

3 A RATIONAL APPEAL TO ATHEISTS AND AGNOSTICS

a. PASCAL'S WAGER (a plea to the atheist)

Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century French mathematical genius, posed this question: What will happen at death according to atheism and theism? [1] If there is no God, there is no payoff at the end, whether we wager for or against the existence of God. For we neither gain nor lose anything if we do not exist. [2] But if there is a God, the wager to believe in Him (and make peace with Him during our lifetime) offers us an infinite payoff—eternal life in joy with God! **Thus, atheism is a no-win bet. Faith is a no-lose bet.** Even if the evidences for and against God were nearly equal, it would still be rational and wise to wager that God exists, for there is nothing to lose and everything to gain.¹²

b. PASCAL'S ANALOGY (a plea to the agnostic)

The agnostic may refuse to place a wager on the existence of God until the evidence is clearer. However, he cannot afford to wait! As Pascal wrote, the "ship of self" has embarked. It is moving along the waters of time past the port of God. The fog will only clear when it's too late—after death. The ship has a finite amount of fuel, and there's a point of no return. To every question there are three possible answers: yes, no, and wait. **But death eliminates the third answer.**¹³

According to the Bible, the agnostic will receive ample evidence after he prays to receive Jesus Christ. God's Holy Spirit will come to dwell within him, He will confirm to his spirit that he is a true child of God, then He will guide him into all truth (Rom. 8:11, 16; John 16:13).

"If there is a God of infinite goodness, and He justly deserves my allegiance and faith, I risk doing the greatest injustice by not acknowledging Him."¹⁴
— Peter Kreeft, Ph.D.

THE UNIVERSE IS A FINELY TUNED MECHANISM (pointing to a Cosmic Fine-Tuner)

"Over the past thirty years or so, scientists have discovered that just about everything about the basic structure of the universe [e.g., gravity] is balanced on a razor's edge for life to exist... The dials are set too precisely to have been a random accident."¹⁵ — Robin Collins, Ph.D.

CONCLUSION

To believe that God exists is both prudent and wise. The stakes are high. Belief in God provides life, hope, and significance over death, despair, and meaninglessness.¹⁶ A profound and relevant question posed to each of us by Jesus Christ, out of His incomparable love, is: **"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"** (Mark 8:36). What if a person gained the wealth of the world during his brief earthly years, but lost eternal life? God is not willing that anyone should perish (2 Peter 3:9). On the cross, His Son paid the tremendous price for every person to choose life. Are you ready to believe in God and receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?

**"For God so loved the world that He gave [sacrificed] His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
(John 3:16)**

A PRAYER TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST

"Dear Father God, thank You for sending Your Son to die on the cross for my sins and to rise again, so I can live with You eternally. Thank You for forgiving my sins. I receive Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior. Help me to grow in my personal relationship with You, through Your Son, now and forever. In Jesus' name, amen."

A PRAYER FOR THE SKEPTIC (to test the religious hypothesis)

"God, I don't know if You exist or not. I might be only talking to a myth or fantasy, but I'm not sure. So if You do exist, You can hear me now, and You know me and my heart. You supposedly promised that all who seek You will find You. If You are the truth, I'm honestly seeking You now. So please let me know You're real, in Your own way and Your own time. I'm open and ready if You are."¹⁷

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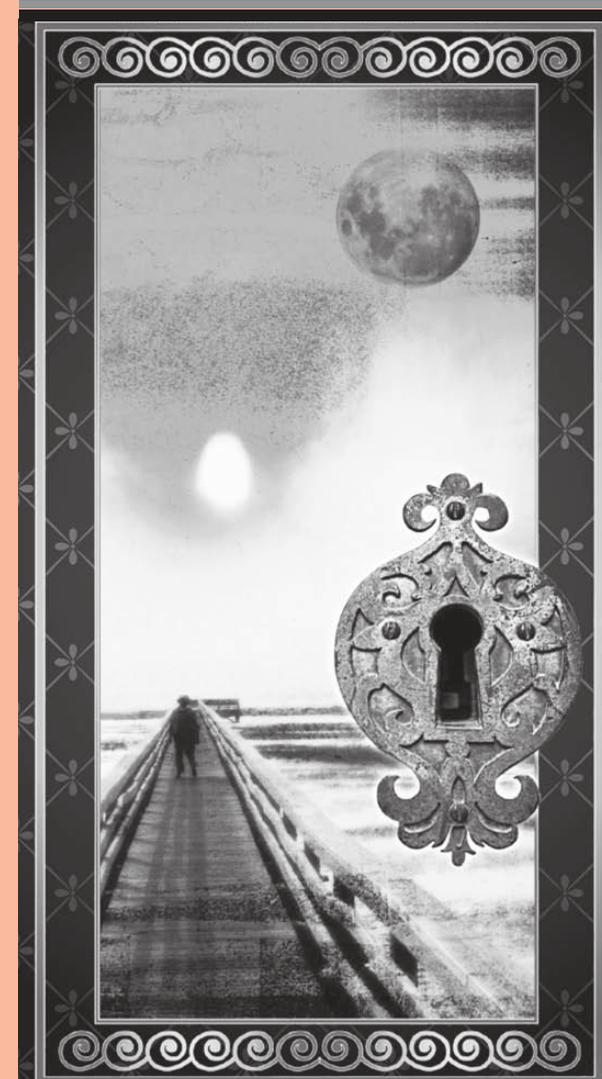


REFERENCES: ¹ J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen. *Does God Exist?* (Prometheus Books, 1993), 240. ² Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks. *When Skeptics Ask* (SP Publications, 1990), 22. ³ William Lane Craig. *Reasonable Faith* (Crossway Books, 1994) Chap. 3. ⁴ Moreland & Nielsen, 27–28. ⁵ J. P. Moreland. *Scaling the Secular City* (Baker Book House, 1987) Chap. 1–3. ⁶ William Lane Craig. *God, Are You There?* (RZIM Ministries, 1999), 11. ⁷ *Ibid.*, 41–50. ⁸ John F. Walvoord. *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Cook Communications, 1999), 7. ⁹ Josh McDowell. *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999), 34. ¹⁰ Moreland & Nielsen, 36. ¹¹ Geisler, 22–24. ¹² Moreland & Nielsen, 289–90. ¹³ *Ibid.*, 290. ¹⁴ Peter Kreeft and Ron Tarcelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (IVP, 1994), 86. ¹⁵ Robin Collins, Chap. 3, in Michael J. Murray, editor, *Reason for the Hope Within* (Eerdmans, 1999), 48. See also Lee Strobel. *The Case for a Creator* (Zondervan, 2004), 131. ¹⁶ Craig (GAYT) 7. ¹⁷ Moreland & Nielsen, 291.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ON INTELLIGENT DESIGN: 1. Gary Kemper, Hallie Kemper, and Casey Luskin. *Discovering Intelligent Design* (Discovery Institute Press, 2013). 2. Stephen C. Meyer. *Signature in the Cell* (HarperOne, 2009) and *Darwin's Doubt* (HarperCollins, 2013). 3. William Dembski. *Intelligent Design* (IVP, 2002). 4. William Dembski and Sean McDowell. *Understanding Intelligent Design* (Harvest House, 2008) and *Intelligent Design: Why Scientists Are Abandoning Darwin* (Rose Publishing, 2009). 5. Guillermo Gonzales and Jay Richards. *The Privileged Plant* (Regenery Publishing, 2004).

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HOW CAN WE KNOW IF GOD EXISTS?



by m.j. tyner, m.a.
christian apologetics

biblical christianity

There is Compelling Evidence for the Existence of God

INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, man has wrestled with the fundamental life question, “Does God really exist?” The answer is crucial, for it determines whether our lives have ultimate meaning and eternal benefits. We will find either a hopeless end or an endless hope. This issue can also affect the quality and purpose of our present life. In general, people either hold to: theism (the belief that God exists), atheism (the belief that there is no God), or agnosticism (the belief that we, as finite beings, cannot know if there is a God). Set forth below are:

- An overview of the case for theism
- An overview of the case for Christian theism
- A rational appeal to atheists and agnostics

1 TOP TEN PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS FOR GOD’S EXISTENCE

THERE ARE 25 FORMAL PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS THAT FOLLOW THE ACCEPTED RULES OF LOGIC. THEY SERVE AS A “MANY-STRANDED ROPE,” MAKING A STRONG CASE FOR GOD.¹

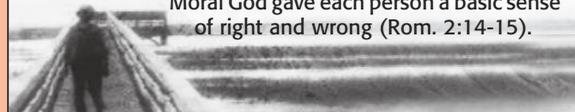
a. THREE CLASSIC PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS

[1] *The teleological argument (based on design).* The complex design and encoded information we observe in the universe (e.g., the DNA code, the complexity of the cell, the fine-tuning of the laws of physics) must have some origin, an intelligent Designer. (See back panel for leading books on Intelligent Design.)

[2] *The cosmological argument (based on creation).* There needs to be a cause of a universe that is expanding and cooling off. A self-existent (uncreated) Being must have caused it because something does not come from nothing. Every effect has a cause. [3] *The moral argument (based on moral order of the universe).* Men are aware of objective moral values (e.g., murder, rape, and fraud are wrong). The presence of this objective moral law implies there is a supreme moral Lawgiver.^{2,3}

A STIMULATING OBSERVATION

Man’s top three intellectual arguments (above) correlate with biblical revelation. According to the Bible, God has revealed Himself through: (1) **Creation.** The intelligent design in God’s work of creation is visible to all (Rom. 1:19-20). (2) **Scripture.** The Scriptures declare that God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them (Gen. 1:1-31). (3) **Man’s conscience.** Moral God gave each person a basic sense of right and wrong (Rom. 2:14-15).



b. ADDITIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS

[4] *The ontological argument (based on being).* “God” must exist by definition; that is, the existence of man’s idea of God necessarily involves the existence of God. [5] *The argument from desire.* There is a longing in the human heart for God, and every innate desire corresponds to a real object. [6] *The aesthetics argument.* The presence of objective art, such as the music of Bach and Beethoven, points to a Creator. [7] *The existential argument.* All people are born with a need for significance (ultimate meaning to life), which implies a Creator. [8] *The religious experience argument.* The vast number of personal encounters with God, as reported over the centuries, points to His existence. [9] *The argument from the mind.* Because matter cannot think, our rational minds must have come from another rational mind: the mind of God. [10] *The argument from*

miracles. There must be a cause for miracles, and such a need demonstrates the existence of a supernatural Being.^{4,5} (See back panel for resources that discuss all 25 formal arguments.)

EVALUATION OF THE EVIDENCE

The hypothesis that God exists provides the best explanation of all the data. It makes sense out of a wide range of the facts of experience.⁶ Atheism cannot explain the evidences, but theism explains them coherently and justifiably.

2 TOP THREE CHRISTIAN ARGUMENTS FOR GOD’S EXISTENCE

WHILE THE FOREGOING PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS ARE COMPELLING, THE SUPREME REVELATION OF GOD TO MANKIND IS THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

a. JESUS CHRIST (special revelation)

We can know that God exists because He revealed Himself to us specifically through His Son (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3). Jesus of Nazareth was unique in His pre-birth announcements, birth, life, death, and resurrection. He was born of a virgin; He was sinless; He was crucified and buried; and on the third day, He returned to life. Jesus made the radical claim that He was eternal God in human flesh (John 8:58; 10:30-33; 14:9). His claim was validated by:

- His performance of numerous miracles
- His fulfillment of extensive biblical prophecy
- His supernatural resurrection from the dead⁷

Out of immeasurable love, God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, so He could offer each person forgiveness and eternal life in heaven (John 1:29; 3:16; 11:25-26).

b. THE BIBLE (special revelation)

The Bible claims to be and proves to be God’s written revelation to mankind, inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The theme of the Bible is God’s loving plan of redemption for us. It includes who God is, why we were created, and what our future holds. Historians agree as to the authenticity of both New and Old Testament writings. Conclusive evidence exists for the Bible’s divine origin and infallibility. Such evidence includes the Bible’s complete harmony and unity (written over 1,500 years); its extensive prophecy and fulfillment (so far, 500 of its 1,000 prophecies have been literally fulfilled)⁸; the bibliographical test results; and the remarkable archaeological confirmations. In addition, the Bible’s text has been transmitted with extraordinary purity, as determined by comparisons of thousands of existing manuscripts, partial and complete (including 5,600 original Greek manuscripts of the New Testament).⁹

c. NATURE AND CONSCIENCE (general revelation)

People can clearly see the Creator-God’s invisible attributes and His great eternal power through all that He created (Rom. 1:19-20). Consider, for example, birds with their natural compass systems; or trees with their beauty, design, and function; or the vast cosmos containing countless galaxies with trillions of stars. They all declare God’s glory and show His handiwork (Ps. 19:1-3). In addition, consider the existence of man’s conscience (our inner judge of moral issues). God’s basic laws are written within man, so that his conscience sometimes accuses and sometimes excuses him (Rom. 2:14-15). Man’s conscience could not have evolved from matter.^{10,11}

EVALUATION OF THE EVIDENCE

Christianity is the most rational form of theism according to: the unique life, claims, and miracles of Jesus of Nazareth (who rose from the dead); the supernatural Bible; observable nature; man’s conscience; plus history, science, and archaeology.