scripture.

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Special Grace and Common Grace

- Common Grace is God working in the heart of the sinner to emulate the Christian life but not effectually saving that sinner. Accepting Christ as the Savior – quite literally allowing Christ into one’s life is a prerequisite for “special grace.”
- This is a most important distinctive of historical Calvinism.