The Existence of God – Faith and Reason

Let's start with defining our terms . . . what do we mean by "God?"

- God: A spiritual, substantial, personal, infinite being, infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection. Absolutely simple or lacking composition, unchanging, happy in Himself, and infinitely superior to all that is or can be conceived apart from Himself. He is incomprehensible in His infinite perfection by all lesser intelligences, although knowable as to His existence.
- Proof or Proving something: To demonstrate something is TRUE or FALSE by means of the scientific method or scientific experimentation.
  - We are going to present EVIDENCE not proofs.
  - Science explains HOW things in the PHYSICAL work or exist. Religion and philosophy explain WHY things exist. It explains the things in the SPIRITUAL realm.
  - The scientific method is not capable of explaining RELIGION and religion is not designed to explain SCIENCE. What we can say is that they are not opposed to each other as we will see.
- Truth: That which is real . . . reality.
- Objective Truth: That which is true regardless of how I feel or what I believe about it.
- Subjective Truth: That which is true because I think or feel that is true. It depends on my opinion.

I. Points to make or discuss regarding the existence of God

1. Difficulty in understanding something does not mean the object is FALSE, NON-EXISTENT or INCAPABLE of

being known to some extent. “I do not understand it, therefore I don’t believe it” is an illogical statement.

a. I don’t understand how science can split an atom, but I know it is true because of the existence of nuclear weapons.

b. I cannot comprehend how a microchip works, but I know they exist because of computers and smartphones.

c. We can never fully understand God, (He is a MYSTERY), but we can, to a certain extent, know He exists and understand His attributes (love, justice, mercy, etc.). We may never know WHY He acts a certain way or allows things to happen in this life, but we can learn to TRUST Him, because He is trustworthy. We can trust him because he is PERSONAL and LOVING.

2. Every human being desires TRUTH. We were made for TRUTH. Our very existence is based on TRUTH.

a. Our very lives depend on certain truths, such as the fact that we must breathe oxygen, eat food and drink water for us to live. Recall, Truth = Reality.

b. Human nature desires the truth even if it is only a perceived truth.

i. The person who say, “I should be free to do whatever I please.” They may sincerely believe that, but I am willing to give others that same freedom, even if their “freedom” harms or affects me?

c. If something is TRUE we should accept it, because it is true. If it is FALSE, we should reject it, because it is false.

d. And that goes for things that are true regarding the existence of God, we should accept it, even if it conflicts with our ideas, feelings or opinions.

e. A related topic is that human nature desires only things that are GOOD.

f. No reasonable person wishes to have bad things happen to them.

g. Even the person who commits suicide is longing for that which is good and true, even if it is only a perceived good or truth. They truly believe that dying is better than living.

h. This desire for the good is really a desire for the greatest Good itself, God.

3. Just because we believe something is true, doesn't make it TRUE. It must be logical, reasonable and able to be supported with evidence.

   a. If one says, "I don't believe it is wrong to take 'small' items from people or items they don't 'need' without their knowledge," does this make it OK with the person that is being robbed? No. There is a certain "reasonableness" that tells us we should not steal. We call that the natural law and conscience . . . more on the natural law later.

   b. Or if I say, "I don't believe that slavery is wrong" does it automatically make it true?

   c. Ask yourself, “Would I be ok if someone did this to me?”

      i. This is where this thing called Relativism enters. Truths are subjective. It states that, “You have your truth and I have my truth.” But . . When this rule conflicts with my truths, we add things like, “so long as you don’t hurt anyone.” This reasoning is self-contradicting.

4. Making the statement, "Prove to me there is a God" is an illogical proposition. Or saying, “I don’t believe it unless I have PROOF.”

a. This proposition is illogical because you can’t prove its opposite - that there is no God. Scientifically, you must be able to demonstrate a proposition’s opposite to have a certainty of proof.

b. We cannot “prove” there is a God, but we are rational beings and can deduce by reason to believe that there is a God (e.g. by experience, the cosmos, the human body, using St. Thomas Aquinas’ logic, etc.) More on this later . . .

c. Another point is that you can’t physically prove that there is a brain in your head without opening your skull. You can only provide evidence there is a brain in your head through effects such as the fact that you are alive and can think and talk.

d. We know things exist because of their effects. We can't see heat radiating from the sun, but we feel the effect of the burning sun. A blind person can know it is daytime by going outside and experiencing the effects of the radiating sun.

e. We may not "see" God, but we experience the effects of His existence.

i. Spiritual emotions (e.g. having a relationship with God)

ii. Miracles iii. Grace working in the virtues. Humans are not virtuous by nature. iv. Ultimately in the fullness of revelation through Jesus Christ.

5. To accept a position as possibly true, you must show that arguments (evidence) in favor of the position are stronger than the arguments (evidence) against it.

a. At times, an opponent will use an “exception” to counter your argument as evidence against it. When an objection to a “standard” belief is raised, note that by definition, the exception proves the rule. (e.g. “On earth, gravity causes objects to fall – that is the RULE. “Helium balloons do not fall, they rise.” – the EXCEPTION)

b. There are much more evidence to believe in God than reasons not to believe. Suffering, poverty, moral evil and diseases may make it difficult to believe in a loving God, but do not prove that God does not exist. More on this later . . .

6. There is such a thing as OBJECTIVE TRUTH.

a. Mathematical truths: 2+2 = 4 (always!)

b. Scientific truths: On earth, gravity makes things fall downward, not upward. We will talk more on this later also . . .

c. Metaphysical or transcendental truths: Humans are religious animals. Blaise Pascal said there are two types of persons, those who are afraid to lose God and those who are afraid they might find Him.

7. The Natural Law

a. We have an internal sense that calls for justice, proper conduct (moral goodness) and distinguishing “right from wrong.”

b. There is a law within us that we did not place there nor create and it can help guide us to the truth. (Rom. 1:19) This law presumes a lawgiver who placed it in our very being. We call this lawgiver, God.

c. Murder, stealing, cheating, lying, adultery are morally wrong and violations of the natural law. You don’t need to be “religious” to know there are natural laws. It is summed up in the statement, “Do good and avoid evil.”

8. The Dignity of the Human Person
    a. (Scientific truths) If we are all products of chance, as the Theory of Evolution claims, then a human being has no greater dignity than a plant or rock that are also products of chance.
    b. If “survival of the fittest” is true, as it is in nature, I should be able to take things from those who are weaker and it would not be “morally” wrong - it is natural. It is interesting that human beings are the only animals that don’t follow the law of “survival of the fittest.” We are the exception.
    c. What makes us different? (Transcendental truth)The fact that we are MORAL creatures with a conscience. We have a rational soul and free will that we did not give ourselves, but was given to us, I would say, by our Creator, God.
    d. We were created out of love in the image and likeness of God (Gen 2:7). This is why we have dignity and why we are different than all the animals.
    e. Fyodor Dostoyevsky famously said in his book, the Brothers Karamazov, “If there is no God, then everything is permitted.”
9. The Principle of Cause and Effect. (Similar to Aquinas’ Prime Mover argument)
    a. Newton’s first law of physics states that an object will remain at rest until acted upon by another force. Scientifically speaking, every effect has its cause.
    b. The creation of the universe has a beginning when all matter was at rest.
    c. If this is true then there has to be a cause (the First Cause) that was not itself a product of another cause or the

problem goes on infinitely and that is not reasonable. We call this First Cause, God.

10. (Metaphysical truth) The Problem of Suffering (or Evil) does not “prove” that God does not exist
    a. If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why does he allow innocent children to suffer? God’s ultimate goal is that we achieve eternal life with Him in heaven.
    b. We must distinguish between God's positive will and His permissive will. God positively wills all the good that happens. He permits suffering only when he foresees that good can result from it. (e.g. the suffering in my life has made me the person I am today.)
    c. If God foresees that my good health would lead me to sin and lose my salvation, He may permit my health to be ruined and lead me to salvation.
    d. There would be no suffering had man not sinned and chosen to do evil. God did not will sin, but having given us free will, He permitted it and its consequences. This permission was a less serious thing than depriving us of our freedom to choose.
11. The Problem of Exclusivity (There is no other name ... by which men can be saved – (Acts 4:12)
    a. Those who do not know Jesus Christ, much less profess a faith in Him, are not automatically condemned to hell. You must willingly choose to reject God to be condemned.
    b. Those who through no fault of their own . . . may be saved (CCC 847)
    c. There are exceptions for “those who do not have the law, but who by nature keep the law.” (Rom 2:14ff)

d. Invincible ignorance – ignorance that cannot be overcome. In our day and age, invincible ignorance is difficult to have as an excuse, but it does exits.

12. Scientific evidence of God's existence. We can also call this Intelligent Design argument . . . from the largest things in our existence to the smallest, we see ID.

a. Statistically (Mathematical truth), we should not exist, yet we do. For our planet to sustain life multiple factors all had to be finely tuned. We have a one in 10^{166} chance of existing based on 128 cosmic and biological parameters.[1] (the list of parameters is growing as science makes new discoveries) In comparison, there are only 1 x 10^{80} atoms in the universe.

b. Irreducible complexity – a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function of the system, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to cease functioning. Any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional.[2] Irreducibly complex systems have to be completely functional at their creation (the human cell, for example) and could not have evolved by gradual mutations as Charles Darwin theorized.

II. To the Believer - Other Ways We Know God Exists

1. Divine Revelation - God has revealed Himself

1 Ross, Hugh. The Creator and the Cosmos, Navpress, 3rd edition, 2001. 2 Behe, Michael J., Darwin's Black Box – The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution, Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1996. Page 39.

a. Sacred Tradition - Tradition handed down by Christ or the

Apostles

b. Sacred Scripture - The written Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Word of God tells us that God loves us, even to the point that He is willing to die for us so that we can be with Him.

2. Jesus Christ - The Word Incarnate - God becomes Man

a. No other figure in history was preceded by a long list of prophecies, such as where he was to be born or where he would be raised as a child, how he was to be born and how he was to die.

b. No other figure in history has been resurrected by his very own power.

c. There is no body to discredit the resurrection. We have the remains of every major religious figure that lived - except for Jesus (and Mary).

d. There are witnesses to the resurrection. They even died for the truth of the resurrection. Some will say that the disciples lied about the resurrection. It is not probable since it is difficult to die for the truth, even more so to die for a lie.

3. The Church - only God could preserve the Church and her teachings for 2000 years.

a. No other institution has survived the test of time and maintained its foundational teachings consistently for this long.

b. The holiness of the Saints - One cannot explain how a person can live the life of holiness that these men and women have lived unless God is working in their lives through grace.

4. Miracles

a. Science has no explanation for the countless miracles that occur even to this day.

b. It should be noted that as Christians, we should not look to miracles as "proof" that God exists. We walk by faith not by sight. (2 Cor 5:7)

5. (Philosophical truths) St. Thomas Aquinas' proofs of God: See Appendix A - Summa Theologica (Part 1, Question 2, Article 3) and the Kalam Cosmological Argument for God

a. First Mover

b. First Cause

c. Possibility and Necessity

d. Gradation (Worst > Bad > Good > Best)

e. Intelligent Design

Appendix A

Theologica (Part 1, Question 2, Article 3) The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to

itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence-- which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it

from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

Another explanation of the 5 proofs from Aquinas

1 - FIRST MOVER: Some things are in motion, anything moved is moved by another, and there can't be an infinite series of movers. So there must be a first mover (a mover that isn't itself moved by another). This is God. 2 - FIRST CAUSE: Some things are caused, anything caused is caused by another, and there can't be an infinite series of causes. So there must be a first cause (a cause that isn't itself caused by another). This is God. 3 - NECESSARY BEING: Every contingent being at some time fails to exist. So, if everything were contingent, then at some time there would have been nothing -- and so there would be nothing now -- which is clearly false. So not everything is contingent. So, there is a necessary being. This is God. 4 - GREATEST BEING: Some things are greater than others. Whatever is great to any degree gets its greatness from that which is the greatest. So, there is a greatest being, which is the source of all greatness. This is God. 5 - INTELLIGENT DESIGNER: Many things in the world that lack intelligence act for an end. Whatever acts for an end must be directed by an intelligent being. So, the world must have an intelligent designer. This is God.

The Kalam Cosmological Argument for God, the “Cause” of all creation

The most prominent form of the Kalam cosmological argument, as defended by William Lane Craig, is expressed as the following syllogism:

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.

2. The universe began to exist.

3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

A syllogism is a kind of logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two propositions that are asserted or assumed to be true.