EQUIPPED

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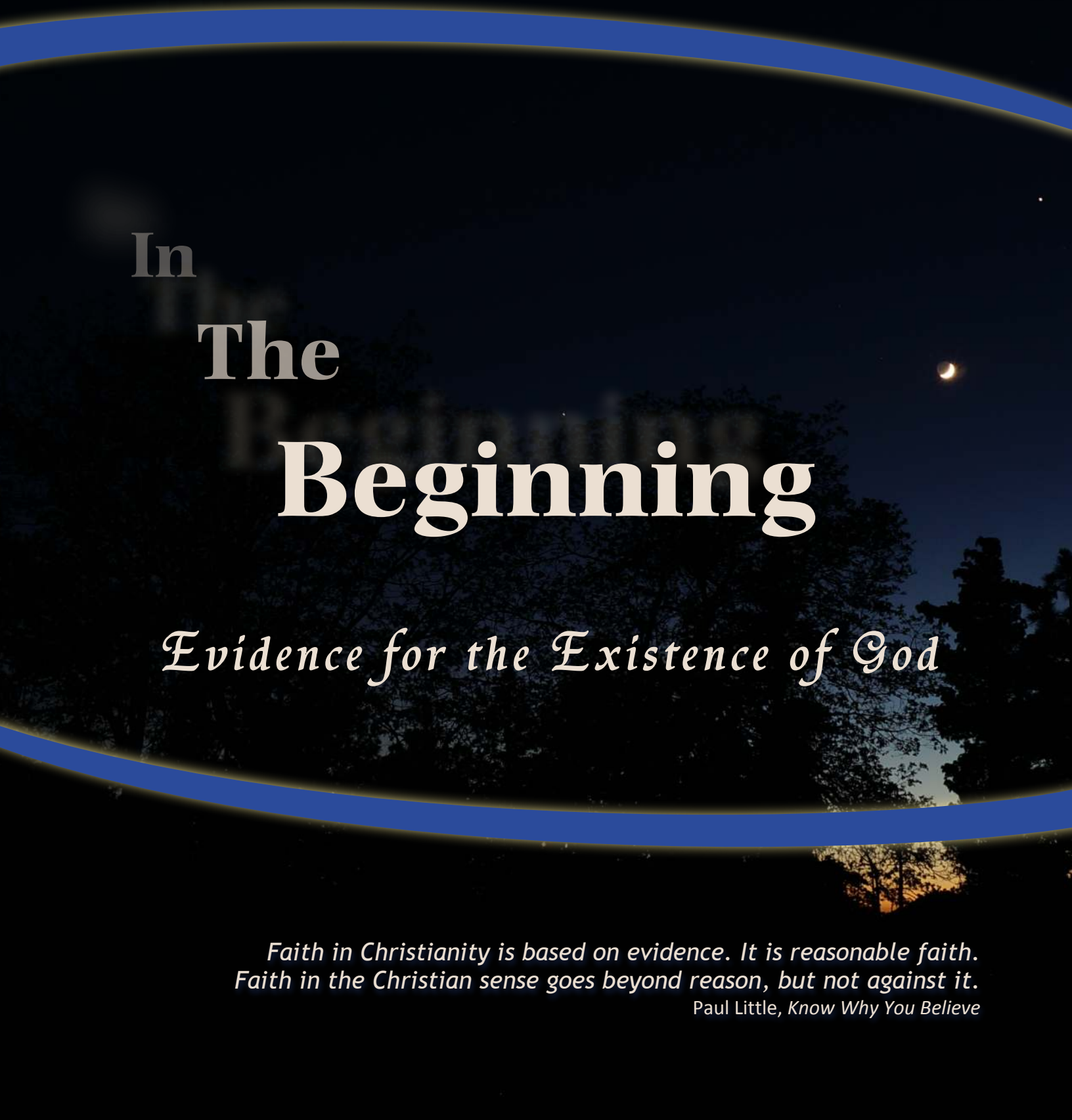
THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS ALLIANCE QUARTERLY

"Overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ"



In The Beginning

Evidence for the Existence of God

Faith in Christianity is based on evidence. It is reasonable faith. Faith in the Christian sense goes beyond reason, but not against it.

Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe*

Statement of Faith

We affirm that there is only one, Triune God,
existing eternally in three distinct persons:
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We affirm that God is the all-powerful Creator.

We affirm that Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the only Son of God,
fully God and fully man, yet one person.
He became incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary,
lived a perfect and sinless life,
was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
suffered death for the forgiveness of our sins, and was buried.
On the third day he bodily rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and
His kingdom will have no end.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead.
There is no other name by which we may be saved.[1]

We affirm that the Holy Spirit is the Lord and giver of life,
who is to be worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son.

We believe the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and
we affirm that they are historically trustworthy and doctrinally authoritative.[2]
We affirm that there is one, holy, universal, and apostolic church.[3]

We affirm the Christian worldview encourages a holy and joyful renewal of each individual and the whole universe. We therefore promote the biblical convictions:

*that the love of our neighbors and the alleviation of human suffering in all its forms is integral to Christian discipleship,

*that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, and
that marriage is the only legitimate context for sexual activity,

*that all human beings have a right to life, including those not yet born,[4]

*that we are called to participate in the restoration of all things, and

*that the Christian Apologetics Alliance is ultimately meant to serve the church and our family in Christ, as one part of God's mission to evangelize and disciple all people to maturity in Christ.[5]

bed·rock

[bed-rok]: any firm foundation or basis; the fundamental principles

Welcome to the first issue of EQUIPPED, a Christian Apologetics Alliance quarterly. As with everything we as an alliance do, we seek in EQUIPPED to answer skeptics and equip Christians by demonstrating the truth of the Christian worldview. As an alliance we maintain unity in the essentials, offer liberty in the nonessentials, and encourage charity in all things, especially towards those who oppose us. Our hope is grounded in one unchanging King amidst the seasons, wars, and epidemics—sandcastles for the tide. It is with this in mind that we introduce the first issue of our quarterly with a focus on some of the evidences for "the" essential: God. We also include a few testimonies and upcoming news, events, and debates.

EQUIPPED is one of many exciting developments in the CAA this year. Our Vice President, Mark McGee, started us off right with organizational flow charts detailing our leadership and ministry structure, ensuring every project helps serve our core goals. We have added a speaking team, joined Apologetics 315's "read along" of Copan and Litwak's *The Gospel in the Marketplace of Ideas* on our Facebook page and Facebook group, and we look forward to attending the first online women's apologetics conference, *Women Equipping Women*, on October 24-25 (men welcome). Joined by many women from The Christian Apologetics Alliance, keynote Nancy Pearcey will address *Stealth Secularism: Apologetics in the Arts and Humanities* in this fifth annual conference hosted by Athanatos Christian Ministries. Melissa Cain Travis will be speaking at this conference and has contributed an article to this first issue of EQUIPPED. Also speaking at this conference is Natasha Crain, leader of our Apologetics for Parents group. Our co-founder and director of partnerships, Chris Reese, has also organized our partnership with the NRB network!

The admin team would like to recognize and appreciate the hard work put in by all of our volunteers on the Facebook group membership team led by Linwood Kemp, its moderators team led by Matt Fig, the CAA website editing team led by Terrell Clemmons, all of our blog authors, everyone who has contributed and will contribute (Lord-willing) to the Catechism, those who have worked and will work (Lord-willing) on the Lay Apologetics Course led by Dr. Tim McGrew, and the EQUIPPED team led by acting editor, Glen Richmond. The CAA could not be what it is without our many volunteers and community members.

As we grow as an alliance, please pray that we focus on our greatest apologetic: the quality of our relationships with our family and neighbors as we not only know *why* the Gospel is true, but step out in obedience and live out its truth as a blessing in our families and neighborhoods, **motivated** by God's unconditional acceptance Jesus perfectly demonstrated for us in his sacrifice. Please be praying about this for our ministry as well as the other apologetics ministries Christ has raised up in his kingdom. Be thinking: Who is your neighbor? What is a neighbor? Who will empower you to be a neighbor? Who loves you even when you aren't neighborly? Let's talk about it, Alliance, and let's let God do something about it in us. Now kick up your feet and enjoy some of the evidence for what unites us!

In Christ and his kingdom,

Maryann Spikes, President
The Christian Apologetics Alliance

He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be moved.
Ps 62:6

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IN NECESSARIIS UNITAS, IN DUBIIS LIBERTAS, IN OMNIBUS CARITAS. In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity. The Christian Apologetics Alliance (CAA) is united in our Statement of Faith. The CAA does not, as an organization, have positions on many of the doctrinal or theological debates that take place within the church. Our primary concern is to promote the gracious, rational defense of the central claims of Christianity and the critique of opposing systems of thought. The CAA community is a diverse one of many denominations. Blog entries made by individual authors reflect the views of the author and not necessarily the view of other CAA authors, or the official position of the Christian Apologetics Alliance group at large.

ves·ti·bule

[ves-tuh-byool]: a passage, hall, or antechamber between the outer door and the interior

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements - surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? —*Job 38:4-7*

My personal story is long; I'll keep it brief. I have no problem sharing the details; this just isn't the time.

A couple years ago the Holy Spirit said, "*IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP! It's time to put away your childish ways and prepare for battle!*" I suspected the moment would come, I just didn't know when I would find myself standing at the precipice. Until then, I chose to live for me; ignoring the Truth. I didn't want to deal with it, I probably never would.

> ***"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."***
> ***1 Peter 3:9***

I have been a Christian since I was 12. I went to a Christian College and became involved in the leadership of student ministries; my senior year, I led the team. Those 4 years were the best; I reflect on them with great pleasure. After graduation, I worked at a respected Christian organization. Then, something happened and instead of choosing to grow through the experience, I became bitter towards God. It happens; disappointment gets twisted and turned into bitterness, but it doesn't have to be that way; I know this now.

For the next 25 years, especially the first 10, that bitterness became a wall between my Lord and me. I went to church, bible studies, and small groups, but deep down inside I struggled with the bitterness. One bad choice led to another, and another. I've done a lot of things in my life I regret ranging from harmless prankster to, *nobody finds out about this.* Regrets which haunted my memories, impaling my soul, causing me to cower in private shame; regrets that felt like death.

In May 2013, I had another personal epic failure. It's difficult to describe how it feels to have a lifetime of regrets coalesce into a single moment: I felt ashamed, scared, convicted, broken, and worthless; I cried - alone. Then I read the following verses as if for the very first time:

> ***"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."***
> ***Romans 8:1-2***

If you read that with a glancing "uh-huh," please read it again. "*Free in Christ Jesus*." Through the power of the Holy Spirit that paralyzing web of regrets disappeared and simultaneously, in humble admission, I finally comprehended: **Jesus Christ is Lord**. He willfully, lovingly, mercifully sacrificed Himself so I could be free; free from regrets, free from sin, free from death; FORGIVEN. Those memories are now just weightless scars; reminders of who I was apart from Jesus Christ.

The God we worship is a patient, forgiving, loving God; a God who washes us in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose again to set us free.

Friends, there are a lot of hurting people in this world who need to know the truth of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Equip yourselves and prepare for battle. Share the truth with them boldly, with humility, and in love because, in Christ you too have been set free.

> ***"What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops."***
> ***Matthew 10:27***

THERE IS A GOD AND HE IS TRUTH

—Glen Richmond, Acting Editor *EQUIPPED*

Approaching The Existence of God

Eric Chabot • chab123.wordpress.com

How do we know God exists? Over the years, when I have been asked this question, I used to jump to an argument for God. I would sit down and try to explain it in detail to the individual. I have now decided to take a different approach and back up: I ask the person "How should we approach the existence of God?" Or, "What method should we use?" Now I know when you ask a Christian, Jewish person, Muslim, and Mormon as well how they know what they believe is true, they might just say, "I have faith." This should cause us to stop and ask if that is an adequate answer. It probably will not go very far in a skeptical and pluralistic culture. So in this article I want to discuss some of the various ways we can approach the existence of God. I am well aware there are other methods.

#1: The Revelatory Approach

The skeptical issue in our culture mostly enters into the religious dialogue in the following way: "In the case of God, who isn't some physical object but a divine being, what kind of evidence should we expect to find? There is a tendency to forget that the Bible stresses sin can dampen the cognitive faculties God has given us to find Him. Therefore, sin has damaging consequences on the knowing process (Is 6:9-10; Zec 7:11-12; Mt 13:10-13). Thus, people are dead, blinded, and bound to sin.

Christianity stresses that the God of the Bible is capable of giving a revelation to mankind through a specific medium. One of the most important themes of the Bible is, since God is free and personal, that He acts on behalf of those whom He loves, and that His actions includes already within history, a partial disclosure of His nature, attributes, and intensions. Revelation is a disclosure of something that has been hidden – an "uncovering," or "unveiling." There are three things needed for a revelation to take place: God, a medium, and a being able to receive the revelation.

The mediums God uses in the Bible are General Revelation (the created order, conscience; Rom 1&2); Special Revelation (Jesus; John 3:16; 14:9; Col 2:9; Heb 1:1-2), The Bible (2 Tim 3:16); Miracles, Prophecy, Theophanies, Missionaries, Messengers, and other means.

Why the need for revelation? First, we need to know the character of God. Hence, we need a clear communication to establish the exact nature of God's character. Who is God and what is He Like? Also, we

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need a revelation to understand the origin of evil/the fall. In other words, we need to be educated concerning the reasons for where we are as a human race. Furthermore, without a clear revelation, people might think they are the result of a blind, naturalistic process instead of being created in the image of God. Thus, without a clear revelation we would not know our destiny.

The skeptic constantly assumes if they could just see God directly or if God would give them an unmistakable sign that He is there, they would bow their knee and follow Him. Sadly, this is misguided on several levels. God declares, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Ex 33:20). However, there seems to be other texts that indicate people did see God. Even in Exodus 33:11, Moses speaks to God "face to face." Obviously, "face to face" is a figure of speech which means they were in close communion or conversation.

Also, in Genesis 32:30, Jacob saw God appearing as an angel. But he did not truly see God. In Genesis 18:1, it says the Lord appeared to Abraham. Obviously, there are other cases where God appears in various forms. But this is not the same thing as seeing God directly with all His glory and holiness. It is evident people cannot see God in all His fullness (Ex 33:20). For if they did, they would be destroyed. Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God; He shows the world who God is (Heb 1:1).

Let me expand on the miracles, prophecy issue a little: There seems to be a pattern of how God works in the history of Israel. Every time He is doing something new in their midst, He confirmed what He was doing through a prophet. Signs are used to provide evidence for people to believe the message of God through a prophet of God.

We see this is an important feature with Moses and Jesus:

1. God says to Moses, "I will be with you. And this will be *the sign* to you that it is I who have sent you" (Ex 3:12).
2. When Moses asks God, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me?" the Lord gives Moses two ***"signs"***: his rod turns into a snake (Ex. 4:3) and his hand becomes leprous (Ex 4:1–7).
3. Moses "performed ***the signs*** before the people, and they believed; … they bowed down and worshiped" (Ex 4:30–31).

"Sign"(*sēmeion*) is used seventy-seven times (forty-eight times in the Gospels). Remember that the prophet Isaiah spoke of a time where miraculous deeds would be the sign of both the spiritual and physical deliverance of Israel (Is 26: 19; 29:18-

But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the Lord of hosts.
Zech 7:11-12

InterVarsity Press Hard Saying: "No One Has Ever Seen God?" John 1:18

Who Do You Say I Am? A Look at Jesus –Eric Chabot

What Can We Know About Jesus? Resources on the Historical Jesus and Historicity of the New Testament –Eric Chabot

19; 35:5-6; 42:18; 61:1). Also:
1. The word ***"sign"*** is reserved for what we would call a miracle.
2. ***"Sign"*** is also used of the most significant miracle in the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus from the grave.
3. Jesus repeated this prediction of His resurrection when he was asked for ***a sign*** (Mt 16:1, 4). Not only was the resurrection a miracle, but it was a miracle that Jesus predicted (Mt 12:40; 16:21; 20:19; Jn 2:19).
4. Nicodemus said of Jesus "We know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous ***signs*** you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:2).
5. "Jesus the Nazarene was a man accredited by God to you by ***miracles, wonders and signs,*** which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

CHALLENGES TO THE REVELATION ARGUMENT

No doubt there are going to be challenges to the revelation argument. After all, the Bible is considered to be God's revelation to mankind. However, The Quran, The Book of Mormon, and other holy books are considered to be The Word of God. Who has it right? The late Christopher Hitchens said:

> *Since all these revelations, many of them hopelessly inconsistent, cannot by definition be simultaneously true, it must follow that some of them are false and illusory. It could also follow that only one of them is authentic, but in the first place this seems dubious and in the second place it appears to necessitate religious war in order to decide whose revelation is the true one.*[10]

That is why the revelation argument will generally lead us to utilize historical apologetics.

#2: HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS/PROPHECY

When it comes to historical arguments, we ask if God has revealed Himself in the course of human history? If so, when and where has He done this? We can look at religious texts and see if they pass the tests for historicity.[1] Thus, we enter the domain of historical apologetics.

For example, former atheist Anthony Flew said the resurrection of Jesus was the best attested miracle claim he had seen.[2] Another aspect of the historical argument is the argument from prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy does not prove the existence of God, but it does show that events predicted in His name which come to pass are evidence of His special activity.[3, 4]

#3: GOD AS AN EXPLANATORY HYPOTHESIS?

Paul says God's existence and attributes can be "clearly seen" (Rom 1:18-20) since they have been "shown" to the unbelieving world through "the things that are made" (nature). Notice Paul never posits we can view God as a material object. He does say that people should be able to look at the effects in the world and infer there is a Creator.

So what has been made (e.g., designed, created)? The laws of nature? The existence and fine tuning of the universe? The Genetic Code? Or, does nature and chance act on their own without agency? C.S. Lewis said, "*I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.*"[5] To apply what Lewis says, we can utilize what is called "inference to the best explanation." The inference to the best explanation model takes into account the best available explanation in our whole range of experience and reflection. Another example of this approach is seen in a book, A Meaningful World: How the Arts and Sciences Reveal the Genius of Nature by Benjamin Wiker and Jonathan Witt.[6]

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Also, using God as an explanatory explanation is seen in philosophical theology, or natural theology arguments. The book The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology[7] does a fine job of handling this issue. To see a short example of this approach: The Return of the God Hypothesis by Stephen C. Meyer or Paul Copan's God: The Best Explanation.

#4: Pragmatic Arguments?

Many people might ask why I would bring this up. The reason I mention it is because about 70% of the people with whom I talk about Christianity, object to it by saying, "I don't understand what difference Christianity would make in my life." This is a very popular approach. I have had atheists tell me they don't even care if a belief is true. Hence, as long as it makes a practical difference in one's life, that is all which matters. In this argument, many people say their religious beliefs have been tried and tested in the reality of life. Thus, they think their beliefs correspond to reality because they do make a difference. In other words, "Christianity works because it is true!"

This does have some merit. After all, if the Christian faith is the one true path, it should make a radical difference in the reality of life. The challenge of this argument is, in some cases, Christianity does not work. Christians have challenges in their families, work related issues, and relationships. However, just because Christians don't always reflect the character of Jesus and don't always show the difference it makes, this does not mean Christianity is false.

It could be the person is not under healthy teaching and discipleship, or is living in sin. So, the pragmatic argument can be a tricky one. Everyone knows, while Christians have done some amazing things for the world, we also have some inconsistencies.[8] In the end, a pragmatic test for truth isn't going to cut it. After all, Mormons can testify as to why Mormonism helps them have strong families. Black Muslims can testify in prison that Islam has helped them be more responsible. But these things don't make Mormonism nor Islam true. So the first question is whether the Christian story is actually true. The claim, "The Biblical God exists," or, "Jesus rose from the dead" must correspond to reality. It is incumbent upon the Christian to explain what objective truth is and how it cannot be avoided!

#5: Existential Arguments

The latest book by Clifford Williams Called Existential Reasons For Belief in God[9] is an approach to why people believe in God. According to Williams, for some people, logic and reason are dominant and in others, emotion and satisfaction of needs are dominant.

Williams mentions 10 existential needs from his book:

- The need for cosmic security
- The need for meaning
- The need to feel loved
- The need to love
- The need for awe
- The need to delight in goodness
- The need to live beyond the grave without the anxieties that currently affect us
- The need to be forgiven
- The need for justice and fairness
- The need to be present with our loved ones

Conclusion:

There are several other approaches to the existence of God. Given humans are emotional, intellectual, and volitional creatures, there is no "one size fits all approach." I hope that has caused you to go further in the question of God's existence.

A Tribute To
Gretchen Passantino Coburn
–Nick Peters

"And yet, it is by relationships that lives are changed. This is incredibly biblical, but incredibly missed by many of us as apologists. In fact, one could have all the reasons, answers, and arguments that Jesus Christ is Lord, but unless we have that relationship with Him by the power of the Holy Spirit, we don't have eternal life! If we would remember this simple core gospel principle in everything we do, we as apologists would be incredibly more effective and far easier to live with!"
–Gretchen

In Memory of
Gretchen Passantino Coburn
–ISWA

On the Existence of God

Nick Peters • deeperwaters.wordpress.com

Many of us today are familiar with William Lane Craig's famous syllogism for the Kalam Cosmological Argument (KCA). It goes as follows:

P1 Everything that begins to exist has a cause
P2 The universe began to exist
C The universe has a cause

Well and good. Many people have been persuaded by this argument. Yet, as I have looked at it years later, I cannot say I am entirely convinced.

My problems are multiple

First, the universe would have a cause, but would that cause necessarily be God? Now yes, I think the result would have to be God, but I also think there are many steps you must take to get there. How, for example, will we handle the multiverse hypothesis if this argument comes up?

This gets in to my **second** problem: many of us have a problem when people, like Richard Dawkins, write on history and philosophy and the New Testament without really studying the subject. I agree, that is a problem. Yet how many of us are commenting on science which we do not understand? What happens if you present an argument like this and get a scientific argument in return with which you are not familiar? I save scientific arguments for those who are scientists.

Third, since the argument depends on modern science, what happens if modern science discovers, for example, something like Big Bang Cosmology is not correct? What will it mean if we have based our apologetic on this? Now it is highly unlikely something like this will be overturned; that is for the scientists to decide. But, what if?

Finally, if the argument needs the metaphysical boost to go the whole way, and if there is a danger in using modern science without knowing about it, then why not just stick with metaphysics, like the medieval church?

The start of my apologetic

I would like to focus on the question of existence. What does it mean to exist? This is something we actually have a hard time answering. Imagine being in a philosophy classroom and having the professor come in, close the door behind him and say "There's an object outside the door and I'm going to tell you one thing about it and you tell me what else you can figure out based on this one clue. It's red. Go."

The first time you hear this, you are going to be left wondering, but then you

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might get some ideas. If it is red, it is obviously colored. It is something which is visible since you can see it to know it is red. If it is visible, it is likely something which is physical. You also know it is not non-red, at least entirely; that would entail a contradiction. Etc.

Now, imagine the same scenario except this time the professor gives a different clue. "It exists." This is the most important thing to know about it, and yet, it is the one that often tells us the least.

For instance, we could have a dream about having a million dollars and that would be nice, but our lives would surely be very different if we found we had a million dollars suddenly in our bank account. You could be a comic book fan and enjoy the adventures of Superman, but how would your worldview change if you found out Superman existed not just in the universe of DC comics, but also in the world in which we live? If you were an atheist, how would your worldview change if you found out God existed? If you were a theist, how would it change if you found out He did not?

Existence is a primary question

To exist simply means to be. Some things are simply in the minds of their creators, like Superman, and then he came to exist in the world of DC comics and in the hearts and minds of fans. Some have existence in reality outside fiction, such as you, and me, and our pets.

The mistake we often make with existence is, we look at the start and then assume once we get things started, a cause is no longer needed. Therefore, if a universe is created then the universe can run just fine on its own. God is not needed from that point on. We can all become deists supposedly.

I find this highly invalid and quite an insult if any Christian thinks this has any weight to it. Let us suppose you get up one morning and prepare to go out to your driveway and you see a large brick wall outside your door blocking you from getting to your driveway. You could ask "What caused this?" This is a valid question. We do not think brick walls just appear out of nowhere after all.

Let us go with a different scenario. You open the door and you do *not* see a brick wall, but this time you hear music. It is a strange tune and one you have never heard before. What kind of question can you ask? "What is causing this music?" Notice this. You think the music has to be continuously caused because it is in a sense, continuously being created, but you do not ask that about the wall. In reality, the wall needs a cause for its existence. Why?

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.
Ex 3:13-15

Life is Beautiful
–Nick Peters

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Look at yourself. Can you will your own existence? Now you can do something to end your physical existence, such as suicide or martyrdom of some sort, but you cannot by a sheer act of will poof yourself out of existence. You can will some things, but not all. A boy cannot will himself to be a great athlete. If he wants to be a great athlete, he has to work out and eat right. A girl cannot will herself to have a successful diet. If she wants to lose weight, she must do the same thing. You cannot will yourself to live forever either.

In reality, you are not the cause of your existence. If you want to go on and exist, you cannot just will that. If you wanted to cease to exist, you could not will that either. You can do actions to benefit your existence and aim to prolong it, at least your physical existence, or you can do the same to end your existence or worsen it, at least your physical existence. Existence is something you are given and choose to do something with.

Note also that you are changing in your existing. You are moving from one state of existing to another. This shows you are not ultimate. Aristotle referred to this as potential and actuality. As it stands, I am actually sitting at my computer right now typing this out. Perhaps I am hungry in a little bit and want to get a snack. I can act on the potential I have to stand up and go to the kitchen. If I do, then in actuality, I will be standing, and I will have the potential to sit again.

This sounds complicated, but it really is not. Actuality is simply what is. It is really the state of being. Potential is what could be. If you can move from one way of existing to another, then you have potential. With this, you have passive or active potential. Passive means you receive change. Active means you are bringing about change.

So let us consider that we see many things around us changing. If that is the case, they are moving from one way of existing to another. Existence is something greater than them. They are not supreme. Now, one day we might find the universe did not have a beginning, but will we seriously enter a day where we will find the universe is unchanging? Doubtful. As long as there is time, there is change.

Let us come up with a new syllogism

P1 Everything that undergoes change depends on something else for its existing
P2 The universe undergoes change
C The universe depends on something else for its existing

This is a metaphysical argument which does not depend on modern science. All it depends on is the reality of change which we see all around us.

Now let us suppose we look at this and we realize we have a problem. If everything depends on something else for its continuous existing, where do you draw the line? You see, my wife and I are childless now. Let us suppose both of us lost our parents suddenly in tragedies like car accidents. Does this mean we are unable to have children? Not at all. Our having children does not depend on the continuous existing of our parents. Obviously, we could not have children if our parents never existed, and brought us into the world so we could marry and potentially have children, but once their work is done, we no longer depend on them. They could have died right after giving birth to us and we could have been raised by other people and still have gotten married and had children.

Now let us go with the demonstration Aquinas uses. Let us take a rock and say the rock is being moved by a stick. The stick is being moved by a hand. The hand is moved by a mind who is willing the hand. We can go on and on. If you remove any part of the chain, the whole system falls apart.

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Each cause in the chain is an instrumental cause up until an act of will. (Even our wills are influenced by other things, such as our desire for good, but that's a different discussion.)

That's because these causes are instrumental causes. That is, they are secondary. If all you have is secondary causes, nothing ever gets done, because there has to be a primary cause behind it all bringing about the actions. Instrumental causes are intermediaries working between themselves and another.

If we follow this to its conclusion (I am shortcutting, though I will include references at the end for more study,) we will find the final cause cannot be an intermediary. That means, it must have no passive potential. It must be incapable of change and yet, must be the cause of all other change. What does this tell us?

It tells us it can't be physical. After all, physical things are made of matter, and matter is always in a state of potential, they can always change. It must also be simple in its makeup. Why? If it has any parts to the way it exists, then it can also be broken apart. It cannot be a combination of anything. It must also be something incapable of being improved upon. Whatever it is, it is to the maximum.

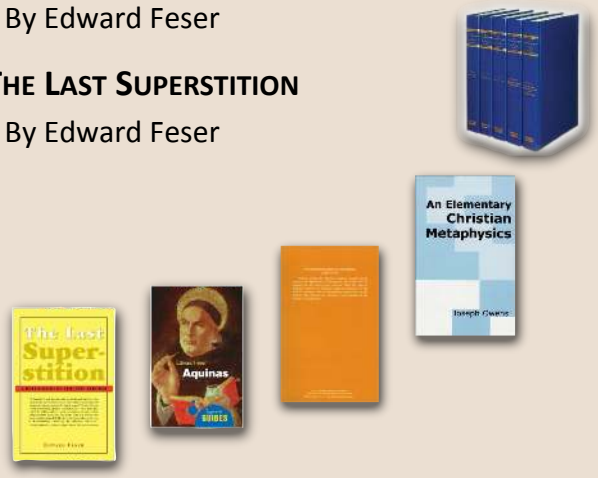
So, let's see. We have an immaterial reality that is omni in everything it is. As for being simple, well, there's no division in it between what it is and *that* it is. It's nature is simply to be. Maybe it could even describe itself as "I AM." There can be nothing else like it, and it is the continuous cause of all other things existing while depending on nothing else for its existing.

I can only end with what Aquinas would say:

"And this, everyone knows to be God."

Recommended books to read:

- **Summa Theologica**
  by Thomas Aquinas
- **An Elementary Christian Metaphysics**
  By Joseph Owens
- **An Interpretation of Existence**
  by Joseph Owens
- **Aquinas**
  By Edward Feser
- **The Last Superstition**
  By Edward Feser



The Divine Mathematician and His Image-Bearers

Melissa Cain Travis • melissatravis.com

In his celebrated book, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe*, Dr. Steven Weinberg said that mankind is a *"farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes"* after the Big Bang. According to Weinberg and many other atheist thinkers past and present, the cosmos is not purposeful and we, its observers, amount to nothing more than self-aware cosmic dust bunnies.

Dr. Weinberg is a Nobel Prize winning physicist, a brilliant scholar who has spent decades investigating the intricacies of the material universe. I find it astonishing that individuals with such extensive, intimate knowledge of the mathematics of nature could so confidently dismiss the implications of the fact that we are conscious, intelligent beings capable of ascertaining these complex truths in the first place.

Consider this: numerous basic abstract mathematical operations had to be in place before disciplines such as astrophysics could harness them. We first had to have the rudimentary tools for composing mathematical descriptions. Ancient historians document how the Pythagoreans (6th century, B.C.) pursued purely abstract mathematics, meaning, mathematical theory that was not created for the sake of measurement or quantitation of the material world (see *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library* edited by Kenneth Guthrie). As science has become fully integrated with number, knowledge of the world has exploded. Why is not every physicist asking the question: Why is there such a deep connection between mathematics, an abstract product of human rationality, and the material cosmos if we, and it, are accidental?

I am by no means a math whiz, but since the ninth grade, I have had an acute fascination with geometry (punny, haha). I find the applicability of number to theoretical space amazing all on its own. When the ancients were drawing lines and shapes in the sand, they discovered elegant laws that continue to inspire wonder. But geometry did not end with sticks and sand. The natural

Melissa Cain Travis
Science, Reason, & Faith.

Wreaking Havoc on Scientific Materialism: C.S. Lewis on Natural Law and Divine Action in Nature
–Melissa Cain Travis

"Why is there such a deep connection between mathematics, an abstract product of human rationality, and the material cosmos if we, and it, are accidental?"

Does Intelligent Design Theory = Faith-Based Evolution Denial? No, Actually.
–Melissa Cain Travis

Human Design Blindly Echos Design in Nature
–Melissa Cain Travis

Mathematics illuminates the orderliness of nature, yet it was first conceived by the human intellect.

The Divine Mathematician and His Image-Bearers

philosophers of antiquity found many applications for their mathematics.

Number essentially permeates nature in both the inorganic and organic realms. In his 1623 work entitled, The Assayer, Galileo Galilei said:

> *Philosophy is written in this grand book—I mean the universe—which stands continually open to our gaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and interpret the characters in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one is wandering about in a dark labyrinth.*

Take for example the logarithmic spirals present in plant leaves, pinecones, nautilus shells, pineapples, and sunflowers. Such spirals are also seen in galaxies, hurricanes, and the flight patterns of some insects and birds.

Or what about the myriad mathematical formulations of the laws of physics, such as Einstein's famous equation, $E=mc^2$, which describes the relationship between mass, kinetic energy, and the speed of light.

In their fantastic book, *A Meaningful World*, Benjamin Wiker and Jonathan Witt remark:

> *We could imagine, with random ordering, that by some mercy of fickle chance, a purely accidental relationship of some mathematical system would "map onto" a particular aspect of nature, but we would never expect it to effectively illuminate the natural order beyond that merely accidental relationship. Yet if we keep finding that multiple mathematical systems "map onto" nature—calling us from one steppingstone of discovery to the next—then it is certainly reasonable to suspect a conspiracy of reasoned order.*

They go on to quote famous physicist Eugene Wigner:

> *The enormous usefulness of mathematics in the natural sciences is something bordering on the mysterious…There is no rational explanation for it…The miracle of the appropriateness of the language of mathematics for*

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the formulation of the laws of physics is a wonderful gift, which we neither understand nor deserve.[1]

The natural world is mathematically intelligible and the tools for comprehending it were first conceived in the human mind. Isn't this extraordinary? The natural world is intelligible and the mathematical tools to comprehend and describe it pre-existed our attempts to do so. Why should there be such a relationship between our abstract reasoning and the realities of the cosmos? Where did our capacity for higher mathematics even come from? Materialists say that it is the product of blind evolutionary processes, but what survival or reproductive advantage is gained from being able to formulate the sophisticated equations of physics—equations that have led to further scientific discovery?

Yet, if we are made by, and in the image of, a Rational Intelligence who is also the artificer of the universe itself, this coincidence is something we should not be at all surprised to find.

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What I Learned While Examining:
"50 Questions Christians Can't Answer"

Joel Furches • examiner.com/christianity-in-baltimore/joel-furches

In July, 2014, I ran a series in my column addressing an article that was first posted on Yahoo Voices, titled "Top 50 Questions Christians Can't Answer."

I chose to do the series answering these questions because they represent a fairly comprehensive summary of the questions and frustrations that critics have towards Christians.

Based on what he says in the article, the author, R. E. Pucket, was a faithful Christian for much of his life. However, as he began to expand his reading and investigate arguments against faith, he became convinced that faith was irrational. This impression was strengthened by the fact that Christians with which he interacted largely told him that he should believe for belief's sake, and that faith trumped rationality.

Pucket now spends a significant amount of time interacting with born again Christians who he feels are trying to convert him and win his soul. He rebuffs these attempts by presenting arguments that seem to stymie these Christians who in turn make vague appeals to "God's Plan" and blind faith.

In his article, Pucket lists out some of the arguments he has found that Christians seem to have no rational, logical answers for, and invites the readers to inspect their faith in light of these questions. Says Pucket:

> *"Don't get me wrong, they will have an answer for them. You will find, however, that their answers have no basis in verifiable fact or evidence whatsoever, and will be largely based in their blind faith forsaking all reason."*

Pucket's questions reflect a tone of sarcasm and frustration that clearly speaks to his personal feelings on the issues he addresses. This tone, along with the title of the article and his assertion at the outset that any answers the Christian might give *"…will be largely based in their blind faith forsaking all reason,"* indicates that Pucket's motivation for writing the questions is more in the vein of discouraging Christianity rather than encouraging a dialogue.

Again and again in the course of the questions, Pucket continually comes back to the question of "God's Plan." In his mind, "God's Plan" seems to be the black box that Christians throw all of

Christian Moral Theory: People are not "Basically Good" –Joel Furches

Psychology and the Bible: Six Stages of Morality –Joel Furches

Judging God Against Moral Law –Joel Furches

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their doubts, questions, and concerns into with the attitude that "we don't know how it all works, but everything happens for a reason, and it all works out in the end." It is very much Pucket's quest to diffuse this attitude by pointing out - in excruciating terms – how foolish God would be to allow certain things, and how foolish Christians must be to trust such a God.

One thing that the article seems a little unaware of is the complexity and diversity of Christian beliefs and doctrines. A variety of the 50 questions take as a given that all Christians agree on things such as Creation versus Evolution; doctrines of atonement, charismatic versus reformed theology, Biblical criticism, and so forth. Pucket constructs his questions around what is no doubt the type of Christianity he once believed, and what he encounters in his internet campaign to enlighten believers.

Consequently, many of the responses I found myself giving were to question the questions themselves, or to expand on the narrower understanding of Christian doctrine that the questions represented. While these answers probably fit Pucket's criticism of having "no basis in verifiable fact or evidence," it is only reasonable to ask that the questions match the actual assertions that Christians make, and not a badly formed caricature.

The questions Pucket asks, then, tend to fall into three broad categories: "**Why does God either do, command, or allow bad things?**" "**Why do you believe a Bible which makes assertions that are ridiculous in light of modern science and understanding?**" and "**Why is Christian doctrine so obviously flawed and self-contradictory?**"

This article will serve as a summary of the interactions I had with Pucket's list, so I will attempt, in brief, to address these three broader questions. Obviously the depths to which one can explore these questions are almost boundless, so the responses I give will be summary responses rather than a comprehensive analysis.

Why does God either do, command, or allow bad things?

This question is at least as difficult to ask as it is to answer. Anyone who asks the question makes several broad assumptions:

- They are stating that they recognize that evil exists in the universe.
- They are inherently assuming that the presence of evil in the universe is recognizable to everyone such that it is undeniable.
- They are admitting that this is a problem that requires a solution, and that no solution presents itself.
- They are admitting that they are powerless to stop the evil themselves, that it would require a higher power.
- They are assuming that humans have essential value and certain rights which are morally violated by the presence of suffering.

In order to ask this question, the critic would have to prove a standard of good and evil that God would have to live up to if he did exist. But how does one go about doing such a thing? One cannot use the standards set up in the Bible, since such standards are based on God's nature. And yet, outside the Bible, how does one show that God is obligated to do such-and-such if he existed? The argument essentially boils down to "the God I don't believe in doesn't live up to the standards I personally hold."

This inconsistency aside, whole volumes have been written supporting this criticism or defending the Christian God against it. Perhaps the best answer is to examine the metanarrative of scripture:

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Why did God create?

If the Christian God exists, then he pre-exists all things, and all things were made by him. Operating from this premise, it is only reasonable to assume that his act of creation was by design. It was not a whimsical and random act of boredom, but rather an intentional act meant to serve some higher purpose. Since God himself is the highest purpose, then creation must ultimately have been to serve some purpose directly related to God.

This is where things often get sticky. The clever philosopher will respond that for God to create assumes that he needed something outside of himself. But for God to need something, he would have to be imperfect.

My response is this: God's act of creation is eternal. There was never a moment of time prior to God's act of creation, since prior to this act, time did not exist. Further, "Creator" is one of God's essential attributes, so for God to have refrained from creating would have been for him to restrain or deny his very nature; something God would never do.

And herein lies the ultimate answer: God's nature.

The grand tapestry of creation is the actualization and revelation of God's nature. Upon the free-will act when humans chose to rebel, there was a seeming paradox that this presented in God's nature. This paradox is possibly best summed up here:

"The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Nm 14:18.)

Question: How can God be both "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression," and also "by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children?"

Forgiveness by definition is the clearing of guilt. If God does not clear guilt, then he is not forgiving; but if God does clear guilt, then he is not just.

This paradox is resolved in the person of Christ. By taking the punishment for human sin, Christ created the mechanism through which God was able to clear guilt, and yet enact his perfect justice.

The very free will that condemned humankind in God's eyes has now become the opportunity through which they may receive forgiveness.

In essence, the grand story of creation from beginning to end has God taking two equally essential and opposing aspects of his own nature and reconciling them; all through the act of Christ who was both creature and Creator.

Understanding this goes a long way toward explaining suffering, evil, and death; things which are a consequence of human rebellion, and which are resolved in Jesus Christ. A human cannot experience forgiveness, restoration, and eternal life if they have not first experienced sin, suffering, and death. In so-doing their negative experiences serve the higher purpose of glorifying God's very nature.

This is, no doubt, an unsatisfying answer for a person who isn't terribly interested in living life for God's purposes, and would prefer to choose their own purpose. The question then becomes, what purpose would ultimately be fulfilling to that person?

The Biblical book of Ecclesiastes makes the case that pursuit of fame, wealth, pleasure, and worldly accomplishments or achievements are ultimately disappointing, unfulfilling, and meaningless. One is free to

challenge this assertion, but apart from some kind of transcendent belief, death erases all of life's accomplishments anyway.

WHY DOES GOD DO AND COMMAND BAD THINGS?

The Old Testament, especially, is full of all kinds of accounts which critics naturally find distasteful. God instantly kills several priests for offering "strange fire," turns a poor woman into a pillar of salt for daring to take a mournful backwards glance at her home town which is being actively destroyed by God, calls a couple of bears out of the woods to maul a group of children who dared to make fun of a prophet for being bald, commands a couple of genocides, sets up and supports all manner of slavery laws, and tells parents to stone their children for any sort of rebellion. These things seem – if nothing else – intuitively wrong. How does God justify doing such things?

When examining this question, it is worth observing that if God is God, there is no higher standard against which to judge his actions. Anything he does is self affirming. Additionally, it is important to note that everyone dies. If God allows a person to die one kind of death – say, being stoned or mauled by a bear – rather than another kind of death – say a heart attack, cancer, or old age – the value of one death over another is something that would require some kind of standard. Children get mauled by bears and people drop dead of heart attacks. These things happen all the time without any explanation attached to them. If God is the highest being, and demands respect – then he is owed that respect. If he allows a person to die a particular death because of their disrespect, this serves as a cautionary tale for all who consider the cost of failing to respect their Creator.

This does not, of course, justify one human killing another. God gives life, God can resurrect the dead, therefore only God has the moral authority to take what he gives in the first place.

Now this may seem unpleasant, even tyrannical. However, in order to make accusations against God, there is one crucial question that requires confrontation: did these stories actually happen?

1) These stories are entirely made-up?

The problem with using these stories as a criticism of God is that the critics generally do not believe these stories represent *actual history.* This being so, they fall down as criticisms of God. If the critic successfully proves that these are made-up stories, they have not disproven God, just these stories about God.

2) These stories describe events that took place, but were only attributed to God?

Let's say that the Jewish people did slay Canaanites and Amalekites exactly as the Old Testament describes, and then fabricated stories about God's commands in order to justify their actions. This has the same problem as the first criticism in that it does not disprove God's existence, nor does it describe anything about God's actual nature.

3) These stories are actually true?

On the other hand, if they *did* take place exactly as described, then God really does exist. One may use these stories to complain about God, but ultimately, these stories can only be used to know something about this God.

Now the critic may argue that, whether or not they really happened, the average Christian *believes* that they happened. Believing that killing is justified when God says so could have terrible consequences such as events like the crusades, inquisition, and Islamic jihads.

This would be true if these stories represented the general rule, rather than the exception. These stories, if taken in

What I Learned While Examining: "50 Questions Christians Can't Answer"

context, represent very particular circumstances that occurred in a very specific place and time, related to extremely unique events.

Christians by their very name are followers of Christ – whose commands are of a particularly pacifistic nature. Practically nothing in the New Testament commands – which relate specifically to the church and not the Jewish nation – suggests that Christians should do anything even remotely aggressive, and give plenty of commands to the opposite effect.

Because there is such a gap between the circumstances and commands of the Old and the New Testaments, any "Christian" who uses these stories as an excuse for aggressive behaviors are acting inconsistently with the Bible they claim to believe.

Why believe a Bible which makes assertions that are ridiculous in light of modern science and understanding?

There are several points to examine in such a question. At the outset it must first be asked "If the Bible were shown to contain errors and inaccuracies, does this disprove Christianity?" Certainly there are some that would say "yes," but if one can prove that, say, the Exodus never happened, but that Jesus *did* rise from the dead, then all of the fundamental assertions that Christianity makes still remain.

So while this question does present a challenge to Christianity, it does not – by itself – defeat it.

That said, one thing stands out when one compares the Bible with its contemporary texts. Almost every ancient text spends a great deal of time attempting to depict a model of the physical universe. Ancient mythologies have the forces of nature such as storms, volcanoes, earthquakes – even sea-tides and the rising and setting of the sun – depicted as physical gods, giants, dragons, and other supernatural forces acting on the physical universe.

With the possible exception of the book of Genesis, the Bible is surprisingly mute on the subject of what we would now call science. The Bible makes no great attempts to explain astronomy, meteorology, geology, physics, or other subjects that other ancient mythologies delve into at great length.

In fact, the Bible looks more like a history book than anything else. It contains genealogies, records of the rise and fall of kingdoms, and tedious details about the amount of livestock that so-and-so owned and how much various things cost.

Beside the history it records (at least some of which has fairly solid backing in archeology), most of what the Bible speaks to is the relationship between God and humans. But this God is not just any God. Unlike the gods of every other civilization of the time, Yahweh was a single, transcendent being who was so superlative that there was no other being – physical or spiritual – who could even compare with him. Moreover, he was transcendent and separate from his creation. He did not live on Mount Olympus, or even in the sky. He was above all other things.

Whatever one may take from the Bible, it is at the very least remarkable among all other ancient texts in the sophistication of its theology. It could even be argued that it is *the most sophisticated* ancient text that still survives. This fact alone is worth at least some consideration before one dismisses it outright.

It should be mentioned that there have been numerous texts from very intelligent and respected individuals across the centuries that make robust arguments in support of the accuracy of scripture in terms of science, archeology, history, philosophy, etc. Before one dismisses the Bible outright, it would be irresponsible to not consider any of

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these arguments.

Why is Christian doctrine so obviously flawed and self-contradictory?

The milieu of Christian theology is a vast and ever-changing atmosphere whose various disagreements and contradictions are ripe for criticism. One could easily look at the fights that Christians pick with one another on various doctrines and beliefs and smugly conclude that if Christians can't even figure out what it is that they believe, then it is clearly unbelievable.

There are two important points to be made here. The first is that if Christianity were, in fact, true; and if an infinitely vast, all-knowing, eternal being existed and had some interaction with finite mortals; one would actually expect that figuring out anything about this God to be complicated and controversial. And, in fact, the study of God is necessarily the study of the interrelation of everything. Because if God is Creator of the physical universe, then there is nothing that exists that does not have some kind of reference to God's nature. This God would be beyond the comprehension of any one person, so it is not surprising that Christians – indeed humankind – cannot entirely understand or agree on everything to do with God.

This leads to the second point: a religion in which every person agrees entirely is generally called a cult. In a cult, all members answer to a single person or council who determines everything that they must believe. Any member of a cult is not free to question any of the teachings. To do so will result in expulsion and shunning from the community.

That Christians are free to examine their beliefs individually, and free to disagree with one another is the hallmark of a belief system that prizes independent thought and individual accountability. The Christian idea is that the individual is ultimately answerable to God alone when it comes to the way in which they have investigated and come to grips with their beliefs. Christians, more than almost any other belief system, are free to ask the hard questions, and free to seek the answers. And should a Christian decide to abandon their faith, the Bible urges the broader Christian community to continue to love and accept this person – not to shun or abandon them.

It is certain that Christians are ignorant or incorrect in some of their ideas or beliefs, just as it is certain that *all humans* are ignorant or incorrect in some of their ideas and beliefs. But being wrong about the particulars does not disprove the whole.

Conclusion

In his relentless list of questions, Pucket does not give any quarter, or pose any challenge with the expectation that a Christian might be willing and able to interact with the question. Pucket does not appear to be seeking interaction – merely the stifling of something which he does not believe and yet is preoccupied with enough to seek to engage those who believe and write long articles to disillusion them. This preoccupation is telling. Christians should not be afraid of such things. Whether or not interacting with questioners like Pucket is fruitful for the questioner, it *is* something that Christians desperately need. If a Christian does not engage the questions about what they believe, they run the risk of becoming just the kind of close-minded blind believers that Pucket already thinks them to be. Engaging with the criticisms of Christianity is one of the best tools of exploring and deepening ones understanding. If Christianity is actually true, one need not fear the hard questions.

sig·nif·i·cance

[sig-nif-i-kuhns]: importance; consequence; meaningful

Who Wrote the Gospels? –Dr. Timothy McGrew

Jesus Myth Theory: A Christian Response –Stephen J. Bedard

EXTRA! EXTRA!
Jesus Never Existed says new report that finds no mention of Christ in 126 historical texts
–Inquisitr

126 writers who, according to Michael Paulkovich, should have mentioned Jesus, if Jesus existed –Steven Bollinger

An open letter to Michael Paulkovich and Free Inquiry –Steven Bollinger

14 Beliefs Not Essential For Christian Salvation

1. The age of the earth/universe
2. The order of events of the end times (including an invisible "rapture")
3. The inerrancy/infallibility of the Bible
4. Complete comprehension of the Trinity
5. Egalitarianism/Complementarianism
6. The appropriate day(s) for assembly
7. The virgin birth
8. The canonicity of all books of the Bible
9. Speaking in tongues
10. Denominationalism
11. Amyraldism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Molinism
12. Zionism (Jewish nationalist movement whose goal is the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine)
13. Complete knowledge of what are and are not sins (though, that one has sinned is an essential belief)
14. Original sin (ancestral sin/inherited sin)

Special Notes

If you read this list and think a correct view of any of these beliefs is unimportant, then you are absolutely wrong. The purpose of this list is twofold:

1. To break down barriers that have, at times, unnecessarily impeded the salvation of unbelievers
2. To refocus Christians on the ultimate primacy of the core gospel

–Tyson James

William Lane Craig

Defenders Series 1

Defenders Series 2

Defenders Series 3 - Starts 10/19/2014

Mere Moral Argument

Samuel Ronicker • samuelronicker.com

This article will seek to set out the moral argument for God as C. S. Lewis presents it in the first "book" of his momentous work, *Mere Christianity.* This text was first published in 1952 partially based on a series of radio lectures given from 1942 to 1944. If you have never read it, you should add it to your reading list; it is considered by many to be one of the best apologetics works of the 20th century. Lewis' style is powerful as he lays out an argument that points to the existence of God based on moral intuition. Lewis was famous as an atheist who set out to disprove Christianity and ended up as he describes his conversion in Surprised by Joy: *"In … 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God … perhaps the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."* In order to cover as much of this work as possible this article will attempt to summarize each chapter of the first section in order, future issues of EQUIPPED will feature expositions of the remainder of the text. Also of note, because there are multiple editions page numbers will not be referenced rather chapter and section headings only as they haven't changed much through the different revisions. Without further introduction:

Book One: Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe – Chapter One: The Law of Human Nature

This section contains the foundation for the rest of the arguments throughout the text. Without a Law of Human Nature any dispute is empty. Lewis uses the example of two people quarreling, and when two people argue, they generally do not dismiss the other person's standards. They actually agree on a standard that there is such a thing as right behavior. In the typical quarrel, each person attempts to justify his or her actions within an accepted moral standard. As Lewis puts it:

> *"It looks, in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behavior or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed. And they have. If they had not, they might, of course, fight like animals, but they could not quarrel in the human sense of the word. Quarreling means trying to show that the other man is in the wrong. And there would be no sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of agreement as to what Right and Wrong are; just as there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some*

Faith vs. Science: Checkmate (part 1) –Samuel Ronicker

An Atheist Answers "20 Short Arguments Against God's Existence" –Samuel Ronicker

C.S. Lewis, Bono, and The Argument From Desire

Mere Moral Argument

agreement about the rules of football."

So, if there's no such thing as right, then there's also no such thing as wrong. Though this law is not like the Laws of Nature (i.e. gravity). One important difference is that humans can disobey this law. There can be exceptions to the Law of Human nature, just as there are occasionally people who are colorblind or tone-deaf. Lewis handles one important objection right away here. Some skeptics claim that morality is totally different in different cultures, but this is missing an important point. Just because there are differences, does not dismiss that all cultures have a sense of right and wrong. The clearest example is in this simple quote, *"Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked."*

Chapter Two: Some Objections

First, some might object and say that these are just moral intuitions, akin to herd or motherly instincts. There are problems with this objection, namely it is when there is a conflict in our intuitions that the Moral Law is most clear. Lewis compares the Moral Law to music and the piano, *"Think once again of a piano. It has not got two kinds of notes on it, the 'right' notes, and the 'wrong' ones. Every single note is right at one time and wrong at another. The Moral Law is not any one instinct or any set of instincts: it is something which makes a kind of tune (the tune we call goodness or right conduct) by directing the instincts."* Also, some claim that this sense of a Moral Law is merely a social convention taught to us by our parents and grandparents. While it *is true* that one's parents often pass on the Moral Law, this does not mean that it's purely a social convention. Lewis uses the example of multiplication. A child that grows up on a desert island alone may not know the rules of multiplication because he or she was never taught the rules, but that doesn't change the fact that there are rules. There's another important point that was referenced in the first chapter; there *are* differences in different cultures. The problem with this objection is that once someone starts to claim that one culture's moral standards are better than another's, one is measuring the two standards against another, higher standard. It is this higher standard that is the Moral Law. Even Dawkins' writings about a moral Zeitgeist are proof of the higher Moral Law, because claiming that morality is somehow getting better, is measuring the current morality against a higher standard.

Chapter Three: The Reality of the Law

Up to this point what we've found is that saying that something or someone is not being or doing what it ought to do

The Moral Law is not any one instinct or any set of instincts: it is something which makes a kind of tune (the tune we call goodness or right conduct) by directing the instincts.

While it is true that one's parents often pass on the Moral Law, this does not mean that it's purely a social convention.

has the consequence of admitting that there is a higher moral standard. Saying that a person ought to do something is appealing to a Law of Human nature. In this chapter Lewis takes on what was made popular in philosophy by Hume, the is-ought problem. There is an important line to draw here, the line between the laws of nature like gravity and the Moral Law. The laws of nature are "is" statements. The law of gravity describes what generally happens to things when they are left unsupported, they fall. This is a statement of fact, not a moral statement that they *ought* to fall. In the middle of this chapter Lewis introduces an important distinction that is often missed in discussions about morality. Namely, morality is not merely what is inconvenient to the offended party. He uses the example from the subway: the man who is sitting in the seat you prefer is not doing anything wrong, but the man who takes the seat you prefer when you back is turned is. The man who accidentally trips another man with his foot in the aisle of the subway is not wrong *even if the man is hurt,* but the man who intentionally attempts to trip another man and fails is wrong *even if the offended man in not hurt.* Morality does not hinge on merely doing or not doing another person harm, there are many thought puzzles that point out that fact. Here's another quote to drive this idea home:

> *"If we ask: 'Why ought I to be unselfish?' and you reply 'Because it is good for society,' we may then ask, 'Why should I care what's good for society except when it happens to pay me personally?' and then you will have to say, 'Because you ought to be unselfish'–which simply brings us back to where we started."*

Chapter Four: What Lies Behind the Law

Chapter four opens with an interesting idea with which many other apologists might actually disagree. Speaking of the laws of nature as discuss in the first three chapters, Lewis says:

> *"In the case of stones and trees and things of that sort, what we call the Laws of Nature may not be anything except a way of speaking. When you say that nature is governed by certain laws, this may only mean that nature does, in fact, behave in a certain way. The so-called laws may not be anything real–anything above and beyond the actual facts that we observe. But in the case of Man we saw that this will not do. The Law of Human Nature, or of Right and Wrong, must be something above and beyond the actual facts of human behavior. In this case, besides the actual facts, you have something else–a real law which we did not invent and which we know we ought to obey."*

Many apologists would probably say that the fact "that nature is governed by certain laws" *is indication* that there's a Mind, indeed a Creator-God behind both the Law of Human Nature and the Laws of Nature in general. In fact, one of the most powerful arguments for God is the so-called, Fine Tuning Argument.

Chapter Five: We Have Cause to be Uneasy

Chapter five, the last chapter of this first section of the text starts out with one of my favorite passages from the entire text:

> *"We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. We have all seen this when doing arithmetic. When I have started a sum the wrong way, the sooner I admit this and go back and start again, the faster I shall get on. There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake. And I think if you look at*

Mere Moral Argument

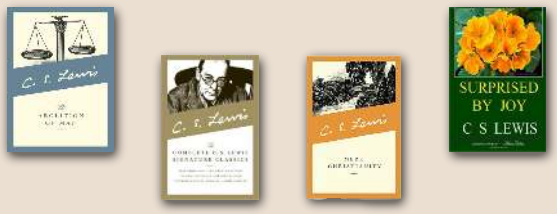
the present state of the world, it is pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistakes. We are on the wrong road. And if that is so, we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on."

How pure Lewis' logic is. People, especially today, talk about scientific progress. The idea of a moral Zeitgeist plays right into Lewis' writing here. What does it mean to progress morally? Are people more moral today than they were even only a few hundred years ago? After making that important point Lewis goes back to the moral argument. With this philosophical argument it's important to point out that so far using just the points put forward we are nowhere near the Christian description of God. So far the only conclusion that we can come to is that there is a "Somebody or Something behind the Moral Law." We are trying to understand what we can about this Somebody without looking at religion or sacred texts. Using just philosophy and observation we have two important points of evidence, the universe, and the Moral Law. Using just those two points what can we tell about this Somebody? Lewis only pulls two points from observing the universe, that this Person is *"a great artist (for the universe is a very beautiful place), but also that He is quite merciless and no friend to man (for the universe is a very dangerous and terrifying place)."* It seems obvious that He is also very powerful, very intelligent, but we haven't quite gotten to the typical understanding of God as found in Christianity. The other evidence, the Moral Law, is much better. It's a type of inside information because it lets us into this Mind. From the Moral Law we can conclude that this Mind is:

"Intensely interested in right conduct in fair play, unselfishness, courage, good faith, honesty, and truthfulness. Let us not move too quickly though, we're nowhere near concluding the good God of Christianity. We are only to the point of an impersonal Mind, not yet able to conclude that the Maker of the Moral Law is a Person that can forgive. If the text ends here and all this Somebody is, is an impersonal mind there is "no sense in asking It to make allowances for you or let you off, just as there is no sense in asking the multiplication table to let you off when you do your sums wrong."

Unfortunately time and space does not allow us to go any further into this profound text. Indeed this first section doesn't even include what people often cite called the; Liar, Lunatic, Lord Trilemma. Also, this section leaves off with a very disheartening conclusion, that is, there is a Moral Law, and we have all broken it. Of course, we know that there is actual comfort in Christianity. In fact, often times skeptics point to the comfort in Christianity as if the comfort found in Christianity is the only reason it's so popular.

"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?"
C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity



The Fine-Tuning Argument

Daniel Shire

There are many arguments, which attempt to prove the existence of God, and one of the most fascinating, as well as one which I believe has great merit, is the Fine-Tuning Argument (FTA). This argument focuses on two main things, the initial state of the universe, and the physical constants of nature. The fine-tuning in regards to physical constants involves the constants in equations, which mathematically express the physical laws of nature, which do not determine the constants, so the values of these constants could hypothetically vary, but not outside of very fine parameters within a universe, which maintains the ability to sustain life. The initial state, or condition of the universe directly after the Big Bang, were it even slightly different, would have ushered in a universe in which life would be impossible. Chaos theory has given us the concept of the butterfly effect,[1] revealing that a minute change in the initial conditions of a system yields vastly different results, as the system progresses through time. Had any physical constants been even slightly different in our own universe at its time of origin, this would have rendered our universe inhospitable to life.

Initial State

Had the expansion of the universe after the Big Bang proceeded in details even minutely different from that which it actually did, life would not have been possible. The range of deviance allowable for certain initial specifications is as little as 1 in 10^{60}, in this case pertaining to the permissible variance in the speed of the expansion,[2] so as to not lead to universes not hospitable to life. Another figure which needed to be within very narrow parameters was the density of the universe, which a variance of as little as 1 in 10^{50} would have been preemptively fatal to life in our universe.[3] William Lane Craig mentions these two parameters,[4] and also mentions the cosmological constant, a figure associated with the expansion of the universe, and which must fall within an even narrower range than these other two figures, with permissible variance of no more than 1 in 10^{120}.

Craig completes his listing of physical constants by referring to Roger Penrose's declaration of the margins within which the initial entropy condition must have been in the early universe for it to yield a universe capable of harboring life. Low entropy, regarded as a boundary condition of the Big Bang, according

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to Penrose, must have fallen within the extremely narrow range of 1 in $10^{10^{\wedge}123}$, which is an incredible number. 10^{123} is a one followed by 123 zeroes, a number greater than the number of atoms in our universe (10^{79}), by the best reckoning,[5] but *ten* to the 10^{123} power, is a number astronomically larger than even this. Ten to the 10^2 power, is a one followed by a hundred zeroes, and ten to the 10^3 power is a one followed by a thousand zeroes, so $10^{10^{\wedge}123}$ is such a huge number, to write it, we could inscribe a zero on every quantum particle in the known universe, and there would still be zeroes left remaining. Anything that has a less chance of happening than 1 in 10^{50} is considered to be mathematically impossible.[6][7] Prior to leaving the topic of the initial state of the universe, one other factor bears mentioning that came into play shortly after the Big Bang, and which had important ramifications to life in our universe. If the strong nuclear force had been 2% stronger than it is, all the hydrogen in the universe would not have made it past the first few minutes after the Big Bang, which would have precluded the development of the universe, as we know it.[8] Only massive elements would exist, and the universe would now consist of black holes and neutron stars, while if it were that much weaker, the universe would be full of hydrogen, but nothing else. The very narrow margin of error in this example, characterizes the majority of the others.

Physical Constants

Upon close examination of the laws of our universe, we realize, as well, that the physical constants of our universe must lie in a very narrow range in order for life to exist. There are multiple figures to consider - different scientists provide different reckonings as to the number of constants, which are important. The best-known constants are those, which describe the strength of the four fundamental forces of nature: the strong nuclear force, the weak nuclear force, the electromagnetic force, and gravity. William Lane Craig adds the ratio between the mass of a proton and the mass of an electron to the list of important constants[4]. Martin Rees, a British astronomer, favors six constants.[9] Lists of important physical constants contain as many as 93 entries,[10] the 140 given by Hugh Ross,[11] on one list, and the 402 given by him on another.[12]

One fascinating entity that supports the fine-tuning argument is water[13] – so many qualities of water are very precisely oriented to life, that it is listed multiple times in the lists of constants cited above. The only substance that exists in all three states, solid, liquid, and gas, in our planet's temperature range, water

has many properties, which, were they even a small bit different, would make life impossible. If water were not clear, we would see no sunlight, and if it did not float, due to expansion when frozen, making its solid phase less dense than its liquid phase, the oceans, lakes, and rivers of this world would freeze from the bottom up, and earth would not be home to anything alive. The cohesion of water causes it to be sticky, the stickiest non-metal liquid, so that the surface tension causes drops to form. The polarity of water molecules causes it to dissolve other polar substances,[14] and because of this quality, we call it the universal solvent. Dissolving more things than any other liquid on earth, even acids, water has the ability to carry dissolved nutrients and chemicals necessary to life. Water has a low molecular weight, which would usually cause it to be a gas at room temperature, but its polarity causes it to make hydrogen bonds between the molecules, so it is a liquid in the range in which it can effectively carry dissolved solids to and from body cells. Water moderates temperature, so had the earth no large bodies of water, the temperature fluctuations between day and night would be catastrophic for life.[15] Because of the forces of cohesion, described above, and adhesion, which causes water to stick to other substances, like the walls of the xylem and phloem in plants, capillary action is enabled, so water and nutrients can flow up through these veins to the plant.

The Ongoing Debate

Many arguments have been put forth by opponents of the fine-tuning argument, an understanding of which will help in a successful presentation of counter-arguments. We should separate the arguments into those presupposing a single universe, in which our present universe is the only one in existence, and the arguments based on the multiverse, in which the universe we inhabit is only one of many. There are counter-arguments to all counter-arguments, and the debate rages on, so it well behooves us to expend a minimum of effort staying on top of the latest developments. By doing so, we will have an idea of the direction from which any debate partners we engage with, will be coming from.

Many opponents of the FTA espouse the Anthropic Principle (AP), by which the universe only seems like it is designed, it being only apparently custom-tailored for life. The teaching puts forth the idea that all we learn about our universe, we filter with an observation bias, and so we must question how we interpret the information we have about our universe.[16] That is sage advice; however, it does not entail that the universe arose apart from a designer. Brandon Carter, a proponent of AP, presents this view in a weak form, in which we exist in a privileged location in space-time, and a strong form, which involves the physical constants being different. He suggests that the latter would entail more than one world having existence, in a multiple world or universe scenario he calls the "World Ensemble."[17] One variant of the AP theorizes that our universe is a vast simulation, but this would require exorbitant computing power, relative to which, a divine designer makes more sense.[18] Douglas Adams made a statement, about which Dawkins referred in his eulogy, which has been come to be called "the puddle thinking argument" against the FTA, describing a puddle in its hole, thinking that the hole must have been tailored for it, because it fits the puddle perfectly.[19] To this argument, as to all such "arguments of inevitability," stating, in essence, that we observe a universe that supports intelligent life, necessarily, because that is what we are, and we should expect to find ourselves in such a universe, a person could argue that, had he survived an avalanche, he did of necessity, because he was not crushed by a boulder. The explanation explains nothing.[20] Other advocates of AP espouse the grand unified theory, the theory of everything

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(TOE), saying that it supposedly will find a solution, but TOE in actuality is only describes the much humbler effort of unifying the four fundamental forces of nature (referred to above), and would not explain the physical constants being set for life, even if finally discovered.

To the second variety of arguments against the FTA, one of the strongest refutations against multiple world/universe theories (MW) is simply that there is no evidence for them. Atheists like to lament that there is no evidence for a divine designer, but this argument backfires in the case of the advocate of MW. William Lane Craig says that, since we do have independent support for a designer, in the form of other arguments proving design, we should not give any credence to MW, which has no independent support.[21] He also provides an argument based on Penrose's figure cited above[5], which postulates that the chances of finding ourselves in this universe are infinitesimally small. He argues in another place that the production of multiple universes is prohibitively unlikely,[22] in support of which he gives the names and citations of the works of two world-class scientists (Quentin Smith and John Earman) who find this illogical, as well. He shows that the evidence supporting the idea of a designer coheres much better with the evidence, than the notion of parallel universes. We cannot assume that any multiple universe generator would produce all the possible universes, nor that the random laws of physics it produces would, by chance, be the right ones for life.[2]

In all, FTA provides a powerful argument in support of God. Stephen Hawking put it well, when he said, *"the laws of science, as we know them at present, contain many fundamental numbers, like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron. ... The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life."*[23] As Freeman Dyson, the eminent physicist notes, "there are many ... lucky accidents in physics. Without such accidents, water could not exist as liquid, chains of carbon atoms could not form complex organic molecules, and hydrogen atoms could not form breakable bridges between molecules."[24] We have a huge collection of evidence supporting the idea that the universe we presently occupy is no accident, that it was created by a Designer, that that Designer is the God we worship, and we have ample reason to have confidence as we engage in the world of ideas, defending His reality against all opponents.

"A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth... At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been there for centuries."

Robert Jastrow - Director: Goddard Institute of Astrophysics
Author: God and the Astronomer

William Lane Craig
Defenders 1
"Doctrine of the Last Things"
(Podcast)

William Lane Craig
Defenders 2
"Doctrine of the Last Things"
(Podcast)

William Lane Craig
Defenders 2
"Doctrine of the Last Things"
(Livestream)

Part 1
Part 2
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Part 12

Eschatology: Don't Get Left Behind

Nadine Salim • gotesrus.blogspot.com

It appears that the movie industry has seen fit to inflict on the populace-at-large another film version of the Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' book, *Left Behind*.[1] (Really? Another one?) For those who don't know or who pretend not to know, *Left Behind* is a fictional account of events that could happen if the prophecies described in Revelation occur as believed according to an eschatological school of thought called "premillennial dispensationalism." Christians believe that Jesus Christ will one day "return in glory to judge the living and the dead."[2] Amongst Christians, there is a variety of schools of thought (and sub-schools of thought) about just how all of this happens, usually centered around the prophetic statements in Revelation with nods to other books like Daniel, Matthew, and Thessalonians. Many Christians avoid this particular topic and believe something along the lines of, "Well, it'll happen however it happens. Nothing I can do about it." Some others hold deep, well-articulated points of view about the matter. Since the discussion of "end times" or eschatology is about how believers are finally ushered into the eternal embrace and worship of God, a small amount of understanding seems warranted. Also, the budding apologist really should have an answer for the people who say, "Is that what Christians really believe? Seems a little weird to me." Here then, is a grossly oversimplified guide to the four most common sets of ideas about the end times, along with some special attention for "Left Behind" fans.[3]

Preterists believe that the judgments in Revelation are in the past. John prophesied about the difficulties (!) that arose between Rome and the early church in the first century.[4] Some preterists may include the fall of Rome. A sub-group of preterists, called partial-preterists, believe that most of the prophecies and events in Revelation have already occurred, except for the resurrection of the Dead and the Second Coming, which have yet to occur. Some of my best friends are partial-preterists.

Historicists believe that the events prophesied in Revelation relate to the history of the Church. The letters were written to real first century churches, but the future events are part of church history from the first century until Christ returns.[5] For the historicist, different periods of church history can be tied to different parts of Revelation, such as the opening of the seals or the blasting of the trumpet.[6] Modern historicists include Seventh Day Adventists.

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Idealists believe that Revelation describes the struggle between good and evil, and God's promise of future success. "Idealists set aside all chronological or predictive issues in order to treat the book as an artistic exposition of the ongoing battle between good and evil; in short, Revelation is a drama that speaks to the longings of the human heart."[7] Sounds nice, doesn't it?

So, where does something like *Left Behind* fit into all of this?

Left Behind, whether book or movie, discusses events as conceived by a *futurist*. Specifically, a *premillennial dispensationalist* – strange, long words guaranteed to get a couple of extra points in any paper about eschatology when accompanied by appropriate citations to learned authorities in peer reviewed journals.

Futurism is the idea that prophetic events as described in Revelation (and elsewhere) are to occur in the future before Christ's return.[8] Most futurists are also *millennialists*. That means their eschatology's locus is the millennial reign of Christ, as described in Revelation 20.[9] There are pre-, post-, and a- millenialists. Added to this is Dispensationalism, ala *The Rapture*. Premillennialists believe that Jesus returns before the millennium. Amillennialists deny that there will be a millennial reign. For the amillennialist, the thousand year period as described in Revelation is symbolic. The millennial reign began with the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. It also holds there will be a second coming and judgment. Dispensational premillennialists believe that the church will be granted a dispensation and that there will be a *parousia,* or an event where Jesus returns before the time of the Great Tribulation to take believers away so that they don't have to suffer with those left on earth before the Second Coming and Judgment. This parousia (meaning presence, or coming) is commonly referred to as the time of the *Rapture*. *Left Behind* tells the stories of people who are – get this – left behind when the believers are spirited away.

The reader should be warned that this is the barest of overviews and that *many, many* books have been written about this subject in all its forms. There have also been some startlingly bad, but entertaining films. Let the viewer beware. This subject should be treated respectfully and carefully. Study of such matters is too important to leave to bad movies.[10]

Debate
Naturalism or Christian Theism; Where Does the Evidence Point? Giunta vs. Schieber "Is Christianity True?"

UPCOMING DEBATES

October 23, 2014
Gay Marriage: A Debate

Will Saletan, correspondent for Slate Magazine and the New York Times, will debate Sherif Girgis, author of *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: a Defense*.

Location: University of Alabama at Birmingham.

October 25, 2014
The Historicity of Jesus: A Spirited Debate

Dr. Richard Carrier will be debating Catholic Apologist Trent Horn about the historicity of Jesus.

Location: San Diego, CA.

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

Johnny Wilson • fairmindednotions.wordpress.com

The Kalam Cosmological Argument (KCA) is probably the strongest evidential argument for God's existence today. On the surface, the argument is simple and easy to memorize. It goes as follows:

P1 Whatever begins to exist has a cause
P2 The universe began to exist
C Therefore, the universe has a cause

If the premises (P1 and P2) are more likely than their negation, or contradictory, then the conclusion (C) necessarily follows. Let us look in depth at the two premises.

Premise One

Premise one states "whatever *begins to exist* has a cause." What does it mean for something to *begin to exist*? William Lane Craig, on who's work this article is based and who is one of the most prominent defenders of this argument today, has explained, "begins to exist" means:

"For any entity *e* and time *t*, *e* comes into being at *t* if and only if:

(I) *e* exists at *t*,
(Ii) *t* is the first time at which *e* exists,
(Iii) there is no state of affairs in the actual world in which *e* exists timelessly, and
(Iv) *e*'s existing at *t* is a tensed fact."[1]

From (iv), we read for something to *begin to exist*, it must exist as a tensed fact. Now a tensed fact is only entailed on a specific theory of time known as the A-theory of time. There are two competing theories of time in philosophy today: the A-theory of time, in which time is tensed and dynamic, and the B-theory of time, in which time is tenseless and static. It will do us good to briefly evaluate the two theories and see which side the evidence favors. Keep in mind, the Kalam does not fail if the B-theory of time is true . . . more on this later!

We may start by asking "what is time?" Really, stop and think about this question. One wise man responded "Time is a magazine." Physicist John Wheeler described time as the thing which "keeps everything from happening at once."[2] *"**Time** is that dimension of reality whose constituent elements are ordered by relations of earlier than, simultaneous with, and later than and are experienced by us as past, present, and future. This much, at least, is common property among almost all disputants in debates about the nature of time."*[3]

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

In the A-theory of time, time is tensed and dynamic, which entails the past no longer exists and the future is not yet existent; only things in the present are currently actual.

In the B-theory of time, time is tenseless and static and therefore all moments in time are equally real. If time is tenseless, temporal becoming is just an illusion of human consciousness. Another neat thing about tenseless time is it would make time travel possible because the future and the past are existent right now! So what are the pros and cons of each view?

The A-Theorist will argue, if there are tensed facts, then time itself is tensed. This is to say, when someone states "I was born in 1990," he or she means his or her "being born" is an event which happened in the past, specifically 1990, and this particular event has come and gone. Therefore, it would be nonsensical to say "I am being born in 1990!" Tensed facts are stating objective truths about reality. The person *was* born in 1990, but the event is over and done with. On the dynamic theory of time, things come into being at a particular moment, endure from moment to moment, and then go out of existence at a particular moment. Tensed sentences such as "Alabama won the BCS National Championship in 2012" and "The meeting begins at 12:00 p.m." apparently express tensed facts. The former sentence is stating, Alabama has won the championship two years ago, but they are not *winning* the championship in 2012 currently, because the event has come and gone. The latter sentence is similar as it is saying the meeting does not yet exist and, around 12:00 p.m., the meeting will *begin.*

P1 Tensed sentences apparently express tensed facts.

P2 The apparent expression of tensed facts by tensed sentences should be accepted as correct, unless:

P2i tensed sentences are shown to be translatable into tenseless sentences without any loss of meaning –or–

P2ii tensed facts are shown to be unnecessary for the truth of tensed sentences.

P3 Tensed sentences have not been shown to be translatable into tenseless sentences without having any loss of meaning.

P4 Tensed facts have not been shown to be unnecessary for the truth of tensed sentences.

C Therefore, the apparent expression of tensed facts by tensed sentences should be accepted as correct.

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

Premise 3 refers to the "Old Tenseless Theory of Language." In defense of premise 3: Imagine a high school athlete who knows practice starts at 3:45 every day. The clock strikes 3:45 and the student is mentally aware practice has *just started*. If he is 5 minutes late, he will have to run extra laps. The student darts towards the practice field and walks in at 3:48. No extra laps for him! In this situation, the student's thought was "it is 3:45 right *now,"* which led him to act. The tenseless counterpart of this thought would be "it is 3:45 at 3:45," which is a tautology, or "3:45 is simultaneous with practice," which is pointless unless we know that particular time, and that practice is occurring *now.* The tenseless wording of the thoughts would not lead to timely action, because it does not inform us of whether or not it is actually 3:45. The student would have never known to run to the practice field to avoid the extra laps! This demonstrates tensed sentences have a meaning and tenseless sentences do not. Therefore, tensed sentences have not been shown to be translatable into tenseless sentences without having any loss of meaning.

Another example: I may know that at a certain time last week, my grandmother was not at home, but I may not know the exact time and day. The tensed belief, "my grandmother was not at home" can be stated without knowing it was on May 26, 2014 that she was not at home. The tenseless version would be something along the lines of "My grandmother is not at home on May 26, 2014." The tenseless version and the tensed versions clearly have different meanings. This goes to show the two are not interchangeable. Therefore, tensed sentences have not been shown to be translatable into tenseless sentences without having any loss of meaning.

To quote William Lane Craig on a third argument in support of premise 3: *"Tensed sentences do not imply the existence of sentence tokens as do their token-reflexive counterparts. Consider this sentence, "No sentence token exists." This sentence is false, but it seems possible for it to be true (for example, during the Jurassic period). But its tenseless translation is "no sentence tokens exist simultaneous with this utterance," which is a self-contradiction and therefore not even possibly true. Therefore, these sentences cannot have the same meaning. . . For all these reasons, the Old Tenseless Theory of Language has been universally abandoned by defenders of the static view of time. . . Premise (3) of the argument is therefore no longer contested by static time theorists."*[4]

We can seem nearly certain of premise (3). So what about premise (4)? Premise 4 refers to the "New Tenseless Theory of Language." Many supporters of static time argue even though tensed sentences cannot be converted into tenseless sentences, tensed sentences can be prone to tenseless truth conditions. The A-Theorist will say there is no reason to think the New Tenseless Theory of Language (NTTL) is any better than the old one. In William Lane Craig's book "Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to time," Craig argues at length why the NTTL fails.[5] He states three reasons:

1. The New Tenseless Theory violates the laws of logic.
2. The New Tenseless Theory offers no coherent account of tensed sentences, which are never tokened.
3. The New Tenseless Theory confuses truth conditions with truth makers of tensed sentences.

Rather than going in detail with these arguments, it will suffice to say, unless the B-Theorist can present a better argument in support of tenseless time, tensed facts, and correspondingly, the tensed view of time should be deemed superior.

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

The Case For A-Theory

The argument for tensed time

The argument for tensed time is formulated as follows:

P1 Belief in the objective reality of the distinction between past, present and future is properly basic.
P2 If our belief in the objective reality of the distinction between past, present, and future is properly basic, then we are prima facie justified in holding this belief.
C Therefore, we are prima facie justified in holding our belief in the objective reality of the distinction between past, present, and future.

We may need to go off to a side bar here to define some terms for those who may be unfamiliar with the philosophical jargon.

A properly basic belief is a foundational belief which is not formed on the basis of any other belief, e.g., looking outside and saying "there is a tree right there." Memories are also properly basic beliefs. One is justified in holding his or her properly basic belief until a defeater - that is, something which contradicts that particular belief - is given. Such beliefs are justified at face value (prima facie). "Prima facie" is Latin for "at first sight."

The argument from our differential attitudes towards the past and the future

Speaking from a personal example, I despise dentist appointments. When I leave, I usually think "I'm glad that's over!" What I do not mean is "Golly geez, I'm rather thankful that event's conclusion has come about on today's date!" or other B-theorist lingo such as "Thank goodness that thing's conclusion is simultaneous with this utterance!" That does not make sense at all. On static theory of time, it seems feelings of relief and anticipation are irrational.

The argument from the experience of temporal becoming

We need not even appeal to the external world for this argument! Internally, we experience different thoughts and different streams of consciousness. What does it mean to "wish it was another time?" For example, what does it mean for the child to say "I wish it were Christmas? Ugh Why can't Christmas come sooner?!" The child is not saying "I wish Christmas was celebrated on such and such day." The child is clearly wishing today was December 25th, the day in which we celebrate Christmas. On the tenseless theory of time, the present is not objective and therefore such universal wishes of mankind would be irrational. What about the experience of waiting? We experience "waiting," because we experience a passage of time, enduring from moment to moment.

Given our personal experience, it is safe to say we are prima facie justified in holding such beliefs.

Several attempts have been made to present defeaters to this prima facie belief, such as McTaggart's paradox and the myth of passage, but such attempts fail. Time will not allow us to go into the details, so I will once again recommend you to Dr. Craig's books on time. Now we need to explore the arguments for tenseless time.

In support of static time, B-Theorist usually turn straight to Einstein's special theory of relativity. Now there are two interpretations of STR. One is Einstein's original interpretation in which dynamic time is supported and the other is the Minkowski interpretation in which static time is supported. The B-Theorist argument can be presented as follows:

P1 Either the Einsteinian, relativity interpretation or the Minkowskian, space-time interpretation of STR is correct.
P2 If the Minkowskian, space-time interpretation of STR

is correct, then a static theory of time is correct.
P3 The Einsteinian, relativity interpretation of STR is not correct.
C Therefore a static theory of time is correct.

Surprisingly, the A-theorist would accept premise (3). The A-Theorist would object to premise (1), as we are presented with a false dilemma. There is a third option here: The Lorentzian view. There are debates over whether the Minkowskian view is a better position than the neo-Lorentzian view, but this is a whole other topic. Again, the Kalam does not fail if B-theory of time is more plausible. Another current issue is over whether STR really poses a threat to presentism wholly apart from the neo-Lorentzian view! Many A-Theorist do not think so. I agree it is good to take scientific evidence to philosophical conclusions (indeed, that is precisely what the Kalam does), but we need to be aware there is often philosophical stances built into the scientific theories themselves. For example, Einstein's verificationism-positivism played a role in his STR. Nonetheless, the debate is ongoing and it comes down to one's metaphysical stance. This particular issue on its own is not enough to reach clarity on the subject so I would therefore deem this a secondary issue. We would have to look at the totality of evidence and have that influence our interpretation of STR.

Additional note on STR: The A-theorist has at least three ways to harmonize tensed time with STR: 1. Distinguish metaphysical time from physical or clock time and maintain that while the former is A-theoretic in nature, the latter is a bare abstraction therefrom, useful for scientific purposes and quite possibly B-Theoretic, the element of becoming having been abstracted out; 2) Relativize becoming to reference frames, just as is done with simultaneity; and 3) select a privileged reference frame to define the time in which objective becoming occurs, most plausibly the cosmic time, which serves as the time parameter for hyper surfaces of homogeneity in space-time in the General Theory of Relativity.[7]

Apart from the Special Theory of Relativity, we have very few positive arguments for B-theory which hold weight. McTaggart presents a paradox, but under criticism, the argument has shown not to be a good one. So what about the arguments against B-theory?

The A-theorist argues against defenders of static time by saying, "mind-dependence of becoming" is incoherent. Are we to think temporal becoming is just as unreal in the mental realm as it is in the external world? Do mental events exist just as tenselessly as the events in the external realm?

P1 The temporal becoming of mental events is either mind-dependent or it is not.
P2 If it is not, then temporal becoming is objective.
P3 If it is, then temporal becoming is objective.
C Therefore, temporal becoming is objective.

PREMISE TWO

If temporal becoming of mental events are not mind-dependent, then temporal becoming clearly becomes objective. Why do we only have the knowledge of the "now?" If my past and future consciousness's exist, why am I confined and not able to jump from past to future? Why do I only have "now-awareness?" Why does temporal becoming in the mental realm proceed in only one direction? Why do all of us show the same now? The B-Theorist has not provided an answer to this. Indeed, it becomes inexplicable why the mental realm is tensed if the external realm is tenseless.

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Premise Three

Let us look now at premise 3. Let us say the B-Theorist does believe the mental realm itself is tenseless. This entire stance is incoherent. "Bluntly put, even the illusion of becoming implies becoming. Becoming cannot be mere illusion or appearance because an illusion or appearance of becoming involves becoming."[6]

So the B-theorist is placed in a dilemma: On one hand, they would have to accept tensed mental experiences, which would be to accept objective tensed facts and the "de-tenser" would be forced into an untenable dualism while also giving way to the A-Theorist argument of tensed facts presented above. On the other hand, the B-Theorist must accept that the consciousness is tenseless and mental becoming is illusory, which is self-refuting.

There is also another issue with the B-theory of time. This is the problem of intrinsic change. Why can an object remain self-identical if it has different properties at different times? The A-Theorist has a simple solution here: Endurantism. The A-Theorist holds that objects endure through time, moment to moment and so there is no issue with intrinsic change on the tensed view. The B-Theorist, however, would have to hold to perdurantism. This is a highly controversial and possibly incoherent stance. Perdurantism seems to be a necessary truth of the static conception of time. If perdurantism is not true, the static conception itself must not be true.

P1 If a static conception of time is correct, then the doctrine of perdurantism is true.
P2 The doctrine of perdurantism is not true.
C Therefore the static conception of time is not correct.

The premise to be looked at here is premise 2. As I stated, if perdurantism is not true, the static conception of time must not be true either, as the two go hand in hand. Right off, there is an issue over whether perdurantism can be coherently assembled. "A perduring object is defined as a collection of spatio-temporal parts; but a spatio-temporal part is then defined as a piece of a perduring object." This is viscous circularity. We cannot even coherently give a definition of to what a perduring object even is.

For the sake of time and article length, I will compose a list of other arguments against the doctrine of perdurantism. I see no reason to go in depth with these particular arguments because it seems the demonstrating of the view's incoherence was a deathblow in itself!

1. It leads to another absurd doctrine known as conventionalist, which denies there are objective physical objects and is as incoherent as perdurantism itself!
2. Perdurantism's account of intrinsic change is implausible.
3. Perdurantism is incompatible with moral responsibility.
4. Perdurantism implies an implausible view of essential properties.

We see here perdurantism is extremely implausible. Durantism is far more coherent and plausible. We therefore have good reasons to grant premise 2. Premise 1 is not controversial. The conclusion the static conception of time is false therefore follows logically.

Summary: The tensed theory of time

I will draw this section to a close by concluding: when considering the full range of evidence, the tensed theory of time seems more plausible. We have seen there are several good arguments for A-theory of time and several good arguments against B-theory of time. We have also seen the only real threat posed towards tensed time is

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Einstein's STR, which in itself appears to be a secondary issue and therefore cannot have the final say. But once again, I will need to mention, the Kalam still stands even if B-Theory were true. A-theory gives us stronger support that the universe *had* to have a beginning. We still have to consider the other philosophical and scientific evidence, which we will do as we discuss premise 2.

Does Everything That Begins to Exist Have a Cause?

Now that we have very briefly evaluated the two competing theories of time, we shall move on to the second portion of premise 1 of the Kalam cosmological argument. Does everything that begins to exist have a cause?

It is astounding the amount of people who object to this. Plenty of people have stated, on the quantum level, virtual particles come into being uncaused. This is hardly true. Even if we cannot predict the virtual particles' coming into existence, we cannot conclude these particles come into being uncaused. We could rightfully take an indeterministic approach here, but to conclude that the lack of determinability entails a lack of causality would be a non-sequitur. Hold on, this gets worse. There is a debate over whether these particles even exist or not!

“Quantum-mechanical events may not have classically deterministic causes, but they are not thereby uncaused or a causal. The decay of a nucleus takes place in view of physical actualities and potentialities internal to itself, in relation to a spatio-temporal nexus governed by the laws of quantum mechanics. The fact uranium atoms consistently decay into atoms of lead and other elements (not in to rabbits or frogs) shows such events are not causal but take place within a causal nexus and law like structures."[8]

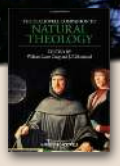
Another famous objection, if one could even call it an objection, to the principle of causality was made by David Hume. Hume stated it was at least possible to conceive of an object coming into being ex-nihilo. For example, imagine a table and a ball suddenly appearing, out of nothing, as it were. Even if it were possible to conceive of such a thing, it does not entail that envisioning it in one's mind entails that it could physically take place in reality. We need to differentiate between the intellect and the imagination here. It is even argued elsewhere that Hume did not even conceive of such a thing at all, but there is no need to go into that here.

Some would say while it is true everything in the universe has a cause, it does not have to be true of the universe itself. This is the taxicab fallacy. It is arbitrary to claim the universe is an exception to the principle of causality. Either the universe was caused or it came into being out of nothing. Now, "nothing" in the philosophical sense has no properties and therefore no causal abilities. Scientists have tried to redefine "nothing" to refer to a quantum vacuum, but this clearly means the universe did have a cause, namely the quantum vacuum (if that is not obvious enough).

So we have not seen a good refutation to the principle of causality and the burden of proof is on the objector here.

I also think it is important to add that the principle of causality is not a physical principle but rather a metaphysical one. It is not contingent upon the universe. It applies to all of reality. Nonetheless, premise one is certainly far more probable than its negation. From here, we should move on to premise two of the KCA.

Premise two of the Kalam states the universe began to exist. This is confirmed both scientifically and philosophically. Let us start with the philosophical arguments.



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It is arguable the actual infinite does not exist in reality. An eternal universe would be an actual infinite. If the actual infinite cannot exist in reality, neither could an eternal universe. Before we dive into this, it will be good to distinguish between the actual infinite and the potential infinite.

The potential infinite is represented by the symbol ∞ (the lemniscate). The potential infinite has the potency to be infinitely extended or divided.

The actual infinite is represented by the symbol $\aleph_0$ (aleph-zero or aleph-null). Aleph zero is what Georg Cantor, founder of modern set theory, called the "true infinite." This is the first infinite/trans-finite number in the series of 1, 2, 3. . . Speaking on the potential and actual infinite, David Hilbert says, *"someone who wished to characterize briefly the new conception of the infinite which Cantor introduced might say that in analysis we deal with the infinitely large and the infinitely small only as limiting concepts, as something becoming, happening, i.e., with the potential infinite. But this is not the true infinite. We meet the true infinite when we regard the totality of numbers 1, 2, 3, 4. . . itself as a completed unity, or when we regard the points of an interval as a totality of things, which exists all at once. This kind of infinite is known as the actual infinity."*[9]

The argument can be formulated as follows:

P1 An actual infinite cannot exist (by *exist* I mean exist in reality, the real world)
P2 An infinite temporal regress of events is an actual infinite (by *event* I mean just that which happens)
C Therefore an infinite temporal regress of events cannot exist

In defense of premise 1 - Cantors work in set theory does not pose a threat to this argument as it only refers to the mathematical realm. William Lane Craig notes several statements from prominent mathematicians:

Bernard Bolzano, who was a Bohemian mathematician, logician, and philosopher, states that the mathematical infinite is in *"the realm of things which do not claim actuality, and do not even claim possibility."*[10]

Abraham Robinson, a mathematician known for his development of non-standard analysis, says *". . . Cantor's infinites are abstract and divorced from the physical world."*[11]

Fraenkel, states that set theory is *"the branch which least of all is connected with external experience and most genuinely originates from free intellectual creation."*[12]

Rotman and Kneebone state *". . . the Zermelo-Fraenkel universe of sets exists only in a realm of abstract though. . . the 'universe' of sets to which the . . . theory refers is in no way intended as an abstract model of an existing Universe, but serves merely as the postulated universe of discourse for a certain kind of abstract inquiry."*[13]

David Hilbert, one of the most influential mathematicians of the late 19th through the earliest 20th century, says, *"The infinite is nowhere to be found in reality. It neither exists in nature nor provides a legitimate basis for rational thought – a remarkable harmony between being and thought. . . The role that remains for the infinite to play is solely that of an idea – if one means by an idea, in Kant's terminology, a concept of reason which transcends all experience and which completes the concrete as a totality- - that of an idea which we may unhesitatingly trust within the framework erected by our theory."*[14]

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To show the absurdities of an actual infinite existing in reality, David Hilbert has invited us to imagine a hotel, call it Hilbert's Hotel. Imagine that a finite number of rooms are full in this hotel. I go to check in and the manager says "Sorry, all the rooms are full." Well, that's it! I have to go find another hotel. Now, imagine the same hotel with an infinite number of rooms that are taken. I go to check in and the manager says "Sure! Not a problem!" He moves the person in room 1 into room 2, the person in room 2 into room 3, the person in room 3 to room 4, on to infinity, and I get to take over room 1. (Infinity + 1 = infinity). Now let us imagine an infinite number of people come in behind me and ask to check in, even though all the infinite number of rooms are taken. The manager says, "Certainly! One moment!" The person in room 1 is moved to room 2, the person in room 2 is moved to room 4, the person in room 3 is moved to room 6. Every person is moved into the room double their current room number, on to infinity. An infinite number of rooms become free and the infinite number of guests can now check in. (Infinity + Infinity = Infinity). Suppose an infinite number of people would like to check out. All the people in the odd numbered rooms check out. The only rooms taken are 2, 4, 6, 8, on to infinity. There are still an infinite number of people in the hotel even though an infinite number of people checked out. (Infinity - Infinity = Infinity). What if everyone except the persons in rooms 1, 2, & 3 checked out? We would only have three rooms taken. An infinite number of people checked out, namely rooms 4, 5, 6. . . on to infinity. (Infinity - Infinity = 3). As a matter of fact, we can subtract infinity from infinity and get any natural number ranging from 1 to infinity! The absurdity of this hotel is, if this were an *actual* infinite, we would not be able to give or take away from it at all! (We would be using the lemniscate here and not aleph zero). In the mathematical realm, this may be consistent, but it is obviously not reflected in the physical realm outside of mathematics.

Views on mathematics: Four schools of thought

1. Platonism/Realism - This school of thought holds that mathematical entities hold ontological value outside of a mind. This is the only school of thought which holds that the actual infinite exists in reality.
2. Nominalism - This school of thought denies the existence of abstract entities, such as numbers, all together.
3. Conceptualism - This school of thought holds that mathematical entities are created by minds and exist in minds and hold no ontological value in reality apart from minds.
4. Formalism - This school of thought holds that mathematics is merely a formalized system which no ontological value in reality.

Out of the four schools of thought, only the Platonist group holds mathematical entities have ontological grounding in reality. It turns out this stance is not tenable. There are three antinomies which completely undermined the Platonist view: Burali-Fortili's antinomy, Cantor's antinomy and Russel's antinomy. Rather than going into details with these, I will just recommend for those who want further reading on this to look into William Lane Craig's "The Kalam Cosmological Argument" on page 90. These three antinomies left open the options of nominalism, conceptionalism, and formalism, but Platonism/realism had no way around these paradoxes. Since then, even the concept of the actual infinite being mathematically possible has been challenged! Given all this data, it is safe to assume premise 1 is true.

In defense of premise two

If the past were eternal, there would be an infinite temporal regress of events. This idea also leads to the absurdities mentioned above in the example of Hilbert's hotel and the absurdities are heightened! One cannot add

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to the actual infinite. But we are adding past events every day. Consider a man who is writing an autobiography of himself. Also, let us say for the sake of discussion he is immortal. Let us say he writes so slowly it takes him one year to record the events of a single day. Now if the actual infinite existed, he could reach the end of his autobiography, because once the days and years reach infinity, they will have a one-to-one correspondence. But this is absurd. The future is merely a potential infinite, not an actual infinite. And even though the man would write forever, he would get further and further behind. According to the view the actual infinite exists, however, the years and days would reach a one-to-one correspondence and this man's infinitely long book would be completed! But we see this cannot be done. For every day the man records in his book, he has 365 more to record (it takes him one year to record one day of his life). By the time he has recorded two days of his life, he has 730 days more to record. By the time he has recorded the third day, he has 1095 days to record. It is obvious he will get further and further behind and hence could never actually finish the book. Let us just suppose, for the sake of argument, the man does finish an infinitely long autobiography. This means at some point, the number of years and number of days reach a one-to-one correspondence. This is to say, an actual infinite number of events have taken place. Why has he finished today and not yesterday or the day before yesterday? For yesterday, there was an eternity beyond it. For the day before yesterday, there was an eternity beyond it. No matter how far back in this series we go, there would have elapsed an infinite amount of time prior. This means it does not matter at what point in eternity we look at the man, we would never find him writing his autobiography for he has already finished forever ago. Obviously this does not make sense. The actual infinite is not found in reality. (Keep in mind, we are not talking about the POTENTIAL infinite here, we are talking about the ACTUAL infinite. Recall the potential infinite is the lemniscate ∞ and the actual infinite is aleph-zero/aleph-null $\aleph_0$.)

It is safe to conclude, an infinite temporal regress of events cannot exist. This leaves us with two possibilities: 1) the universe began to exist or 2) the finite temporal regress of events was preceded by an eternal, absolutely quiescent universe. The argument can be constructed as follows:

P1 Either the universe began to exist or the finite temporal regress of events was preceded by an eternal, absolutely quiescent universe.
P2 The finite temporal regress of events was not preceded by an eternal, absolutely quiescent universe.
C Therefore the universe began to exist.

Premise one seems fair. It entails either there was an absolute beginning of the universe or there was a relative beginning of temporal events which sprung from an eternally existing universe. Premise 2 is in need of defense.

So the first event to arise out of the absolutely eternal and immobile universe was either caused or it was not. If it were caused, then the conditions to create such an effect were present for all of eternity. This means the effect would be there for eternity, which makes a first event impossible. So, let us say the event was caused. This only pushes the temporal regress of events back one more into the past. We have already shown there cannot exist an infinite regress of temporal events. We have to reach a very first event whose necessary and sufficient conditions have been there for all of eternity, which was just shown to be impossible. In fear of a vicious regress, we can try a different route. Let us go with option 2: the first event was uncaused. But surely this is an irrational stance. An event taking place without the necessary and sufficient

conditions seems untenable and possibly incoherent. The defender of this stance would have to demonstrate that an event could take place without the necessary and sufficient conditions in place.

There is also scientific evidence against this. An immobile universe would require a temperature of absolute zero, for heat causes motion. This model is already disqualified, as it is impossible to reach such a temperature. Moreover, to cause an event such as the Big Bang (the alleged first event), the temperatures would have to be far from absolute zero. Thirdly, if there were a universe in a frozen state, no change could ever occur. An eternally existing cause creates an eternally existing effect (this is state-state causation. More on this later!) For example, let us imagine a world where it is eternally freezing. In this world, all the bodies of water exposed to such freezing temperatures would be eternally frozen, for the necessary and sufficient conditions are eternally there. Therefore, we have good reasons to hold that such an immobile universe is untenable and possibly incoherent. We can now affirm premise 2. Therefore the conclusion the universe began to exist necessarily follows.

To sum this up: ". . . Since an actual infinite cannot exist and an infinite temporal regress of events is an actual infinite, we can be sure an infinite temporal regress of events cannot exist, that is to say, the temporal regress of events if finite. If the temporal regress of events is finite, then either the universe began to exist or the finite temporal regress of events was preceded by an eternal, absolutely quiescent universe. But the finite temporal regress of events could not have been preceded by an eternal, absolutely quiescent universe. Therefore, since the temporal regress of events is finite, the universe began to exist."[15]

TEMPORAL SERIES OF EVENTS PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT

Before we go on to the scientific evidence for premise 2 of the KCA, let us look at one more philosophical argument.

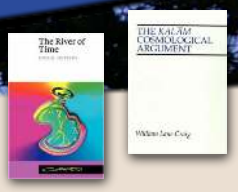
P1 The temporal series of events is a collection formed by successive addition (sequentially/successively in time)
P2 A collection formed by successive addition cannot be an actual infinite
C Therefore the temporal series of cannot be an actual infinite

Notice this argument does not assume the actual infinite does not exist. It argues that the actual infinite cannot be obtained by successive addition. Recall that we cannot add on to the actual infinite. If one begins counting, there is always one more number he/she can count. A potential infinite can never be turned into an actual infinite due to the very nature of the actual infinite. Please note, time is irrelevant to this argument. Craig invites us to imagine a man running on slabs. Every time the man's foot hits one slab, another slab appears in front of him. This would go on ad infinitum, but it would never end. So it is obvious the actual infinite cannot be reached by successive addition. Since the actual infinite can never be reached by an amount of successive addition, this entails that if the actual infinite were to even exist, it would have to appear all at once. This appears to be another absurdity brought about by the existence of an actual infinite.

I will sum up this section with an unanswered question: If the past were infinite (that is one event followed by another, which was followed by another for an eternity), how do we reach today? Think about this for a while.

THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

To start off this section, I am going to very briefly talk about the ruling paradigm in contemporary cosmology:



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the Standard Big Bang Model. In 1916 (or 1917?), Einstein published his general theory of relativity (GTR). Einstein discovered that the most minute deviation would lead the universe to either implode or expand. In 1920, Alexander Friedman and Georges Lemaitre considered this particular discovery to devise solutions which led to the prediction of an expanding universe. In 1929, Edwin Hubble, one of the most important observational cosmologists in the 20th century, discovered the isotropic cosmic expansion which was predicted by Friedman and Lemaitre. As the cosmos expands, it becomes less and less dense. If we reverse this expansion, we can trace the universe back to a state of "infinite density," which represents the cosmological singularity.

To prevent anyone from claiming I am misrepresenting here, I will not even use my own words to speak on the standard model. Also, I will keep the other sections extremely short.

Quentin Smith: *"It belongs analytically to the concept of the cosmological singularity that it is not the effect of prior physical events. The definition of a singularity . . . entails that it is impossible to extend the space-time manifold beyond the singularity . . . This rules out the idea that the singularity is an effect of some prior natural process."*[16]

Gott, Gunn, Schramm, and Tinsley *". . . the universe began from a state of infinite density about one Hubble time ago. Space and time were created in that event and so was all the matter in the universe. It is not meaningful to ask what happened before the big bang; it is somewhat like asking what is north of the North Pole. Similarly, it is not sensible to ask where the big bang took place. The point-universe was not an object isolated in space; it was the entire universe, and so the only answer can be, the big bang happened everywhere."*[17]

Sir Author Eddington, astronomer, physicist, and mathematician of the early 20th century who did his greatest work in astrophysics: *"The beginning seems to present insuperable difficulties unless we agree to look on it as frankly supernatural."*[18]

Stephen Hawking: *"Almost everyone new believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the Big Bang."*[19]

P.C.W Davies, English physicist: *"If we extrapolate this prediction to its extreme, we reach a point when all distances in the universe have shrunk to zero. An initial cosmological singularity therefore forms a past temporal extremity to the universe. We cannot continue physical reasoning, or even the concept of space-time, through such an extremity. For this reason, most cosmologists think of the initial singularity as the beginning of the universe. On this view the big bang represents the creation event not only of all the matter and energy in the universe, but also of space time itself."*[20]

John Barrow (English cosmologist, theoretical physicist, and mathematician) and Frank Tipler (mathematical physicist and cosmologist): *"At this singularity, space and time came into existence; literally nothing existed before the singularity, so if, the Universe originated at such a singularity, we would truly have a creation ex nihilo."*[21]

Alexander Vilenkin (for some reason, this specific one makes people angry): *"It is said that an argument is what convinces reasonable men and a proof is what it takes to convince even an unreasonable man. With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is no escape: they have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning."*[22] Vilenkin also says, *"All the evidence we have says that the universe had a beginning."* You should watch Vilenkin's

speech: "Did the Universe have a begining?" Rather than go in to depth with all the other scientific models such as oscillating models, chaotic inflationary models, vacuum fluctuation models, quantum models, etc., it should suffice to say, none of these models have been shown viable.

Vilenkin, along with two other scientists, formulated the BGV theorem. This theorem states: any universe which is in a state of cosmic expansion has an absolute beginning. To quote Vilenkin once more: *"A remarkable thing about this theorem is its sweeping generality. We made no assumptions about the material content of the universe. We did not even assume that gravity is described by Einstein's equations. So, if Einstein's gravity requires some modification, our conclusion will still hold. The only assumption that we made was that the expansion rate of the universe never gets below some nonzero value, no matter how small."*[23]

Apart from the expansion of our universe and the BGV theorem, the second law of dynamics is another scientific evidence of a finite universe. The issue here is, the universe will eventually come to a state of equilibrium and suffer a "heat death." Obviously, the universe cannot be eternal in the past because otherwise it would have reached this death an infinite time ago.

Thus far, we have seen, there is good philosophical and scientific evidence the universe began to exist. I did not include a whole lot of detail here, but we have seen enough to conclude, premise 2 of the KCA is far more likely than it is contradictory. Earlier we saw premise 1 of the KCA is also far more likely that its negation. Therefore the conclusion (3) logically follows: the universe has a cause.

We can address now what sort of cause this would have to be. To create all of space-time reality, the cause itself would have to be transcendent, or in other words, beyond the universe itself. Recall that even if there was a multiverse, it too had an absolute beginning. This means literally all of matter and space was brought into being by this cause. The cause, then, must be immaterial and spaceless. As the cause of time, the cause must be timeless and eternal. To be timeless entails being changeless. Being changeless, however, does not entail immutability. To be eternal entails being without a beginning. Being without a beginning entails being uncaused. We could also go on to call this cause omnipotent, as it brought all of space-time reality into existence without a material cause. The cause, being uncaused and eternal, must also be metaphysically necessary.

THE CAUSE IS PERSONAL: THREE REASONS

1. As Richard Swinburne has said, there are two types of causal explanations: scientific explanations and personal/agent explanations. For example, imagine a pot is boiling on the stove. The scientist can give me the low down of to what is making the pot boil. On the other hand, my grandmother would simply say she has the water boiling because she is about to make sweet tea. Regarding the universe again, the issue is there was no prior state of the universe (we discussed this in a deductive argument earlier) and therefore cannot be explained in scientific terms. The only option on the table here is explanation is terms of an agent.

2. Recall, the cause must be immaterial, beginningless, uncaused, timeless, and spaceless. Only two types of objects fit into such a category: Abstract objects and unembodied minds. Abstract objects do not stand in causal relations. That is part of the very definition of being 'abstract.' A number, for example, cannot cause anything. Hence, the cause is an unembodied mind. Since this cause was not existent in time and space, we cannot be speaking

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

of event-causation here. It also cannot be a state-cause for the same reason. Nonetheless, we are not even dealing with state-state causation here. We are talking about state-event causation - that is, an eternally existing state and a temporal event.

3. This leads us to a third reason the cause is personal. An agent is the only way to make sense of a changeless state bringing about a temporal event. A mindless eternal state would bring about some other eternal state (Remember the eternally freezing temperature bringing about eternally frozen lakes from earlier?) How could the necessary and sufficient conditions to bring about such an effect be there for eternity but yet only take place a finite time ago? Why is the effect not coeternal with the cause? The only way out of this dilemma is agent causation. An agent with free will can bring about the conditions for such an event whenever. An immortal man with a lot of patience could sit for all of eternity and freely will to stand up. In the same manner, some personal Creator of the universe freely willed to create the entire natural realm.

In conclusion:

The cause of the universe must be a transcendent, immaterial, spaceless, eternally existing, uncaused, beginningless, and omnipotent personal Creator. Ockham's razor leaves us with only one personal Creator: God.

"It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, except as an act of God who intended to create beings like us."
–Stephen Hawking
"A Brief History of Time" (p.127)

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use."
–Galileo
Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina (1615)

"I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is not God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that."
–Thomas Nagel
"The Last Word"

"Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as science without presuppositions ... A philosophy, a 'faith' must always be there first, so that science can acquire from it a direction, a meaning, a limit, a method, a right to exist ... It is still a metaphysical faith that underlies our faith in science."
–Friedrich Nietzsche

"You don't have to address the deep spiritual questions if you just keep yourself sufficiently entertained."
–William Lane Craig

"But my belief that miracles have happened in human history is not a mystical belief at all; I believe in them upon human evidences as I do in the discovery of America. Upon this point there is a simple logical fact that only requires to be stated and cleared up. Somehow or other an extraordinary idea has arisen that the disbelievers in miracles consider them coldly and fairly, while believers in miracles accept them only in connection with some dogma. The fact is quite the other way. The believers in miracles accept them (rightly or wrongly) because they have evidence for them. The disbelievers in miracles deny them (rightly or wrongly) because they have a doctrine against them"
–G.K. Chesterton

"Unless you assume a God the question of life's purpose is meaningless."
–Hugh S. Moorhead
"The Meaning of Life"
quote by Bertrand Russel

The Day I Converted From Atheism

Maryann Spikes • ichthus77.blogspot.com

I spruced up the old testimony for Brian Auten's Former Atheist Project on Apologetics 315, just in time for my approaching born-again birthday. If you're a former atheist, Brian would love to hear your story--and so would I. Mine begins here...

Before I became an atheist, I had grown up in church, a preacher's kid who prayed to receive Christ when I was four. I never matured beyond the Sunday school understanding of avoiding the punishment of hell and gaining the reward of heaven. There were lots of questions my parents did their best to answer, but many questions lingered after I got married and moved away from home.

When we bought a computer, I used it to witness in chat rooms and message boards, even met a few times in person with one of the people to whom I was witnessing. In the process I discovered people have a lot of doubts about Christianity, and I added those doubts to my own.

I remember the night when the scales tipped and my doubts outweighed my faith – I had a nightmare that I rode in the passenger seat of a car speeding through a hilly stretch of road and could not make the driver slow down. I woke up terrified as the car launched off a cliff into the blackness of night. The grounding of my faith gave way to an abyss of nothing. It didn't kill me, but it didn't make me stronger, either. The abyss provides no ground for meaningful strength.

I lived as a lost, prodigal sheep for about five years. Emotionally I abandoned my family, paying as little attention to them as I could get away with, and invested all my spare time in online philosophy message boards. I did a lot of selfish things I rationalized were okay at the time, as long as no one knew. Now I regret those things. They caused pain and left scars. I learned that nothing genuinely good needs to be hidden. Really, I knew that, but I ignored what I knew, and God gave me over to delusional thinking. I remember with sadness even the happy memories during that time, because they are all colored with the full reality of what I hid.

By the time He brought me back to Himself, I no longer thought about God. I didn't think a God existed to think about. I felt apathetic about life. I taught my kids that believing in God was like believing in the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, and the Tooth Fairy. My still-believing husband and I butted heads over my stand.

Defining the good: The Golden Rule –Maryann Spikes

Does the Moral Argument Reify Subjective Morality? –Maryann Spikes

The Day I Converted From Atheism

The nagging question of why something exists instead of nothing needled me. It bothered me because I couldn't answer it, not because I thought an answer exists.

Finally I tired of lying to my husband and stopped doing things I had to hide, hoping my marriage would improve. I became a zombie. I merely existed, and would've continued that way if God had not intervened. I wished I could believe like my husband believed, to make our marriage go more smoothly, but I couldn't. I couldn't believe something for which I felt there was no evidence.

It all became real on September 22, 2005, when God smacked me upside the head. I am leaving out details no atheist would believe unless they experienced them, but He influenced me to tell my husband everything I had ever done. It felt like I threw my whole marriage and our parenting up in the air and trusted God to catch it and help it all land safely on the ground.

It turned out my husband had broken down and prayed two days before that I would find God and our lives would get straightened out. He already knew I wasn't completely present in our marriage, and when I told him the truth, he wanted to leave, but God put it on his heart to stay.

Besides guiding me to tell my husband the truth that day, God helped me quit smoking and let go of other addictions. Life wasn't all sunshine and roses—things got much worse before they got better, but God was on our side and carried us through the storm of insanity. I refer to it sometimes as the fiery whirlwind. God broke me, sifted me and refined me.

He made His saving love real to me by offering me His hand and giving me the choice to be saved out of the mud when I still wallowed in it. The transformation God brought about in my life helped me and my husband go from the nightmarish brink of divorce, to best friends in love all over again, united in our faith. He helped me gradually restore the intimacy mothers are supposed to share with our children.

After Jesus made himself real to me, I decided I wanted to actually look into the evidence, rather than chant the mantra still heard from atheists today, that "there is no evidence". I've been involved in apologetics ever since. Now I teach my sons about arguments for God's existence and evidence of Jesus' resurrection.

For You had cast me into the deep... But You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.
Jonah 2:3, 6

Resolving Euthyphro's Dilemma
–Maryann Spikes

Answering Gettier
–Maryann Spikes

The Almost Atheist

Roger Maxson

There is a problem. Masses of people are abandoning the Christian faith. I was a breath away from joining them.

According to a study by the Barna group, nearly 6 out of 10 people ages 18-29 have dropped out of church, possibly forever.[1] I personally know laymen, preacher's kids, and ministers who have left the Christian faith; many becoming atheists. Those who never claimed Christ are now more vocal in their skepticism. WHY? For many of them, it's because they no longer believe Christianity is true. Many young people leaving the church said "The church is not a safe place to express doubts."

I was raised with a Christian mother who (thankfully) made me read Scripture growing up. I trusted the Lord very early on. When I became a teenager, under the influence of dynamic preaching, I realized that I wanted to serve God with my life. I was very zealous. My wife and I graduated from Bible college. Upon graduation, I became an assistant pastor in a conservative church full of warm and loving people. But in the most private places of my life, there was a problem. Since the time I was young, and all the way through Bible college, I quietly wondered, "How do I know this is actually true?"

For years, my zeal and existential experiences with the Lord calmed my inner doubts. But the older I got, the more questions I had. For a long time, my experiences and feelings kept me going. I felt it was true. One day, I left the ministry to serve in the Marine Corps. Life changed very quickly. At Parris Island, I kept the faith. Even one of my Drill Instructors pulled me aside and asked me about what it is to be a Christian. I was able to lead a fellow recruit to the Lord. But still, there was a problem, and it was getting worse. After months of Marine life, I no longer 'felt' Christianity was true. I began to feel more like a Marine, and less like a Christian. When my 'feelings' that Christianity is true wore off, all I was left with were my doubts and questions.

I decided to investigate whether Christianity is true or not. I knew that I wanted to live by what is true. Even if I was uncomfortable with the outcome of my investigation, I would accept the truth no matter what it turned out to be. I thought, "What better place to start my investigation, than to ask minister friends of mine?" I had a list of questions. And I asked them. The answers I received were not helpful.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.
1 Cor 15:3-8

The Almost Atheist

"You should know better than to ask these questions!" They were right. I should've known the answers to these questions; but in my heart, I knew I didn't. If anyone had asked me these types of questions in the past, I usually told them to "Just believe." And then I preached louder. But I didn't have the answers. I knew the Scriptures, but I hadn't the faintest idea why I thought the Scriptures were true. When I asked other preachers, some would answer, "I don't know why I believe it; I just do." I was literally told not to think about such questions by one gentlemen. "Don't question it! Don't worry about reasons, or evidence; just have faith!" "But then how do I know it's true?"

All the while, I had also been investigating other worldviews. I looked briefly into Eastern religions, Deism, and others. The view that grabbed my attention was atheism. Why? Because the new atheists constantly preached: "Ask the big questions, follow the evidence, and think for yourself." This was in stark contrast to what I saw in Christianity.

Christianity (at least, it seemed) said, "Don't ask the why questions! Don't use evidence! Don't reason about these things! Just Believe it!"

Atheism said, "Ask the big questions! Follow the evidence! Use your head, not just your heart! Don't believe anything without reasons!"

I was drawn to atheism like a magnet. It offered answers to my questions.

The irony is, the answers offered by atheism don't work. The more I studied atheism, the more I realized that it fails to explain the world we live in.

I continued to study. I studied many atheists, and I studied in detail the reasons to believe in God. I studied the reasons not to believe in God. I studied reasons to believe in miracles. I studied reasons not to believe in miracles. I studied reasons to believe the Bible. I studied whether or not Jesus rose from the dead. I even studied whether or not Jesus of Nazareth existed in history. I questioned everything, and studied everything I could. I studied history, philosophy, world religions, and cosmology. After years of spending nearly every waking moment I had in a mad search to learn the truth, I came to a decided answer. The conclusion? God exists, miracles can't be dismissed if there's sufficient evidence, the Bible is true, and Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on a cross and actually rose from the dead. ACTUALLY ROSE FROM THE DEAD. Christianity is true.

I discovered that there are good reasons to believe in Christianity.

The Almost Atheist

Thankfully a Christian friend, by the name of Nick Peters, who had spent years studying these things, took a great deal of time walking with me through my questions. But why didn't many of my Christian friends tell me about these answers? Why did some Christians scorn me for asking honest and humble questions? I was down, and I needed help.

Unfortunately, many Christians seem to think that everyone already knows in their hearts that Christianity is true. “Don't worry with evidence,” they'll say. “Just proclaim. If people have questions, just preach. No need to explain why we believe the Bible.”

I would like to offer some thoughts.

1. With all of the sincerity in my heart I tell you, that even as an ordained minister, I had deep and serious doubts. There came a time in my life, when I honestly wasn't sure that Christianity is true. And I could not preach what I wasn't sure I believed.

2. Those who told me to “Just believe,” or “Don't worry with evidence," or “You shouldn't ask questions,” didn't help me. With respect, they made it much, much, much worse. It's not their fault that I doubted. It's mine. I should've had the answers, but I didn't. And I knew it.

3. The Scriptures are not anti-thinking. As Christians, we are free to follow evidence where it leads. We are free to study the Bible, and to study why we believe the Bible in the first place. If something is true, the evidence shouldn't contradict it. As Christians, we have nothing to fear by investigating truth.

Consider a few examples:

A) Before writing his gospel record, Luke examined the evidence. He examined written evidence and eyewitness testimony. See Luke 1:1-4.

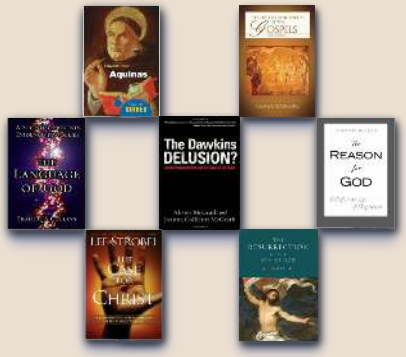
B) Paul used evidence. Please see 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. (Not to mention the fact that he quoted Greek thinkers and extra-biblical sources.)

C) Even preachers have doubts. John the Baptist and Thomas both knew the Lord personally, yet they both doubted that Christianity was true. Jesus didn't rebuke or embarrass them; He helped them. Please see Matthew 11:2-6; John 20:24-29. My point is this: Christians don't have to study history, philosophy, science, etc. Being a Christian is (thankfully) very simple. Being a Christian is having faith in Christ. But Christians should know the Scriptures, and we should know why we believe the Scriptures. If you have doubts and questions in your heart, don't ignore them. Get the answers you need, before your doubts get the better of you.

If a fellow Christian is doubting, or if a non-Christian asks questions as to why we believe Christianity is true, don't ask them to ignore their doubts! Their questions are important, and shouldn't be dismissed.

If you aren't certain about something, don't pretend to be certain. People will see through this.

Lastly, I beg my fellow Christians, to please know why you believe what you believe. Don't tell people not to ask questions. There are answers out there, and we in Christian love and compassion should endeavor to help others.



InterVarsity Press Hard Saying

John 1:18: No One Has Ever Seen God?

This verse is clearly saying that no one has ever seen God, but in Exodus 33:20 we read, "You cannot see my face . . . and live," and in Exodus 24:11, "They saw God, and they ate and drank." How can John claim that no one has ever seen God when the Old Testament text indicates that people did see God on at least two occasions?

First, notice that even the Old Testament indicates that no one has seen the face of God: "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Ex 33:20). It is in this context that the two theophanies occur. In the earlier theophany it appears that what the elders see is "a pavement made of sapphire" (which will appear again in the early chapters of Ezekiel as the floor of the divine chariot). No form is seen, although they may have had some awareness of a Being above the pavement. In this sense they "saw God" but apparently did not see his "face." In the later theophany Moses asks to see God's "glory" (Ex 33:18). In the view of the author of Exodus, he is asking for more than what he saw along with the elders of Israel. God grants more, but not all that Moses asks for. The only experience God will allow is for Moses to be hidden while God passes by and declares his character audibly; then Moses will get to see God's "back," which some commentators identify with an "afterglow," but which could mean the back side of a retreating form (in Near Eastern fashion this would be shrouded with clothing so only an outline would be visible). Even this experience is so powerful that Moses' face glows afterward (Ex 34:29).

John is clearly contrasting Jesus with Moses (Jn 1:17; Moses' theophany was at the giving of the law), but even later theophanies in the Old Testament do not contradict our observation. Isaiah has some awareness of a throne and a being on it, but the only things that he can describe are the hem of God's "robe" and the seraphim who are associated with him (Is 6:1-5). Ezekiel in a vision sees a form on a throne (Ez 1:26-28), but there is no face and no features, only burning fire in a vaguely human shape. The face of God is never seen.

Now we can understand what John is saying. The Word is with God (Jn 1:1), and the image implied in the preposition is the face-to-face position of equals. What is more, the Word is what God is (as we noted in the previous chapter). Now the Word becomes a human being ("flesh," Jn 1:14), and he has a "glory" or character or reputation which is that of one who is exactly like his Father, full of grace and truth (which are Greek equivalents of "love and faithfulness" of Ex 34:6). So Moses brought law from God (Jn 1:17), but Jesus brought the very character of the Father to us. Thus while no one has ever seen God, Jesus makes him known with an accuracy brought about by his being in the most intimate contact with him ("at the Father's side" in the NIV or, better, "in the bosom of the Father" [RSV]). They may have seen a form or outline in the Old Testament, but Jesus, the Word incarnate, has not only seen the Father face to face, but has also looked into his soul and contains within himself his very character.

This is an important theological point. Ever since Marcion in the second century there have been those who contrast the distant and harsh Father with the gracious and kind Son. The Father seems to be law and the Son grace. The Father seems to be difficult or impossible to relate to, apparently existing without feeling, and the Son seems to be caring and even warm and friendly. This contrast is entirely false. What John is saying is that if we want to find out what the Father is like, we only have to look at the Son. The "love and faithfulness" we see in Jesus is the "love and faithfulness" of the Father. The kindness we see in Jesus is the kindness of the Father. The healing we seen in Jesus is his doing the works of the Father (Jn 5:19). In sum, Jesus is the place where we get our best view of the face of the Father; in Jesus we can see what the Father's heart is really like. When this truth sinks into our heart, many of us will receive a renewed vision of the Father and thus develop a new love for and intimacy with God.

A Parent's Opportunity - Cultivating Purpose

Bonita Jewel • positiveparentingblog.wordpress.com

To a child, the idea of God is not difficult to grasp. Such a belief seems to come naturally. I have never met a child who, when told about a God they cannot see, responded with, "I don't believe that," or "You're kidding, right?"

Somehow, it makes sense in the mind of a child. It fits.

Why? It could be for a number of reasons. Perhaps part of it boils down to that inner sense of right and wrong that every child has … and they do have it. If I give a cookie to my son and not his sister, her reaction will be immediate: "That's not fair. Where is my cookie?" An innate sense of justice, of equity, exists in the mind of even young children. It follows that there is some kind of "bigger being" – a Creator, a God – who is goodness, equity, and justice.

The idea of purpose also comes naturally to a child. Young children quickly realize that there is a purpose for everything they see around them. A child will inquisitively ask the purpose for anything they do not understand. "What is that, Mommy? What does it do? How does it work? What is it for?"

They know that things are made for a reason. They have a design. By the time children are three or four, they understand that there is a purpose for equipment, technology, furniture, vehicles (and, of course, toys). As they grow a little older, they start to learn there is a purpose for things in the natural world: trees, the atmosphere, and the four seasons.

But in our post-modern culture, children are then told, "There is no purpose for humanity's existence on earth. It all happened as random processes." How dissonant that concept must settle in the heart of a child. So the idea is watered down slightly: "Well, purpose is subjective. Only you can determine what your purpose is – and if you do indeed have one. Only you can decide whether or not you want to subscribe to a sense of purpose in life."

Without God, purpose is no more than a nice thought; it can make you feel good about yourself. But stripped to the core, the very idea of "subjective purpose" commits logical suicide. If there was no Designer, there could be no design. If everything

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A Parent's Opportunity - Cultivating Purpose

in existence came about from random mutation and development, there would be no purpose in the universe – in macrocosm or in microcosm.

The logical thought process would lead to the conclusion that no one's idea of purpose is purer or more ideal than another. But if this was so, how do we – as a culture, as humanity – intrinsically know that certain purposes have higher ideals than others. If there was no purpose, how could we determine that Mother Teresa fulfilled a wonderful purpose that served to better humanity, while Adolf Hitler served not only an unworthy "cause," but one that was entirely malevolent?

A child intrinsically understands that there is a purpose for everything. They also have an inborn good-o-meter – an inner scale that determines whether something is right or wrong. This non-subjective perception can act as a child's introduction to the existence of God. From that point, their understanding of God can develop into not only an overall sense of God's purpose for mankind, but into His having a unique purpose for them.

In the greater scope, every child can grasp the existence of a Designer who has a special and unique purpose for him. It makes sense. There might be missing pieces of the puzzle, but there is a reason for everything that happens. And that reason gives them something new to explore. Something to discover.

"What is my purpose? Why am I here? Who has God created me to be? What has He created me to do?"

They are big questions. And your child will come to you with them. Don't be afraid of the questions. Encourage your child to ask them. Don't be afraid of not having all the answers. It gives you the opportunity to search for answers together. Read together. Study together. Explore together. Discuss together.

It might be easier to say, "Because that's just the way it is" in answer to your child's deep questions about life, nature, or God. It takes time to read, study, discuss, and explore. But it's well worth the effort, because you will cultivate a child who knows how to think, how to look at life objectively, how to tackle the difficult questions that are bound to arise as he grows, and how to search through God's Word and other resources to find the answers.

We parents have a great opportunity – and a great responsibility – to cultivate understanding, reasoning, knowledge, and faith in the lives of our children. When I picked up my children from school today, my ten-

year-old daughter jumped into the van and thrust a notebook toward me. "Can you check this?" she asked. "I'm writing an essay."

I glanced at the page of handwritten script. My daughter ended her essay with these words:

"I think God's plan for my life is for me to write children's stories about his love. Or he might want me to be a missionary."

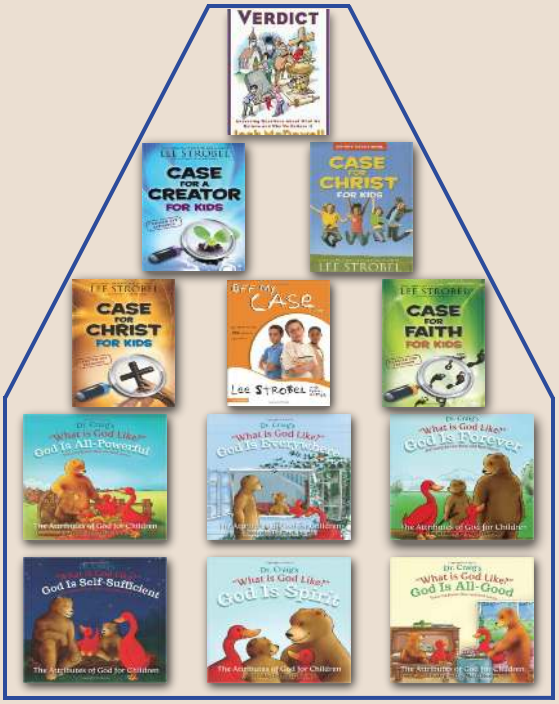
Is that God's plan for my daughter's life? I don't know, but I can't describe the thrill I felt when I read those two sentences. I am eager to see how God's plan unfolds for her, and for each of my children. It won't happen in an instant, but He will be walking beside them every step of the way. And as their mother, I am grateful to be experiencing this part of the journey with them.

I am sure you feel the same, as you grow in knowledge, faith, and purpose together with your children. Together, uncover the evidence for God's existence and for His unique plan for their lives. The two go hand in hand. And, as a Christian parent, you have the opportunity to walk hand in hand with your child along the path of knowing a God of love, life, purpose, and reason.

Where do I start?

The following websites contain comprehensive lists of apologetics resources for children of all ages:

- Reasonable Faith Apologetics for Children
- Ratio Christi Apologetics for Kids
- CARM Apologetics and the Family
- AIIA Institute Apologetics for Kids
- Christian Mom Thoughts



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New Members . . . Linwood Kemp

re·source

[ree-sawrs]: a source of supply, support, or aid; readily drawn upon when needed

Christian Apologetics Alliance

Join the CAA at our Facebook Group! We hope your involvement with the CAA deepens your faith and equips you to "give a reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:15)

Other social media: **Facebook** • **Twitter** • **Google+ Community** • **Google+ Page**

Contact membership team.

CAA Speaking Team. Here you will find a list of our speaking team members, their location and ministry information, and a way to donate if they are missionaries that rely on donations. Note that we consider all proclaimers of the truth of the Gospel to be missionaries obedient to the Great Commission, whether or not they rely on donations.

CAA Catechism is a collaboration of the CAA to break the essentials of apologetics up into bite size pieces (400 words or less), catechism-style. **Contact Catechism team**.

C.A.S.E. The Christian Apologetics Search Engine by CAA member, **Mark Deviny**.

Apologetics Events Calendar by CAA partner, Ratio Christi.

Ask the Alliance a question and we will post it in our Facebook group for discussion, and summarize our best answers in a post on this blog.

Media – CAA banner, logos, and wallpaper by alliance member, **Lauren Kimball**.

Apologetics Bloggers Alliance group has been created for those with blogs so we may support each other, share blog posts, promote one another, share ideas for blogging, SEO, promotion; and raise the awareness of the need for apologetics in the church, university, and the community; to pray for one another, and lift up Jesus Christ. **Contact**.

Apologetics for Parents is a group of parents committed to teaching our kids apologetics (a "defense" or case for Christianity) and exchanging what works, what doesn't, and maybe starting a website to share the best of what works with the world. **Find us on Twitter. Contact**.

Donations: The Christian Apologetics Alliance has many expenses; primarily website hosting. We also plan to expand in the following ways:
1. Develop a training course for "Grassroots Apologists."
2. Promote the CAA at apologetics conferences.
3. Obtain 501(c)3 status.

General Contact Email: **Christian Apologetics Alliance**

Upcoming book release: "Did God Really Command Genocide?" –Paul Copan and Matthew Flannagan

"No Magic Bullet" Copan's Insufficient Answer to the Slaughter of the Canaanites –Lydia McGrew

Apologetics Events Calendar –Ratio Christi

"Defending Truth in a Culture of Deception" Apologetics Conference November 1, 2014

2014 Evangelical Philosophical Society National Meeting November 19-21 San Diego, CA

Friends & Partners

In all of our diversity, we share a love for God, and a passion for apologetics.

CAA Co-Founder and Director of Partnerships: CHRIS REESE

The Christian Apologetics Alliance is currently the primary 'network of networks' for the global apologetics community. The membership of the CAA encompasses every continent. It includes high school students who are just learning to defend their faith with reason and senior leaders of respected apologetics organizations. It includes both men and women, from a wide variety of vocations, from hundreds of denominations.

We are in the process of developing more formal partnerships with a variety of other institutions and organizations. Our goal is to find mutually beneficial ways of connecting with other groups for the advance of the gospel.

B&H Academic • Tactical Faith • Apologetics315 • Ratio Christi • kregel • Crossway • Baker • NRB • Moody Publishers • HBU University • IVP

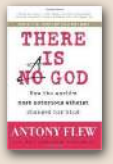
ref·er·en·ce

[ref-er-uh-ns]: a book, passage, etc., to which one is directed

APPROACHING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

–Eric Chabot

1 "We can look at religious texts and see if they pass the tests for historicity"
2 There Is A God? How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind by Anthony Flew (2007)
3 "Is Jesus the Messiah? A Look at the Messianic T.A.S.K."
4 "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth"
5 The Weight of Glory, "Is Theology Poetry?" by C.S. Lewis (1944), para. 24, p. 92
6 A Meaningful World: How the Arts and Sciences Reveal the Genius of Nature by Benjamin Wilker and Jonathan Witt (2006)
7 The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology by William Lane Craig (2009)
8 "What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?"
9 Interview with Clifford Williams: Existential Reasons for Belief in God
10 Christopher Hitchens, God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2009), 97-98.

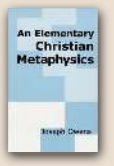




ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

–Nick Peters








THE DIVINE MATHEMATICIAN AND HIS IMAGE-BEARERS

–Melissa Cain Travis

1 Wigner, Symmetries and Reflections, pp. 222, 237

MERE MORAL ARGUMENT

–Samuel Ronicker

ESCHATOLOGY: DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND

–Nadine Salim

1 Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. *Left Behind*. (Colorado Springs, CO: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011) Reprint.

2 See the Nicene Creed.

3 The author of this article claims no significant experience with any of these views other than premillennial dispensationalism having become Christian in a denomination where this is the prescribed belief. No prophets were harmed in the writing of this message.

4 Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black. *The New Testament. Its Background and Message.* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing) 2003, 584

5 Craig L. Blomberg, and Sung Wok Chung, Sung, eds. *Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to Left Behind Eschatology*. (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Academic, 2009). Accessed October 12, 2014. ProQuest ebrary.

6 Ibid, *The New Testament*, 585.

7 Ibid, *Case for Historic Premillennialism,* 4

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9 Ibid.

10 Snarky remarks about the quality of the *Left Behind* films solely reflect the opinions of the author and not the Christian Apologetics Alliance.

A PARENT'S OPPORTUNITY - CULTIVATING PURPOSE

–Bonita Jewel

THE FINE-TUNING ARGUMENT

–Daniel Shire

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2 http://www.discovery.org/a/91
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4 William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith. (3rd ed.). (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1984), 158-159.
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6 Dean L. Overman, A Case against Accident and Self-Organization. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 181.
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THE ALMOST ATHEIST

–Roger Maxson

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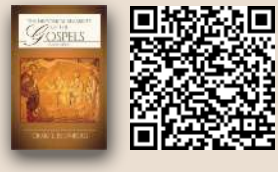

THE KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

–Johnny Wilson

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Publication Notes

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
Ps 121:1

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"Overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ"

In the next issue of EQUIPPED:

"The Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us."

John 1:14

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS ALLIANCE

answering seekers, equipping Christians, & demonstrating the truth of the Christian worldview