

Does God Exist? A Christian Argument from Non-biblical Sources

Probe founder, Jimmy Williams, looks at evidence for the existence of God from multiple, non-biblical sources. He demonstrates that God's creation speaks to his creator. The important apologetic discussion forms the foundation for a complete biblical understanding of God and His purposes.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Introduction

Metaphysical Options

Most will agree that the most basic, fundamental question concerning existence is not that *nothing* is here, but rather that *something* is here. I am a part of some kind of *reality*. I possess a consciousness, an awareness that something is transpiring, unfolding, happening. And you and I are part of it. The reality borne out of our personal observation and experience is that we are participants in a space-time universe which is characterized by a *series of events*. The mind naturally asks the question, "What is it?" Where did it come from?" Did the *cosmos*, what we see, simply come into being from nothing, or has this material universe of which we are a part always been here? Or is something or someone which transcends this material universe responsible for bringing it into existence and us with it?

All of these questions relate to the philosophical concept of *metaphysics*. Webster defines it thusly: "*That division of philosophy which includes ontology, or the science of being*

and cosmology, or the science of fundamental causes and processes in things.”{1} When we seek to answer these basic questions, then, we are thinking “*metaphysically*” about the origin and the causes of the present reality. And at this basic, fundamental level of consideration we really are left with few options, or possible answers, to account for or explain the universe. The three potential candidates are:

(1) Something came from nothing. Most reject this view, since the very idea defies rationality. This explanation to account for the universe is not widely held. Kenny remarks: “*According to the big bang theory, the whole matter of the universe began to exist at a particular time in the remote past. A proponent of such a theory, . . . if he is an atheist, must believe that the matter of the universe came from nothing and by nothing.*”{2} Since nothing cannot produce something by rules of logic (observation, causality), something is *eternal* and *necessary*. Since any series of events is not eternal (thus a contradiction), there is, therefore, an eternal, necessary *something not identical* to the space-time universe.

(2) Matter is eternal and capable of producing the present reality through blind chance. Carl Sagan stated this view clearly when he said, “All that ever was, all that is, and all that ever shall be is the Cosmos.”{3} This second view has spawned two basic worldviews-*Materialism* (or *Naturalism*) and *Pantheism*. Both hold the premise that nothing exists beyond matter. *Materialism* therefore is atheistic by definition. *Pantheism* is similar but insists that since God does not exist, nature is imbued with “god” in all its parts.

(3) God created the universe. This view, *Theism*, holds forth the assertion that *Someone* both transcends, and did create the material universe of which we are a part. There are *no* other logical alternatives to explain the *cosmos*. Christians, of course, embrace this third view, along with all other theists, as the most reasonable explanation for what we find to be true of ourselves and of the world. Holding this view is not simply

a statement of blind faith. There are sound and rational reasons for preferring this view over the other two. Theism is therefore a reasonable idea. In fact it is more reasonable to believe that God exists than not to believe He exists. Theologians have posed several lines of “proof” to argue for God’s existence. These arguments, while not *proving* the existence of God, do nevertheless provide insights that may be used to show *evidence* of His existence.

The Cosmological Argument

This argument centers around the concept of *causality*. Every event has a *cause*, and that includes the universe. It had a beginning. There was a time when it was not, and a time when it was:

*An **infinite** number of real parts of time, passing in succession and exhausted one after another, appears so evident a contradiction that no man, one should think, whose judgment is not corrupted, instead of being improved, by the sciences, would ever be able to admit it.” (emphasis mine) [{4}](#)*

Hume is here arguing that time and space are *not* infinite, not eternal. If this is true, the universe, which is an “effect,” had a *cause*. Robert Jastrow comments,

“The most complete study made thus far has been carried out . . .by Allan Sandage. He compiled information on 42 galaxies, ranging out in space as far as six billion light years from us. His measurements indicate that the universe was expanding more rapidly in the past than it is today. This result lends further support to the belief that the universe exploded into being.” [{5}](#)

He goes on to say:

“No explanation other than the big bang has been found for

the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and heat produced in a great explosion.”{6}

Jastrow also concludes the universe is dying:

“Once hydrogen has been burned within that star and converted to heavier elements, it can never be restored to its original state. Minute by minute and year by year, as hydrogen is used up in stars, the supply of this element in the universe grows smaller.”{7} *“Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover.”{8}*

Some have argued that an *infinite regress* of causes may not be logically possible. They say the universe is not a “whole” that *needs* a single cause, but rather that it is “mutually dependent” upon itself! Mutual dependence misses the point. The real issue is why there is an *existing* universe rather than a *non-existing* one. Reality and rationality suggest that every event has a cause. Whole series of events must have a cause as well (since the whole is the sum of the parts). If all the parts were taken away, would there be anything left? If we say yes, then God exists (i.e. an eternal necessary being that is *more* than the world. If we say *no*, then the whole is *contingent* too, and needs a cause *beyond* it (God).

We will conclude this section with an examination of perhaps the most often-asked question concerning the cosmological argument, “*Where did God come from?*” While it is both reasonable and legitimate to ask this question of the universe

which we have just examined, it is irrational and nonsensical to ask that same question of God, since it implies to Him characteristics found only in the finite universe: *space* and *time*. By definition, something eternal must exist *outside* this space/time continuum. The very question posed reveals the inquirer's fallacy of reasoning from within his *own* space/time context! By definition, something *eternal* must exist *outside* both time and space. God has no beginning; He **IS!** (Exodus 3:14).

The Teleological Argument

This second argument for the existence of God addresses the order, complexity, and diversity of the cosmos. "Teleological" comes from the Greek word "*telos*," which means "end" or "goal." The idea behind the argument is that the observable *order* in the universe demonstrates that it functions according to an *intelligent design*, something undeniable to an open-minded, intelligent being. The classic expression of this argument is William Paley's analogy of the watchmaker in his book *Evidences*. If we were walking on the beach and found a watch in the sand, we would not assume that it washed up on the shore having been formed through the natural processes and motions of the sea. We would rather naturally assume that it had been lost by its owner and that somewhere there was a watchmaker who originally designed and built it with a specific purpose in mind. Intelligence cannot be produced by non-intelligence any more than nothing can produce something. There is, therefore, an eternal, necessary intelligence present and reflected in the space-time universe.

Until about five hundred years ago, humanity had no difficulty in acknowledging God as the Creator of the natural order. The best explanation saw Him as the divine Designer who created it with a purpose and maintained all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17). But the rise of modern science initiated a process we could call the "demythologizing

of nature," the material world. Superstition and ignorance had ascribed spirit life even to forest, brook, and mountain. Things not understood scientifically were routinely accepted to be unexplained, supernatural forces at work. Slowly, the mysterious, spiritual factor was drained away as scholars and scientists replaced it with natural explanations and theories of how and why things actually worked. After Copernicus, human significance diminished in the vastness of the cosmos, and it was felt only time and research, not God, would be needed to finally explain with accuracy the totality of the natural order. The idea of a transcendent One came to be deemed unnecessary, having been invalidated by the new theory of natural selection.

Ironically, the same science which took God away then, is bringing back the possibility of His existence today. Physics and quantum mechanics have now brought us to the edge of physicality, to a place where sub-atomic particle structures are described by some as spirit, ghost-like in quality. Neuro-physiologists grapple with enigmatic observations suggesting that the mind *transcends* the brain! Psychology has developed an entirely new branch of study (parapsychology) which asserts that psycho-spiritual forces (ESP, biofeedback, etc.) actually function *beyond* the physical realm. Molecular biologists and geneticists, faced with the highly-ordered and complex structures of DNA, ascribe a word implying "intelligence" to the chaining sequences: the genetic "*code*." And we have already concluded that astrophysicists have settled on the "big bang" which seems to contradict the idea that matter is eternal, and, huge as it is, the universe appears to be finite. Whether we look through the microscope or the telescope it becomes more difficult in the light of experimental science to hold to the old premise that such order and complexity are the products of blind chance. The old naturalistic assumptions are being critically reexamined, challenged, and found to be unconvincing by many of today's scientists. Dr. Walter Bradley, Professor Emeritus of

Mechanical Engineering at Texas A & M University states the case:

“Discoveries of the last half of the 20th century have brought the scientific community to the realization that our universe and our planet in the universe are so remarkably unique that it is almost impossible to imagine how this could have happened accidentally, causing many agnostic scientists to concede that indeed some intelligent creative force may be required to account for it.”[{9}](#)

Areas of reconsideration include cosmology and the origin of life, essential elements of design and their recognition, the minimal requirements for a universe to support both life of any type and specifically complex human life, why these requirements are met in our universe, and requirements for a place in that universe uniquely met by planet earth. All of these remarkable features of our world are being reevaluated and point toward intelligent design.

The Moral Argument

This argument for God’s existence is based on the recognition of humankind’s universal and inherent sense of *right* and *wrong*. (cf. Romans 2:14,15). No culture is without standards of behavior. All groups recognize honesty as a virtue along with wisdom, courage, and justice. And even in the most remote jungle tribes, murder, rape, lying, and theft are recognized as being wrong, in all places and at all times. The question arises, “Where does this sense of morality come from?” C. S. Lewis speaks of this early on in his classic work *Mere Christianity*. He calls this moral law “The Rule of Right and Wrong”—“a thing that is *really there*, not made up by ourselves.”[{10}](#) For years Lewis struggled against God because the universe to him seemed unjust and cruel. But he began to analyze his outrage. Where did *he* get the very ideas of *just* and *unjust*? He said, “A man does not call a line crooked

unless he has some idea of a straight line.”{11}

He goes on to suggest that there are three parts to morality. Using the analogy of a fleet of ships on a voyage, he points out that three things can go wrong. The *first* is that ships may either drift apart or collide with and do damage to one another (alienation, isolation: people abusing, cheating, bullying one another). The *second* is that individual ships must be seaworthy and avoid internal, mechanical breakdown (moral deterioration within an individual). Lewis goes on to point out that if the ships keep having collisions they will not remain seaworthy very long, and of course, if their steering parts are out of order, they will not be able to avoid collisions! But there is a *third* factor not yet taken into account, and that is, “Where is the fleet of ships headed?” The voyage would be a failure if it were meant to reach New York but actually arrived in Buenos Aires (the general purpose of human life as a whole, what man was made for)!{12}

The human conscience to which Paul refers in Romans 2 is not found in any other animal—only man. The utter uniqueness of this moral compass within humans, along with other exclusively human qualities (rationality, language, worship and aesthetic inclinations) strongly suggest that man not only has a relationship *downward* to animals, plants and earth, but also a relationship *upward* to the God in Whose image he is. As we saw God’s great power and intelligence expressed in the first two arguments, we also see here that this sense of morality, not known in the world of nature, comes from the Great Law Giver Who is Himself in *character* the “straight line” (righteous, just, holy) against which all human actions are measured.

A Word about Atheism and Agnosticism

An *atheist* is a person who makes a bold assertion, “There is no God.” It is bold because it claims in an *absolute* manner what we have stated above what is not possible: i.e., the

existence or non-existence of God cannot be *proven* absolutely. It is also bold because, in order to make such an assertion, an atheist would literally have to be God himself! He would need to possess the qualities and capabilities to travel the entire universe and examine every nook and cranny of it before he would ever qualify to hold such a dogmatic conclusion!

The most brilliant, highly-educated, widely-traveled human on earth today, having maximized his/her brain cells to optimum learning levels for a lifetime could not possibly "*know*" 1/1000th of all that *could* be known. And knowledge is now doubling by the years rather than by the decades or centuries of the past! Is it *possible* that God could *still* exist outside the very limited, personal knowledge/experience of one highly intelligent human being? Furthermore, before an atheist can identify himself as one, he must first acknowledge the very idea, or concept, or possibility of God so he can then deny His existence!

The Bible says that "he who comes to God must believe that He is. . ." (Hebrews 11:6). In other words, there is a "faith" factor relative to a belief in God's existence. But the dogmatic and bold assertion above is itself an expression of faith. It takes faith to believe God *is*, and it takes faith to say God *is not*. In my judgment, it takes even *more* faith for the atheist to believe in his position because he holds to his faith against overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Christians also affirm God's existence on the basis of faith, but it is a *reasonable* faith based on the true nature of the *cosmos*, not a *blind* faith.

Turning to agnosticism, Webster defines it as a position which states that "neither the existence nor the nature of God, nor the ultimate origin of the universe is known or knowable."[\[13\]](#) Here again is a bold statement: When the agnostic says, "*I don't know*," what is really implied is "I can't know, *you* can't know, and *nobody* can know." Leith Samuel in his little book *Impossibility of Agnosticism*, mentions three kinds of

agnostics: [{14}](#)

Dogmatic: "I don't know, you don't know, and no one can know." Here is a person who already has his mind made up. He has the same problems as the atheist above—he must know *everything* in order to hold this position honestly.

Indifferent: "I don't know and I don't care." It is not likely that God would reveal Himself to someone who does not care to know: "He who has ears, let him hear." (Luke 14:35).

Dissatisfied: "I don't know, but I would like to know." Here is a person who demonstrates an *openness* to truth and a willingness to change his position should he have sufficient reasons. If such were the case, he would also be demonstrating what is true of agnosticism, namely, that it is meant to be a *temporary* path in search of truth which gives way to a more reasonable and less skeptical view of life and all reality.

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse." (Saint Paul, Romans 1:20).

"Only the fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' " (King David, Psalm 14:1).

Notes

1. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., Publishers, 1953), s.v. "metaphysics", 528.
2. Anthony Kenny, *Five Ways* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1969), 66.
3. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), 4.
4. David Hume, *An Enquiry: Concerning Human Understanding*, Great Books of the Western World, vol. 35 (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), 506.
5. Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 94-95.

6. Ibid., p. 15.
7. Ibid., 15-16.
8. Robert Jastrow, "A Scientist Caught Between Two Faiths," interviewed by Bill Durbin, *Christianity Today*, 26 (6 August 1982):14-18.
9. Walter L. Bradley, *"Is There Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Creator of the Universe?"* (lecture given at High Ground Men's Conference, Beaver Creek, Colo., Lecture given at High Ground Men's Conference, 2 March, 2001).
10. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1943), 18.
11. Ibid., 45.
12. Ibid., 70-71.
13. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "agnosticism."
14. Leith Samuel, *Impossibility of Agnosticism* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, n.d.).

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Evidence for God's Existence

Romans chapter 1 says that God has planted evidence of Himself throughout His creation so we are without excuse. Sue Bohlin looks at different types of evidence indicating that God really does exist.

A "Just Right" Universe

There's so much about the universe, and our world in particular, that we take for granted because it works so well. But Christian astronomer Dr. Hugh Ross has cited twenty-six different characteristics about the universe that enable it to sustain life. And there are thirty-three characteristics about

our galaxy, our solar system, and the planet Earth that are finely-tuned to allow life to exist.[{1}](#) I do well to make the meat, potatoes, vegetables, and bread all come out at the same time for dinner; we're talking about fifty-nine different aspects all being kept in perfect balance so the universe hangs together and we can live in it!

Our Earth, for instance, is perfectly designed for life. It's the "just right" size for the atmosphere we need. Its size and corresponding gravity hold a thin, but not too thin, layer of gases to protect us and allow us to breathe. When astronaut John Glenn returned to space, one of the things that struck him was how thin and fragile our atmosphere is (only 50 miles above the Earth). If our planet were smaller it couldn't support an atmosphere, like on Mercury. If it were larger, like Jupiter, the atmosphere would contain free hydrogen, which is poison for us.[{2}](#) Earth is the only planet we know of that contains an atmosphere that can support human, animal, and plant life.

The Earth is also placed at a "just right" distance from the sun and the other planets in our solar system. If we were closer to the sun, we'd burn up. If we were farther away, we'd freeze. Because Earth's orbit is nearly circular, this slightly elliptical shape means that we enjoy a quite narrow range of temperatures, which is important to life. The speed of Earth's rotation on its axis, completing one turn every 24 hours, means that the sun warms the planet evenly. Compare our world to the moon, where there are incredible temperature variations because it lacks sufficient atmosphere or water to retain or deflect the sun's energy.

Speaking of the moon, it's important that there is only one moon, not two or three or none, and it's the "just right" size and distance from us. The moon's gravity impacts the movement of ocean currents, keeping the water from becoming stagnant.[{3}](#)

Water itself is an important part of a “just right” world. Plants, animals and human beings are mostly made of water, and we need it to live. One of the things that makes Earth unique is the abundance of water in a liquid state.

Water has surface tension. This means that water can move upward, against gravity, to bring liquid nutrients to the tops of the tallest plants.

Everything else in the world freezes from the bottom up, but water freezes from the top down. Everything else contracts when it freezes, but water expands. This means that in winter, ponds and rivers and lakes can freeze at the surface, but allow fish and other marine creatures to live down below.

The fact that we live on a “just right” planet in a “just right” universe is evidence that it all was created by a loving God.

The Nagging Itch of “Ought”

As a mother, I was convinced of the existence of a moral God when my children, without being taught, would complain that something wasn't “fair.” Fair? Who taught them about fair? Why is it that no one ever has to teach children about fairness, but all parents hear the universal wail of “That's not fa-a-a-a-a-a-air!” The concept of fairness is about an internal awareness that there's a certain way that things ought to be. It's not limited to three-year-olds who are unhappy that their older siblings get to stay up later. We see the same thing on “Save the Whales” bumper stickers. Why should we save the whales? Because we ought to take care of the world. Why should we take care of the world? Because we just should, that's why. It's the right thing to do. There's that sense of “ought” again.

Certain values can be found in all human cultures, a belief that we act certain ways because they're the right thing to

do. Murdering one's own people is wrong, for example. Lying and cheating is wrong. So is stealing. Where did this universal sense of right and wrong come from? If we just evolved from the apes, and there is nothing except space, time, and matter, then from where did this moral sense of right and wrong arise?

A moral sense of right and wrong isn't connected to our muscles or bones or blood. Some scientists argue that it comes from our genes – that belief in morality selects us for survival and reproduction. But if pressed, those same scientists would assure you that ultimate right and wrong don't exist in a measurable way, and it's only the illusion of morality that helps us survive. But if one researcher stole another's data and published results under his own name, all the theories about morality as illusion would go right out the window. I don't know of any scientist who wouldn't cry, "That's not fair!" Living in the real world is a true antidote for sophisticated arguments against right and wrong.

Apologist Greg Koukl points out that guilt is another indicator of ultimate right and wrong. "It's tied into our understanding of things that are right and things that are wrong. We feel guilty when we think we've violated a moral rule, an "ought." And that feeling hurts. It doesn't hurt our body; it hurts our souls. An ethical violation is not a physical thing, like a punch in the nose, producing physical pain. It's a soulish injury producing a soulish pain. That's why I call it ethical pain. That's what guilt is – ethical pain."[\[4\]](#)

The reason all human beings start out with an awareness of right and wrong, the reason we all yearn for justice and fairness, is that we are made in the image of God, who is just and right. The reason we feel violated when someone does us wrong is that a moral law has been broken – and you can't have a moral law without a moral law giver. Every time we feel that old feeling of, "It's not fa-a-a-a-air!" rising up within

us, it's a signpost pointing us to the existence of God. He has left signposts pointing to Himself all over creation. That's why we are without excuse.

Evidence of Design Implies a Designer



If you've ever visited or seen pictures of Mount Rushmore (South Dakota USA), you cannot help but look at the gigantic sculpture of four presidents' faces and wonder at the skill of the sculptor. You know, without having to be told, that the natural forces of wind and rain did not erode the rock

into those shapes. It took the skilled hands of an artist.

William Paley made a compelling argument years ago that the intricacies of a watch are so clearly engineered that it cannot be the product of nature: a watch demands a watchmaker. In the same way, the more we discover about our world and ourselves, the more we see that like an expertly-fashioned watch, our world and we ourselves have been finely crafted with intentional design. And design implies a designer.

Since we live in our bodies and take so much of our abilities for granted, it's understandable that we might miss the evidence of design within ourselves – much like a fish might be oblivious to what it means to be wet. Dr. Phillip Bishop at the University of Alabama, challenges us to consider what would happen if we commissioned a team of mechanical engineers to develop a robot that could lift 500 pounds. And let's say we also commissioned them to design a robot that could play Chopin. They could probably do that. But what if we asked them to come up with a robot that could do both, and limit the robot's weight to 250 pounds, and require that it be able to do a variety of similar tasks? They'd laugh in our faces, no matter how much time or money we gave them to do it. But you

know, all we'd be asking them to do is to come up with a very crude replication of former football player Mike Reid.{5}

Probably the greatest evidence of design in creation is DNA, the material of which our genes are made, as well as the genetic material for every living thing on the planet. One of the startling discoveries about DNA is that it is a highly complex informational code, so complex that scientists struggle hard to decipher even the tiniest portions of the various genes in every organism. DNA conveys intelligent information; in fact, molecular biologists use language terms – code, translation, transcription – to describe what it does and how it acts. Communication engineers and information scientists tell us that you can't have a code without a code-maker, so it would seem that DNA is probably the strongest indicator in our world that there is an intelligent Designer behind its existence.

Dr. Richard Dawkins, a professor of biology who writes books and articles praising evolution, said in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." {6} Even those who desperately fear the implications of design keep running into it.

Those who deny the evidence of a designer are a lot like the foolish fisherman. If he fails to catch a fish, he says, "Aha! This proves there are no fish!" He doesn't want to consider the possibility that it might be he is an inept fisherman. Since science cannot measure the intangible or the supernatural, there are many people who say, "Aha! There is no Creator." {7} Foolish fishermen deny the evidence that God exists and has left His fingerprints all over creation.

The Reliability of the Bible

Every religion has its own holy book, but the Bible is different from all the others. It claims to be the very Word

of God, not dropped out of the sky but God-breathed, infused with God's power as He communicated His thoughts and intent through human writers.

The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years, by about forty different writers, on three different continents. They addressed a wide variety of subjects, and yet the individual books of the Bible show a remarkable consistency within themselves. There is a great deal of diversity within the Bible, at the same time displaying an amazing unity. It presents an internally consistent message with one great theme: God's love for man and the great lengths to which He went to demonstrate that love.

If you pick up any city newspaper, you won't find the kind of agreement and harmony in it that is the hallmark of the biblical books. A collection of documents that spans so much time and distance could not be marked by this unity unless it was superintended by one Author who was behind it all. The unity of the Bible is evidence of God's existence.

One other aspect of the Bible is probably the greatest evidence that God exists and that He has spoken to us in His holy book: fulfilled prophecy. The Bible contains hundreds of details of history which were written in advance before any of them came to pass. Only a sovereign God, who knows the future and can make it happen, can write prophecy that is accurately and always – eventually – fulfilled.

For example, God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel against the bustling seaport and trade center of Tyre. In Ezekiel 26:3-6, He said He would bring nations against her: "They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her soil from her, and make her a bare rock." Ezekiel 26-28 has many details of this prophecy against Tyre, which would be like Billy Graham announcing that God was going to wipe New York off the map.

Tyre consisted of two parts, a mainland city and an island a half-mile offshore. The first attack came from the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years. Finally, his battering rams broke through the walls, and he tore down the city's towers. But the island part of the city wasn't yet destroyed, because this prophecy was fulfilled in stages. For 250 years it flourished, until Alexander the Great set his sights on Tyre. Even without a navy, he was able to conquer this island city in what some consider his greatest military exploit. He turned the ruined walls and towers of Old Tyre into rubble, which he used to build a causeway from the mainland to the island. When he ran out of material, he scraped the soil from the land to finish the land-bridge, leaving only barren rocks where the old city used to be. He fulfilled the prophecy, "They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters"(Ez. 26:12).

Fulfilled prophecy is just one example of how God shows He is there and He is not silent. How else do we explain the existence of history written in advance?

Jesus: The Ultimate Evidence

The most astounding thing God has ever done to show His existence to us is when He passed through the veil between heaven and earth and came to live among us as a man.

Jesus Christ was far more than just a great moral teacher. He said things that would be outrageous if they weren't true, but He backed them up with even more outrageous signs to prove they were. Jesus claimed not to speak for God as a prophet, but to be God in human flesh. He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9), and, "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30). When asked if He was the Messiah, the promised Savior, He said yes. [\[8\]](#) He told his contemporaries, "Before Abraham was, I am"(John 8:58). The fact that His unbelieving listeners decided then to kill Him shows that they

realized He was claiming to be Yahweh, God Almighty.

When Jesus told His followers that He was the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18), they would immediately be reminded of a passage in the book of Ezekiel where Yahweh God pronounced Himself shepherd over Israel (Ez. 34:1-16). Jesus equated Himself with God.

But words are cheap, so Jesus backed up His words with miracles and signs to validate His truth-claims. He healed all sorts of diseases in people: the blind, the deaf, the crippled, lepers, epileptics, and even a woman with a twelve-year hemorrhage. He took authority over the demons that terrorized and possessed people. He even raised the dead.

Jesus showed His authority over nature, as well. He calmed a terrible storm with just a word. He created food out of thin air, with bread and fish left over! He turned water into wine. He walked on water.

He showed us what God the Father is like; Jesus was God with skin on. He was loving and sensitive, at the same time strong and determined. Children and troubled people were drawn to Him like a magnet, but the arrogant and self-sufficient were threatened by Him. He drenched people with grace and mercy while never compromising His holiness and righteousness.

And after living a perfect life, He showed His love to us by dying in our place on a Roman cross, promising to come back to life. Who else but God Himself could make a promise like that and then fulfill it? The literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the final, greatest proof that there is a God, that Jesus is God Himself, and that God has entered our world and showed us the way to heaven so we can be with Him forever. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me" (John 14:6).

God exists, and He has spoken. He made a "just right" universe that is stamped with clues of its Maker. He placed eternity in

our hearts, as Ecclesiastes tells us, and all people have a strong moral streak because we are made in the image of a moral God. The evidence of design in our bodies, our world and the universe is a signpost pointing to a loving, intelligent Designer behind it all. The unity of the Bible and the hundreds of fulfilled prophecies in it show the mind of God behind its creation. And we've looked at the way Jesus punched through the space-time continuum to show us what God looks like, and opened the doorway to heaven. Jesus is the clearest evidence of all that God does exist.

Notes

1. Hugh Ross, *Creator and the Cosmos*. (Colorado Springs, CO.: Navpress, 1995), 111-145.

2. R.E.D. Clark, *Creation* (London: Tyndale Press, 1946), 20.

3. *The Wonders of Gods Creation*, Moody Institute of Science (Chicago, IL).

4. Gregory Koukl, "Guilt and God," Stand to Reason Commentary.

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7. Bishop.

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The author gratefully acknowledges the insights of Marilyn Adamson, whose article "Is There a God?" on LeaderU.com formed the basis for much of this essay.

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“What is the Purpose of God?”

Dear Probe,

I was having an interesting conversation with an atheist over at Wasteland Of Wonders [an Atheist/Agnostic Website and Message board] when the topic of ultimate purpose came up!

Now most believers in God, myself included, seem to say that if the universe just *is*, then it becomes a big pointless absurdity, almost like a sick joke!

However if God exists then the universe and everything in it has a purpose, but the fellow over at Wastelands of Wonder with whom I was chatting said the following :

“Okay then, what is the ultimate purpose of God’s existence? Don’t you just have the same problem with theism, but pushed back a level? If God “just is,” what purpose then is there for your existence?”

I have to say this question reminds me very much of the infinite regression problem of “If God exists then who made God?!”

The best I could think of was that God contains an explanation for himself and that was it! This question truly had me bedazzled and I was scratching my head looking for a decent, non-cop-out explanation! [Like God explains himself]

So may I ask, if you were asked this question by someone what would you say?

Thank you for the interesting question! Let me try to answer it this way:

First, there would seem to be an important difference between the two questions, “Why does the universe exist?”, and “Why

does God exist?" Today, most scientists and philosophers believe that the universe had a beginning; it is not eternal. However, if God exists at all, He exists necessarily and is therefore eternal. Thus, even though each question is asking WHY something exists, they are each asking this about very different kinds of things.

Second, it's important for us to remember that purposes can only exist within a mind. The dictionary on my desk defines "purpose" as follows: 1. something one has in mind to get or do; plan; aim; intention. 2. object or end for which a thing is made, done, used, etc. Clearly, nothing which lacks a mind can have purposes of this sort. Whatever purpose there is for the existence of impersonal things must come from intelligent, purposeful beings. As a general rule, such beings would also be personal. Here I am thinking primarily of man, but also of God and the angels if they exist. Of course, some higher animals may have what might be described as very limited sorts of purposes for some of the things which they do. But generally speaking, purposes are the products of intelligent, personal beings.

Thus, if the universe is simply a "brute fact," and was not brought into existence by a purposeful, intelligent being, there can be no ultimate purpose for its existence. If nothing exists outside the universe then clearly, going back to the previously given definition of purpose, there can be no object or end for which the universe came into existence. The universe can only have some ultimate purpose if it was created by an intelligent being who, in fact, had some purpose in making it.

However, when we come to the question which you were asked, "What is the ultimate purpose of God's existence?", we need to pause and consider exactly what we are being asked. I think you are correct in seeing this question as a variant of that other, often-asked question, "Who made God?" While such questions can be asked, I honestly doubt whether they are

truly meaningful.

In the case of the question, "Who made God?", the questioner seems to be assuming that whatever exists requires a cause of its existence. But this is not true. Actually, it is only what BEGINS to exist that requires a cause. The universe began to exist; therefore, the universe requires a cause of its existence. But God never began to exist; He is eternal. It is therefore meaningless to ask "Who made God?", for what is really being asked is something like "Who made the Unmade Maker?", or "Who created the Uncreated Creator?" Clearly such questions are meaningless.

I believe that the question, "What is the ultimate purpose of God's existence?" or "Why does God exist?", is probably a similar sort of question. If the Christian God exists, then He is eternal. It is therefore unnecessary to posit a cause of His existence. Furthermore, if the Christian God exists, then He is the Creator of everything (other than Himself, of course!).

But now go back to our definition of "purpose" mentioned earlier and remember that, since God is the eternal, Uncreated Creator of all that exists, there was clearly no one other than God who might have had a purpose for bringing Him into existence. Additionally, it would also be meaningless to ask what purpose God had for bringing Himself into existence. The notion of a self-caused being is absurd. In order for a being to cause its own existence, it would first have to exist – which is obviously absurd. But if the purpose of God's existence cannot be explained by reference to an intelligent, purposeful being other than God, and if it can also not be explained by referring to a self-creative act of God Himself, I conclude that the question is probably meaningless.

Thus, while one can meaningfully ask about God's purpose(s) in creating the universe (and thus about the reason WHY the universe exists), one cannot meaningfully ask this question

about God Himself. Probably, the question is simply meaningless. But if not, we could not possibly know “the ultimate purpose of God’s existence” unless He tells us—and so far as I’m aware, He hasn’t done so.

Hope this helps.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

“I’m Doubting the Truth of the Bible and God’s Existence”

I was wondering about some matters pertaining to truth, specifically the truth of the Bible and existence of God. I’ve grown up in Arkansas in the bible belt my entire life and of course of been surrounded by churches, christianity, and an unquestioning world view that God exists and the bible is the truth.

Recently, I’ve started questioning reality and my perception of the world. I know it is dangerous to get caught up in humanly philosophies and crap like that, but a lot of things don’t make sense to me about God. I’m trying to look at truth from all perspectives so I’ve been reading this book called *The God Delusion*. I know you might say I’m crazy and I’m going to be completely disillusioned by some stupid science and philosophy, but some of what it says doesn’t seem to be completely crazy. Right now, specifically I’m struggling with

contradictions that the Bible seems to present. I'm wondering whether all the Gospels are in agreement as to the birth of Jesus. I'm sure there are several other contradictions that atheists would point out also. If you could address some of those and give me another viewpoint.

Thanks for your letter. There's nothing wrong with wanting to think carefully about what you believe and why. There's also nothing wrong with reading Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*,—although many serious scholars don't think very highly of his arguments or condescending attitude. For a good critique of Dawkins' book, you may want to also read [The Dawkins Delusion](#) by Alister E. McGrath. It would offer an informed rebuttal of many of Dawkins' claims by a world-class scholar with doctoral degrees in both molecular biology and theology.

I deal with alleged contradictions in the infancy narratives in [my article on the virgin birth](#) here on the Probe Web site. A more in-depth article can be found here: www.tektonics.org/af/birthnarr.php.

Two other sites you should be familiar with are Bible.org and ReasonableFaith.org. The latter site is that of Christian philosopher/theologian William Lane Craig. I would highly recommend his articles on the existence of God, the historicity of Jesus, etc. Both sites have lots of great resources.

Wishing you all the best in your studies!

Michael Gleghorn

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“I Can't Find a Good Reason to Believe in God and the Bible”

I have been reading some of the questions and answers that have been given about god, angels and the rest. Some of the questions make sense but to me almost none of the answers. Just so you know, I am a non believer in all of that and can find no good reason to believe. I tried going to church, going to meetings, bible study, prayer meetings—for me there are no real answers to anything in this life, just excuses. Maybe I am writing this with hopes of finding some.

When I have read the bible I find the good that everyone talks about and speaks of. It is always the same few things. The reason for me is because there is so little of it. I find plenty of ethnic cleansing, wars of extermination, murder of men women and children ordered by god. If the numbers in the bible are true which I do not believe they are, it is just something to try and frighten people. If the numbers of people ordered murdered by or murdered by god are anywhere near what is real, it makes Hitler, Stalin and Mao look like made-up cartoon characters. Yet we read about them and are appalled, so why not god?

I really believe to read the bible without horror one must undo everything that is tender, sympathizing and benevolent in the heart of man. That is what is the most frightening thing to me about most people who believe. I know I cannot read the bible with an open mind and not be appalled at the majority of the actions of god. I have tried. For me this is not divine love. People are always upset at the amount of violence that is in society, much of it on television—why not by the amount of it in the bible? The treatment of women is one of the most horrible I have ever read...for the most part. In both the old

and new testament. That can easily be pointed out in both the laws of the part of the world at that time and in the laws of god.

I do not at all understand how the two most powerful beings in existence cannot solve their own problems and if they can't do that, how am I to believe either of them can assist me in any way? And because they couldn't get along, the entire human race is damned because of that? Makes no sense to me. That to me is like saying one of my siblings did something wrong so I am going to spank all of you for it. And in the case with god it is not because of the siblings it is because he and satan can't get along.

Because of this and many more things I have read in the bible along with research on the meaning of words and laws of that time...I cannot believe. There are too many other teachings that show a much more kinder way of life for human beings. There are many people I have met in life who know that the violent nature of human beings does not exist in all of us...and that is what we live everyday. I believe that in those in whom it does exist, the bible more so than not gives excuses for it to continue. If the entire book is what it is really about, then entire book should be taught. I would love to attend a class bible class that teaches that. I have not yet found one. I know I would be a tough student...not because I want to be...but because I want to know. I just can't take another bible study that does not go into everything in the book

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. Although it may be a hard thing to read, I believe that God's command to the Israelites to utterly destroy the Canaanites teaches us a very important lesson about God. God is absolutely holy and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (see Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Proverbs 11:21; Nahum 1:3). The Canaanites were guilty of some of the worst crimes imaginable: terrible idolatry, immoral sexual behavior, and child sacrifice, just to name a few. All the way back in Genesis 15:13-16, God revealed to

Abram His plan to give His people the land of Canaan. However, notice that His promise would not be fulfilled for over 400 years. Why? Because, as God said, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:16). We must not forget, therefore, that God was very patient with the wicked practices of these people. He gave them hundreds of years to repent and turn from their wicked ways. But they chose not to. In the end, God did indeed judge them for their sin – just as He will one day judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31; Matt. 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15).

Let me also point out that God, as the Sovereign Creator and Judge of all mankind, has the right to give life and to take it away. After giving the Canaanites hundreds of years to repent, God finally judged their sins by waging a holy war against them through His people. This was a Divine judgment upon the Canaanites for their sins. It was also the means by which God would protect His chosen people from being corrupted by the wicked practices of these peoples (see Deuteronomy 12:2-4; 20:16-18). The lesson we are taught, I believe, is that God takes sin very seriously and will, as the perfectly holy and righteous Judge of all mankind, punish all sin without exception. In the end, not one sin will go unpunished. If any sin went unpunished, God would not be perfectly just. But since He is perfectly just, not one sin will go unpunished. This is a sober warning to all mankind that God is very serious about judging sin. It is quite proper for us to react to these stories with a healthy fear of God's judgment. Although God's judgment on the Canaanites was severe, the number of peoples killed is not anywhere close to the numbers murdered by Hitler and Stalin. But even if they were, it's important to put these events in proper perspective. After all, God's judgment on those who reject His Son and the free offer of His friendship, grace, love and forgiveness, results in much more severe consequences than mere physical death (see Revelation 20:11-15). Those who reject Jesus' sacrifice on the cross in their place as the only acceptable payment for their

sins, will have to pay for their sins themselves. And this involves eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46).

As for the treatment of women, it's very important to recognize that women in ancient Israel, and especially in the early church, were treated far better than they were in the surrounding cultures of those days. All the way back in Genesis 1:27 we are told that BOTH men and women are created in the image and likeness of God. Paul says that in Christ there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). He urged husbands to love their wives in the same manner that Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). This is a sacrificial sort of love that would even give its life for the beloved, just as Christ did for His church. Christianity actually did more than any other force in the ancient world to bring about an elevation in the status of women.

It's important to realize that man is not punished because God and Satan can't get along. This idea is taught nowhere in the Bible. Men are to be judged and punished for their sins (unless they repent and receive God's mercy through faith in Christ Jesus), just as Satan and his angels are to be judged and punished for theirs. We will not be punished because God and Satan can't get along. Furthermore, we shouldn't think of God and Satan as virtual equals. Satan is a rebel angel, a being originally created good by God, but who rebelled against God and sinned. Satan has no more power relative to God than you or I. Compared to God, Satan is completely powerless. Indeed, the only power he has is due to the fact that God created him with it, maintains him in existence, and (for the moment) allows him to exercise it in a manner contrary to His perfect moral will. At God's proper time, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity (Revelation 20:10). He will never be permitted to wreak chaos and moral rebellion in God's world again.

Finally, I will honestly say that I don't believe there is a

higher example of moral purity, holiness and virtue than that of Jesus. If what He taught is true, then the only way to be reconciled to God is through faith in Him (John 14:6). Furthermore, the Bible does not acknowledge that anyone (other than Jesus) is without sin or guilt. The Bible teaches that not one of us is righteous (Romans 3:10), but that all of us are sinners (Romans 3:23). Nevertheless, although the wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Although Christians are not perfect, Christ Jesus is. And it is to Him that God invites us to look for His grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and eternal life. "O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Evidence for God’s Existence? I Think Not!”

I have just read [your article on the existence of God](#). There are SO many mistakes (and assumptions) you have made that I don’t know where to begin:

A “Just Right” Universe?

Of course our planet is ‘just right’ to sustain life. If it were not we would not be here! There are billions and billions of galaxies, each galaxy has billions of stars, and each star has many planets. So although the chances of life occurring are slim, because there are so many opportunities for it to

occur, the chances are that it will almost definitely occur somewhere.

The Nagging Itch of "Ought"

This is to do with moral values. Not Christian values, but just plain humanitarian moral values. We know that in order to survive, social chaos is a bad thing. We don't need a Supernatural all knowing God to tell us this. Common sense tells us to do to others what you would like them to do to you. Do you seriously believe that without God it is impossible to make moral judgements in the interests of mankind? Don't forget that although we evolved from apes, evolution itself is driven by natural selection, genes that enable us to survive live, and those that don't die. Obviously murdering, stealing, cheating etc, will increase the odds of that happening to you. Therefore it is not in a species' interests to have these characteristics, therefore they die out. We have evolved moral values, they were not bestowed upon us by some god!

Evidence of Design Implies a Designer

Have you not never heard of evolution? Evolution is the non-random development of species through time, through random mutations in its DNA. That means that if it mutates in a bad way, the creature dies. If the mutation is beneficial to its survival then it lives and passes it 'new' genes on to the next generation. The process can take millions of years to evolve simple self replicating molecules (which can and do occur) into a diverse range of species. And hence give the appearance of design.

The Reliability of the Bible

HA!

Reliable and Bible are not two words I use together in a sentence very often! The Bible is full of holes and

contradictions, it is the most inconsistent book I have ever read. If you don't believe me have a look at the enclosed text file!

Jesus: The Ultimate Evidence

Jesus? The only evidence that can be found to suggest that he even existed. Is yes... in the Bible! Which insistently was written by unknown authors over 150 years after he (supposedly) died. It was also written in a different language than Jesus himself would have spoken!

Thank you for writing. You asked no questions, but only made statements which show me that you have not done much research, but you do have strong opinions. Therefore, I will not attempt to answer your comments since I am sure your time is as valuable as mine, and I doubt that you're interested in anything that would contradict your opinions.

I did look at your list of contradictions, and they do not trouble me at all since there is a rational explanation for them. The majority of them are like the contradiction my children experienced when my husband called me "Sue" and they called me "Mommy."

But thank you for writing.

In closing, you might want to consider Pascal's wager: Either Christianity is true or it's false. If you bet that it's true, and you believe in God and submit to Him, then if it IS true, you've gained God, heaven, and everything else. If it's false, you've lost nothing, but you've had a good life marked by peace and the illusion that ultimately, everything makes sense. If you bet that Christianity is not true, and it's false, you've lost nothing. But if you bet that it's false, and it turns out to be true, you've lost everything and you spend eternity in hell.

Quite a wager. . . and every one of us makes it, either

consciously or unconsciously.

So, _____, since you haven't checked into the things you confidently assert are true (for example: your statement that there is no extra-biblical evidence for the existence of Jesus. Check out the historian Josephus), are you willing to bet your life and your eternity that you're right?

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What If God Doesn't Exist?”

I have been a Christian for a very long time. I enjoy arguing for the truth of my faith. However, I run into a lot of trouble when it comes to doubt. I have read many of the articles on your site talking about things like, [“Why Isn't the Evidence Clearer?”](#) The problem that I have is that it is difficult to fully devote myself to the Lord in the presence of the plausibility of His non-existence. I believe there is very good evidence for the historical reliability of the scriptures and so forth but there is such a huge possibility still open for this not to be true. Just because there is a reliable historical record about something doesn't make that thing true. It just seems that the every day experience that I have as a Christian can be interpreted in any number of ways. In fact many other people of other antithetical religions to Christianity and schools of thought explain answered prayer and things like that in seemingly acceptable ways. It seems that to simply say that our evidence is the “best” isn't good enough. I know I have made mistakes about things that I believe in the past because I wasn't careful enough about examining the arguments against it. Therefore I think that it

is possible that there are other ways to interpret my beliefs.

Lots of people struggle with doubt, so you are in good company.

You're right, it is POSSIBLE that other religions and other worldviews may explain what happens in life. It's possible there is no God and we are all one giant cosmic accident (except that we wouldn't be a giant accident, we would be a small, insignificant, meaningless accident, right?). It's possible there is no heaven, that we all go into another life form in reincarnation. These things are, indeed, possible.

My challenge to you is, what evidence can you find that these explanations are better than the revelation from God in the Bible? Don't just look at it in your own head, thinking, "Oh yeah, that could be true." Actively pursue the evidence for the truth of alternate worldviews.

If your biggest problem is that it's possible God doesn't exist, then you might want to explore other expressions of Christianity. Is it possible that you have only been in churches where people live in their heads, like many Baptist or Bible churches? Do you have any experience with supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit? Do you have any experience with churches that truly understand the depth of reverence and holiness in worship?

I have a hunch that your problem may well be that your God is too small. That you have only had a peek at the true God, the God who is a consuming fire as well as a passionate Lover as well as one who speaks in a still, small voice.

I suggest you start seeing what else you can learn of God's heart and personality and experience by trying different types of Christian churches. Go to a charismatic or Pentecostal church if you've never done that. Go find a Catholic or Episcopalian church where the leadership knows Christ and seeks to make Him known. If you've never known a church with

excellent Bible teaching, try that. Especially look for a church with deeply meaningful worship where people are intentionally and effectively drawn into greater intimacy with Jesus Christ. Get outside the box of your experience up to this point. And at the same time, ask God to reveal Himself to you in ways you've never seen or heard or experienced.

Is it possible there's no one there to answer? Sure. But if that is the case, why is there such a deep longing to know Him? We have stomachs because of food, and we have eyes because there is so much to see. . . and we have longing hearts because God made us for Himself.

I hope this helps. I send this with a prayer that the God Who is there will touch you in such a deeply intimate part of your heart that you will KNOW He is there.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“There Is No Evidence for God or the Bible”

I read your article about the [evidence for God's existence](#). Although it was an interesting article, I didn't really see any evidence of God's existence in the article. I am a believer in God's existence. However, my belief is strictly faith based. I suppose it is possible that God does not exist. I choose to believe that he does. There are many things in the world we live in and our Universe that are truly amazing and unexplainable. But just because something is strange, amazing, awesome, mind boggling or unexplainable, does not mean it is evidence of God's existence.

Just like the existence of God cannot be proven, the Holy Bible itself can not be proven that it is the inspired word of God. There simply is no evidence. It is faith that people have in that it is the word of God. It can never be proven. This is very hard for many Christians to accept, but it is the undeniable truth. You believe because you choose to believe and for no other reason.

I think perhaps you misunderstand the difference between evidence and proof. I agree with you that we do not have proof of God's existence or that the Bible is the Word of God. However, what we do have is very powerful evidence that choosing to put our trust in God in His word is a reasonable choice.

Recently my husband was up on the roof of our house putting up Christmas lights. From inside the house, I heard noises above my head that sounded like footsteps. And when I looked out the window, I saw a man's shadow on the ground that indicated there was a person on the roof. Since Ray had told me he was going up on the roof, I believed he was up there. Could I prove it from inside the house? No, but it was completely reasonable for me to look at the evidence and conclude my husband was putting up Christmas lights.

Sometimes people look evidence full in the face and then deny it. Our founder, Jimmy Williams, is fond of telling the story of the man who went to a psychiatrist convinced that he was dead. The psychiatrist was unsuccessful at talking him out of his illusion. Finally he asked him, "Do dead men bleed?" The patient said no, they don't. The psychiatrist pulled out his Swiss army knife, reached over and nicked the man's finger. Amazed, the patient exclaimed, "Well, how about that! Dead men DO bleed!"

See the difference between evidence and proof?

Sue Bohlin

“A ‘Just Right’ Planet?”

Sue:

I enjoyed reading your article entitled [“Evidence for God’s Existence”](#) on probe.org. I found it to provide interesting insight.

I found your comments regarding a “just right” earth particularly intriguing. You stated that our “just right” planet is clear evidence that it was created by “a loving God.” As someone who has witnessed the fury of mother nature more than once, I am compelled to ask – do you include volcanic eruptions, floods, tidal waves, and earthquakes in this “just right” view of God’s creation of the earth?

I find it very hard to believe that this planet we live on is as “just right” as you portray. I have seen massive landslides that buried charities, churches, and brothels side by side without regard. I have seen so many God-fearing people struck by flood and other natural disasters that I cannot help but fail to understand how the earth can be so “just right.” Think about how many innocent children suffered for days, even weeks in immense pain and agony, buried under rubble in an earthquake, before finally dying. Are such tragedies really part of a “just right” design?

I recently read a research paper from the American Oceanographic Institute regarding some really cool bacteria – they live 2 miles deep in the ocean near hot thermal vents in the ocean floor where no light has ever penetrated. The water temperature there reaches 800 degrees or more and contains

highly toxic and poisonous chemicals (well – to humans at least). These conditions are not so different than you might find on other planets in our solar system. I know that one day we will land spacecraft on other planets and find, in the most hostile environment imaginable, living organisms thriving in places we never thought possible.

Like you, I marvel at the intricacies of the world (and universe) we live in – it truly is a wondrous place. William Paley is well-known for his “watchmaker” theory – he, too, marveled at our universe and was so overwhelmed at it’s complexity that he said that someone MUST have engineered it – for it could not possibly exist without a designer.

I offer you this challenge, then – let’s apply Mr. Paley’s own logic to God himself. Surely you will agree that God himself is far more complex and intricate than the universe is. By Mr. Paley’s logic, something so complex MUST have a creator. Therefore, someone or something MUST have created God, since such complexity cannot exist without a designer. I submit that Mr. Paley is simply a victim of someone in need of a reason – we all want to have a reason. Some of us can accept the fact that we don’t yet know where the universe came from. Others, like Mr. Paley, are so desperate to explain things that they will simply make something else up which is immune from question to explain that which they cannot.

I say these things not to inflame you or attack you. I simply seek knowledge, thought, and interaction with people of differing viewpoints than my own. Perhaps one day I will come to agree, perhaps not. But I find that speaking to everyone I can, becoming their friend, and agreeing to disagree to be very fulfilling in my life.

Hopefully you will take a few minutes to talk with me and we will both go our ways with a little more knowledge and insight than we started with.

I have received quite a few e-mails from people who disagreed with me in this article, but none that were as gentle and reasonable and sweet-tempered as yours! It says something about your character, methinks. . . . <smile>

Two answers. First of all, concerning the horrific destruction that gets unleashed in nature: according to the Bible, which gives us information we couldn't know otherwise because it's information from "outside the box," this world is in a state very different from the one God originally created. After sin entered the world courtesy of the first human beings, the whole world was plunged into a state of corruption, decay and destruction that spawned natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and droughts. (And then you add the HUMAN disasters that are a result of moral corruption and decay that spawned atrocities like the Holocaust and Sept. 11! –But that's another story.)

At the risk of belaboring the point, allow me to offer an illustration. My sister-in-law is an extraordinarily gifted cake decorator in Chicago, and I live in Dallas. She wanted to share one of her creations with me, and was told by a mentor that if she packed a cake with the right precautions, she could FedEx it to me and it would arrive intact. Apparently, the folks at FedEx didn't know that, and when I opened the box it was a mess of crumbs and broken sugar flowers. It still tasted wonderful, and evidence abounded for its original beauty and glory, but it got ruined between Chicago and Dallas. Her heart sank when she learned what had happened to it, not only because of the waste but because her hopes for pleasing me with the cake's original condition were dashed. I think it's an illustration of how it grieved God for His beautiful earth to be ruined by the mishandling of the people into whose hands He had placed His creation to be good stewards, because their sin caused all manner of destruction not only between people but also on the earth itself. The fact that the cake was ruined after it left my sister's hands

didn't detract one bit from the gifted design and skill that went into creating it in the first place. I still contend that God's design is "just right," even though the world doesn't function as perfectly as it did when He first created it.

Secondly, concerning the idea that someone or something must have created God: as you move backward in discerning cause and effect, there must eventually be an Uncaused Cause in order for anything to exist at all. At some point there has to be something or someone who has always existed who is responsible for causing other things to come into existence, because nothing comes into existence on its own. Thus, at some point there had to be an Ultimate Causer (or Ultimate Cause) that has always been here. Because if you can go "beyond God," so to speak, to a time when there was nothing and no one in existence, then there would be no way for God to come into existence without a cause. There MUST be an Uncaused Cause.

Hope this helps you to understand where I'm coming from!

Most respectfully and cordially,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Why I Don't Believe in God"

Dear Christian Philosopher,

One day I was asked why I believed in God. I had a very hard time coming up with one reason. However, since my faith has disappeared, I have had a relatively easy time coming up with reasons that I do not believe in Him. Here are five:

- *I have not perceived God. Everything that I believe exists,*

I have perceived. As a result, I do not believe in God (since I don't believe that He exists).

- *I have not received reliable testimony that anyone that has perceived God. However, I have received reliable testimony that others have not perceived God. Therefore, since I must perceive something (or at least hear reliable testimony from a perceiver) before I say it exists, I do not believe in God.*

- *I do not believe in God because he does not exist. God does not exist because everything that exists must take up space and God does not take up space. Therefore, God does not exist.*

- *It is impossible for spiritual substance to interact with physical substance. The Christian God is composed of spiritual substance and the world is material substance. The Christian God created the world. Since creating the world entails spiritual substance interacting with and manipulating physical substance, the Christian God cannot exist. (If spiritual substance can interact with physical substance, then how?)*

- *There is no such thing as spiritual substance (Descartes mind or the other realm); i.e., the soul, the devil, angels, hell etc. (If there is spiritual substance, then I would like to hear some reasons why I should believe that there is such a substance.). My reason for saying that there is no such thing as spiritual substance is due to spiritual substance being unperceivable and non-existent (assuming that to exist is to take up space). In fact, spiritual substance cannot be perceived because human-kind's faculties for perception only gather information from material substance. Since all human faculties are material, they cannot gather information from spiritual substance because the spiritual substance would have to interact with the material faculties; and it is impossible for spiritual substance to interact with physical substance.*

Like I said, my faith disappeared. I believe that if someone shows me how I have made a mistake, then my faith will come back. I know that these reasons are probably not great in the eyes of a seasoned philosopher (I am just doing my undergraduate work right now), but in my stage of development as a thinker, these are huge roadblocks. Thank you.

Dear _____,

Thanks for your letter. I will respond to each of your five points individually.

1. I have not perceived God. Everything that I believe exists, I have perceived. As a result, I do not believe in God (since I don't believe that He exists).

By perceive, do you mean through the senses? If so, for this reason to be valid you must present a case for a strong empiricism such as that of the logical positivists of the early 20th century. They believed that only that can be held as true knowledge which is empirically verifiable. This has been shown to be self-referentially incoherent, since the theory itself can't be so verified. Consider, too, the things I'm sure you believe exist even though you haven't perceived them by your senses, things such as electricity or love. You can see the effects of these things, but not the things themselves (if love can be called a "thing"). Similarly, we can see the effects or the works of God without seeing Him. If you mean you haven't perceived God in any way, there is nothing I can say to that, except that this is no proof that God doesn't exist. It could be that you have closed off any avenues by which you might perceive Him.

2. I have not received reliable testimony that anyone that has perceived God. However, I have received reliable testimony that others have not perceived God. Therefore, since I must perceive something (or at least hear reliable testimony from a perceiver) before I say it exists, I do not

believe in God.

Again, by perceive do you mean by the senses? If so, my first response still stands. If you mean any kind of perception, then millions of people can offer positive testimony. Of course, if you have decided already that God doesn't exist, then you will write such testimonies off to something else. But that would be no argument against God's existence, but rather a testimony of your own philosophical/religious biases.

3. I do not believe in God because he does not exist. God does not exist because everything that exists must take up space and God does not take up space. Therefore, God does not exist.

Here you first need to present an argument to prove that anything which exists must take up space. Materialists have the same obligation as theists to prove their world view.

Here are some reasons I find naturalism untenable. Consider first that if matter is all that exists (since all existing things must take up space), then the universe must be explainable purely in terms of natural laws, including the law of cause and effect. If there is a purely materialistic cause/effect explanation for everything, then even our mental processes are nothing more than the motion of atoms in our brains (whether chemical or electrical) acting in a strict cause/effect sequence. But if this is the case, how can we know whether what we think is true, or whether it is just the result of determined natural processes? How do you know that what you think about the world outside yourself actually obtains? It could all be simply mental images your brain has produced. There must be something in our reasoning abilities which isn't reducible to natural processes.

In addition, such determinism strikes at the heart of free will, which means that you didn't make a free choice to write

your letter: it simply happened as a result of the natural, non-mental, processes of your brain and body.

One more note: Those working in artificial intelligence still haven't been able to produce a computer which thinks like a human. If reason were a strictly causal process surely they would have been able to do so already.

4. It is impossible for spiritual substance to interact with physical substance. The Christian God is composed of spiritual substance and the world is material substance. The Christian God created the world. Since creating the world entails spiritual substance interacting with and manipulating physical substance, the Christian God cannot exist. (If spiritual substance can interact with physical substance, then how?)

Why do you believe it is impossible for spiritual substance to interact with physical substance? Some say that such interaction would negate natural laws. But I see no reason to accept this. We can't deny the interaction of the supernatural with the natural just because it complicates matters.

Just how this happens I cannot say. But my limited understanding shouldn't be an impediment to belief. If we have good reasons to believe God exists and created the universe, and there are no objections significant enough to overcome those reasons, then one is justified in believing in God. Because there are other reasons to believe in God, the burden is on you to prove the spiritual cannot interact with the physical.

5. There is no such thing as spiritual substance (Descartes' mind or 'the other realm'); i.e., the soul, the devil, angels, hell etc. (If there is spiritual substance, then I would like to hear some reasons why I should believe that there is such a substance.). My reason for saying that there is no such thing as spiritual substance is due to spiritual

substance being unperceivable and non-existent (assuming that to exist is to take up space). In fact, spiritual substance cannot be perceived because human-kind's faculties for perception only gather information from material substance. Since all human faculties are material, they cannot gather information from spiritual substance because the spiritual substance would have to interact with the material faculties; and it is impossible for spiritual substance to interact with physical substance.

You (again) make your presuppositions very clear: 1) all existing things take up space, and 2) the spiritual cannot interact with the material. Again, I ask that you present a case for your materialism and for your assumption about the impossibility of spiritual/natural interaction.

Here I have simply tried to respond to your ideas and show where I see weaknesses. For positive arguments to believe, there are numerous resources available. I suggest that you look for copies of C.S Lewis' books *Mere Christianity* and *Miracles*. For a study on mind/body dualism from a Christian perspective, see J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987), chapter 3. Also look through the list of articles on our web site (www.probe.org) under the categories Theology/Apologetics and World View/Philosophy. My articles on atheism and miracles address the issue of naturalism.

Rick Wade

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