

## Introduction:

The origin and evolution of the universe - it's one of science's most fascinating subjects. People have a natural desire to understand where they came from and why they're here. In the modern era, one who wishes to seek out answers to life's most pressing questions can turn to society's vast library of scientific knowledge. Science tells us that 13.8 billion years ago, the universe burst into existence, rapidly expanding and spewing out the materials needed to construct everything that exists. It tells us that those materials gave rise to the amazing variety of stars, planets, and cosmic objects we see today. It tells us how life snapped into existence from the harsh, primordial environment of earth and gradually formed itself into the wide variety of creatures which now exist. The origin of the universe? The meaning of life? How we have arrived at our present state of being? All of these inevitable human questions can be answered logically for the rational person by mankind's indisputable catalog of scientific knowledge... right?

There are plenty of other explanations and teachings out there. What about God? Is believing in God naive, when science can explain everything without Him? Those with faith-based worldviews take a lot of ridicule from atheists, as they are told their beliefs are not compatible with science. Is taking your entire belief system on faith in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary a bad thing? Of course it is! If you can't be completely certain about what you believe in, why do you believe it?

Are you 100% confident that science can provide at least an adequate explanation of the universe? Much of society just shrugs and says, "Of course, because what scientists tell us is proven fact!" And if you don't agree with this, you are marked as a baseless skeptic. Is someone who doesn't trust everything science tells us really unjustified? I tell you he is not. There are a plethora of issues that have been raised with the plausibility of the atheist narrative that has been pushed onto society, and what I've seen thoroughly convinces me that there is no good reason to trust what evolutionary scientists tell us. But that's not what I'm here to talk about today, because on the scientific level, this is a ceaseless debate. In the end, science, no matter whose side you're on, can prove nothing. It's always possible to ponder and speculate from every way imaginable to refute and argue and rebut and re-argue. And if you can just accept this simple fact, there is already cause to doubt what you believe and search for a concrete explanation of what the truth is.

Earlier I said that taking something on blind faith is a bad thing. You might be wondering how I can believe in God and still make this claim. If science can't prove anything and observation is all we really have in this world, how can I be so sure that God is real? Simply put, I believe that observation is enough. I believe in a God that desires to be known by humanity and has given us everything we need to find Him. Allow me to walk you through the reasons I am sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is the Creator of everything.

## Consciousness:

The very fact that we are conscious is a problem for materialists. The conundrum arises from the perspective that a person is defined by their brain and that every aspect of the person - their personality, their emotions, their entire life's experience - is just a result of the complex biological mechanisms in their brain. This viewpoint essentially asserts that consciousness is an illusion and nothing we feel is real.

Here's an example:

Psychologist Richard Lazarus proposed three steps to explain how humans process emotion. The first step is called cognitive appraisal. In this step, the brain cognates an external stimulus, which triggers the emotion mechanism. Step two is physiological changes, in which chemical responses are produced, corresponding to emotions. The final step is action - the brain interprets the emotion and decides on a physical reaction. This seems like a reasonable model, but there's just something missing in the final step - something that no materialistic philosopher will ever be able to explain. What does it really mean to 'feel' emotion? See, this three-step process applies perfectly to robots. A computer can sense, compute, and respond, just as this process describes. What is missing is something to interpret the sensation. The computer is not conscious because it does not feel; it does not understand what it does; it is not self-aware. Of course, there are other models of emotion, but all of them are missing the same thing. Neurologists can describe the different parts of the brain and what function and control; they can tie neurons to the concept of thoughts; and they can determine what chemicals are linked to emotion. Yet in all this knowledge, they will never be able to tell you what it actually means to understand oneself, and they attribute consciousness to the massive complexity of the human brain relative to other life forms. That's a big leap to take, however.

The brain is a complex mechanism for perceiving the world and forming conclusions about it, but it is not conscious. Consciousness cannot occur without a soul to interpret it. What do I mean by this? Let's take some basic logical steps to allow me to illustrate my point. In the reality we live in, every physical thing we interact with can be divided or separated into components. You can slice fruit, cut paper, or take apart a computer. And anything which you divide can be further divided all the way down to the most basic pieces - atoms, perhaps. Even atoms and their components can be divided, too, but that's beyond the realm of this discussion. It's fair to say that nothing is a whole entity which is a combination of smaller entities, aside from the identity with which we imbue it for its purpose. For example, we recognize a car as a specific configuration of things that can transport us from place to place. Practically, it's one thing - an object we drive around in - but realistically, it's a combination of many smaller things, such as an engine, wheels, and a metal frame.

Now think about the human brain. Practically, it's one thing - an organ which allows us to perceive the world, but realistically, it's a combination of many smaller things which combine to produce that functionality. The brain can be divided into many different

components, such as lobes, which control different systems of the body. Again, any one section you can identify can be divided endlessly into more sections, down through neurons to individual molecules. This is where we find a problem for materialists who argue that a self-aware person is one and the same with their brain. The brain does not exist as a singular entity, since it can be divided, yet it is said to possess thoughts, concepts, and ideas. Abstractions such as these *are* singular entities. They're indivisible - they aren't formed by combining things, so why should we believe that they are somehow generated by, or exist within, something that is divisible? When you picture a pencil in your mind, where is the image of that pencil located? It obviously doesn't make sense to say that it is in one location in your head or another, but what then? It must exist, since it is observed by consciousness, but how can you explain it in terms of the same observational science which is used to study the brain? Surely it is the brain which holds the information necessary to envision a pencil, but no materialistic scientist will ever be able to explain exactly what it means to "picture" a pencil in your mind.

The bottom line here is that the brain, astoundingly complex as it is, is made up of the same things as the rest of the universe. The fact that it functions as a brilliant thinking machine is no reason to believe it is any more conscious than other parts of nature, which are all made up of the same basic elements of the periodic table. The fact that our car can perform more sophisticated functions than a rock does not make it any more self-aware than one. What's that? There's a difference between cars and humans, you say? Why, because we are alive? Let's read the definition of life, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica: life is "matter that shows certain attributes that include responsiveness, growth, metabolism, energy transformation, and reproduction". There is no requirement here for living things to know they exist. Need another reason why humans must have souls?

From the human mind comes information, and information is worthless without someone to understand it. Information, by definition, requires an interpreter to consciously understand it, else it is nothing at all. Humans, as conscious beings, require information to exist and learn about our universe, so which came first?

All these things we've talked about - concepts, ideas, information, and mental pictures of pencils - are not made of atoms or respond to the laws of the universe, but they still exist. And they, unlike the brain, exist as singular, indivisible entities. They just can't "fit" into the world envisioned by atheists where matter and forces are all that exist. Ultimately, this is why consciousness can't exist in the atheist's world - because concepts, ideas, information, and mental pictures of pencils aren't made of molecules or forces.

As a final argument, just as it is illogical to assume inanimate components can combine to produce a conscious and self-aware whole, it is even more illogical to believe consciousness came about through gradual natural processes. Consciousness is both irrational and unnecessary from the perspective that matter is all that exists. From this viewpoint, it seems like organisms should have evolved into biological, self-sustaining

computers. There should be no evolutionary need for creatures to know that they exist! Where could such a thing come from? Why should an animal need to do such things as question its life purpose, form emotional attachments, or be creative? They should merely be unconscious rovers with the sole purpose of sustaining themselves and continuing their species. Well, that's exactly what animals are, and that's why humans are not animals. Humans have souls.

### Morality:

This leads us to the concept of morality - the way we view our actions and those of others as being right or wrong. This also is a major problem for those who believe everything came about through gradual change. In a universe with no ultimate creator and authority, where is the basis for morality? Even the concept of good and bad makes no sense in the materialistic view, since similar to what was argued a moment ago, good and bad are not made of atoms and are not affected by gravity, yet they exist. What does the evolutionist say about morality? Why, it evolved, of course, just like everything else. So, "good", therefore should be considered the survival of the species, and humans would naturally embrace actions that promoted their survival. But once again, who's to define what's right in a universe without God? Isn't murder right because it eliminates a weaker human? Isn't stealing right because it aids the survival of the thief? Isn't racism right because a species should tend toward one, optimal version of itself? No! People do have a conscience! People have an inner, emotional sense of what is morally right. It is obvious why murder, stealing, and racism aren't right, but such a moral compass just has no evolutionary explanation.

Now, some evolutionists have proposed that morals developed because of the desire to pass on genetics to the next generation and continue the species. It is supposed that altruistic behaviors would be naturally selected because of their benefit to the group. But this reasoning falls short. There is no way that our innate sense of right and wrong could have arisen from a survival conflict. Such an explanation attributes some overarching intelligence to the species as a whole. Following this logic forces one toward the idea that every creature in the evolving world is part of some larger entity that can decide for itself where its evolution should go next. But it's not whole, since it's made up of individuals. How are these individuals, who don't possess moral understanding because it hasn't "evolved" yet, supposed to make a conscious decision to behave in a manner that would promote the survival of the group? Let me state this again to clarify my point. In a universe without God, morality, along with consciousness and intelligence, would be an illusion. It would require understanding in order for a single creature to realize that being altruistic, in other words making sacrifices for the greater good of the group, is beneficial to its species. But how would understanding like this even evolve in the first place since doing absolutely anything that could evolve into moral behavior, such as sharing a food supply or not stealing and murdering, is either detrimental or at the very least not helpful to the individual doing it. It is easy to see that the atheist explanation is circular reasoning.

## Laws of Nature:

Now, if you stand questioning all the arguments I've presented to you thus far, let me ask you one ultimate, seldom-asked question that, in my opinion, closes the case on the existence of God. Why is the universe upheld by laws of logic, and why are they consistent? It's a question so simple that no one asks it. The very best a materialist can do is reach a profound and suspiciously religious-sounding conclusion like "The universe exists because it had to exist" or to just avoid the question and believe that things are the way they are and we shouldn't ask why. But why not question it? I can think of a thousand ways to ask. Why is logic consistent from day to day? Why is math useful and not full of gaps and loopholes? Should  $2 + 2$  always equal 4 or should it suddenly change at random? Why are the laws of physics compatible with each other? Why is truth absolute? Why do the laws of nature allow for the existence of existence? I ask these things to force you to think - how would you answer them? The point I'm trying to make here is - why is absolutely anything logical enough for its own existence? There's no other way to say it than "That's the way it is". For me, that's not good enough. Why is that the way it is? Without God, you can never know.

Big Bang theorists assert that the universe began as a "singularity". What exactly is a singularity? Well, it's what existed at the beginning of the universe. I'm not going to attempt to explain what it is, because honestly, it's a very vague and mystical concept, but I want to point out that secular science's models of the origin of the universe, as it exploded out of this singularity, depend on the laws of nature just existing in the absence of literally everything else. At the beginning of the universe,  $2+2$  just had to equal 4. I mean, how would the universe have worked out if the laws of physics were random, and atoms just weren't able to hold together after the big bang happened? Here is a quote from atheist cosmologist Paul Davies: "Trying to explain the origin of the amazing laws of physics may lie beyond the scientific enterprise, and at the end of the day we may just have to accept them as an unexplained mystery". So you see, even atheists are forced to admit that something beyond nature exists as a precedent to the natural universe. Knowing this, the only decision to make is whether to believe in an intelligent God or to believe in mindless laws of nature that are somehow eternal. But yet the world goes to absurd lengths to explain the universe without acknowledging anything outside of it - planets flinging themselves into existence, incomprehensibly complex life popping out of dirt, creatures evolving through methods no one has ever witnessed. You see, if you just consider observable common sense without even getting into a scientific debate, it becomes clear that the atheistic origins explanation came about because humans just don't want the responsibility that comes with believing in God. They don't want to find out that they are accountable to a higher power.

## The Bible:

What is your perspective of the Bible? The mindset of the masses seems to be that it is a collection of myths and legends, which have little to no historical relevance. The reason for this stance is understandable. Since the Bible describes events which are to science impossible, most people dismiss it and cling to their security of “seeing is believing”. But that is an inconsistent attitude to take, since we all believe in that which we cannot see. We discussed this previously when we mentioned the fact that the universe is abundant with examples of immaterialities. Nevertheless, I would not expect you to embrace the veracity of the Bible only on the word of its Author. There are many observable facts which testify to its truth. Let’s see some examples.

The Bible claims many times to be the inspired word of God and it speaks for itself.

Forty different people, from fishermen to kings, wrote the 66 books of the Bible over a period of 2,000 years, and it never contradicts itself - not once. This fact is, of course, disputed by skeptics, but they are always taking passages out of context, misinterpreting the actual meaning of words, or just plain ridiculing it with no grounds.

All accusations against the uniformity of the Bible are always easily refuted. Many passages in the Bible directly support or refer to other passages, as an internal example of its perfect consistency.

In Acts chapter 17, Paul preaches to the citizens of Athens, condemning them for building a monument to glorify any gods they might have missed in their polytheistic worship and going on to explain about the life of Jesus. Monuments “to the unknown god” like the one Paul mentioned were discovered in both Athens and Rome, and were referenced in such ancient writings as the Bibliotheca, a first-century collection of Greek myths.

In 1868, a monument known as the Mesha Stele was discovered. Its author, King Mesha of Moab, describes an event that matches closely with 2nd Kings 3. Mesha tells the story from his own point of view, mentioning the God of the Bible as well as his false god “Chemosh”, and Omri (the King of Israel), both of whom were discussed in 2nd Kings.

In 1961, Italian archeologists discovered a plaque that was created by Pontius Pilate in dedication to Emperor Augustus. This was the first remnant to be found evidencing the existence of Pilate, who was a major player in the life and death of Jesus.

In 1993, the discovery of an artifact known as the Tel Dan Stele in northern Israel confirmed the existence of King David, whose historicity had always been disputed. The artifact was a monument erected by an unnamed leader who wanted to proclaim his victory over Israel, specifically referencing the killing of a king of the “House of David”. The inferred author, Hazael, who reigned before 800 BC, and his dominion over Israel, are described in the Bible.

Now let's move on to what is probably the greatest testament to the Bible's authority - its prophecies. What are prophets? The prophets of the Bible were not mysterious fortune-tellers, nor did they possess any special powers of their own. They were simply people who had a message that was given to them directly by God. Not only did the prophets convey their revelation to its intended audience at the time, but they also recorded it in the Bible so future readers could see how God directed history.

One of the most famous prophecies made in the Bible is the eleventh chapter of Daniel, where Daniel's plain writings reveal the precise pattern of war and conquest in the middle east for the next several hundred years. It describes the rise of Alexander the Great and the division of his kingdom, and the conflict between the cycling authorities of the north and south regions. For example, in verse six of this chapter, Daniel predicts that during a period when the two nations will be "joined together", the daughter of the southern king would attempt to make an agreement with the king of the north, which would fail. The next verse describes how her relative would enter the fortress of the north and defeat their army. In history, we see the fulfillment in the character of Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II, who was the king of Egypt from 283-246 BC. During a peace agreement between Syria and Egypt, she married Antiochus II, who was king of Syria at the same time. This marriage is believed to have been prearranged and would have benefitted Egypt. Four years later, Antiochus II remarried his first wife Laodice and died shortly after. When Berenice attempted to claim the royal status for her son, she was murdered by Laodice. This prompted Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III, to successfully invade Syria in what was known as the Third Syrian War. This complex chain of events is just a small segment of the massive prophecy by Daniel which came true in its entirety. Daniel's exposition of the future is so long, intricate, and 100% true that the best opponents of the Bible can do is claim that it was written 400 years later than it actually was. However, such claims have no ground when it is considered that the book of Daniel is included in the Septuagint, which was compiled before some of the events described by Daniel. Daniel's existence and status was referred to by the prophet Ezekiel, who is known by secular historians to have lived around 600 BC, as well as by Josephus, a first century historian. Additionally, the book of Daniel states that the last king of Babylon was Belshazzar, a fact that was completely lost to history by the time critics claim Daniel was written. The 1881 discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder confirmed the existence of Belshazzar. That's just a brief summary of the evidence for the divine inspiration of the book of Daniel. It is a matter of enormous debate between Christians and atheists. The plain truth is that the atheists would have no problem accepting its Christian data if it were not for the supernatural origin of the prophecies. Their denial makes them concoct evidence to attempt to prove that it was written in retrospect of the events it describes.

This is just one of the many amazing examples of fulfilled prophecy in the Bible. For example, Daniel also flawlessly prophesied the division of the Greek Empire. Ezekiel foretold the destruction of the city of Tyre. Isaiah prophesied the reign of King Cyrus. Micah foretold the exact town where Jesus would be born.

The life of Jesus is also well-documented in history. As with many events described in the Bible, secular historians would have no issue accepting the Biblical record were it not for the supernatural happenings. Almost all scholars agree at the very least that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and was crucified with the order of Pontias Pilate. Of course, Jesus' resurrection is unequivocally rejected by these historians. Christians often defend the Bible's account of His life by pointing to details that would be too "embarrassing" for the early Christians to have made up, such as the humble circumstances of His birth, the fact that the first witnesses to His resurrection were women (whose eyewitness account at that point in history would have been ignored), or that the disciples did not initially believe He had risen. They also point to the fact that the disciples were willing to die in defense of His gospel, and did, another fact documented by history. Many of the details of the fates of the apostles are unknown, but historical sources strongly agree that several of them were executed for their unwavering belief in Jesus' resurrection. Multitudes of early Christian sources concur that Peter and Paul were both killed under the persecution of Nero. First-century historian Josephus records that Jesus' earthly brother James was stoned to death by order of the high priest. The Bible itself records the execution of James the apostle. Most importantly, it is indisputable that all of the disciples put themselves in peril of death because they wanted to share with the world that Jesus had risen from the dead. Nothing in history suggests they ever gave up their convictions. Additionally, historical records testify to the fact that the Jews believed up to the second century at least that Jesus' tomb was empty and tried to argue that His body had been stolen, since His resurrection certainly made them look foolish.

## Conclusion:

And now we arrive at the end of this discussion. Throughout, I have tried to show how my faith isn't blind. In this world, we will all eventually seek out the meaning of life, and we have but logic and observation to sort things out. Human logic and reasoning only go so far, and I believe that whenever we can't use them or they contradict the Bible, we should trust God first. But when a person is searching for answers about if God exists and who He is, looking at the universe through an unbiased lens will show that all history, science, and logic screams out that God is real and the Bible is His message to humanity. The Bible itself even speaks to this fact, stating in Romans 1:19-20 "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse". There is one thing about the Bible I haven't mentioned yet. It is probably the single most compelling logical evidence that the Bible is really the one true message from God: It is unlike anything created by man. All of history's worldly religions are based around people earning their way to heaven. Some make pilgrimages, some perform rituals, some rely on their membership with their church, but all of them are doing empty, meaningless acts of self-redemption. All of man's invented religions have the common theme that people must do something to earn reconciliation with their god. Unfortunately, they fail to realize the insignificance of people's religious actions to the God who created this incomprehensibly vast universe. But the God of the Bible desires your heart. In Matthew 22:37, when Jesus is asked what the greatest

commandment is, He tells us "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." God made the universe as a dwelling place for us - souls which would have the choice to either seek Him or reject Him. In Isaiah 45:18, it says of the universe that God "created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited". The Bible says that none of us are righteous on our own merits. Romans 3:10 tells us that "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one". We've all done wrong; we've all broken God's commandments. Romans 3:23 says "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". But we can't atone for all the sins we've committed in our lives through our actions. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast". We can't do anything for God because God has already done everything for us. Jesus, of whom it is written at the beginning of the book of John "in the beginning" "was with God" and "was God", came to this earth to live a perfect life and die as a sacrifice for all of humanity. Isaiah 53:5-6 states of Jesus "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". The Creator Himself entered His creation to redeem us, who have rebelled against Him, so that we can live forever with God. Jesus went to the cross to die a cruel death willingly for you and for every person who has ever lived. He told us in John 14:6 that "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". All you need to do to claim this promise of God is to acknowledge that you have broken God's laws and there is nothing anyone can do to redeem himself, believe Jesus died in your place, admit to God that you need His saving grace, and ask forgiveness for all the wrongs you have done in your life, because only God can forgive. Romans 10:9 tells us that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved". Death could not have victory over Jesus. As He had promised in Matthew 16:21 that He would "be killed, and be raised again the third day", He did rise from the grave. He met with His disciples after He had risen, and Mark 16:19 tells us that after He "had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." And to anyone who believes in His sacrificial death and resurrection is made the promise of living forever in eternity with Him. John 3:16, possibly the most famous verse in the Bible, says "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". That's the meaning of life. The idea that the universe is all that exists is just an illusion created from the effect of being inside it. The fact of life is that life ends. And when life ends, we will cease to exist inside of the universe and suddenly step outside of it, where we will understand everything. And when we meet God, we will either be shocked with horror and terrified beyond comprehension at our impending judgement or overcome with joy at the pure bliss of being free from the imperfect universe and being with God beyond the mortal concept of time. I know for sure which outcome will be mine; do you?