

A Study in Christian Apologetics – What We Believe & Why

Lesson Four: The Existence of God

Cogito, Ergo Credo: I Think, Therefore I (:)believe!

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"The subject of God is the most widely published discussion in history because more consequences for thought and action follow the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other basic question."

Mortimer Adler; The Great Ideas; A Synopicon of Great Books of the Western World

Who Cares? Almost All of Us!

Carl Sagan, the eminent theoretical physicist and atheist, when asked what evidence he would require to believe in God, is reported to have said that 'extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.' Yet it is said that 95% of the population of the world believes in a deity of some sort. Clearly, belief in God is not as 'extraordinary' as Carl Sagan might have us believe.

Categories of Theism | Atheism

Theism	Strong Atheism	Agnosticism Weak Atheism	Argumentative Atheism	Polytheism	Pantheism
Belief in a deity	"God does NOT exist"	We cannot know for sure	"I have a lack of a belief"	Many Gods exist	Everything is God

It's as Easy as A-B-C

We've learned that the Natural/General Revelation (our religious impulse) starts us off on our search for God, and that the Special Revelation of Christianity likely answers our questions (more on that later). A simple code that we teach Kindergartners helps us remember how easy this is. When I ask the kids "How do we know there's a God?" they respond by shouting back "A-B-C!"

A - He makes us AWARE of Him - Our own human nature (conscious, moral fiber, etc.) suggests to us that there must be something beyond ourselves - we just 'know' in our 'hearts' that there is more to life than what we can see and touch.

B - He gave us the BIBLE - Our awareness leads us to look for God. The Bible is the evidence that God has left us; a self-autographed documentation of His nature and His plans. The Bible is singularly unique, contrasted to all the other supposed scriptures.

C - We can see His CREATION - One of the 'general revelations' about God surrounds us each day, we see the miracles of creation everywhere. God told us that we could observe the evidence and information about Him within His creation. It is the most obvious fact of His existence - for how could there be a creation without a Creator?

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Philosophical Proofs

But make no mistake; there is room for philosophy in the search for God. Literally translated as 'a love of wisdom', philosophy utilizes logic and readily apparent evidences to draw valid conclusions. Here are examples of some of the most useful arguments that have been used to 'prove' the existence of God for hundreds of years.

"A little philosophy inclineth a man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's mind about to religion."
Francis Bacon

The Argument of Evident Causality (Cosmological Argument) - St. Thomas in his Summa Theological proposed five proofs of the existence of God which lead to the conclusion that there must be a God from the General Revelation. They can be summarized as follows:

Mankind's experience in the world indicates that all things have a cause. Consideration of this fact leads us to the conclusion that 'causes' must continue in history back into infinity. This is clearly not possible in practicality, so there must have been an 'uncaused cause.' This first cause is known as 'God.' And because nothing can be created by itself, there must be that which exists by itself. That which exists by itself is known as 'God.' Among the things that exist there is separation of value, indicating a rule by which to measure this value. That source of all value is known as 'God.' Finally, the reason for anything 'existing' instead of 'not existing' implies purpose - even things that appear to lack knowledge still have purpose, and act in accordance to a purpose beyond themselves. That purpose beyond all things is known as 'God.'

The Teleological Argument (the Argument for Purpose) - AKA an argument for a Designer:

- 1) Every aspect of the universe displays an incredible amount of order, both in the things we can see and the way things react to each other. (For example, consider the organs in your body - all working wonderfully for the sustaining of our lives, perfectly tuned and connected. This axiom can be extended almost indefinitely, from the amount of oxygen in the air for us, to the gravity keeping us on the ground, etc. etc. etc.)
- 2) Either this order is the product of intelligent design, or random chance.
- 3) Chance is incapable to produce this magnitude of order.
- 4) Order comes from a designer - with a purpose for the order.
- 5) Therefore, the universe is the result of an intelligent designer.

The Argument from Consciousness - Intelligence seems to be different than inanimate matter. In other words, there is something different about the 'animate' carbon and other chemicals that make up my body, and the 'inanimate' carbon and other chemicals found in nature. This difference is intelligence, or consciousness. Intelligence exists in the cosmos, yet the cosmos is not intelligent (self-aware.) So where did it come from? Consider this syllogism:

- 1) We experience the universe as intelligible.
- 2) Either the intelligible universe and the finite minds able to grasp it are the products of intelligence, or they arrived from blind chance.
- 3) Not blind chance.
- 4) Therefore, the intelligible universe and the finite minds grasping it are the products of intelligence.

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The Argument of Desire - An internal yearning for God? Can that be logical?! In fact, it is clearly logical and easy to understand. Let's try it out:

- 1) All the desires within us correspond to something that can fulfill the desire
- 2) However, there is a desire within us in which nothing on earth seems to fulfill
- 3) Therefore, something must exist outside of earth, time, and material that will satisfy this desire.
- 4) This something can only be what people refer to as 'God,' and a fulfillment (life) with Him forever.

At first glance this argument may seem odd, but upon further reflection it is clear. There are two types of desires: those that are natural (things such as food, sleep, knowledge, sex, friendship, beauty, etc.), and those that are developed (things such as football games, licorice, Barbie dolls, a better job, etc.) The former all people desire, the latter come from outside of us - from society, fiction, or preference. But why would all people desire something that is never satisfied in this world? Get a new car; you'll soon want a better one. Get that new job or love or whatever your heart desires; soon it won't satisfy. The yearning in our hearts never seems to be filled - what could it be leading us to? It appears logical to assume that a Creator may have placed this desire within us to lead us to search for Him.

But Be Careful!

We must be cautious - popular opinion and philosophical proofs may warrant belief in a Creator, but not necessarily in the Christian God. We must remember that we are looking for specific answers to the questions that were generated by the General Revelation. Clearly not all the religions provide the same (right?) answers. The Revelations MUST correspond with each other. Only Christianity provides corresponding Revelations! (More on that next week.)

Ok - But Where Did God Come from?

This is usually the first question a person will ask after we discuss God's position as the First Cause. But remember, by definition God is the first event, sometimes known as the 'Prime Mover'. Therefore, by this definition, God is uncaused. So the question 'Where did God come from?' is an improper question. It is a category error. It is like asking for a square circle, or a flat sphere. Is it hard to accept? Yes. But does it make sense to us? Of course, in the sense that we know that there cannot be an infinite regress of events. SOMETHING had to be first, and start it all off. There is nothing in nature that we see coming from nothing (despite the fifty dollar words some Naturalists throw around, like quantum fluctuations, etc.) It is just not natural. So what started it all off? It had to be something outside of nature - something supernatural.

Occam's Razor

In the movie Contact, Jody Foster's character applied the principle of [Occam's Razor](#) (the concept that the simplest answer to a complex problem is usually the correct choice - also known as the 'Law of Parsimony') to the existence of God. She said "So what's more likely? That an all-powerful, mysterious God created the Universe, and decided not to give any proof of his

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existence? Or, that He simply doesn't exist at all, and that we created Him, so that we wouldn't have to feel so small and alone?"

But I'm not so sure she set up the argument correctly. Let's look at the dilemma this way:

1) Everything in the cosmos either existed forever or came from nothing. Gasses then evolved into light elements, and then into heavy elements. Then 'dead' elements evolved into something alive, and finally mutated into a person who has the capability to eat, see, think, procreate and know right from wrong. (None of these steps, by the way, have been observed in nature, and in fact are contrary to known natural law - they are simply what 'must' have happened in an anti-theistic worldview.)

In my view, it seems easier to believe: 2) That Something created everything and shows us the evidence of its authorship in the amazing details, synergies and complexities of the cosmos and of life.

Certainly both take an active choice (faith?) to believe, since there were no eyewitnesses. We must however use ALL of our faculties, our intuition and senses, to answer the question truthfully. It does not relieve our minds to accept mere scientific fact if we don't also answer the questions why and how. But certainly between the choices above (and there are no other choices) there is adequate warrant to have a belief in a Creator.

But Isn't Belief in God Just a 'Crutch' for Weak-Minded People?

Sigmund Freud called the condition 'wish fulfillment'.

Marx discredited Christianity as the 'opiate of the masses' - which is useful to those in power as a means to keep people suppressed, as they look forward to 'pie in the sky in the bye and bye' while they suffer under tyranny in the present. Is this a proof against the truth of Christianity? Is it a valid argument against the hope of a benevolent God?

These types of accusations commit what is known as the 'genetic fallacy'. Just because the 'accusation' may be true, it doesn't mean that the underlying assertion is not true. Sure, we may wish that God exists, but that doesn't mean that He doesn't exist! In order to prove that Christianity is false, its critics will have to do MUCH more work than simply denigrate the 'motives' of the believers! Indeed, if Christianity is true, then we would expect that people would indeed be longing for it!

If we are truly separated from our Creator and He is the ultimate expression of our purpose, it makes sense that we WOULD desire Him! And if the Creator is actively searching for us and also longing for our reconciliation, it is not beyond belief that the needs within us would be left there by Him, to be used to draw us toward Him!

And finally - this particular criticism actually works against the critic! Is it not possible that a person may project their 'wish' for autonomy and their 'fear' or 'dislike' of a righteous God by projecting (wishing) that He does not exist? So, if religious belief can be seen as a kind of 'wish projection', so could religious disbelief!

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Thinking Points

What are the implications if God does exist?

What are the implications if God does NOT exist?

What can we know about God from the General Revelation?

Does philosophy 'prove' anything?

Lesson Summary

It is logical to believe in a Creator God

It is practical to believe in a Personal God

It is popular to believe in God (the vast majority does!) The

alternative to belief in God is un-livable Conclusion: A

Belief in God Is Warranted

Next Lesson: Evidences for The Bible (aka why we should believe in the God of the Bible)

Resources:

[Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God](#); C. Stephen Evans; Intersity Press
1996

[Reasonable Faith-Christian Truth and Apologetics](#); William Lane Craig Crossway Books;
1995

[20 Compelling Evidences that God Exists](#); Kenneth D. Boa & Robert M. Bowman Jr.; River oak
Publishing; 2002

[Mere Christianity](#); C. S. Lewis

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