

Why I Believe In A Divine Being

A Sermon by Marty Baker, Th. M.

- THE BIG IDEA: My belief in a divine being is based on philosophical evidence as showcased in the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments.
- THE PURPOSE: I will strive to convince my audiences to embrace the logical evidences for the existence of a divine being so they can ultimately and personally know Him as their Creator.

THE INTRODUCTION

Is it really logical for a thinking, educated person to believe in a divine being? Harvard Genetics Professor Richard Lewontin, a committed atheist and firm believer in strict materialism, doesn't think so. In fact, in the 1997 *New York Review of Books*, he shows the lengths he will go to not ever let himself believe in the God concept when he remarks:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs . . . in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.¹

I guess we should congratulate him for, at least, being honest. As an atheistic scientist, he is so blindly committed to his philosophy and worldview he does not want to be bothered with any evidence to the contrary, even if his view is demonstrated to be logically inconsistent and unfounded. Amazing. Talk about a closed mind. Unfortunately, from what we can see in the rise of the New Atheism, with ardent and passionate voices like Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris, many others hold tenaciously to Professor Lewontin's thinking about man's origins and the absence of a Creator for the cosmos.

Perhaps you are of this cosmological camp too. You are highly educated, a bright, astute analytical thinker, and your love of science naturally guides you away from ever giving thought to whether there might be a God. But if you are truly a thinker, I would think you should be open to considering the logical, reasonable philosophical proofs which support belief in the

¹Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," *New York Review of Books* (January 4, 1997), quoted in Greg Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 171-172.

existence of God. Put differently, I would think you should take a hard look at the arguments for the probability of divine existence and ask yourself one pivotal question: “Which arguments are more logically consistent? Are mine, which are against the God concept more tenable, or those which support a divine Creator?”

I, as a thinking, educated person, am convinced, based on thoughtful analysis; there is more intellectual credibility for embracing those ancient and well-thought-out philosophical concepts favoring the reality of a divine being. Whether that God is the Christian God, or not, is the subject of another study. However, for our purposes today, let us concern ourselves primarily with philosophical concepts which can substantiate divine existence.

As we consider them in a cursory format, let us ask ourselves some honest questions. THE PREVIEW: What are the evidences that we are not alone in the cosmos? Yes. What are the reasonable, logical proofs we just might not be living in a closed evolutionary system devoid of divine reality? More precisely, if there is a God, we must ask if he has left any evidences, outside of special revelation, to guide us to knowledge and belief in Him? In reality, there are more philosophical proofs than we can address in one study; hence, for our purposes we will limit our analysis to the time-tested cosmological, teleological, and moral proofs.

To begin our journey, I would invite you to contemplate the crucial question before us.

WHAT ARE THE PHILOSOPHICAL EVIDENCES FOR BELIEF IN A DIVINE BEING?

The Big Idea: My belief in a divine being is based on philosophical evidence as showcased in the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments. Historically, these three philosophical evidences give us reasonable grounds to believe in the existence of God.

THE FIRST LINE OF PHILOSOPHICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A DIVINE BEING IS THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

Introductory comments: Before we dig into this first of three divine proofs, permit me to make a few cursory observations.

1. No one has iron-clad, fool-proof evidence regarding the existence or non-existence of a divine being.
2. What we do possess are numerous clues embedded in the cosmos which can demonstrate the reasonable likelihood that a divine being is alive and well. By analyzing this evidence from a philosophical perspective, we use our logical reasoning abilities to posit the statement it is more logical to believe in God than to disbelieve in Him. What you will do, however, with the evidence is, in the final analysis, your choice.
3. Given the time parameters we have in this study, our presentation will by no means be exhaustive. Our purpose is to simply give you a foundational understanding of the philosophical reasons to believe we, as finite creatures, exist under the watchful eye of an eternal God.

Transition: Based on this background information, therefore, it is now appropriate for us to consider this first argument favoring God’s existence. Let’s begin by first addressing . . .

The core of the cosmological argument points to God presence. The late Dr. Charles Ryrie defines this view well when he observes: “Simply stated this line of evidence (the cosmological argument for the existence of God) points out that the universe around us is an effect which connotes an adequate cause.”² Since effects do not and cannot logically cause themselves, we are left to conclude that someone or something beyond and outside of our universe fashioned it at the beginning. Put in practical terms, the chair you are sitting in is a cold, hard (and comfortable) effect, which, in turn, was caused by someone or something. Logically, we can readily say it would seem more reasonable, at this juncture, to conclude that causation was more likely someone than something. Further, it would be foolish to conclude it merely either caused itself or that it was caused by an unthinking, blind force working strictly within the realm of chance and luck.

Dr. Norman Geisler takes this definition of this argument and demonstrates how it has been historically supported with horizontal and vertical syllogisms. The horizontal form is concise as well as thought-provoking.

1. The universe had a beginning.
2. Anything that had a beginning must have been caused by something else.
3. Therefore, the universe was caused by something else, which we call “God.”³

The progression and components of the argument are highly reasonable and logical, and they guide us to reality about our thinking about the probability of divine existence. Understanding that reality begins first by realizing that some scientists argue that the cosmos is simply eternal; however, the second law of thermodynamics argues against this.

The first law, which represents “a scientifically observed phenomenon which has been subjected to very extensive measurements and experimentation and has repeatedly proved to be invariable throughout the known universe,” states “Energy can be neither created nor destroyed.”⁴ This, of course, does not tell us anything about whether atheists or theists are right or wrong. It’s just an observation of a scientific law. No new energy is being created nor is any going out of existence.

The second law, however, gives us more insight into the temporal nature of the cosmos. According to Geisler, it states the following, “In a closed, isolated system (such as the whole universe is) the amount of usable energy is decreasing.”⁵ The energy is decreasing insofar as it is being transformed into another form, as when your car uses up the limited amount of gas in your tank. The logical conclusion of this second scientific law should not be missed: if the usable energy of the cosmos is limited and is being used up, it is not eternal and must have had a beginning point. If it, as an effect, had a beginning point, it had to be caused, and since it could not have caused itself, it must have been caused by *someone* or *something*. Again, since *something* could not be eternal, because it is a finite thing, or an effect, incapable of self-causation, then we are left with the *someone* option, viz., God.

²Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Victor Books, 1986), 28.

³Norman L. Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 10.

⁴Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 724.

⁵Norman L. Geisler, *If God, Why Evil?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2011), 133.

The cosmological argument also contains a vertical dimension. Once more, we appeal to Geisler for the syllogistic nature of this facet of the argument:

1. Every contingent (dependent) being has a cause right now.
2. The whole physical universe is contingent right now.
3. Therefore, the whole physical universe has a Cause right now.

The reality of this second syllogism is apparent. Whether it is a person, like yourself, or a plant, we are all, by definition in a state of utter dependency for life as we know it. No one or nothing is self-contained . . . well, maybe your high school student feels otherwise.

Logically, this means the universe, and all that is in it, is dependent on One who is Uncaused and eternal, existing outside of the limitations of time and space. Geisler rightly calls this One, the necessary Being. He, by definition, is not bound by causation since He is uncaused and eternal. He is also purely actualized with no potentiality for existence or non-existence whatsoever. We, on the contrary, as dependent, caused beings were at one point only potential before we were actualized. Our very causation and presence on this planet and in this cosmos logically tells us, therefore, we are products of One greater than us. Additionally, this reality tells us we are purely dependent on His existence for our lives and continued existence.

Transition: The causation component of the cosmological argument is thought-provoking and challenging. It is hard to walk away from it and not think, “Belief in God is not as irrational as I first thought.” It is also hard not to move from the core of this particular argument and not begin to see what I would call . . .

The consequence of the cosmological argument points to God’s person. What do I mean by this? I mean even though the argument does not definitively prove God exists, it at least tells us what he is potentially like. Since our cosmos is finite, it informs us that He has to be infinite. Since everything which had or has a beginning has cause, He has to be Uncaused. The law of infinite regress tells us it is impossible to for cause and effect to go backward to infinity. There has to be the first cause, and since that which is finite cannot cause itself because it is only potential, He has to be the eternal One upon which the chain of cause/effect hangs. How great must He be?

At this point, I cannot help but see that the Judea-Christian Scriptures, apart from all holy books ever written, showcase Him in this fashion. Writing about Him in Psalm 147, the author remarks in verse 5, “*Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.*” Since His thinking is infinite, He, by definition, would have to be infinite in all of His other characteristics, from His love to His mercy. Surely, this sounds like the Being the cosmological argument points to. Further, when Moses asked for His name at the burning bush, God declared, “*I AM WHO I AM is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you*” (Exodus 3:14). Again, this naturally fits the emphasis of the cosmological argument on the eternal nature of the Being who started the universe as we know it. He had to be eternal and utterly necessary because we are temporal and utterly dependent.

Transition and Restatement: In light of the cosmological argument, it seems like it is just common sense to follow the evidence toward a divine being. Effects do have causes, and there is no such thing as a self-caused effect; hence, we are left, as created, temporal beings, with looking for One who is uncreated and uncaused who could have fashioned the our magnificent universe. This is one argument for divine belief, and it is followed by a second one which naturally follows it.

THE SECOND LINE OF PHILOSOPHICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A DIVINE BEING IS THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

As the cosmological argument directed our thinking toward the presence and person of a divine being, the same holds true with this particular philosophical proof.

The core of the teleological argument points to God's presence. Originally, Saint Thomas Aquinas developed in the thirteenth century what are historically called the "Five Ways" to validate the existence of God. His fifth argument is rightfully called the teleological because it is based on the Greek word denoting the end or completion of something.⁶ Dr. Norman Geisler takes the argument of Aquinas and brings it up to date with this helpful syllogism:

1. Every agent acts for an end, even natural agents.
2. Now what acts for an end manifests intelligence.
3. But natural agents have no intelligence of their own.
4. Therefore, they are directed to their end by some Intelligence.⁷

Simply put, this argument posits it is reasonable and logical to look for a designer when you see design, especially with you see intricate and specified design.

The other day I kicked back on the large swing on my back patio. While lying there looking up at the beautiful blue sky, a military jet flew high overhead, leaving two big, white contrails in its wake. As I sat there taking in the amazing nature of the contrails, I watched as the wind began to blow, bend, and contort them. At one point, as lines broke up, two lines crossed each other and formed an "X." "Wow, that is amazing," I thought. Then a few minutes later an "O" appeared above me. I was dumbfounded, and I started thinking, "I wonder what the statistical probability it was that this occurred?" Then I thought, "The design code built into the DNA chain is far more intricate than this simple 'X' and 'O.'" There is no way this could have occurred by blind, random chance. It had to be fashioned by a divine Designer."

Chandra Wickramasinghe, a professor of applied mathematics at the University of Cardiff, Wales, established the reality of this convincing argument years ago. He did this by determining the statistical probability for the chance formation of just one enzyme, which, in turn, is the building block of the gene, which is, then, the building block for the human cell. After crunching all the numbers, he said the chance of this intricate design occurring on its own is 1 in $10^{40,000}$.⁸

⁶William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 811.

⁷Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 715.

⁸David Warme, Ph.D., demonstrates how the atheist position can argue against this figure when he observes, one of the problems with the $10^{40,000}$ number that you referred to for the enzyme is that the derivation of that number is itself open to debate. Note also that the purpose of an enzyme is to accelerate the rate of some chemical reaction. This is normally accomplished by greatly increasing the probability of the reaction happening, e.g., by bringing the two reactants into a suitable physical alignment. The right enzyme can make otherwise "impossible" reactions happen readily and rapidly. With the right enzyme (or catalyst) present, this $10^{40,000}$ number might drop to 25 or less. Furthermore, not all enzymes or catalysts are complicated. Platinum, for example, acts as a powerful catalyst for many chemical reactions. David Warme, interview by Pastor Marty Baker, Burke, VA, July 24, 2016.

According to Ravi Zacharias, a man who converted from Hinduism to Christianity based on the proofs of Christianity, “The translation of that figure is that it would require more attempts for the formation of one enzyme than there are atoms in all the stars of all the galaxies in the entire known universe.”⁹ Based on this statistical probability Dr. Wickramasinghe, a thinking, logical, mathematical man concluded he had to concede the supernatural position. Interesting. He considered the mathematical improbability of one enzyme forming by random chance, evaluated this evidence statistically, and then followed the evidence to a God concept. I do not know about you, but this sounds like good, common sense thinking in light of the data points at hand. Such is the power of the teleological argument. The intricate, specified crafting of one enzyme potentially can guide a person’s thinking toward the presence of a Master Designer, God.

In modern times, Christians, who are reputable scientists, have reworked and applied this insightful argument to the fact that our cosmos is fashioned on a perfect knife edge to promote life as we know it. Dr. Kenneth Boa expands this meaning when he remarks, “In other words, these are factors that must be just right—often within a very small range—for us to be here noticing them in the first place. This phenomenon is often called the ‘fine-tuning’ of the universe.”¹⁰ The enhanced view is, then, appropriately called the anthropic principle, building its name upon the Greek word for man.¹¹

Dr. Hugh Ross, a Canadian astrophysicist at the University of Toronto, has applied it directly and logically to how our universe is carefully constructed. He has charted over 122 factors which have to be just right for life to exist. Here are just three factors which illustrate just how finely tuned our planet is. If the earth’s surface gravity was greater, then there would be too much ammonia and methane in the atmosphere. If the gravity was less, not enough water would form in the atmosphere. If the earth’s distance from the sun were greater, then it would be too cold to live here. If the distance was less, then it would be too hot for life. If the thickness of the earth’s crust became greater, then not enough oxygen would form in the atmosphere. If less, we all might as well move to California and Hawaii because earthquakes and volcanoes would be commonplace.¹² Looking at this hard evidence led Dr. Ryrie to correctly conclude, “Random action could never have produced the highly integrated organization which we observe in the world.”¹³ Whether you give an atheistic scientist 40 billion or 100 billion years for all 122 factors necessary for life to fall into place accidentally, it seems more reasonable and logical to conclude this would never occur.¹⁴

⁹Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 65.

¹⁰Kenneth D. Boa, *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Publishing, 2001), 187.

¹¹William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 68.

¹²Hugh Norman Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 154, 188.

¹³Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 31.

¹⁴Atheists counter this argument by positing the possible presence of multiple universes. Within this theory, of which there is no evidence (only faith), the thinking is we just happen to be fortunate enough to live on a habitable planet within a uniquely structured universe. Other universes may not be so lucky; however, some may

Transition: What are we left to conclude based on the intricate design evidence of the teleological argument? Once more, I believe we are moved to consider a premise we encountered concerning the practical outcome of the cosmological argument. What is that outcome?

The consequence of the teleological argument points to God's person. Design does not just speak of a Designer, it shouts at us concerning His existence. And just what does this design tell us about the divine craftsman? Yes, what can we possibly learn about the person of the unseen One?

In its base form, the argument suggests the Designer is the essence of unlimited creative intelligence. How could He not be when you consider the complex specificity, intrinsic beauty, and inter-connected intricacies of all the components and systems of the entire cosmos. Once more, this conclusion, based on the data points before us, dovetails with the Judeo-Christian concept of God.

The Psalmist sounds like a supporter of the teleological position when he exclaims, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day do day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (Psalm 19:1-2). That speech from the creation of the heavens alone highlights a divine being’s unlimited knowledge in creating them to sustain life on earth. As Geisler notes, “If Jupiter were not in its current orbit, the earth would be bombarded with space material. Jupiter’s gravitational field acts as a cosmic vacuum cleaner, attracting asteroids and comets that might otherwise strike earth.”¹⁵ The knowledge one gains from studying the master design of the stars and planets and their perfect relationship to earth also points to a Being with an infinite intelligence to position all of this evidence up there for us to contemplate.

Transition and Restatement: Evidence of this nature should cause any thinking person to consider the absolute rationality for embracing the divine option for the origin of the cosmos. Everyone understands how every effect must have a cause, and this naturally leads us to ask, “What set causation in motion in the first place?” Everyone also knows how complex, magnificent structures, be they the stone carving of Abraham Lincoln in Washington or the Eifel Tower in Paris, France, cause us to stand in wonder at the designer behind the design. Such is the power of the cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of the ultimate Cause and ultimate Designer, God. But there is still a third powerful proof we need to analyze.

THE THIRD LINE OF PHILOSOPHICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A DIVINE BEING IS THE MORAL ARGUMENT.

Transition: Dr. Norman Geisler has written extensively about this view in several of his books. In his book *If God, Why Evil?* He convincingly demonstrates through logical reasoning how . . .

and others might be headed toward the prospect of life. Cf. Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, pp. 107-108.

¹⁵Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 105.

The core of the moral argument points to God's presence. Consider how this argument is constructed by first addressing the key term: morality. We all know what this term means. It simply references right or wrong behavior. As such, it is an easier term to wrap your mind around than the two we have already addressed, and as with the other two arguments it does lead us to posit a pragmatic question: Where does the concept of morals come from?"

In classic fashion, Dr. Geisler equips us to answer this question by giving us yet another powerful syllogistic argument.

1. Every law has a law giver.
2. There is a Moral Law.
3. Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver.

When I performed my first wedding in Virginia eight years ago, I did not think I needed a license because I had performed weddings for nineteen years in California. I found out differently when I went to sign the marriage license. It asked for a clergy number. I did not have one, and within a few days I discovered all three facets of this syllogistic argument. I paid a fine, went to court with the couple, stood before a judge and waited while he worked to finalize his rendering for the "crime."

From this cognitively tight syllogism comes a reality which is rude for some and welcomed for others. Absolute moral law exists. True, some attempt to say morals are relative; however, the argument is self-defeating because it defies what it is trying to disprove. To say absolute morals do not absolutely exist because morals are relative is to prove the contrary point. If we are honest, we all know there are absolute moral laws woven through the fabric all of peoples and nations. Murder is never virtuous. Robbing a bank is never a wholesome activity. Hacking into someone's computer is never a cardinal virtue. Failing to help a disabled person who has fallen in public is never classified as an admirable position to take. If moral absolutes did not exist, we would not be able to do any commerce with other nations, nor would we be able to have allies, diplomats and so forth.

Transition: The truth is despite our world's rush to embrace relative morals, we just cannot escape the presence of absolute moral laws which transcend time and culture. Their very presence guides logical thinkers toward a very sober and exciting contemplation of the existence of an eternal Lawgiver, God. Their very presence also validates the premise that . . .

The consequence of the moral argument points to God's person. This is exactly what C. S. Lewis came to understand in time. Lewis, the quintessential atheist, eventually traded his supposedly airtight atheism for belief in the Judeo-Christian God based on the force of this reality and this argument. Listen to his testimony:

Just how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? . . . Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove God did not exist—I

found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense.”¹⁶

How interesting. Lewis just could not get his mind around where his concept of absolute time transcending moral law came from. As I said, he eventually followed the evidence to the logical belief in the eternal Lawgiver, God. And he discovered, from reading the Judeo-Christian Scriptures that the God displayed here was, in fact, the eternal essence of all absolute law. Once more, Psalm 19 helps us see another perfection of the great unseen God when it states, “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:1-2) That which is perfect needs no modification and, by definition, cannot be relative. Such is the nature of God’s law, and its law we readily see woven through the warp and woof of our world as an eternal testimony to His presence and person.

[*Transition and restatement*]: Just as a magnificent spider web dangling between two posts at your home causes you to think of the spider who designed this web wonder, I am convinced there is a Divine Designer based on the wonderful web held together by the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments.

THE CONCLUSION

The question now is simple: What will you, a thinking, educated person do with the three rational, logical evidences for belief in a divine being who sounds very much like the God of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures? Will you permit the evidence to move you from reason to faith, or will you decide to hold tightly to your airtight reason, while steering clear of faith? Perhaps I can help you in your decision with an interesting story from a recent scientific discovery.

On February 11, 2016, scientists at the California Institute of Technology and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced they had finally detected gravitational waves from a massive collision deep in space. The factual news, interestingly enough, came 101 years after Albert Einstein postulated about the mathematical possibility for a ripple effect in space-time.¹⁷ Mind you. Scientists had no hard facts, just a whole lot of faith based on a little reason. As they doggedly studied the evidence and scoured the heavens, their faith eventually led them to making a historical scientific discovery of all time.

Restatement of the Big Idea: Please, do not tell me faith is not important. If faith coupled with minimal evidence led these thinking minds to a great scientific find, how much more can the massive evidences in the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments move you toward an even greater find, even God Himself? It is a journey which led me to belief in a divine being some 49 years ago. And those three evidences gave me all the reason I needed to solidify my faith in the existence of not just a divine being, but a powerful, personal God who cares not just about me, but who cares about you.

¹⁶C. S., *Mere Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2001), 38-39.

¹⁷Matt Emerson, “At its Heart, Science is Faith-Based Too,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 2016, accessed July 22, 2016, http://www.wsj.com/article_email/at-its-heart-science-is-faith-based-too-1457049114-lMyQjAxMTA2NDI4MMDMyMTA5Wj.