

CHAPTER *One*

Is There a God?

“God is evident. . . . For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

—ROMANS 1:19–20

ON DECEMBER 10, 2004, AN Associated Press news release rocked the rarified atmosphere of academia with the headline, “Atheist Philosopher, 81, Now Believes in God.” British professor of philosophy Antony Flew, who had been a leading champion for the cause of atheism for more than fifty years, announced that based on scientific evidence, he had come to believe that a super intelligence is the only good explanation for the origin of life and the complexity of nature.¹ Dr. Flew was merely joining an overwhelming majority of the human race, past and present, in belief that creation requires a Creator.

Belief in God Is Normal

Is there a God? Most people say *yes*. In fact, a Gallup poll taken at the turn of the millennium indicates that more than 90% of the population of the United States does indeed believe in God.²

In light of the high percentage of people who believe in God, we can say it is *normal* to believe in God. This pervasiveness of belief in God has caused some neuroscientists to investigate the possibility that humans are “hard-wired” to believe in God.³ This should not surprise anyone since the Bible says that humans are created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26).

If it is true that belief in God is *hard-wired* into our genes, perhaps it substantiates the contention of Augustine 1600 years ago when he wrote in his *Confessions*, “Thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.”⁴

Belief in God Is Natural

Normal refers to the individual expression of belief in God, while *natural* describes the corporate nature of religious expression in societies. Charles Darwin wrote in his book *The Descent of Man*, “A belief in all-pervading spiritual agencies seems to be universal.”⁵ An article in the *New York Times* stated, “According to anthropologists, religions that share certain supernatural features — belief in a noncorporeal God or gods, belief in the afterlife, belief in the ability of prayer or ritual to change the course of human events — are found in virtually every culture on earth.”⁶ That includes past and present.

Belief in God Is Reasonable

With the continuing explosion of scientific knowledge, belief in God seems to have become even more rational and reasonable. One of the world’s leading astronomers, Dr. Alan Sandage, recently said in an interview, “. . . The world is too complicated in all its parts and

interconnections to be due to chance alone. I am convinced that the existence of life with all its order in each of its organisms is simply too well put together. . . . Because of this, many scientists are now driven to faith by their very work.”⁷

The grandeur of the heavens excited awe and wonder in the heart of the biblical writer, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God, and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Psalm 19:1). If that were true in David’s day, a thousand years before the birth of Christ when five or six thousand stars were visible to the natural eye, how much more today when astronomers using powerful telescopes suggested in 2003 that there might be 70,000,000,000,000,000,000 (70 sextillion) stars, or perhaps there is an infinite number.⁸

It is just as amazing to be told that inside each tiny atom is a nano-universe of energy whirling about in perfect coordination following the same laws that govern the vast array of galaxies, nebulae, quasars, black holes, and other celestial entities in space. Science has discovered a whole array of forces in sub-atomic structures.

To believe that the unbelievable complexity of creation came about by blind chance is too great a leap of faith for many scientists. After examining the evidence and alternatives, they have come to the rational conclusion that the most plausible explanation for the origin of the universe is a super-powerful intelligent being that we call *God*.

“Why This Scientist Believes In God”

Dr. Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., was until recently the Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, which some call the most prestigious job in science. *Genome* is a word that dates back to 1930. It was formed by the German word *gen* (gene) and the Greek word *soma* (body) and means the genetic information in a body.⁹

All living creatures have genes, but Collins’s work specifies human genetics. His story of becoming a Christian is gleaned from two interviews which Dr. Collins had with PBS¹⁰ and CNN¹¹ plus Dr. Collins’s bestselling book, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*.¹²

Collins began one interview with the statement, “I am a scientist and a believer, and I find no conflict between those two world views” (CNN). While a graduate student pursuing a degree in quantum mechanics at Yale University, Collins became an atheist who “felt quite comfortable challenging the spiritual beliefs of anyone who mentioned them in my presence, and discounted such perspectives as sentimentality and outmoded superstition.”¹³

After becoming somewhat disillusioned with his graduate study in quantum physics, he took a course in biochemistry. That spurred him to apply to the University of North Carolina Medical School, where he earned an M.D. During his residency in internal medicine, Collins was impressed by many patients going through terrible suffering who derived remarkable comfort from their belief in God. Some of his patients asked him what he believed, and he was too embarrassed to admit he did not know.

Collins realized that as a scientist he had always insisted on gathering all the available data before reaching a conclusion, but he had gathered no data at all concerning belief in God before making his assumptions. In an effort to be better grounded in his atheism, he visited with a neighboring Methodist minister. The minister suggested he read the Gospel of John. Collins found it both puzzling and interesting, but he was not ready yet to accept or even understand the concepts.

Then the minister gave Collins a copy of *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. As Collins read, he was struck particularly by Lewis’s argument based on the moral law of human nature. In every culture, there is a standard of right and wrong that is unique in the animal kingdom. This concept of right and wrong within the human heart reveals that a spiritual nature is within all of us and suggests that God himself is good and holy.

Collins came to realize that as a scientist he had been looking at the components of the house but had never considered a conversation with the Owner. He had carefully been studying the notes on the page but had never listened to the music.

After a struggle of many months, Collins began to understand that if there is a God, he is holy, and we are not. He recognized that Christ provides a bridge between unholy humanity and a holy God.

Finally, after about a year, I was on a trip to the northwest, and on a beautiful afternoon hiking in the Cascade Mountains where the remarkable beauty of the creation around me was so overwhelming, I felt, “I cannot resist this another moment. This is something I have really longed for all my life without realizing it, and now I’ve got the chance to say yes.” So I said yes. I was 27. I’ve never turned back. That was the most significant moment in my life.¹⁴

“Journey Into Light”

Emile Caillet, Th. D, Ph. D., longtime Princeton professor, tells of his conversion experience in his autobiography, *Journey Into Light*. When Caillet married, he made it clear to his wife that religion would not be allowed in their home. He went away to fight for the French army in World War I, and he spent many lonely night watches in the trenches. In secret, he began to prepare a book for his private use. After he returned home, he would file passages that spoke to his heart and copy them in a leather-bound journal that he always carried with him.

The day came when the book that would speak to his condition and help him through life’s experiences was completed. With eager anticipation, he sat down under a tree on a beautiful sunny day and opened his “precious anthology.”¹⁵ As he read his book, a feeling of growing disappointment came over him. He came to realize “that the whole undertaking would not work, simply because it was of my own making.”¹⁶

At that very moment, his wife came through the gate of the garden pushing a baby carriage. She had been out shopping and “accidentally” wandered into a Huguenot church building. Finding the pastor, she asked whether he had a Bible in French. After she was given a Bible, she walked out with feelings of joy and guilt.

As she returned to her home, she began to apologize to her husband for bringing home a Bible. He interrupted,

“A Bible you say? Where is it? Show me. I’ve never seen one before.” She complied. I literally grabbed the book and rushed to my study. I opened it and “chanced” upon the Beatitudes! I read, and read, and

read,—now aloud with an indescribable warmth surging within. . . . I could not find words to express my awe and wonder. And suddenly the realization dawned upon me: This was the book that would understand me! I needed it so much, yet, unaware, I had attempted to write my own—in vain. I continued to read deeply into the night, mostly from the gospels. And lo and behold, as I looked through them, the One of whom they spoke, the One who spoke and acted in them, became alive to me.

To this God I prayed that night, and the God who answered was the same God of whom it was spoken in the book.¹⁷

“The Beauty of the Gospel”

Dr. John A. McIntyre, a Princeton Ph.D., professor of physics, and assistant director of the Cyclotron Institute at Texas A&M University, now retired, was drawn to Christ by the beauty of the gospel. In the course of attending a home Bible study, he found that his training in physics had prepared him to appreciate the message of the Bible. The Bible was considered to be true just as a scientist considers nature to be both consistent and understandable. When difficulties were encountered, the class accepted the challenge as an opportunity to modify their understanding instead of concluding that the Bible was in error. They studied the Scripture carefully, compared different passages, and cross-checked just as a scientist does in the laboratory.¹⁸

After looking at the evidence for the authenticity of the Bible, he was convinced that the Bible is indeed reliable. While reading the Gospel of John one night, he was compelled to believe that Jesus is who he said he is.

McIntyre gives four reasons he believes it is easier for a scientist to believe in the gospel of Christ than for a non-scientist:

1. “The Christian gospel is a *beautiful explanation* of a great many facts, ranging from the evil nature of man to the striking order of the universe. . . . A scientist is attracted by the

extensive, logical, and profound system that represents the Christian view of the world.”¹⁹

2. “The best *ethical standard* that we know is the Christian standard. . . . The practical man . . . is satisfied with the results of science or theology, whereas the scientist and Christian are more concerned with what lies behind the practical results. And the Christian knows too that his life can’t be improved by working only with the practical results, the Christian ethics, but that he must make contact with the Source of these ethics, Christ Himself. Therefore, by the very nature of his enquiring mind a scientist is led to look for something beyond humanism, and his search should lead him to Christ.”²⁰
3. The *strange character* of the gospel story is appealing because a scientist is accustomed to abstract and complicated thinking. “. . . When the Christian Gospel insists on a seemingly complicated procedure for God to deal with men, the scientist is apt to be more open minded. . . .”²¹
4. Many Bible passages are *difficult to reconcile*, but the scientist has encountered seemingly contradictory truths in the physical world. For example, an electron can be described equally well as a wave or a particle depending on the method of examination. So the scientist is not surprised to read of seemingly contradictory truths in Scripture.

McIntyre concludes, “For what more could a scientist wish than that the most wonderful theory he could ever imagine be validated so completely in the laboratory of life.”²²

Evidence of the Existence of God

From these and other testimonies of numerous people who were once unbelievers but have been converted to a belief in God, the following evidences that God exists can be cited.

The Testimonies and Quality of Witnesses

From the days of the New Testament church until today, the most powerful evidence for the existence of God is the number and quality of the witnesses. The Apostles themselves were radically transformed from fearful refugees hiding behind closed doors into fearless public advocates in the face of the seemingly invincible authority of the most powerful government in the history of the world. These poor and powerless followers of Christ had nothing to gain in this world if there is not another to come, and if there is no God. The blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the church. When early Christians were persecuted, they were scattered like sparks in the wind to spread the fires of the gospel to the tender dry hearts of the pagan world.

Fox's Book of Martyrs recounts the heart-wrenching stories of representative examples of the torture and death of hundreds of thousands of Christian witnesses. After Patrick Hamilton, age twenty-three, was burned at the stake in Scotland in 1527 for his religious principles, a young sympathizer who spoke respectfully of Hamilton was also condemned to die by burning at the stake. However, one of the advisors to the ecclesiastical official suggested that the condemned be burned in a cellar because "the smoke of Patrick Hamilton hath infected all those on whom it blew."²³

In fact, it may be said that most converts are made through the witness of believers. This is the method prescribed by the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "You shall be My witnesses . . ." (Acts 1:8). Describing his sojourn from atheism to belief, Christian apologist Lee Strobel confessed, "I would probably still be mired in atheism if it weren't for the woman I later married. Leslie's decision to follow Christ prompted me to use my journalism and legal background to investigate whether or not Christianity makes sense. . . . My conclusions ended up changing my entire life."²⁴ The daily witness of believers in life and work is one of God's ways of drawing people to himself.

The Evidence the Universe Had a Beginning

This evidence is founded on the belief that everything that has a beginning has a cause. Of course, this idea finds its origin in the Bible, which states, “In the beginning . . .” (Genesis 1:1).

For many years there was a debate in the scientific community about whether the universe had a beginning or whether it always had been in existence (steady state theory). British scientist Sir Fred Hoyle, staunch supporter of the steady state theory, rather derisively coined the term *Big Bang*²⁵ to describe the view that the universe began in one tremendous cosmic explosion.

However, in the last fifty years or so, new discoveries seem to have proven scientifically that the universe did have a beginning, and the *Big Bang* theory of the origin of the universe is now accepted by most scientists who study the composition and interaction of the universe. By mathematical calculations, science seems now to agree that the universe is about 13.7 billion years old.²⁶ Proof that the universe had a beginning means that the universe is not eternal and is therefore not God. This position also lends credence to the idea that God created the universe.

The formal theological term for this evidence of the existence of God is the *cosmological* argument. The word *cosmological* comes from the Greek words *kosmos* (harmonious order of the universe) and *logos* (which in this case means *instruction*).²⁷ The universe must have a *First Cause* and a *Prime Mover* in order to begin, and that all-knowing, all-powerful, and eternal Person is God. *Since God is eternal, God had no beginning and alone is thus qualified as uncreated Cause and Mover.*

There are only two choices. Either the universe is eternal (which science seems to agree it is not), or God is. Either commitment requires an act of faith since there are no extant human observers of the creation event. As we continue with further evidence, it is easily seen that God is the most logical and reasonable conclusion.

The Evidence of Design

Philosophers call the evidence of design the *teleological* argument, from the two Greek words *telos* (end or purpose) and *logos* (instruction). *Teleology* means the study or evidences of design and purpose in nature.

Perhaps the most famous illustration of the evidence of the existence of God because of design in nature was used by William Paley in his book, *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (1802). Paley wrote that if he had been walking and found a watch lying on the ground, he would think that a watchmaker had designed and constructed it.²⁸

Other analogies have been used. One is known as the *typing monkeys theorem*. According to this illustration, the probability that the universe came into being by chance without an intelligent design would be far less than the chance that a million monkeys typing on a million typewriters for a million years could produce the works of Shakespeare. Mathematicians have concluded that even if the universe were filled with monkeys typing for all time, the total probability to produce a single instance of just one play, *Hamlet*, would still be less than one chance in $10^{183,800}$ (the number 10 followed by 183,800 zeros)!²⁹

The universe is infinitely more complicated than the sum total of all the books ever written in human history. Thus, in light of the argument from design in nature, belief in God is quite reasonable. As playwright Tom Stoppard has one of his characters say, “The idea of God is slightly more plausible than the alternative proposition that, given enough time, some green slime could write Shakespeare’s sonnets.”³⁰

The Fine Tuning of All Creation

There are many evidences that the universe has been finely tuned in order for it to exist. The *speed of expansion* is just right for the creation of the universe. It has been suggested that if the rate had been any faster, matter would have been spread evenly and would not have

coalesced into the wide variety of celestial objects in space. If the rate of expansion had been slower, all physical matter would have crashed back in upon itself. The very narrow margin for error suggests something more than accident and chance.

The incredible uniqueness of planet Earth requires more than a series of remarkable coincidences. In their book *Rare Earth: Why Complex Life Is Uncommon in the Universe*, University of Washington professors Peter Douglas Ward and Donald Brownlee contended that the more we learn about Earth, the more we realize how improbable the existence of complex life (animal life) in the universe is.³¹

Of course, volumes have been written about the unique qualities of Earth that are necessary to sustain life. The following is just a minimal sampling of these amazing facts.

- Just the right size star (our sun) is needed to provide light and energy for our planet. Any larger or smaller star, and life could not be sustained.
- The right distance from Earth to the sun, 93,000,000 miles, is needed. If we were any nearer or farther, it would be too hot or too cold for life. For example, Mercury and Venus are too close to the sun, and Mars is too far away.
- The right size planet is necessary. The Earth's size enables gravity to retain the correct blend of gases in our atmosphere. Ours is the only known planet that has the proper atmosphere to sustain plant, animal, and human life.
- Earth is tilted on its axis at 23½ degrees, which gives the planet climatic stability.
- Earth's moon is the right size and distance from Earth's axis and provides just enough tidal movement to prevent stagnation of the oceans without causing tidal waves.
- The planet Jupiter is the right size and distance from Earth to have a strong gravitational pull to sweep most of the debris in space away from our planet.
- Plate tectonics (earthquakes) have caused land masses to rise above the oceans or our planet would be covered with 4,000 feet of water.

- The presence of water acts as a universal solvent. Thus, there is the correct ratio of 70% water to 30% land mass; a remarkable natural process to recycle fresh water from the salt water oceans; and also the means of world-wide distribution of water through condensation of water vapor.

These parameters are so finely tuned that it is too great a leap of faith in blind chance and accident to believe that it happened without an All-Powerful Being to conceive and bring it all into existence.

The Origin of Life

It does not seem to be logically possible for non-life to produce life. It would take life to create life, or as the Bible simply says of God in Christ, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life” (John 1:3–4a).

One of the more popular hypotheses of how life could come from non-life has been the *primeval soup* theory. According to this theory, a number of gases and chemicals in the ocean or a pond may have been energized by bolts of lightning to produce amino acids that are part of the basic building blocks of living things. This theory has been discredited as being statistically improbable if not impossible because of the complexity of the task.

The Human Body

The human body is amazingly complex, with 206 bones, nine major organ systems, and 75 trillion cells.³² The heart beats about 36,000,000 times every year to pump life-giving blood through miles of organic tubing. All of this develops from a drop of protoplasm no bigger than the head of a pin! Indeed we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

The human brain has been called the “most complex organised structure in the universe.”³³ The brain is a small super computer made

up of 100 billion nerve cells (neurons) with each neuron making up to 10,000 contacts(synapses) with other neurons to exchange information. The number of possible combinations of brain activities exceeds the number of particles (atoms) in the known universe. All these neurons are automatically processing responses to the input of the five senses and controlling the functions of the body. When we see a computer with far less capabilities, we logically assume that someone designed and created it. No amount of time would have been sufficient to develop the “most complex organised structure in the universe” by chance and circumstance.

The *human eye* is a fantastic television set, smaller than a golf ball. It comes in a variety of colors, changes channels automatically, and comes with a lifetime power source! Did this incredible instrument come into being from non-living matter over eons and ages of time through a process of random selection? That conclusion would seem unreasonable and irrational to many observers.

DNA has become a common term in the vocabularies of the world languages since the discovery of the *double helix* and the building blocks of all life by geneticists Francis Crick and James D. Watson in 1953.³⁴ Individual cells are so small that thousands of cells could fit on the head of a pin. Even so, every cell has DNA within it that contains the information representing the organism. If indeed codes and language require intelligence, then DNA is certainly an indication of a Super-Intelligence.

The Evidence of the Sense of Right And Wrong

This evidence for God is also called moral or ethical law, the law of conscience, or the sense of oughtness. In his influential little book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis, who had formerly been an atheist himself, begins with this evidence of God’s existence that he calls “The Law of Human Nature.” Lewis writes, “. . . 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.”³⁵

To the objection that an innate sense of right and wrong is a herd instinct, he answers that an instinct would choose self preservation

instead of endangerment to help another. The fact that guilt may be felt later over the failure to help another person shows a sense of *oughtness* and moral law.

To the objection that the moral law is a social convention or learned behavior, Lewis replies that just because children learn the multiplication tables does not mean that the multiplication tables are something parents made up for themselves.

To those who would say that “no set of moral ideas were truer or better than any other,” Lewis replies that then “there would be no sense in preferring . . . Christian morality to Nazi morality. . . . If your moral ideas can be truer, and those of the Nazis less true, there must be something—some real morality—for them to be true about.”³⁶

From the moral law, we conclude “that the Being behind the universe is intensely interested in right conduct—in fair play, unselfishness, courage, good faith, honesty and truthfulness.”³⁷

Conclusion

No amount of evidence can convince a person that there is a God, but it may remove some of the doubts of sincere seekers. Such evidence shows that it is just as reasonable and intellectually honest (yes, and even more so) to believe in God as it is not to believe.

Christ said, “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .” (John 6:44). The Holy Spirit convinces us of our need for God. “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). C.S. Lewis admitted that when he couldn’t find God, it was for the same reason a criminal can’t find a policeman.

Blaise Pascal, the brilliant seventeenth-century French mathematician, physicist, and philosopher, wrote in his personal notes discovered after his death that it is wiser to believe in God rather than not.³⁸ If a person believes in God, and after death finds that there is no God, that person has lost nothing. In fact, that person has gained a better life on earth anyway. But the person who does not believe in

God and finds after death that there is a God, that person has lost everything.³⁹

Belief in God is only the first step, however. There are many gods in the world, but there is only one true and living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Who is the true and living God? That will be the subject of our discussion in the next chapter.