

## WHY BELIEVE IN A CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE AS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE?

Can one prove that a creator of the universe exists? No! At least one cannot prove it in the same way that one can prove something by scientific experimentation (repeatable observations). No one can do a ‘rerun’ of the beginning of the universe. However, there is no difference between this failure and trying to ‘prove’ by the scientific method (repeatable observations) that Julius Caesar existed. Furthermore, because God is not tangible, one cannot deductively (reasoning from the general to the specific) ‘prove’ God’s existence; however, neither can one deductively disprove it. In fact, no single piece of evidence by itself can prove either way. However, by the application of various pieces of evidence one can inductively (reasoning from the specific to the general) show either the probability that He does exist or that He does not exist. Each piece of evidence must be weighed in conjunction with all other pieces of evidence to see where the balance of probability lies. The purpose of this study is to show that the balance of probability lies with the proposition that God does exist.

### THE MAIN ARGUMENTS OF ATHEISTS *AGAINST* THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The main approaches of atheists, whose obvious hypothesis is that God does not exist, include proposing that:

- Godless evolution precludes the need for a creator.
- The question ‘who made God?’ cannot be answered.
- God cannot exist because ‘this is not the best possible world.’
- The problem of evil in the world discounts the possibility of a good God, and
- The arguments for God’s existence are invalid.

However, this study does not concern itself with the question of evolution which is examined in studies 3 and 4 for the purpose of showing that such naturalistic evolution is neither biblical nor truly scientific, but is a pseudo-science.

### ANSWERING THE ATHEISTS’ LESSER ARGUMENTS

- One argument is that if God exists, He must necessarily possess all of several remarkable qualities (including supreme goodness, omnipotence, immortality, omniscience, ultimate creator, purpose giver), yet not all of these qualities could exist in any one entity.

*Response:*

This argument seems to be assuming that any proposed creator has developed these qualities over time and so it fails to take into account the fact that God is described as One who has always existed with all of these qualities. Also it has to be noted that the God presented in the Bible is not exactly the same as the rather static (from Greek philosophy) god presented by mainstream Christianity. Although not capricious, the God of the Bible is capable of responding intelligently to human actions. It seems to make little sense to propose that all of these qualities could not exist in any one entity, because humans display a significant range of qualities, such as: goodness, morality, power, ability to acquire knowledge, ability to create, and ability to have/give purpose – all balanced one with another. So although God’s qualities are supreme, they, too, are balanced one with another, so that His omnipotence is not exercised without doing what is morally right and His love is balanced with an exercise of justice.

- Another argument is that there is a comprehension gulf between man and God because man is finite but God is infinite.

*Response:*

Certainly man does not know everything about God. However, individual humans do not know everything about those who are closest to them and they really don't even know everything about themselves. Nevertheless there is not a total comprehension gulf between man and God because God has chosen to reveal just so much about Himself so that a person can get to know Him up to a point through the pages of the Bible. This is in just the same way one comes to know various individuals by reading their autobiographies or the biographies written by others about them even without ever meeting the person face to face. This is still true even if the person is from the long distant past and so cannot be seen even by photo or portrait. We still believe that they existed. Similarly one comes to know of God's qualities and his character by learning of His dealings with individuals and nations through the centuries by reading about him. Furthermore, the fact that he is infinite makes no difference because He has made Himself more comprehensible to humans by the use of anthropomorphic language. However, the promise for Christians is that, once granted immortality, they will actually "see God" (Matt. 5:8). So in these ways the Christian knows that God exists.

### ANSWERING THE ATHEISTS' MAIN ARGUMENTS

- The question 'who made God?' cannot be answered.

*Response:*

This question is often proposed, usually by atheists, but sometimes by agnostics. However, this is a tautological question, inasmuch as it contradicts the very definition of God as an eternal and infinite being. Therefore the question has no meaning. So either one must propose that the universe was created by finite beings – sometimes proposed as aliens; or that it had no agentival cause. Regarding the theistic definition of God E.L. Miller wrote:

The question, "Where did God come from?" can thus be discarded as ill conceived, because it construes God to be, like other things, the sort of being that can come and go. If God himself can come into being, then he cannot possibly be the cause of things that come into being and would not therefore be what the theist means by **God**. *God and Reason* 1972, p. 55.

- God cannot exist because 'this is not the best possible world.'

*Response:*

Different people would define differently what 'the best possible world' could be. Certainly, the Bible describes God as having a progressive purpose so that the world will change in different 'ages' in the future. Nevertheless, the Earth and the rest of the universe are indeed beautiful and incredibly interesting. This is a world where even the atheist often appreciates the beauty of creatures and inanimate plants along with the incredible landscaping of Earth. Certainly one would call it good and certainly fit for its purpose. However, is the best possible world to be based on having more of certain things, in which case, does more again make it an even better world? Not necessarily! Really the 'best possible world' proposal is impossible because all creatures would have all qualities to the same ultimate degree which would then destroy the amazing variety that exists e.g. all creatures on Earth would have ultimate intelligence and ultimate level of senses, or, again for example all creatures, including snails, must have the same power as lions or even angels. So could one ever say that it was not a good act of the best kind for God to have created the animals in all their variety?

- The problem of evil in the world discounts the possibility of a good God.

*Response:*

This argument is somewhat linked with the previous argument, because the natural disasters and the evil acts of humans seem to interfere with this being the best possible world. There are a number of

philosophical answers to this argument. However, this study presents the view that only the Bible gives a satisfactory answer to the problem of evil as well as revealing that God purposes to bring an end to evil in the world. So the Biblical answer to this argument is given in the latter one third of this study.

### THE MAIN ARGUMENTS **FOR** THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

- The Cosmological Argument (first cause)
- The Teleological Argument (the purpose and order in the universe)
- The Argument from Consciousness
- The Anthropological Argument (human nature)
- The Biblical Record of God's revelation of Himself

As stated at the beginning of this study no one piece of evidence by itself can prove the existence of a personal creator; yet, by the application of various pieces of evidence one can indeed inductively show the very great probability that He does exist .

### THE KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

As shown earlier, the question: 'Who made God' i.e. 'Does God have a cause of his existence?' has no meaning because it ignores the very definition of God being God.

Basically expressed this argument states that:

1. By definition God does not have a beginning in time, whereas the universe has a beginning in time.
2. Everything that has a beginning in time has a cause of its existence.
3. Because the universe has a beginning in time, it has a cause of its existence, and that cause is God.

In 1955 philosopher Samuel M. Thompson reasoned that:

The world obviously exists, and yet cannot explain its own existence; therefore, something else must account for it. But, if we are not to develop still another unexplained existence of some kind, this "something else" must contain within itself the cause of its own existence. Such an uncaused being is God

*A Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 284.

### THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

The third of Thomas Aquinas' five lines of argument for God's existence was the argument from contingency, which later came to be known as the cosmological argument.

In 1972 Bruce R. Reichenbach presented a modern form of this argument as:

A contingent being exists.

a. This contingent being is caused either (1) by itself, or (2) by another;

b. If it were caused by itself, it would have to precede itself in existence, which is impossible. Therefore, this contingent being (2) is caused by another, i.e., depends on something else for its existence. That which causes (provides the sufficient reason for) the existence of any contingent being must be either (3) another contingent being, or (4) a **non-contingent** (necessary) being.

c. If (3), then this contingent cause must itself be caused by another, and so on to infinity.

Therefore, that which causes (provides sufficient reason for) the existence of any contingent being must be either (5) an infinite series of contingent beings, or (4) a **necessary being**. An infinite series of contingent beings (5) is incapable of yielding a sufficient reason for the existence of any being. **Therefore, a necessary being (4) exists.**

Based upon *The Cosmological Argument: A Reassessment*, pp. 19-20.

Everything that is contingent must be caused by something else. That ‘something else’ may also be contingent and so have a cause. So it is theoretically possible to continue this process to infinity and still have a series of caused beings. However, in reality the process, ends with a **non-contingent being** —i.e., one needing no external cause and having its own cause in itself. This is **the necessary being** whose non-contingent existence can be proven simply because contingent beings exist. This reasoning is based upon **the principle of causality**, which is an obvious and pervasive feature of the world around us – it is the very principle upon which Science operates. In fact, Thompson defends the causal principle by stating that:

...if causation does not really happen, then change is not real and the world of nature does not exist

*A Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p.330.

In his book *Reasons for Faith* John H. Gerstner stated:

Because every effect must have a cause, there must ultimately be one cause that is not an effect, but pure cause, or how, indeed, can one explain effects? A cause that is itself an effect would not explain anything but would require another explanation. That, in turn, would require another explanation, and there would be a deadly infinite regress. p.53.

Hence the theoretical possibility for infinite regression is based on the false assumption that everything must have a cause and so discounting the ‘uncaused cause,’ namely a personal creator. So there is a **first cause** for everything whether the bringing into existence of something new or the making of changes in what already exists. For the bringing into existence of complex things an intelligent agent must exist. So the ‘cosmological argument’ is an argument to the existence of God, the intelligent agent, from the existence of the complex physical universe. This intelligent agent had intention and sufficient power to bring about the existence of the physical universe. This is a valid inductive argument because the universe is highly complex and has been acknowledged to have had a beginning by virtue of the current moving apart of the galaxies. Because of the application of known laws there is no evidence for a previous contraction but only of an expansion and so from a starting point. This logically leads to there having been an intelligent originator of the universe who we call God – an eternal being. So the fact that the universe exists posits the possibility that God exists. Yet to follow a purely scientific argument i.e. excluding God, the existence of the complex physical universe has no explanation.

The cosmological evidence of God’s existence was affirmed by the apostle Paul when he stated:

- ❖ “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse”  
(*Rom. 1:19, 20 ESV*).

#### *THE NON-CONTINGENT (NECESSARY) BEING IS GOD*

By one’s determining the characteristics of the non-contingent being from the cosmological argument and then correlating these with the stated characteristics of God from the Scriptures, one can determine the characteristics (although not exhaustively) of the non-contingent being as at least including His being:

1. Eternal – because if He could be brought into or taken out of existence, He wouldn’t be a non-contingent being;

2. Uncaused – because He cannot be limited or modified by another being, and therefore He is infinite;
3. Self-sufficient and self-sustaining – because He contains in Himself the sufficient reason for His own existence and that of all contingent beings;
4. Singular – because this follows from (2) above, and is reinforced by considering that if there was a plurality of beings, that which differentiated them would have characteristics that had been derived from something other than its own existence, making that one a contingent being.

So passages such as: Genesis 1:1, Exodus 3:14, Deuteronomy 6:4, John 5:58, Acts 17:28, and 1 Timothy 1:17 all show that the God of the Bible fits all of these characteristics.

#### CREATION OUT OF NOTHING

In considering the proposal that God creates out of nothing i.e. *ex nihilo*, Samuel Enoch Stumpf wrote:

God does not act upon any existing material since no such primary matter exists. Only God exists originally, and whatever comes to be, derives its existence from God. Everything, then, is related to God, is a creature of God because it came ultimately from God, there being no independent source of being other than God. *Socrates to Sartre*, p. 197

So the cosmological argument is an important part of the cumulative evidence which builds faith in the existence of God (Heb. 11:6).

### THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

#### THE ARGUMENT SIMPLY EXPRESSED IS THAT:

1. Nature demonstrates purpose, order, complexity, and ability to adapt.
2. These demonstrated features cannot be explained by random/accidental processes.
3. Therefore, there must be a mind that has produced these features.
4. Such a mind is a definition of ‘God,’ who therefore must exist.

The word ‘teleological’ is from the Greek word *telos* and means ‘end/goal/purpose;’ and the main thrust of the argument is that the universe is too **complex and well ordered** to have been produced by chance or random change (in spite of evolution theory) and so only an intelligent designer could have produced **physical laws** by which the universe came about and continues. Clearly, every form of life that has ever existed has been or currently is highly complex. Examples are:

- Single-celled bacteria which are so complex that without all of their parts working together at the same time they would not survive.
- A single strand of DNA equates to one volume of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- The human brain is approximately 10 billion gigabytes in capacity.

Furthermore, the whole universe seems designed for life with hundreds of conditions being required for life to exist on earth. (Please see STUDY 2, A FINE-TUNED UNIVERSE AS PART OF THE EVIDENCE FOR A CREATOR). For random forces to have brought about this amazing system is so far beyond imagination that it is effectively impossible! The Teleological Argument’s greatest strength is that it lines up very well with everyday experience i.e. that nothing seems to become orderly by itself. So where did much of the order of things on earth come from? The Teleological Argument simply extends this principle out to the rest of the universe. Again this is only one of the various pieces of evidence that contributes toward inductively showing the very great probability of God’s existence.

Chemical Engineer Spiro Kakos MBA, MSc asks:

“After all, who can say that a thought is made up of electrons without challenging his/her logic? For example can the thought “the circumference of a circle is equal to  $2\pi r$ ” be made up of electricity? **Is a thought made up of something material? How can that be? Electrons are electrons. Neurons are neurons. A thought is a thought and cannot be made of the above mentioned materials, because simply we understand thought as something different than these “things”.** Many electrons form “many electrons”, not a human “thought”. Can really the thought “I want to eat” be made of things you actually eat?”

Although Newtonian physics has no answer concerning the origin of consciousness, quantum physics does propose a number of different arguments. So firstly we must note that nobody really knows what ‘consciousness’ actually is or how it is caused in scientific terms. Nevertheless, we can understand this teleological argument for a creator inasmuch as it views the harmony in the relationship between mind and body as evidence of design. The brain is, of course, physical but what really are beliefs, thoughts, and feelings.

However, mental events cause physical events and physical events also cause mental events; so there is **mind-body interaction** based on laws which govern such mind-body interaction e.g. one’s decision to stretch out an arm causes that event. However, if that arm accidentally hits a wall it will cause pain i.e. a mental event.

So as shown in the above quotation, naturalistic processes cannot account for consciousness which leaves this relationship as only explicable by design and therefore as one of the inductive arguments which contribute to belief in an intelligent personal creator.

*BEAUTY (AESTHETICS) RARELY RESULTS FROM BLIND FORCES*

How could blind forces bring about a world of such incredible beauty and wonder, such that even atheists wax lyrical over their observation of much of the natural world? Even any apparent ugliness in creatures is a cause of fascination and variety. So Richard Swinburne notes that:

The universe is beautiful in the plants, rocks, and rivers, and the animal and human bodies on Earth, and also in the swirl of galaxies and the birth and death of stars...On the other hand, if the universe came into existence without being created by God, there is no reason to suppose that it would be a beautiful universe.

*The Existence of God*, p.190.

The arguments toward God’s existence which focus on the existence of beauty itself are termed ‘ontological’ arguments. They lead one to ask: “just how likely is it that non-purposeful natural laws could produce all of this objective beauty?” Some counter this argument by stating that such beauty occurs only because it has **survival value** for the creature in question. However, this is not actually the case because some beauty is evident in what is not biological and so needs no survival abilities e.g. a mountain range, the appearance of the sky, a sunset, or an aurora. Even biological organisms have great beauty that seems unrelated to the organism’s survival. One would simply not expect beauty to arise in either the biological or non-biological world if only naturalistic processes were the cause.

However, there is also subjective awareness of beauty i.e. mankind’s ability to appreciate this beauty. As evidence toward God’s existence this latter is termed ‘epistemological’ and is an anthropological argument.

## THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The nature of man contains aspects of himself that cannot be accounted for by naturalistic means. These are:

- Man’s intellectual, emotional, and moral nature (conscience).
- Man’s appreciation of beauty (epistemological)

*MAN'S INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MORAL NATURE (CONSCIENCE)*

There is no reason to believe that the working of blind forces of nature would bring about an intellectual or emotional nature in creatures and in particular in mankind. Furthermore, the argument for God's existence from man's moral nature states that the existence of God must be supposed in order to account for the fact that humans have developed moral codes because human conscience influences people to behave unselfishly and altruistically; and must therefore argue for the existence of a personal being who created that conscience i.e. God, because conscience could not arise from naturalistic processes. For humans to make choices they must have the concepts of moral goodness and moral badness. It has been said that 'the voice of conscience is the voice of God' because even individuals or societies who have not come into contact with biblical teachings have a certain morality e.g. truth-telling, promise-keeping etc, and exhibit altruism and conscience. If there is no God how likely is it that humans (if evolving) would have progressed so as to have acquired these abilities and qualities? As Richard Swinburne concludes, "there is no great probability that moral awareness will occur in a Godless universe" (*The Existence of God*, p.218).

*MAN'S APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY*

Naturalistic approaches to man's existence cannot explain human aesthetic awareness as well as does a theistic approach. William C. Davis explains that:

Humans have numerous features that are more easily explained by theism than by metaphysical naturalism, if only because metaphysical naturalism currently *explains all human capacities in terms of their ability to enhance survival*. Among these features are the possession of **reliable faculties aimed at truth, the appreciation of beauty, and a sense of humor**. *Reason for the Hope Within*, p.37.

It would indeed be a peculiar world, in which one's aesthetic experiences giving life such great meaning are, after all, just meaningless illusions!

THE VERACITY OF THE BIBLICAL RECORD AS GOD'S  
REVELATION OF HIMSELF

For Christians this is the most important argument and this is where faith enters the picture – not blind faith – but evidence based faith along with reasonable inferences (Heb 11:1).

*THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE*

Science is concerned with physical things which can be observed, measured and analyzed. In contrast the Bible is a book concerned with moral values and how best to live our lives. So the Bible is not a science textbook. However, where it touches on the things of science there is no conflict. For instance, concerning the understanding of **our solar system** Historian William Manchester wrote that:

More than *three hundred years before the birth of Christ*, **Aristotle** had determined that the planet must be **a sphere**; after an eclipse he had pointed out that only an orb could throw a circular shadow on the moon  
*A World Lit Only by Fire*, p. 230.

Although the Greek astronomer **Ptolemy** of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century also recognized that the earth was a sphere, he also mistakenly taught that the earth was the centre of the universe. The early Gentile Christians from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the later Catholic Church followed Ptolemy's teaching but even eventually rejected his teaching that the earth was a sphere. During the Middle Ages the astronomer **Copernicus**, realized that the earth is not a flat disk which the sun rotates around, but is a sphere which moves around the sun. **Galileo** later confirmed these findings. Yet this understanding was rejected by the Church until centuries later, and Copernicus was treated as a heretic. Does this mean that the Bible contradicts science?

Firstly, the Bible is not a book about science and it must be taken according to the understanding of the day. So, for instance, in Moses time the ancient cosmology was relatively limited. There is little reason to imagine that Moses had any other knowledge on this matter than the rest of the ancients, nor did it seem to matter to them because function was their concern. Certainly the cosmological understanding, at least by the time of Isaiah was that the earth was a sphere because God “sits above the circle of the earth” (Isa. 40:22) and He has hung the earth “on nothing” (Job 26:7) a statement confirmed thousands of years later by Sir Isaac Newton who discovered the invisible laws of gravity which show how the earth is hung “on nothing.” So the people of the Bible were up to date with current cosmological understanding. Only because the Church, between to 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the Middle Ages, had fallen back into ancient thinking about these matters did the Bible wrongly become discredited. They were out of tune with proven science but the Bible writers were not.

Regarding the scientific research showing the **age of the universe** as being 13.7 billion years and the **age of the earth** as being 4.5 billion years, there is nothing in the Scriptures, when carefully analyzed, which contradicts such findings even if there are future adjustments by the scientific world. (Please see STUDY 8, AN ANCIENT CREATION). This fact contradicts those Christians who propose that what science has discovered in the astronomical, fossil and geological records is only “the seeming age of the universe and of the earth” i.e. an “appearance of age” that God had built into His creation. However, this false reasoning presents God as engaging in a form of deception - an unacceptable concept for all Christians! Simply, the Bible *does not say* when the universe was created. Furthermore, the current cosmological understanding is that of “the Big Bang” as the beginning of the universe at a specific moment and this concept confirms the biblical statements that the universe had a beginning and therefore had an originator as pointed out above.

Concerning **medical and sanitation knowledge** the health laws given by God to Moses far surpassed the medical knowledge of other nations of the ancient world. This can be seen by examination of the Ebers Papyrus, an Egyptian medical text dating from 1500 B.C. and which demonstrates the many infection-spreading “cures” they practiced. Yet Moses who “had learned the wisdom of Egypt” wrote of very different and superior practices given him from another source i.e. God. So unlike the surrounding nations in their ignorance, the Israelites could avoid epidemics of such diseases as: cholera, typhus, dysentery, and hepatitis etc. because they were to:

- ❖ “...have a place outside the camp and go out there, and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement” (*Deut. 23:12, 13, NASU*).

Well beyond the practices of these nations, the Israelites benefited by laws concerning washing and general hygiene. This also applied to sexual purity so that sexually transmitted diseases could be avoided. In contrasting Israel’s **dietary laws** with those of the nations *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on Leviticus 11-15, states:

In general it can be said that the laws protected Israel from bad diet, dangerous vermin, and communicable diseases. Only in recent days have better laws of health been possible with the advance of medicine. These were rule-of-thumb laws that God gave in his wisdom to a people who could not know the reason for the provision ... The Hebrew was not only to avoid eating unclean animals; he was not to touch their dead carcasses. Thus the laws automatically helped control vermin. Common unclean animals would be spiders, flies, bugs, rats, and mice. A dead rat in a Hebrew house was not overlooked. It was carefully taken out and buried. In an effort to avoid such problems, the Hebrew housewife would normally keep a clean house ... It is, of course, true that some cultures have adopted similar rules out of sad experience. The [Old Testament] did not get its taboos from surrounding cultures, but some other cultures in later times adopted by experience some of these taboos ... The laws were wonderfully fashioned by God for the general health of the nation. R. Laird Harris, Vol. 2, p. 569.

All of these factors show us that Israel was living under divine guidance because of information which did not come from a human source.

*THE BIBLE AND ARCHAEOLOGY*

This aspect involves the subjects of history, geography and culture. In all of these we find that archaeological discoveries confirm the biblical record. However, only about 350 of the 5,000 known sites in the biblical lands have been excavated and of these only about 2 to 3 percent have been done so extensively. Professor Walter Kaiser Jr. stated:

The facts, from whatever source, when fully known have consistently provided uncanny confirmation for the details of Old Testament persons, peoples and places by means of the artifactual, stratigraphical and epigraphic remains [and] evidence uncovered.

*The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* p. 108.

- For instance, the Genesis 15-16 description of the customs of patriarchal society concerning inheritance and property rights, slavery, and adoption, etc are confirmed by the Nuzi tablets which were discovered near the city of Asshur in Assyria. Furthermore, clay tablets discovered in the holy land which date to around Joseph's time (the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.), show that the general price for slaves was 20 shekels. This is just as Genesis 37:28 stated as the price Joseph's brothers sold him for as a slave. Yet by the eighth century B.C., the price had risen to 50 to 60 shekels. This clearly gives us confidence to know that the biblical picture is sound.

- Yet why is there little evidence of Israelites having lived in Egypt? Professor Kitchen explains that:

The [Nile] Delta [where Israel dwelt] is an alluvial fan of mud deposited through many millennia by the annual flooding of the Nile; it has no source of stone within it ... The mud hovels of brickfield slaves and humble cultivators have long since gone back to their mud origins, never to be seen again.

"Even stone structures (such as temples) hardly survive, in striking contrast to sites in the cliff-enclosed valley of Upper Egypt to the south ... Scarce wonder that practically no written records of any extent have been retrieved from Delta sites reduced to brick mounds ... with even great temples reduced to heaps of tumbled stones. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, p. 246.

- And why is there little evidence of the Exodus? Again Professor Kitchen explains:

As pharaohs *never* monumentalize *defeats* on temple walls, no record of the successful exit of a large bunch of foreign slaves (with loss of a full chariot squadron) would ever have been memorialized by any king, in temples in the Delta or anywhere else.

*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, p. 246.

- For a long time it was denied that the 'Hittites' mentioned in Genesis 10:15 were actually a people. Then in 1906 an archaeological discovery was made which confirmed the biblical record concerning them. Walter Kaiser relates the details:

Until the discovery of the Hittite empire at the beginning of the last century, they were unknown ... But in 1906 Hugo Winckler began excavating a site known as ancient Hattusha ... in what we today call Turkey. As a result a people whose existence was seriously doubted previously is well documented with literally tens of thousands of clay tablets *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?*, p. 102.

- Even some notable people who had been sceptics have had to acquiesce and acknowledge the accuracy of the Scriptures. After many years of detailed study of the archaeological evidence, the historian and biblical sceptic Sir William Ramsay, who had previously believed that the book of Acts had been written in the mid-second century and therefore Luke could not have written it and

so making it a fabricated history, came to a disconcerting (for him) conclusion that there are “reasons for placing the author of Acts among the historians of the first rank”

*St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, p. 4.

Apart from noting the historical characters: Augustus, Herod the Great, Pontius Pilate, Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Felix, Festus and Herod Agrippa I and II; Luke is accurate in providing some of the lesser details. For instance, in his book *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, professor of biblical studies F. F. Bruce assures us that:

One of the most remarkable tokens of [Luke's] accuracy is his sure familiarity with the proper titles of all the notable persons who are mentioned ... Cyprus, for example, which was an imperial province until 22 BC, became a senatorial province in that year, and was therefore governed no longer by an imperial legate but by a proconsul. And so, when Paul and Barnabas arrived in Cyprus about AD 47, it was the **proconsul** Sergius Paulus whom they met. pp.82-83.

Many centuries later archaeological discoveries confirmed all of the details of Luke's writings. Again as F.F. Bruce notes:

A writer who thus relates his story to the wider context of world history is courting trouble if he is not careful; he affords his critical readers so many opportunities for testing his accuracy. Luke takes this risk, and stands the test admirably. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, p.82.

In summary of the historical evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ, Bruce notes that:

Some writers may toy with the fancy of a 'Christ-myth', but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the 'Christ-myth' theories. *ibid.* p.141.

#### *THE PROPHECIES IN THE BIBLE*

Although a vast amount of biblical prophecy is yet to be fulfilled (see Matthew 24, 1 and 2 Thessalonians; and most of Revelation), there are prophecies which have clearly already been fulfilled even though they were uttered hundreds of years before their fulfilment. This aspect of accurate foretelling of the future is a further evidence that the mind behind it can only be a supernatural one i.e. a God who really exists. As Old Testament scholar Gleason Archer wrote:

The Holy Bible is like no other book in all the world. It is the only book which represents itself as the written revelation of the one true God ... demonstrating its divine authority by many infallible proofs. Other religious documents, such as the Muslim Koran, may claim to be the very word of God, but they contain no such self-authenticating proofs as does the Bible ... [such as] **the phenomena of fulfilled prophecy.**

*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 15.

The prophecies in the book of Daniel in the sixth century B.C. display an amazing accuracy. As a few examples consider:

- The “70 sevens” prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:24-27, in which God, through Daniel, foretells the precise year of Christ's appearance and the beginning of his ministry. By calculation this seems to work out to having been in A.D. 33.
- Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chapter 2) concerning the foreordained succession of 4 world powers that were to dominate the Near East until Messiah's future final victory over them. This had its fulfilment with the presence of the world powers of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, Medo-Persia under Cyrus the Great, and Greece under Alexander the Great. The fourth has yet to appear on the scene.
- An angel (Dan. 9:21), tells Daniel what is to occur in the “latter days” (Dan. 10:14). The prophecy, which appears in the Bible in Daniel 11, spans events from that time until the future return of

Christ. However, the initial stages of the prophecy confirm the Bible because they have already been fulfilled, inasmuch as there was the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great. Verses 3, 4 introduce Alexander the Great, after his death the Greek Empire was divided among his 4 generals (vs. 4). These eventually formed just two empires of the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria. Clearly this is compelling evidence for the divine inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures, since **only God** could possibly foreknow the future and ensure its announcement so that it is precisely fulfilled.

### THE ARGUMENT FROM MIRACLES

A miracle is generally defined as an event which seems to contravene current scientific knowledge about the laws which govern the physical world e.g. the parting of the red sea, Jesus' turning water into wine, the instant healings or the resurrection of someone. Such miracles are to be understood as validations of God working through such persons as Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Jesus, or the apostles; and therefore giving evidence toward God's existence. Yet, however strong the evidence is for a miracle and however reliable the witnesses to the event are, some sceptics prefer to reject miracles and argue that it will always be more rational to reject any miracle than to believe in it because the probability of such an event is doubtful. Nevertheless, is this a reasonable position to take? A truly reliable witness is someone who is rational, having a logical mind, whose senses are functioning correctly, and who is totally honest. So although miracles seem to involve violations of the laws of nature one cannot deny the testimony of a truly reliable witness. Yet the Christian accepts the validity of the accounts concerning miracles because he understands the other factors concerning history, geography, science and fulfilled prophecy in the rest of the biblical record as being true as well as accepting the testimony of those he acknowledges as truly reliable witnesses of such miracles.

#### *THE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST*

Jesus' resurrection from the dead was the greatest of all miracles, and is, in itself, sufficient reason for believing in the existence of God. However, what makes it so certain that the witnesses were truly reliable? Below are a set of factors to consider:

- The Jewish Sanhedrin feared that Jesus' disciples would **steal his body** and claim that he was resurrected. Because of this the Sanhedrin asked Governor Pilate for Roman soldiers to guard the tomb (Matt. 27: 62-66).
- Roman soldiers were very well trained and highly disciplined, but the Governor's Custodian Guard contained the elite in the Roman army.
- The Roman guarding procedure was for each man to defend 6 feet of ground, so there were probably sixteen guards assigned to Jesus' tomb, four in front of entrance to the tomb and six to each side. So, twelve of the guards would sleep, while the four in front would keep watch. Every hour there was a rotation of the guards so that the four in front of the entrance were replaced and could then sleep.
- The Roman law was that if a prisoner escaped, the penalty for the guard was death (Acts 12:18, 19).
- Jewish tombs of that time had an entrance of 4.5 to 5ft high, so by calculation the estimated **weight of the stone would have been about 1.5 to 2 tons**. The stones were placed on a slight incline and held in place by a wedge. When the wedge was removed the stone rolled slightly forward and covered the tomb and then it was sealed with the governor's seal. The **penalty for breaking the governor's seal** was death by upside down crucifixion – a more extremely painful and terrifying death than by normal crucifixion.

With these facts in mind we now look at the resurrection account which also speaks of the Sanhedrin's concern that the disciples might claim that Jesus was resurrected, and the Sanhedrin's attempt to deal with this issue:

❖ “Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a **great earthquake**, for an **angel** of the Lord descended from heaven and came and **rolled back the stone** and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the **guards trembled and became like dead men**. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for **he has risen**, as he said. Come, **see the place where he lay**. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, **Jesus met them** and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there **they will see me**.”

<sup>11</sup>While they were going, behold, **some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place**. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, “**Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’** And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and **keep you out of trouble**.” So they took the money and did as they were directed. **And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day”** (*Matt 28:2-15*).

In bringing all these details together we can see just how terribly flawed this Sanhedrin plan really was. Other authorities and people in general would immediately question this scenario with the following thoughts:

1. Why would the disciples even be interested in taking Jesus' body? They themselves were sceptical (Note: Thomas in particular). They had a wait-and-see attitude concerning whether or not Jesus' prediction of his resurrection would actually happen.

2. No disciple would purposely break the governor's seal and risk inverted crucifixion just to create a hoax.

3. How could the disciples have got past the four watchful Roman guards who would be determined to remain alert, prompted by their awareness of their incurring of the death penalty in the event of a prisoner escape?

4. If, by absolute fluke, these four guards did all fall asleep, how could the disciples move a 1.5 to 2 ton stone without waking them?

5. To use the excuse that all the guards had fallen asleep leads to the question of how the guards could possibly know that it was the disciples who took the body?

6. Simply, if even one guard was awakened he would have awoken the rest of the soldiers.

#### *FURTHER EVIDENCE FOR CHRIST'S RESURRECTION*

- To claim a resurrected Jesus was to risk persecution. So the apostles would never have made such a claim unless they were absolutely sure it was true. Would it be worth it for a hoax?
- Paul, the greatest persecutor of the disciples, suddenly believes that Jesus was resurrected. Why if it were not true?

- Paul continues throughout his life to preach Jesus' resurrection in spite of intense persecution often at the risk of his life. Why unless he was convinced of it?

### CONCLUSION REGARDING THE EVIDENCE FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

When each of the above pieces of evidence are placed alongside every other piece of evidence for God's existence one can inductively (reasoning from the specific to the general) demonstrate that God does indeed exist and that the arguments against the probability of God's existence as proposed by atheists do not really carry much weight. However, there is one more argument of the atheists that must be answered:

### DOES THE PROBLEM OF EVIL DISCOUNT THE EXISTENCE OF A GOOD GOD?

The Biblical answer is no! Furthermore, it is only the Bible which gives a satisfactory answer to the question of why evil exists in the world and it is also the only source which provides the only real hope for the removal of evil. This is because it reveals that the purposeful Creator works according to 'ages' whereby He will bring about "a New Heavens and Earth" (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev.21:1) wherein there is no suffering. Firstly we must examine some details of the character of God:

#### CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES SHOW THAT GOD DOES ONLY GOOD

- ❖ "...how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask him"  
(Matt. 7:11).

By Jesus own example of healing everyone that came to him (as "he who has seen me has seen God") demonstrated that God does only good.

- ❖ "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above" (Jas. 1:17).

#### GOD DESIRES HONEST LOVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIS INTELLIGENT CREATION

- ❖ "Love is from God...**God is love**...In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us**... We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:7, 8, 10, 19).
- ❖ "God **demonstrates His own love** toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"  
(Rom. 5:8).
- ❖ "For God **so loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
- ❖ "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word: and **my Father will love him**, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

#### THIS REQUIRES THAT ANGELS AND HUMANS HAVE FREEWILL

- ❖ "I am offering you [*David*] these three things [*punishments*]; **choose** for yourself one of them, which I will do to you" (2 Sam. 24:12-16).

*This shows that God gives humans genuine choices, genuine alternatives:*

- ❖ "**Choose** for yourselves today whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15).
- ❖ "...at the time he [*Immanuel*] knows enough to refuse evil and **choose good**" (Isa. 7:15).

*So God cannot be blamed for how angels and humans use their freewill.*

#### THIS ALLOWS FOR THE RISK THAT GOD WILL BE REJECTED

- ❖ "They **deserted** Yahweh and served Him no more" (Judges 10:6).

- ❖ “Have you seen what disloyal Israel has done? How she made her way up every high hill and to every green tree, and played the whore there? **I thought**, ‘After doing all this **she will come back** to me.’ *But she did not come back*” (Jer. 3:6, 7).
- ❖ “**I thought**: You will call me Father and will never cease to follow me. **But**...you have betrayed me” (Jer. 3:19, 20).

*IF GOD IS REJECTED THEN HIS MORAL STANDARDS ARE REJECTED*

- ❖ “They did not honour Him as God..., but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:21).
- ❖ “...they have **rejected** Yahweh’s word. What price their wisdom now?” (Jer. 8:9).
- ❖ “They have **corrupted themselves**; they are not His children, Because of their blemish: A perverse and crooked generation” (Deut. 32:5).

*THE POTENTIAL FOR SIN AND EVIL LIES IN THE NATURE OF FREEWILL*

- ❖ “You [*King of Tyre as figuratively representing Satan*] had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty...You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created **until unrighteousness was found in you**...Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; **You corrupted your wisdom** by reason of your splendour” (Ezek. 28:12, 15, 17).
- ❖ “But each person is tempted when he is lured and **enticed by his own desire**. Then the desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death” (Jas. 1:14 *ESV*).

*ADAM’S TRANSGRESSION TRANSFERRED AUTHORITY OVER THE WORLD TO SATAN*

- ❖ “And the devil took him [*Jesus*] up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, ‘To you **I will give all this authority** and their glory, for **it has been delivered to me**, and I will give it to whom I will’” (Luke 4:5, 6).
- ❖ “...the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).
- ❖ “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against **the rulers**, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against **the spiritual forces of wickedness** in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

*GOD PROVIDED CHRIST TO ENABLE SINFUL MAN TO COME INTO LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM*

- ❖ “For God **so loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
- ❖ “...through him [*Jesus*] to reconcile to himself all things...making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20).

*MAN IS ALLOWED TIME TO DEVELOP THIS RELATIONSHIP*

- ❖ “Yahweh has **untiringly** sent you all his servants the prophets, but you have not listened” (Jer. 25:4 *NJB*).
- ❖ “...when the **patience of God** kept waiting in the days of Noah” (1 Pet. 3:20).
- ❖ “The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise....but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish” (2 Pet. 3:9).

So the continuance of evil is a consequence of God’s patience so that more individuals might willingly develop a relationship with Him as they begin to know Him from the Scriptures.

WHEN EVIL REACHES ITS ZENITH THEN AUTHORITY OVER THE WORLD IS TRANSFERRED TO CHRIST

- ❖ “When the wicked spring up like the grass...And when all the workers of iniquity **flourish**, it is that they may be destroyed forever” (*Ps. 92:7 NKJ*).
- ❖ “In the last days of those kingdoms, **when their sin is at its height**, a king of grim aspect will appear, a master of strategem” (*Dan. 8:23 REB*).
- ❖ “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (*Rev. 11:15*).

A FIRST STAGE REMOVAL OF EVIL WILL BE AT THE END OF THE AGE

- ❖ “The **Beast** and the **false prophet** [*Satan’s agents*]...were thrown alive into the lake of fire...And the rest [*The kings of the earth and their armies*] were slain with the sword” (*Rev. 19:19*)
- ❖ “See how Yahweh lays the earth waste...the inhabitants of the earth have been burnt up and **few people are left**” (*Isa. 24:1-6*).
- ❖ “[*an angel*] overpowered the dragon...**Satan**, and chained him up for a thousand years. He hurled him into the Abyss and shut the entrance and sealed it over him, to make sure he would **not lead the nations astray** again until the thousand years had passed” (*Rev. 20:1*).

#### SUMMARY OF WHY GOD DOES NOT PRESENTLY INTERVENE TO STOP MORAL EVIL

- This would result in the loss of **freewill**; although at God’s appointed time the wicked will lose their freedom.
- Satan has temporary dominion over the world (those *in Adam*).
- God respects Satan’s temporary rights over the world.
- God cannot act in opposition to his own righteous nature.
- He does not presently intervene in the lives of those *in Adam* except by persuasion.
- God has provided Christ for those who **wish to** transfer from being *in Adam*.
- Those who have transferred to being “*in Christ*” are not under Satan’s dominion.
- Therefore, **at their request**, God does, through Christ, intervene in the lives of those who are “*in Christ*.”
- Sometimes this intervention involves testing so that God can come to know us better.
- “*It was fitting for God to perfect (morally) the author of their salvation through sufferings*” (*Heb. 2:10*).
- However, the incorrigibly wicked will have their **freedom taken from them** at God’s appointed time.

#### WHY DOES GOD NOT PRESENTLY INTERVENE TO STOP NATURAL DISASTERS?

Natural disasters are only disasters if they affect people negatively. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes and fires are all earth processes which make it a living planet. Such activity occurs randomly.

1. After God created the planet He left it to work without constantly intervening to *tweak* its systems. The Bible never teaches that God controls every detail of life; although He is certainly in overall control of His creation.
2. Adam's introduction of sin into the world affected the balance of nature:
  - ❖ "Cursed is the ground because of you...thorns and thistles..." (*Gen. 3:17, 18*).
  - ❖ "For the anxious longing of **the creation** waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was **subjected to futility**, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will also be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the **whole creation groans** and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now" (*Rom. 8:19-22*).
  - ❖ "There will no longer be any **curse**" (*Rev. 22:3*).
3. The world has been left temporarily in Satan's control. So why don't we blame him for the disasters? Nevertheless, even Satan is not the cause of all wickedness although he certainly does promote it.

#### SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

- God desires *honest* loving relationships with his intelligent creation.
- This requires that angels and mankind have freewill.
- This allows for the risk that God will be rejected.
- If rejected then God's standards are rejected thus producing sin.
- The potential for Sin and Evil lies in the nature of freewill.
- Satan was the first to be enticed by his own desire and let it come to birth as sin.
- Adam, influenced by Satan, was enticed by his own desire bringing sin into the world.
- Adam's transgression transferred dominion (authority) over the world to Satan.
- God provided Christ to enable sinful mankind to come into loving relationship with Him.
- Man is allowed time to develop this relationship. Continuation of Evil is a consequence of this.
- When evil reaches its zenith then authority over the world is transferred to Christ.
- The first stage removal of Evil is at the return of Jesus.
- The final stage removal of evil is after the Millennium.

#### THE FAILURE OF ATHEISM

Atheism answers none of the questions concerning existence satisfactorily, but only multiplies unsolved mysteries. The acceptance of the existence of God as Creator of the universe is like a key that fits all the facts of Scripture, knowledge and science. In his *Pensees* Blaise Pascal wrote of how "There is a god-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man, and only God can fill it." And notably, many atheists also recognize this vacuum. In fact, this was an issue for atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell according to his daughter Katharine Tait who said:

Somewhere at the back of my father's mind, at the bottom of his heart, in the depth of his soul, there was **an empty space** that had once been filled by God and he never found anything else to put in it.

She was quoted by Luis Palau in his book *Is God Relevant?* p. 93.

This assessment was confirmed by Russell himself when he said that:

The centre of me is always and eternally a terrible pain - a curious wild pain - a searching for something beyond what the world contains.

He was quoted by Philip Yancey in his book *Disappointment with God*, p. 253.

Some philosophers have noted that an atheistic or agnostic world-view that removes God from its reality leads to the depersonalization of humanity so that values (including moral goodness, beauty, and truth) are often relegated to the realm of the subjective, the relative, or mere opinion.

As a final thought Blaise Pascal, in essence, proposed that it is better for a person self-centeredly to believe in God when it is, in fact, not true, than not to believe when it is, in fact, true. This is called Pascal's Wager.

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#### SUGGESTED READING

*The Existence of God* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) by Richard Swinburne (Note: this contains formulae for logic)

*The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* by Walter Kaiser Jr.

*The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* by F. F. Bruce

