Does God Exist?

Apologetics – Week 1
Introduction

‘Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear so that when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.’ (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Our goal with this unit is to help you to develop some ideas so that you can give ‘an accounting for the hope that is in you;’ Peter’s implication is that our answer to the hope that is in us should be more than “I have faith”. The word for ‘accounting’, or ‘reason’ as the NIV puts it, is the word logos. Part of its meaning is to make an answer or explanation in reference to a judgement; in other words to have a considered opinion on, in this case, the hope that we have.

C. S. Lewis wrote in Is Theology Poetry?: "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."

1. What does Evidence really mean?

It is important to begin with what we are able to ‘prove’ and what we are not able to ‘prove’. The word ‘proof’ carries with it a sense that when a position is proved then there cannot be any disagreement about the position. However when we look at the evidence that might prove the existence of God, this evidence does not remove all of the doubt or all of the uncertainly, in other words it does not ‘prove’ that God exists.

What the evidence does do is place more probability on God existing than on God not existing. It is not totally conclusive, nor is it absolutely necessary for believing in God, but it is useful.

The following pieces of evidence makes God’s existence more probable than if we did not have these pieces of evidence.

2. Why is there anything at all?

This is the first and biggest question asked by philosophers. The answer to this question will affect the answers to all other questions about life.

Implicit within this question is a basic belief that if something exists then that something must have an explanation for its existence.
If we agree that the universe exists then it follows that it must have an explanation for its existence.

This follows a fundamental logical and scientific premise; everything that is in existence as a contingent item has a beginning and therefore a cause.

This can be stated in what is known as the Kalam Cosmological Argument;

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist
3. Therefore the universe has a cause.

3. What then do we know of the universe?

For many years science proposed that the universe had always existed. While there was some discussion as to the form in which it existed, it never-the-less was believed that it had an infinite past.

However with the development by Albert Einstein in 1916 of the theory of General Relativity, more and more evidence began to emerge to suggest that the universe had a beginning in a hot big bang creation event.

The 1965 discovery by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson of the back ground radiation of the universe predicted by the ‘Big Bang’ Theory placed this theory of the beginning of the universe clearly in the position of the most accepted theory.

Stephen Hawking’s (perhaps the world’s leading physicist) first major work was published with Roger Penrose, a physicist very famous in his own right, and George Ellis, during the period 1968-1970. They demonstrated that every solution to the equations of general relativity guarantees the existence of a singular boundary for space and time in the past. This is now known as the "singularity theorem," and is a tremendously important finding.

The idea that space and time may form a closed surface without boundary . . . has profound implications for the role of God in the affairs of the universe . . . . So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator. But if the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end. What place, then, for a creator?

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In simple terms the equations of General Relativity demonstrated that
the universe, space and time, had a beginning.

How strong is the evidence for the Singularity or Big Bang model?

William Lane Craig states;

It can be confidently said that no cosmological model has
been as repeatedly verified in its predictions and as
corroborated by attempts at its falsification, or as
concordant with empirical discoveries and as
philosophically coherent, as the Standard Big Bang
Model. This does not prove that it is correct, but it does
show that it is the best explanation of the evidence which
we have and therefore merits our provisional acceptance.²

From our Kalam argument then; what has a beginning must have a
cause.

a/ **What do the features of the Universe tell us about its cause?**

The following are features of our universe;

1. It is big
2. It is powerful
3. It appears designed
4. It includes the dimensions of both time and space

So what do they tell us about The Cause?

1. The cause must be more powerful and larger than the universe.
2. The cause must exist outside of the universe in order to create
   it. This means that the cause *transcends* both time and space.
   This transcendent cause must therefore be changeless and
   immaterial, since timelessness entails changelessness, and
   changelessness implies immateriality.
3. The cause must be both intelligent and personal to be a
designer and to be able to choose when to create the universe.

Dr. Miguel Endara makes the following observation;

For example, it makes sense to posit a personal and
transcendent being with great power and free will as the
causal agent or force behind the creation of the universe.

How so? First, this causal agent or force must transcend
the universe because he or it had to exist prior to the
universe in order to create it. Second, the agent must
possess great power in order to create the universe. Third,
the causal agent or force must be personal or possess free
will to be able to decide when to create the universe.³

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b/ The fine tuning of the Universe for intelligent life

The Anthropic principle says that the universe appears "designed" for the sake of human life. More than a century of astronomy and physics research yields this unexpected observation: the emergence of humans and human civilization requires physical constants, laws, and properties that fall within certain narrow ranges—and this truth applies not only to the cosmos as a whole but also to the galaxy, planetary system, and planet humans occupy. To state the principle more dramatically, a preponderance of physical evidence points to humanity as the central theme of the cosmos.¹

Ps 19:1,2

c/ Objective moral values in the world

C. S. Lewis, on moral values:

These, then, are the two points I wanted to make. First that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave this way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe in which we live.⁵

But the problem is that objective moral values do exist, and deep down we all know it. There's no more reason to deny the objective reality of moral values than the objective reality of the physical world. Actions like rape, torture, and child abuse aren't just socially unacceptable behaviour they're moral abominations. Some things, at least, are really wrong. Similarly, love, equality, and self-sacrifice are really good. But if objective values cannot exist without God, and objective values do exist, then it follows logically and inescapably that God exists.⁶

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (Great Britain, Fontana, 1952) p.19
4. **Tough Questions**

*a/ There can’t be just one True Religion*

At the end of a panel discussion featuring a Christian minister, a Jewish Rabbi and an Islamic imam the following statement was agreed upon:

If Christians are right about Jesus being god, then Muslims and Jews fail in a serious way to love God as God really is, but if Muslims and Jews are right that Jesus is not God but rather a teacher or prophet, then Christians fail in a serious way to love God as he really is.

This comment is often founded in the post-modern belief that truth is always relative to the truth sayer. If the word truth has any meaning at all then there must be a real reality that truth statements actually describe.

Truth is defined as an “accurate description of reality”

This comment is also often founded in the concern that people have for the escalation of violence that has occurred between religious groups. “Look at how different religions treat each other”, is often the cry. However a very quick glance at history will reveal that people who do not believe in god have also cause major violence to occur, for example, Hitler and Pol Pot.

It would seem then that the problem is not the clash of religions but the clash of ideas with power resting in a small group of people who wish to force their idea on everyone else.

Underlying the idea of there not being just one ‘true’ religion is the concept of a pluralistic society.

Many social commentators have used the term ‘pluralistic’ to describe our society meaning;

“a condition in which many cultures coexist within a society and maintain their cultural differences;”

The problem with plurality is that ultimately it leads to

“the claim that all religions intend to get to the mountain top, but the path taken, what is believed and done, is secondary. Of course one needs to take some path, but one could just as well jump from one path to another and still get to the same place. What one believes than, doesn’t really matter after all.”

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7 “cultural pluralism”, Webster’s New Millennium Dictionary of English, Preview Edition
Martinson goes on to say that the problem with pluralism is that it; “Assumes that all religions seek the same goal, the same salvation, the same end. If one listened to what the religions themselves say is the goal and end they seek, I don’t see how one can make such an assumption.”

Where are we heading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion (by %)</th>
<th>Type of God and our ultimate end</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity 33%</td>
<td>A transcendent and immanent, Triune God who is creator and sustainer of all life. Mankind’s ultimate end is either living with God in a restored universe or not with God, based on a personal decision to have God through Jesus as the Lord of their life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam 18%</td>
<td>One God, Allah, who is creator. Mankind’s ultimate end is either living with God in heaven or not with God, based obedience to Allah’s will,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu 16%</td>
<td>One Supreme Reality (Brahman) manifested in many gods and goddesses. Humans are in bondage to ignorance and illusion, but are able to escape. Purpose is to gain release from rebirth, or at least a better rebirth. Reincarnation until gain enlightenment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist 16%</td>
<td>There is no God. Life’s purpose is whatever you choose to make it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism 6%</td>
<td>Varies: Theravada atheistic; Mahayana more polytheistic. Buddha taught nothing is permanent. Purpose is to avoid suffering and gain enlightenment and release from cycle of rebirth, or at least attain a better rebirth by gaining merit. Reincarnation (understood differently than in Hinduism, with no surviving soul) until gain enlightenment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Traditional 4%</td>
<td>Dualistic yin and yang; mythological beings and folk deities. Purpose is a favorable life and peaceful afterlife, attained through rituals and honoring of ancestors. Judgment, then reincarnation or temporary hell until gain a Buddhist-type paradise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primal-indigenous 4%</td>
<td>Generally pantheistic with strong emphasis on a spirit life after death. The spirits of ancestors and the various gods, are to be interacted with in order to gain favours in this life. Life’s end is to die and join the ancestors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish 0.25%</td>
<td>Monotheistic. Life’s purpose is to remain a part of God’s covenant and God will ultimately restore the Jewish nation to world rulership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b/ Where did Cain’s wife come from?

Genesis 4

Cain is the first born son of Adam and Eve
Able is the second son
Cain murders Able
God banishes Cain to a land called Nod where he marries a wife and
builds a city
Where did his wife come from?
What about the people who were in the city with Cain?

Expected Population Growth in Adam’s Lifetime

According to Genesis 5, life spans from Adam to Noah averaged 912
years. Each of the patriarchs mentioned had "other sons and
daughters" in addition to the sons recorded by name.

The following table calculations are based on:
- life span = 900 years,
- first child comes at age 50,
- child bearing years =500, and
- one child every 5 years during child bearing years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>reproducing couples</th>
<th>children born</th>
<th>total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>200</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>142</td>
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<td>250</td>
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<td>852</td>
<td>4180</td>
<td>5884</td>
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<td>400</td>
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<td>14,450</td>
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<tr>
<td>550</td>
<td>121,292</td>
<td>595,378</td>
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<td>2,894,492</td>
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<td>650</td>
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<td>7,103,862</td>
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<tr>
<td>700</td>
<td>4,999,176</td>
<td>24,538,536</td>
<td>34,536,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750</td>
<td>17,268,444</td>
<td>84,762,338</td>
<td>119,299,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>59,649,613</td>
<td>292,790,780</td>
<td>412,090,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>850</td>
<td>206,045,003</td>
<td>1,011,374,120</td>
<td>1,423,465,830</td>
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<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td>711,732,063</td>
<td>3,493,544,650</td>
<td><strong>4,917,014,660</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion:

All foundational philosophical positions, sometimes known as world views, have at their base *a priori* beliefs; that is beliefs that are held regardless of the evidence or lack of evidence. This is known as faith.

Naturalism’s belief that ‘the universe is all there ever was, is or will be’ is an *a priori* belief. It is a belief held without absolute evidence.

Super-naturalism’s belief that ‘there is more than just the physical universe’ is an *a priori* belief held without absolute evidence.

Both positions take faith.