

Is there a God?

by Rex Morgan

Here is an age-old question, but a very important one—the most foundational question of all. What could be more critical to our view of life? Does God exist or not? If so, what does he have to say to us?

In ancient times, people were much more inclined to believe in a power or powers beyond human comprehension. They revered the sun, moon, and stars as gods. There was a god of the sea and of the forest, gods were everywhere: a literal pantheon of countless deities.

In recent years, people in their droves have abandoned belief in God, for various reasons, including the behaviour of some Christians and clergy, problematic aspects of church history, captivation with material pursuits, and the belief that humankind is clever and resilient enough not to need help from any divine source.

Nevertheless, millions of people still believe in God, and many claim to have a personal relationship with him. Are such people simply naïve and superstitious? This is an important question for each of us to face with an open mind and come to our

own informed decision. It's a vital question because if there is a God, maybe he has something to say to us? And if he does exist, that opens up the intriguing potential of ongoing life after death.

Have you personally considered this question and made up your mind about it?

Having studied the matter carefully, here are two reasons I personally believe there is a God. Have a look at them and see how they stack up for you. This question is too important not to do some thinking on!

At the outset, it is important to recognise that no one can irrefutably prove the existence of God. But neither is it possible to prove he doesn't exist. I propose in this article that it is far more reasonable to believe that God exists than that he doesn't. And many people have found the evidence so compelling they have been willing to die for it.

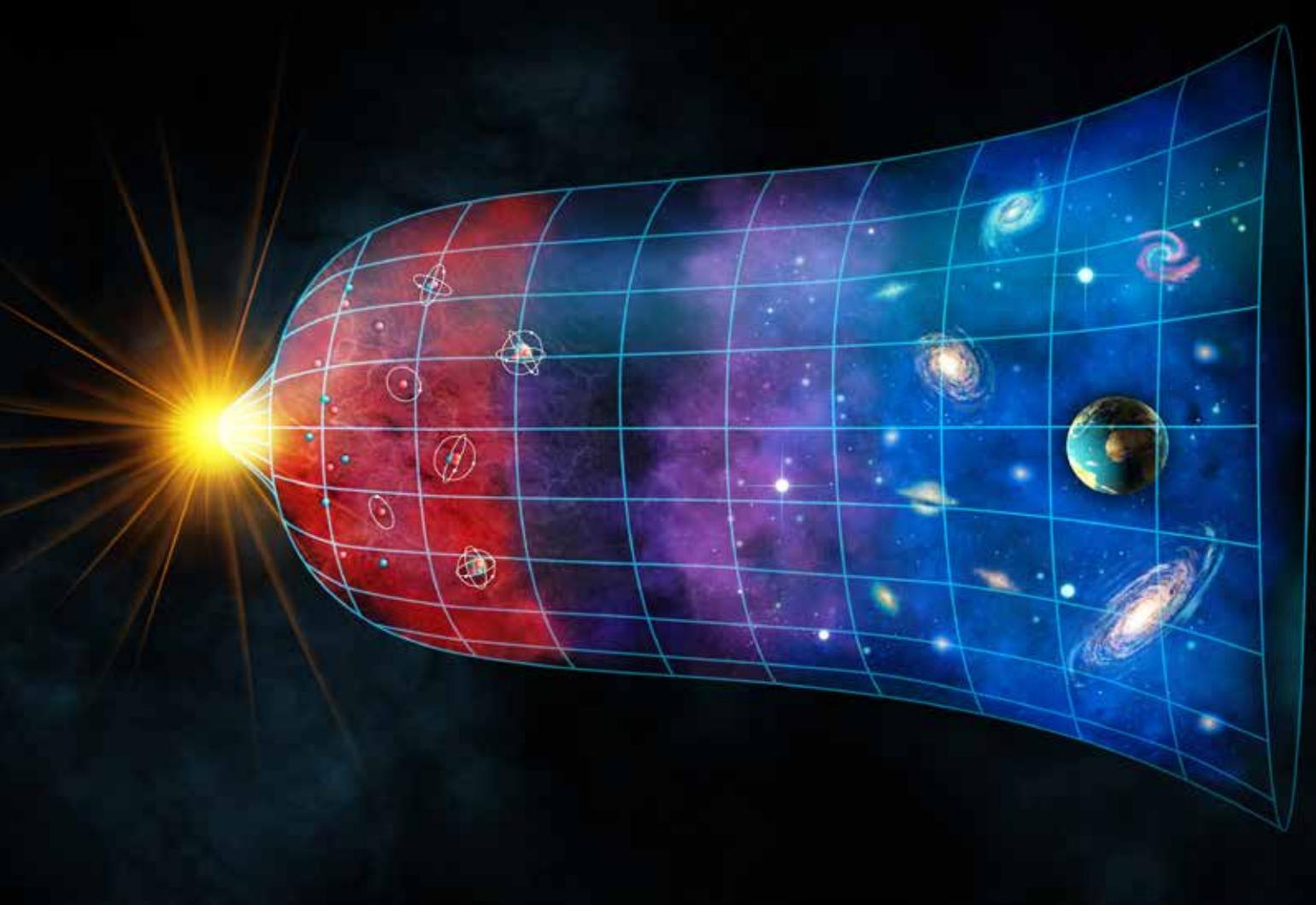
So, let's look at two reasons for belief in God, noting that there are many other reasons that lack of time and space prevent us from including here. First, we'll look at the world outside and around us, and then take a look at the world inside us.

1. The existence and design of the universe

Almost all scientists believe the universe had a beginning. In fact, even logic shows that there must



Many millions of Muslims, Jews, and Christians (pictured from top to bottom) claim a personal relationship with God through their prayers.



An artist's depiction, in compressed form, of the "Big Bang", commonly believed to be the beginning of the physical universe. Could it simply have created itself out of nothing?

have been a beginning, because it is impossible for there to have been an infinite number of years in the past. You can always add one more to infinity, so there is no such thing as an infinite number of years: there had to be a beginning. That means there was nothing before it. So where did things come from? How did the universe come out of nothing?

Logic, experience and scientific observation all combine to affirm that it is impossible for something physical to come from nothing. The physical universe simply couldn't have created itself out of nothing. So there had to be some cause from outside of space and time that brought the universe into being. It had to come from something beyond itself, therefore something immaterial, non-physical, or super-natural.

Adding to the impossibility of the material universe emerging

out of nothing, there is also the conundrum that living things exist in the universe, on earth at least. But where did life come from? The law of biogenesis states that "Life can only come from pre-existing life". Non-living material or mix of chemicals cannot give rise to life. It is evident that the fact of creation necessitates a creator, and life needs a living source. And if God is not that creator and source of life, who or what is?

So that is one valid reason for believing in God. And this belief isn't naive and superstitious—it is logical and scientific. Is there a better explanation? I haven't seen one. Maybe in the beginning there was some sort of primordial vacuum, but how could anything arise out of that? I think we have to conclude that God is the best explanation for the cause of the universe.

Of course, this begs the question of where God came from. See the accompanying box (p. 14) for an explanation.

Not only does the universe exist, but it is spectacularly and intricately designed, fine-tuned for human life. In recent years scientists have discovered numerous factors in the structure and nature of the universe, the solar system, and the earth that are precisely what are needed for life to exist.

For example, it so happens that the earth is located just the right distance from the sun. If it were only fractionally, say around 2%, further away, we would all freeze. If it were as little as 2% closer, we would all burn up.

It so happens also that the earth moves at just the right speed. If it moved marginally faster in its orbit

around the sun, the earth would be shifted outward to an orbit where it would cool significantly and life would cease, frozen. If it travelled only slightly more slowly, the sun's massive gravity would draw our planet closer, causing the extinction of all life.

Looking at the universe as a whole, a number of fundamental forces or laws of nature combine to make it what it is. One is the force of gravity, which happens to be at just the right strength. If it were stronger, the stars would be so hot they would burn out, but if it were weaker, they wouldn't become hot enough to ignite nuclear fusion, and no planets would have been formed.

Another is the strong nuclear force, which binds protons and neutrons within the nuclei of atoms. If it were any more than about 1% weaker,

protons and neutrons wouldn't stick together, resulting in the existence of only one element in the universe, hydrogen, and life would be impossible. But if the strong nuclear force were slightly stronger there would be no hydrogen and therefore no life.

Physicist Dr Robin Collins says:

Over the past 30 years or so, scientists have discovered that just about everything about the basic structure of the universe is balanced on a razor's edge for life to exist. The coincidences are far too fantastic to attribute this to mere chance or to claim that it needs no explanation. The dials are set too precisely to have been a random accident.¹

Commenting on the multiple forces and parameters of the universe that are "just right", acclaimed scientist Stephen Hawking observed:

The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.²

Hawking also observed:

The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous...I think clearly there are religious implications whenever you start to discuss the origins of the universe.³

He quantified the odds with this astonishing statement in his bestseller, *A Brief History of Time*:

If the rate of expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have re-collapsed before it ever reached its present size.⁴

Even the renowned atheist Fred Hoyle famously stated:

A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.⁵

Celebrated British cosmologist Martin Rees, who has been Astronomer Royal since 1995, wrote that if the six numbers that underlie the fundamental physical properties of the universe were altered "even to the tiniest degree, there would be no stars, no complex elements, no life".⁶

Astrophysicist Dr Hugh Ross has catalogued 38 cosmic characteristics that must have values falling within narrowly defined ranges for life of any kind to exist.⁷ Noted physicist Paul Davies remarked:

It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the universe... The impression of design is overwhelming.⁸

Where did God come from?

This is a tough question for us to get a handle on because we are physical and material. But since matter is not eternal and can't create itself from nothing, something outside the bounds of the material universe must have brought it into being. The Bible claims that God exists above and beyond time.¹⁹ From our viewpoint, he is "everywhere" and "everywhen" simultaneously, because he created space and time. He has existed eternally. Asking "Who created God?" limits our enquiry by assuming God is confined to the same limitations as human beings. It's as if we are characters in a novel trying to comprehend the reality of the novelist, who exists totally outside the "world" of the novel.

One way to help grasp this point is to consider your own mind and thoughts. How many things can you think of at one time? How much room do your thoughts take up? Can you see or touch your thoughts? Thoughts are an example of something that is outside space, and not limited by time—you can instantaneously cast your mind back many years if you wish; thoughts are unlimited by physical constraints.

In this way, our imagination gives us a peek into the realm outside the material world, the realm of the 'spiritual' or 'supernatural', the dimension inhabited by God. Eternity, where God exists,²⁰ doesn't refer to time going on forever and ever; rather it references a realm or dimension outside of time—transcending time and space. So God exists without beginning and end. He didn't have to come from anywhere—we only think he did because we are looking at it from the material standpoint.



The breath-taking complexity of one molecule of human DNA—far too tiny to be seen by the naked eye, an intricate spiralling ladder with about 100 million twists, highlighting a single gene. Did this amazing self-replicating mechanism come into existence by an astonishing accident, or was it designed by a wise creator?

When we replace the telescope with a microscope and look into the inner world, the same breath-taking complexity again astounds us. For instance, one molecule of human DNA, far too tiny to be seen by the naked eye, comprises an intricate spiralling ladder with about 100 million twists, and about 100 billion atoms. The human eye looking into the microscope contains 40 different mechanisms, such as a lens, a pupil, and a retina, and is made up of 130 million cells. And is there anything more marvellous than the human brain, which processes more than a million messages every second?

At every level the world of nature shows evidence of design. Humankind keeps on trying to copy the design of nature, and usually is unable to do a very good job. And

how can there be design without a designer?

In this article I'm focusing only on first causes. Science has made it clear that today's world has developed through a process of evolution over millions of years. But that doesn't account for the original or first cause. Something or someone had to put evolution into process, and a wise Creator God is the only candidate I can see for this. In his brilliance, he set in motion a process by which all life would "create" itself in this way.

What is the alternative, if you don't believe in God? The only answer can be that everything somehow came into being by chance, that it is all a massive coincidence, an astonishingly unlikely accident!

I actually think it takes more faith to believe in that than to believe an eternal God brought our universe and world into existence!

For our second evidence of God's existence, let's move from the outside world to what happens inside human beings.

2. The existence of qualities like personality, morality, and reason

In addition to proposing that physical matter somehow arose from nothing, an entirely material view of the universe also requires that non-physical elements such as personality, consciousness, rationality, free will, and moral values resulted from random chance.

There is an immense gap between the capabilities of human beings, who have personality, identity, and reflective self-awareness, and non-living things, or even other animals and plants. How could the marvel of human consciousness and personality possibly originate from the inorganic, impersonal matter of which the universe is composed? If there is a personal God, then human personhood makes perfect sense. Without God, it is inexplicable.

What about moral and ethical values, such as the sense of right and wrong that every human being feels? Values like kindness, concern, forgiveness, and love: how did they arise out of mere molecules and matter?

Atheists are quick to raise the question: "How could there be a God when the world is full of evil and suffering?" It's ironic that they protest about evil when in their worldview there can be no such thing as evil, since every occurrence is just what happens in the natural world. The very fact of their outrage at evil indicates that they are in touch with some standard of goodness

by which they judge the world as defective. In other words, there is an overarching standard of goodness, which surely points to God!

The fact that they can even ask this question means that they are able to reason and query the existence and even the character of God, and the fairness of life. But when you think it through, none of these abilities makes sense if everything about humanity arose from inert matter.

Influential British writer, C.S. Lewis, who converted to Christianity when he faced up to questions such as these, remarked:

Supposing there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen, for physical or chemical reasons, to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by-product, the sensation I call thought. But, if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? It's like upsetting a milk jug and hoping that the way it splashes itself will give you a map of London. But if I can't

trust my own thinking, of course I can't trust the arguments leading to atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an atheist, or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I cannot believe in thought: so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God.⁹

How can dust and mud give rise to intelligence and reason, without a guiding hand shaping and giving vitality to it? It just doesn't make logical sense. Intelligence demands an intelligent source. Yet atheism requires us to believe that intelligence and reason somehow arose from non-intelligence and non-reason.

Consider also for a moment the origin of information. The article you are reading contains information. If the page was to be burnt, the printed words would disappear, but the information would still exist. It has no mass or energy, and takes up no time or space. Because it is a non-material entity, its origin can't be explained by material processes. How does information come into existence? The information in this article came from my thinking, research and writing. In doing this I produced a non-material entity. This is something we all do, whenever we think a thought and then manipulate it alongside other already existing thoughts. Meaningful information and thoughts alike must come from an intelligent non-material source. It is impossible for purely material causes to account for the immaterial.

It is thought that the whole universe arose from a singularity the size of a hydrogen atom,



Intelligence demands an intelligent source. How can dust and mud give rise to intelligence and reason, without a guiding hand shaping and giving vitality to it?

and yet we cannot plumb the information content of the universe. The more we scrutinise creation the more we discover. Interestingly, the Bible refers to Jesus as (the) *logos*, meaning “word, reason, information”, and says that he was there in the very beginning, and created all things.¹⁰

The fact that we have free will is further evidence that we are not simply products of blind chance or accident. In that case thoughts would be simply products of the automatic chemical reactions going on in our brain and we would not be free to think things out for ourselves.

What about attributes such as creativity, imagination, and the ability to reflect, and even to worship? How could they stem from physical processes? From where does the common human desire to worship a higher being arise?

If we were created by a personal, loving God, then it makes total sense that he would be interested in imbuing us with our individual personality, self-awareness, values, emotions, and a desire to worship him.

To advance from non-living matter to consciousness and morality involves a quantum leap, the crossing of a vast chasm from measurable substances into the area of unmeasurable spiritual qualities.

If there is no God, there is no standard for what is right and wrong. We are left with each person's viewpoint, with none being more valid than any other. Yet we all agree that despicable crimes like child abuse and mass murder are wrong for everybody, everywhere. This isn't just a personal preference or opinion: it is an objective moral standard. And that is best explained as having been put within us by a moral God.

Inability to explain away mankind's sense of objective moral values is the chief reason a scientist of the stature of Francis Collins converted to Christianity. Dr. Collins, former

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head of the Human Genome Project, explains why he believes in God and how this is compatible with being a leading scientist in his book, *The Language of God*.

We all have a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, much as it sometimes seems that some people don't! The rightness or wrongness of actions or attitudes can't be determined by any kind of scientific methodology. Yet there is love and hate, selfishness and self-sacrifice, evil and goodness. How could these

values or qualities arise from inert, meaningless matter? Surely there has got to be something outside the physical—something that can be called “spiritual”.

C.S. Lewis mused on the phenomenon of love and put it this way:

You can't, except in the lowest animal sense, be in love with a girl if you know that all the beauties both of her person and of her character are a momentary



If our thought processes are explained in entirely physical terms, where do compassion and love come from? But if there is a personal loving God who made humans in his image, such qualities are easily explained.

and accidental pattern produced by the collision of atoms...¹¹

How can any chemical reaction or series of reactions lead to the appreciation of beauty, self-consciousness and self-awareness? How can personality, personhood, and identity come from something impersonal like matter? Where does compassion come from if our thought processes are explained in entirely physical terms?

But qualities like compassion and love are the attributes of a personal loving God who exists, and “made man in his image”,¹² which is what the biblical book of Genesis stated, thousands of years ago!

It has been convincingly argued that life without God is absurd. At the very least, it is meaningless. The atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell referred to the universe as “purposeless” and “void of meaning”. He wrote that man’s “origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms...”¹³ Without God, life is all a hit and miss matter of time and chance, and there is no inherent value, purpose or design in life. But with God in the picture, life is of immense value, so much so that God was willing to die for each one of us.¹⁴

C. S. Lewis argued incisively:

If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning. Just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.¹⁵

British philosopher Antony Flew was a vociferous advocate of atheism for most of his life. Between 1950 and 2000 he authored about 30 books and papers, all arguing against belief in God. However, in 2004 he shocked his fellow atheists when he dramatically changed his position, stating that he now believed in the existence of an intelligent creator of the universe. In 2007, he published

a book entitled *There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*.

Flew said that he decided to lay aside his personal bias and preconceptions and follow the evidence wherever it led him. A methodical analysis of the scientific evidence caused him to change his mind.

He states in his book:

I must say that the journey to my discovery of the Divine has been a pilgrimage of reason. I have followed the argument where it has led me. And it has led me to accept the existence of a self-existent, immutable, immaterial, omnipotent, and omniscient Being.¹⁶

and

The only satisfactory explanation for the origin of such end-directed self-replicating life as we see on Earth is an infinitely intelligent mind.

We’ve looked at just two reasons for believing that there is a God. Christians point to several other powerful evidences, such as the reliability and wisdom of the Bible, the accuracy of biblical prophecies, the uniqueness of the life and teachings of Jesus, the historical proof of Jesus’ resurrection, and the presence of God in the lives of believers.

God can be personally known and experienced by anyone who wishes to be in contact with him. The Bible promises that those who seek God will find him,¹⁷ and if we draw near to God he will draw near to us.¹⁸ Numerous people have taken up this challenge down through history and have found that God has become a personal reality in their lives. If you would like help in pursuing this further, please be sure to contact the staff of *Inside Life* at the address given on the inside front cover of this magazine.

Notes

- 1 Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, Zondervan, 2004, p.160.
- 2 Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, Bantam Books, New York, 1988, p. 125.

³ Stephen Hawking quoted in Fred Heeren, *Show Me God: What the Message from Space Is Telling Us about God*, Day Star Publications, 2000, p.186.

⁴ Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, Bantam Books, New York, 1988, p. 125.

⁵ Fred Hoyle, “The Universe: Past and Present Reflections”, *Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics* 20 (1982), p.16.

⁶ Brad Lemley, “Why Is There Life?”, *Discover*, Nov 2002, and Marin Rees, *Just Six Numbers: the Deep Forces that Shape the Universe*.

⁷ Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, Navpress, 1993, p. 111.

⁸ Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1988, p. 203.

⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*, p.32.

¹⁰ John 1:1–3

¹¹ C. S. Lewis, “On Living in an Atomic Age”, in *Present Concerns*, Collins, 1986, p. 76.

¹² Genesis 1:26.

¹³ B. Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, Touchstone Books, New York, 1957, pp. 106–107.

¹⁴ Matthew 10:28–31; John 3:16.

¹⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Macmillan, New York, 1943, p. 46.

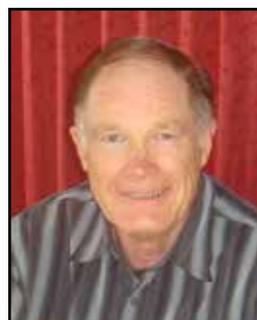
¹⁶ Antony Flew, *There Is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, Harper Collins, New York, 2007.

¹⁷ Jeremiah 29:13.

¹⁸ James 4:8.

¹⁹ e.g. Isaiah 48:12–13; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Peter 3:8; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 1:8.

²⁰ Isaiah 57:15.



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