

Skeptical: "How can we believe in God if there isn't any proof?" 5/12/19

Faith in God is nothing more than the license religious people give themselves to keep believing when reasons fail...Atheism is not a philosophy; it is not even a view of the world; it is simply a refusal to deny the obvious [God does not exist]. The atheist is merely a person who believes that the eighty-seven percent of the population who claim [to believe in the existence of God] should be obliged to present evidence for his existence. - Sam Harris, Neuroscientist and leading proponent of New Atheism, "Atheist Manifesto"

OK, Dr. Harris, I will take you up on that challenge this morning. This is really a 2 part message, on the 26th, Problem of suffering, which is Sam Harris' biggest issue with the idea of God. Now I realize that the vast majority of us in this room fall into the 87% of humanity that does believe in God, so to some degree I will be preaching to the choir...literally. Some of you say, I believe in God because I trust the Bible, or because you have experienced him in your life. And these are strong subjective evidence, but I want to first reason together for those who don't necessarily trust the Bible's account, or have not had an experience of God in their lives. Who are skeptical.

The common narrative among the New Atheist movement, some familiar names such as Sam Harris, Late Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins are a part of, is that **faith in God is unreasonable and irrational**. What I'd like to demonstrate is that **believing in God, on the contrary, is actually the most reasonable and rational explanation of reality**. I want to give you three resources: Alvin Plantinga's, 2 Dozen or so arguments for God, Tim Keller- The Reason for God, chapter 8-9, Philip Yancey, Rumors of Another World.

Since we don't all have philosophy degree nor the time for Plantinga's 2 Dozen arguments, I want to look at just **4 Reasons Belief in God is the Best Explanation of Reality**. While we cannot see God, I believe his fingerprints are all over the universe and his fingerprints are on every human life he has made. Tim Keller makes a great point that while "none of lines of evidence in themselves are absolute, airtight proof of the existence of God, that the accumulated weight of them are very formidable."

Reason #1 The Big God behind the "Big Bang"

Prior to the last 70 years or so, many in the science community believed that the universe itself may be eternal, they really didn't have an explanation for its origins. But now, there is strong evidence that the universe exploded into existence and is expanding outwardly from a singularity, a single, infinitesimally small point. Stephen Hawking wrote, "Almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the Big Bang."

And so many scientists think they have solved the mystery of what created the universe, the big bang. But there is an obvious missing question....If you are in your room sleeping at night and you hear a little bang, you would want to know what caused the little bang, wouldn't you? How much more important is it to understand what caused the big bang? Why is there something instead of nothing? Science has no answer to this question. [\[Back to #1 Reason Slide\]](#)

Now this is a major whole in their argument. Why? Everything in this natural world owes its being to something other than itself. An egg is contingent upon a chicken, and a chicken is of course contingent upon an egg and so forth all the way back through time. Last week I met Jim Perdue, the Chicken Man. And I asked him, "You might be the right guy to ask, what came first, the chicken or the egg?" Good dad joke. So tell me, Sam Harris- what is more rational and reasonable...to believe that everything came from absolutely nothing or that everything came from something outside of time/space, outside of nature, a supernatural, non-contingent being.

It is amazing to me that recent science with the big bang theory in essence describes what the Bible has been saying for thousands of years. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth. And God said, let there be light and there was light." God spoke into the nothing and created everything. You don't need a degree in astrophysics to see the fingerprints of God. So simple that the shepherd boy, David, on that hillside long ago said, *Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God.*

Reason #2 A Fine-Tuned Universe

Francis Collins, the brains behind the Human Genome Project and Christian, *"When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants...that have precise values. If any one of those constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million, million, the universe would not have been able to coalesce, there would have been no galaxy, stars, planets or people."*

Late Christopher Hitchens said the fine-tuning argument is without a doubt the greatest evidence of God, and my fellow atheists agree. *Stephen Hawking in moments of honesty said, "The odds of a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications. It would be very difficult to explain why the universe would have begun in just this way except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us."*

But Stephen Hawking and others committed to the cause of atheism, have to devise another answer, The multiverse theory, "Well there may be trillions of universes over enormous amount of time and space and so inevitably there would be one lucky one." Of course there is zero evidence of this theory. Is it possible? Maybe...but which is more rational and reasonable to believe, a God who intended to create a finely tuned universe like ours to sustain life or a completely unsubstantiated multi-verse theory that unintentionally, sort of stumbled into life by sheer luck? [\[Back to #2 Reason Slide\]](#) When an atheist tells you they don't have faith, don't believe it. Philosopher John Leslie gives this illustration. Imagine a man who is sentenced to be executed by a firing squad consisting of fifty expert marksmen. They all fire from six feet away and not one bullet hits him. Since it is possible that even expert marksmen could miss from close range it is technically possible that all fifty just happened to miss at the same moment. Though you could not prove they had conspired to miss, it would be unreasonable to draw the conclusion that they hadn't. Although organic life could technically have just happened without

a creator, which is more reasonable? We move from looking out into the stars to inside our souls.

Reason #3 Transcendent Beauty, Desire and Meaning

Pictures- Grand canyon, Hawaii, Kids eating Ice Cream, Symphony, Love, baby

That baby...an accidental collocation of atoms- Bertrand Russell.

I know you think your spouse of 60 years is beautiful and you are in love- but it's not real. It's just a neurological hardwired response to data, inherited from ancestors who survived because this trait helped them survive. You know the significance and meaning you feel when you listen to Beethoven or experience powerful worship? This is just humanity dancing to our DNA- Richard Dawkins. These intensely real, significant, powerful experiences point to nothing beyond themselves.

[Back to Reason #3 Slide] Regardless of the beliefs of our mind about bio-chemical responses and the random meaningless of life, before the face of awe, wonder, love and beauty we know better. But it is not just in the experience of love, beauty and meaning, it is in the **longing for it**. St. Augustine in his *Confessions* reasoned that our unfulfilled longings of hunger, joy, love, sex, friendship, success “all signify that we want something that nothing in this world can ultimately fulfill”, because it is only a hint, a clue, a fingerprint of the divine fulfillment we were made for. Solomon- Put eternity in our hearts.

This is why it is impossible to live without transcendence. Our soul's long for it, and we will find a God, even if it is lowercase g. Philip Yancey- “Sophisticated moderns have not renounced transcendence but rather replaced it with weak substitutes. Unlike past generations, many are unsure about God and an invisible world. Even so, we feel the longings for something more. A society that denies the supernatural usually ends up elevating the natural to supernatural status.”

Exactly what the Bible says in Romans 1:25

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised.

Is it more reasonable and rational to believe that we are just a collocation of random atoms and our experience of transcendence and longing isn't real? Or that God created us to worship and long for it as a shadow of what is to come?

Reason #4 An anchor for Morality

Is there such a thing as moral absolutes that are true and right for all societies for all time? Or is morality relative, just a social construct or something passed down in our DNA for survival? Does any one person or society have the right to tell another person or society how to live? Well, in a purely atheistic system, the rational and reasonable answer is NO. Nietzsche, the father of modern atheism, argued that if God is dead then there is no anchor for morality, no absolutes, only what is practical for survival of our species. But no one actually lives that way.

Tim Keller says, "People who laugh at the claim that there is a transcendent moral order do not think that racial genocide or rape is just impractical or self-defeated, but that it is actually wrong. We do not only have moral feelings, but we also have an ineradicable belief that moral standards exist, outside of us, by which our internal moral feelings are evaluated."

Atheist Philosopher, Bertrand Russell- I cannot live as though ethical values were simply a matter of personal taste, I do not know the solution to this.

In the Reason for God, Keller tells the story to illustrate this so well. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban is a cultural anthropologist, her and all her colleagues believe in cultural relativism- a view that all moral beliefs are culturally created and that there is no basis for objectively judging one culture's morality to be better than another. But she was studying so Middle Eastern cultures and was appalled at their oppression of women. She immediately realized her conundrum: what right did she have to promote and even work to legislate her views over those of the non-Western societies? You can read her full response in the book but what she concludes: "When there is a choice between defending human rights and defending cultural relativism, anthropologists should choose to protect and promote human rights. We cannot just be bystanders."

Tim Keller comments on this. "If you insist on a secular view of the world and yet you continue to pronounce some things right and some things wrong, then I hope you see the deep disharmony between the world your intellect has devised and the real world that your heart knows exists."

But pure atheism not only has to deny moral absolutes, it must deny even the concept of good and evil. These are religious terms, how can actual evil exist? This is why Richard Dawkins works so hard to eliminate such things as evil. He says, "We must deny the reality of evil if our argument is going to stay." So then, Dr. Dawkins, what do you say of the stories of the Nazi soldiers at Auschwitz who raped young Jewish girls, then shot them in front of their families, all with a wry smile? Is that evil? Or the Las Vegas gunman who responsible for the greatest mass-shooting in history? Who had no history of mental illness or seemingly no motive other than to kill? Is that evil? Or are we just "dancing to our DNA?" The atheist is left with no true categories when faced with the reality of evil.

Why is there real evil and real good? Why is justice right and rape wrong? Because it is anchored in a transcendent moral God who created us in his image and stitched morality to our conscience.

Which is more rational and reasonable to believe, that morality, good and evil are just practical constructs or that there is a moral law giver who wired us for morality?

Summary:

Reason #1 "The Big God behind the Big Bang"

Reason #2 A Fine-Tuned Universe

Reason #3 Transcendent Beauty, Desire and Meaning

Reason #4 The Anchor of Morality

Now I have attempted to demonstrate briefly that, contrary to Sam Harris' statement, that I opened with, that belief in God is the most reasonable and rational explanation for reality. I've primarily attempted to engage your intellect. But, I need to be honest and I say this in love. I actually don't think unbelief in God is made with our heads, **I think it has to do with suppression of truth in our hearts.**

What brings British author A.N. Wilson, C.S. Lewis, Christopher Hitchen's younger brother Peter and many former atheists to faith in God? Not the fine-tuning argument, or creator argument...it's they have always known God is real and finally stopped repressing it. This is Paul's entire argument in **Romans 1:25 For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him or gave thanks to Him.** They exchange a truth for a lie.

A very successful DE businessman came to speak at a class I am taking and made it very clear that he is an atheist, very colorful and candid man. A pure Epicurean. After the class I came to find him and asked him why he is an Atheist. I was waiting for all the intellectual arguments. He said, "Freedom. I don't want anyone telling me what to do." Honest.

Philosopher Thomas Nagel, He says, **"I experience fear of religion. I want atheism to be true. I hope there is no God because I don't want the universe to be like that. And I can't imagine anyone who isn't subjective about that."**

[Back to suppression of truth slide] I heard an illustration once that puts this well. Imagine a man whose son is the apple of his eye. He built his life around his son's success. He would do anything for him. And so he spoils him. And sends him to the best school. And then one day the school brings in the father because they say they have evidence that his son has been cheating. But because the father does not want to believe that he comes up with another theory that explains away all the evidence, the school is jealous, they don't like him, they are setting him up. It's a conspiracy. "I don't need this" so pulls him out. Goes to the another. After a few months the same thing happens and so he goes to another.

The Bible says this is the problem of humanity. We have rebellious hearts. If God is in control, it means we owe everything to him and he gets to define reality for us. And so we will dismiss and repress what is in our soul.

I went through a period of agnosticism for about 4 years. While I hid behind intellectual arguments and seeing Christians as a bunch of hypocrites, the reality was actually emotional I was hurt by religious people who claimed to be Christians, and I wanted to live my life how I wanted. By my own moral code, for my own happiness. I chose to see the "alternative facts" and suppress what I knew in my soul. But what ultimately brought me to my knees was realizing that Jesus Christ so accurately described the deep brokenness in my soul and my complete inability to fix myself. But Jesus did not only describe the problem, but he offered the only

solution. Jesus took on my brokenness and sin and shame on the cross. **The ultimate evidence of God's existence is Jesus Christ.** How do we know love is not just chemicals in our brains? Because Romans 5:8 God demonstrated his love, while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How do we know justice isn't merely an evolutionary adaptation for survival? Because the justice of God was displayed when Jesus declared "it is finished" on the cross and judged our sin once for all. How do we know we aren't just an accident here for a brief moment in a meaningless universe? Because Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in will never perish."

[Title Slide] If you are a skeptic, ask yourself if you are honestly seeking, or if you have made a decision in your heart to not believe. If you open your heart and mind to God he will meet you there.