

UPON THE ROCK

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UPON THE ROCK is printed quarterly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians

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*We begin this issue by acknowledging Mark Reynolds who served as Editor of **Upon the Rock** for the past ten years, and Larry Reynolds who served as Co-Editor. With each issue, Mark and Larry made sure to provide Christians excellent articles and sound Bible teaching. The elders of the West Side church of Christ, along with the new Editor, are indebted to both Mark and Larry for their contribution and editorial oversight. We greatly appreciate them for their service to Christ, His church, and for their love for the Truth. We thank you and love you both!*

For the next several issues of **Upon the Rock** we will be getting back to the basics of Bible doctrine. It's always a wise undertaking to return to the basics of Bible teaching and for several reasons. First, it's always a good thing to refresh our memories on basic, fundamental teachings of God's Word. Perhaps there are things we have forgotten or things we really never gave much thought to before, which makes our endeavor into these studies that much more personally rewarding. There may be times when we are unsure of our understanding on a particular matter, and a study of the basics can better educate us. Getting back to the basics of the Bible can certainly strengthen one's faith, providing them confidence of knowing a particular subject when discussing spiritual matters with others.

Second, there may be new Christians who are in need of learning and knowing the fundamentals of the faith. What a tremendous way for newer Christians to dig deeper into the Word of God, allowing themselves to fortify their own faith. Third, it is vital that our young men and women be well acquainted with the fundamentals of the faith in order to stand up to the unrighteousness found in our in our school systems, including humanism, atheism, Evolution, rampant immorality, and disrespect for the authority of God's Word.

In our upcoming issues of **Upon the Rock** we will be dealing with a number of important Bible topics such as "**Bibliology**" – a study of the Bible; "**Angelology**" – a study of angels; "**Hamartiology**" – a study of Sin; "**Soteriology**" – a study of salvation; "**Christology**" – a study of Christ; and "**Ecclesiology**" – a study of the church. In our current issue we are addressing "**Theology**" – **A Study of God**.

As noted above, Theology is the study of God. Such a study is needed because there are many misconceptions about the God of the Bible – even Christians are guilty of entertaining misguided

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notions concerning our Creator. This was true in the first century as well as the 21st century.

A Study of God is important because it is the Grand theme of the Bible, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). It is our prayer that this study will benefit each of you and that you will have a greater knowledge of who God is, be assured of His existence, understand more of His nature, and come to appreciate and love Him all the more.

Editor – Doug Post

Who, or What, is God?

Doug Post

There is nothing more thrilling than a study of God. It is a subject so very deep, vast, and challenging that it seems almost incomprehensible at times. For instance, we learn from the Bible that God is eternal but can we really comprehend the meaning of “eternal”? The thought of a self-existing Being, having no beginning and no ending, is truly mind-blowing. If we spend too much time considering this concept we might blow our own “circuits.” Isaiah tells us that we cannot know everything about God: **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts”** (Isaiah 55:8-9). The apostle Paul said it this way:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out. For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” (Romans 11:33-35).

While we may not know everything there is to know about God, we can certainly know SOME things and be assured of knowing them. While God has revealed Himself to mankind through General Revelation, i.e., through His creation, He has also revealed Himself through Special Revelation, i.e., through Divine Revelation – through the Scriptures. While people may know that God exists through General Revelation, they will never know God in an intimate way until they know Him through Special Revelation, through His Word. This

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intimate knowledge of God is what He desires of us. The wise Solomon wrote, **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”** (Proverbs 9:10). God desires that we know Him, revealing enough information about Himself so we can. Although God has not revealed everything about Himself, He has provided enough information to have a relationship with Him. Regarding this easily accessible information concerning God, Moses wrote, **“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law”** (Deut.29:29). What God has revealed about Himself in the Bible is sufficient for us. What He has NOT revealed we simply do not need to know. It would be impossible to truly and intimately know God if He had not provided us information about Himself and if He had not revealed His Will for us on the pages of sacred Scripture.

We can know God from the information we glean from the Bible. For instance, we know from the Bible that He is eternal (Psa.90:2; 1 Tim.1:17) and that He is a God of love (1 John 4:8). We can know He is a God of love and yet, we can ascertain He is a God of **“goodness and severity”** as well (Rom.11:22).

We also KNOW that God is the Creator of the universe and of life (Gen.1:1). Please note that the Bible begins by declaring, **“In the beginning God ...”** Please understand that God does not begin His Special Revelation by defending His existence, nor does He offer a “twelve-step” program in order for you to believe in Him. God simply bursts upon the scene as if to say, *“I Am God Almighty, I Exist Because ‘I AM’ –Believe it!* And, what is so “mind-blowing” about all this is the fact that God was not created and did not come from anyplace or anyone. He has always existed. He simply **IS**. The idea of **“I Am”** is that it is simply the verb “to be” – it is always in the present tense, implying God’s eternity. God simply **IS!** Being eternal is a quality that only God possesses. God only is eternal, which makes Him the “First Cause” of Creation, i.e., He is the One who made everything – He is the cause of it, as opposed to some theoretical, spontaneous explosion from nothing that randomly formed all life and matter. If there ever was a time when NOTHING existed, then NOTHING would exist today, in other words, **nothing, plus nothing, equals nothing.** Both logic and Science dictate that something cannot be produced from nothing. Only something can create something, and God is that **SOMETHING** – He’s the “First Cause.”

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We learn from Scripture such things as, God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and a Spirit has no flesh, bones, or blood (Matt.16:17; 1 Cor.15:50; Luke 24:39). We learn from Scripture that a **moral authority** exists (moral laws of “good and bad”). One writer makes a great point regarding **moral authority**:

“If there are moral rules, moral laws, and/or moral authority, then there must be someone(s) to initiate this state of affairs (God)” ... “If people have a sense of moral oughtness the existence of which cannot be explained by principles of organic evolution (or other theories of naturalistic origins), then this sense of moral oughtness must have been created (i.e., God-given). We do have this ‘moral oughtness’.” Therefore, it was created and God exists” (Gilmore, 88).

God, through the Scriptures, provides the Moral Authority: **“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”** (Gal.5:19-24). Most importantly, however, we learn from the Bible that God sent His Son to save us from our sins (John 3:16; Acts 2:23-24; Rom.5:6-8, etc.). While we may know all of this information, believing God exists, we still need to answer this question – who, or what, is God?

Monotheism is the belief in one God, which is opposed to polytheism, which is the belief in many gods. This is certainly a distinctive of both Judaism and Christianity. From Creation to present day God’s people have believed and taught that there is only one God, and that this God is the God of the Bible. Moses declares one God and only one God: **“To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God: there is none other besides Him”** ... **“Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the Lord Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other”** (Deut.4:35,39). And for emphasis sake, Moses goes on to say, **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one”**

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(Deut.6:4). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul also affirms monotheism saying, **“there is no God but one”** (1 Cor.8:4) and **“Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one”** (Gal.3:20). Indeed, the Bible teaches there is only one God (1 Kings 8:60; 1 Chron.17:20; Isa.43:11, 44:6,8, 45:5a; 45:21, 46:9, Zech.14:9; James 2:19 Mark 12:29, 34; John 17:3; Eph.4:6; 1 Tim.2:5, etc.). Although the Bible teaches that there is only one God, it also evinces the fact that there the only one God is comprised of a plurality of Persons or Personalities. Several passages of Scripture demonstrate this concept:

- **“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”** (Gen. 1:26) – [In the Old Testament, the word **God** translates the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is the plural form of *Eloha*, of which the shortened form is *EI*].
- **“Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil”** (Gen. 3:22).
- **“And the LORD said, Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech”** (Gen. 11: 6-7; cf. 20:13; 48:15).
- **“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me”** (Isaiah 6:8).
- **“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth”** (Eccl.12:1), [the word *Creator* is in plural form in Hebrew].

The above passages of Old Testament Scripture conclusively reveal that the Hebrew word for **God** is plural, representative of there being a plurality of Beings who are God. The word *theos* is a Greek word meaning “God” from where we get the word “theology” or “study of God.” The word **God**, itself, is not so much a **name** of a Being or Person as it is a description of a Being or Person. It’s a word suggesting quality, nature, or essence. One scholar expresses it this way:

“These appellations, when used of the true God, simply suggest the nature or quality of being divine--deity. The word “God” is not the name of a personality; it is the name of a **nature**, a quality of being. When it is said, therefore, that there is but one

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God, the meaning is: **there is but one divine nature**" (Jackson).

Although there is only one God, the Scriptures demonstrate that this one God has a "Triune" nature (three Beings or Persons who comprise God and/or who are God, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). This is the concept commonly referred to as the "Trinity" (the words "Triune" and "Trinity" are not found in Scripture, but the concepts are). Though the fullness of the **Trinity** is far beyond human comprehension, it is unquestionably how God has revealed Himself in Scripture—as one God eternally existing in three eternal Persons. Since there is but one God, there is but one Divine Nature. This one **God/Divine Nature** is possessed by the three Beings identified as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, thus *God* has internal differentiations. This is not to suggest, of course, that the Bible presents *Tritheism* or three different gods (cf. Deut.6:4). On the contrary, the Bible clearly teaches there is only One Divine Nature (God) and that there are three Beings who possess this one Divine Nature. This Bible concept is vastly different than the false concept of *Tritheism*.

Regarding the text of Deuteronomy 6:4, "**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one**" – the Hebrew word *echad* literally means a collective, unified, or united one. "It is a numeral having the power of an adjective and means one, together, unitedly ... the intensive reflexive form signifying to unite, to join oneself together, to collect oneself" (Gesenius', 28). God, collectively, is three unified or united Persons in one **Essence**, or in one **God**, or in one **Divine Nature**. To underscore this point, Genesis 2:24 tells us that man (husband) and woman (wife) are one (*echad*), Genesis 41:25-26 states that two dreams are one (*echad*), and 1 Samuel 22:13 says many speak with one mouth (*echad*). This same concept is stated in Zechariah 4:19, Malachi 2:10. The concept of a multiplicity persons being one is demonstrated for us in the New Testament as well. In the account of the healing of the **Gadarene Demoniac** (a demon-possessed man living the country of the Gadarenes) we are told that the man was possessed by many demons (Mark 5:9), yet these many demons (plural) were described by Jesus as being an "**unclean spirit**" (singular) (Mark 5:8). In describing the church of Christ, the apostle Paul say, "**For as we have many members in one body**" (Romans 12:4; cf. 1 Cor.12:12ff).

The term "God" is frequently used in the general sense of the

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Godhead or Deity. This One **Divine Essence** subsists wholly and indivisibly, simultaneously and eternally, in the three members of the one Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **The Scriptures teach that these three Persons together are one and only one God.** This Three-in-Oneness is made explicit in the New Testament by virtue of the presentation, personhood, and deity of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

As noted above, a new term is introduced describing God, the “Godhead.” The word **Godhead** is found three times in Scripture (Col.2:9; Acts 17:29; Rom.1:20) and is simply another derivation or another way of saying **Deity, Divine Nature, or Divine Essence.** The apostle Paul evinces the fact of one Divine Nature (God) or Godhead, dwelling in Jesus: **“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”** (Col.2:9). Jesus had the fullness of Divine Nature in Him. The idea of the word **Godhead** is that of **Godhood.** Actually, the term “Godhead” is a form of “Godhood.” It is accurate to say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all part of the Godhood so that there is no subordination as to essential being though Christ as human did subject Himself to the Father (Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; John 17:1-5; Phil. 2:6-8) and will, then, do so for an eternity (1 Cor.1: 15:28). In summarizing what has been said thus far, the beloved Guy N. Woods wrote:

“How is it possible that there is but one God, yet three persons in the Godhead? The answer is that the word **God** is the name of the divine nature, and since there is but one divine nature, there is but one God. However, there are three persons possessing this one divine nature; and by a figure of speech which grammarians call the synecdoche – where a part is put for the whole or the whole for a part – each person of the Godhead is called God in the Scriptures” (Woods,121,122).

The Divine Beings or Personalities constituting the plurality of God, or Godhead, are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – each one is referred to as God:

The Father:

- **“Labor not for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you: because God the Father has set His seal on Him”** (John 6:27).

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- “[T]hat you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).
- “[Y]et for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through Him we live” (1 Cor.8:6).
- “[O]ne God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph.4:6).

The Son, Jesus Christ

- “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us” (Matt.1:23).
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).
- “[W]ho, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (Phil.2:6).
- “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

The Holy Spirit:

- “But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself, while it remained your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4).
- “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor.1:10-11).
- “[I]n whom you are also being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph.2:22).

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When *God* is mentioned we need to think of all three Divine Beings unless the context shows that one is specifically being discussed. The oneness of God and the recognition that He is the only God is one of the basic ideas of Christianity. With that recognition, we learn we must submit to Him in all things.

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The Existence of God

Bob Hawkins

While doing mission work in Murmansk, Russia, this writer was blessed with a wonderful opportunity to present solid evidence for God's existence in many schools, several Institutes, orphanages, hospitals, and in many Bible studies, classes, and gospel meetings. Since the number of atheists in Russia is at a higher percentage than in most countries, the necessity of proving God's existence to many of the Russian people came as no surprise. But, upon returning to the

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states after working seven years in Russia, this writer received quite shock. There was a noticeable change in our beloved country, which was not for the better. For example: Tattoos and sloppy appearance had become common place; People living together in fornication had become acceptable, rather than being looked at as shameful and sinful behavior; But, the most disturbing change was the numerous attacks being made against the Bible and Christianity on a regular basis. What has resulted is obvious: The number of atheists in our country has increased; And the number of sound congregations of the Lord's church has decreased! In Indianapolis, Indiana, according to the newspaper, four billboards near the interstate going around the city, reads: "You don't need God - to hope, to care, to love, to live." Did you recognize Satan's lie from the beginning, "...ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil?"

There is a great need for Christian evidences to be taught in our Bible classes, to be preached from our pulpits, to be presented in lectureships, newspaper articles, and public debates, as we have the opportunity! As members of the Lord's church, we must be prepared to defend "**the faith,**" (Jude 3). We should be teaching our children and our grandchildren about Christian evidences, Not only because they will be taught by atheistic teachers, who accept the general hypothesis of evolution (evolving from lower species to higher species) as a fact, but because they need to have a strong biblical faith. Christians need to be ready to give an answer (1 Pet. 3:15), not hang our heads down and mumble "I just accept that God exists." What kind of faith pleases God? Not a blind leap in the dark kind of faith; not little faith; and not wavering faith *tossed to and fro*; but true Biblical faith, as the Hebrew writer declares, "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen**" (Heb.11:1). If God, as revealed by creation and the Holy Bible, exists, and if the Holy Bible is truly the infallible word of God, then the hypothesis of general evolution is false. It can be logically proven, that God exists, and that the Holy Bible is the infallible word of God. Therefore, the general evolutionary hypothesis is without a doubt **false!** Evolutionists desire for all of mankind to believe as a fact, that life came about by chance from non living matter, and that man evolved from a single cell organism (lowest life form) over a period of millions of years. However, they are unable to state one fact. What they state is their hypothesis, which is based on assumptions! But here is the fact of the matter: **Man is without excuse when he denies**

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the existence of God (Cf. Acts 14:13-18; Rom. 1:20)

ROCK SOLID EVIDENCE WHICH PROVES THAT GOD EXISTS:

I. **COSMOLOGICAL:** Every Effect must have an Adequate Cause – **“For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God”** (Heb.3:4). Everything built or created must have a builder or a creator. If we see an object moving without seeing what cause it to moved, could we not conclude that something caused it to move? And, could we not conclude that whatever caused it to move was an adequate cause to make the object move?

The Kalam Cosmological Argument:

Premise 1 – Whatever begins to exist has a cause (cannot come from nothing)

Premise 2 – The universe began to exist

Conclusion – The universe has a cause for its existence

Since the universe is **fine tuned**, it is illogical to conclude that the following measurable areas of science and mathematics resulted from blind chance: laws of Physics and constants; speed of light; gravitational force; electromagnetic force; cosmological constant; Boltzmann’s constant; Planck’s constant; proton mass; atomic mass; electron mass; weak and strong nuclear force; carbon energy resonance; and many others could be listed. One who believes that blind chance is an adequate cause for an orderly universe is either deceived or desires to believe a lie rather than submit to their Creator!

II. **TELEOLOGICAL:** Everything that has Design must have a Designer – **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork”** (Psa.19:1). **“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”** (Rom.1:20).

HOW DO WE DETERMINE DESIGN? (1) IMPROBABLE OBJECT (2) RECOGNIZABLE PATTERN; Small probability and Specification; Matter plus Energy cannot produce Information (different parts interacting); Example: writing on the sand, cave drawings, four past Presidents’ faces on Mount Rushmore, etc.

Let us take the human brain and compare it with a well designed computer: How can evolutionists bridge the gap between the realm of hard objects and the realm of ideals and concepts? God, who is all wise and knowing, gave us a mind which is capable of reasoning and learning a language. Information implies Intelligence –

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therefore, intelligence, which comes from being created in the image of God, bridges the gap.

Let us take a living cell and compare it with a chemical factory: Hundreds of chemical reactions are going on simultaneously. There are subdivided compartments in the living cell, as in a chemical factory.

Let us take the human eye and compare it with a well designed camera; or the human female's milk and compare the best formula on the market today; or take all the wonderfully designed systems of the human body with genetic coding and compare it with anything manmade. DNA is a code which was designed by God. **All codes have a designer!**

Let us take the wonderful features of our planet earth, as there is no life on other planets. The location of the earth is a key point. Earth is located in a galactic, habitable zone, which is the best setting for complex life or for making scientific discoveries, (observation of the structure of the Milky Way & other galaxies). The distance from the sun is just right for life to exist on the earth (surface temperature). If we were five percent closer from the sun, we would be like Venus. If we were twenty percent further from sun we would be like Mars. Also, the tilt of the earth, at twenty-three and a half degrees, is perfect for the earth to enjoy four seasons resulting in excellent growing conditions. The rotation of the earth, every twenty-four hours, serves to evenly heat the earth. Then, consider the atmosphere of the earth, having just the right composition of gases (Nitrogen 78%, Oxygen 21%, Argon slightly less than 1%, and Carbon Dioxide .03%) enabling us to breath very comfortably, and the right proper density serves to filter ultraviolet light. Oceans of the earth – known to exist only on the earth – make up seventy-nine percent of the planet's surface (340 million cubic miles of liquid water with heat absorbing properties which help regulate the earth's temperature). The crust of the earth – Continental Crust – is usually over twice as thick as the oceanic crust. Consider the moon; its distance from the earth is just right for controlling the tides. It's size and distance are just right for a total eclipse of the sun, enabling man to study the sun's upper atmosphere, where the chromosphere spectrum can be seen. (See Psa.95:4-6; Isa.45:18)

III. ONTOLOGICAL: The study of the nature of being, existence, or essence. The concept of God could not be possible, unless God exists. Since man has the concept of a perfect being, a

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perfect being must exist. Man's imagination cannot create, but works on the things already in the mind. Solomon wrote, **"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun"** (Eccl.1:9). Man has a concept of God because God has revealed Himself to man, **"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"** (Gen.1:1) and **"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth"** (Psa.46:10).

THE NATURE OF MAN:

1. MAN HAS A SENSE OF OUGHT – We are made in the image of God: **"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth"** (Gen.1:26). The nature of our very being – Man is able to know who he is; know his fellow man, and know God his Creator. He can understand the value of a human life, and he can certainly know the value of his eternal spirit, **"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"** (2 Tim.1:12).

2. MAN HAS AN APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY – Animals do not have this quality, which cannot be explained by the evolutionary hypothesis. This is one of the ways man is made in the image of God. Music is produced by making distinctive sounds. Composers use their talents to create beautiful orchestrated masterpieces. Man is cable of recognizing musical sounds from noise and appreciating the difference. Do animals admire a beautiful sunset, a flower garden, or works of art? How many animals take pictures of Niagra Falls, the Grand Canyon, or Glacier National Park?

3. MAN HAS A RELIGIOUS TENDENCY – Man by his very nature desires to worship something. This fact proves that there is someone who is worthy to be worshiped. All civilizations have worshiped something. Because some deny God's existence does not take away the fact that man is inclined to be religious. Some deny that man has been to the moon and some even deny matter, which is simply foolish and absurd.

4. MAN HAS A CONSCIENCE – Only human beings have a conscience, which is regulated by the influence one experiences in

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life. This could not have evolved into reality, but was given to man by his Creator as the apostle Peter says, **“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”** (1 Pet.3:21).

IV. MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF MAN: Morality could only come from God, who gave man His law, which is the standard by which we are to live on this earth, **“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law”** (1 John 3:4, see also Jer.10:23). It is impossible for an environment without law and morals to produce an environment with laws and morals! We have laws and morals because God gave His laws to man, who could choose to obey God’s laws and be a moral person or disobey God’s laws and be an immoral person .

V. THE HOLY BIBLE: God’s Revelation to man can be used as proof that God exists. There are many evidences proving that the Bible could not have come from man alone: Unity of 66 books written over a period of 1600 years by about 40 writers; no mistakes in history or geography. We also find exact detailed prophecy fulfilled hundreds of years after given by the inspired prophet (Over 300 prophecies of Christ are found in the Old Testament and their fulfillment is recorded in the New Testament). Of course, there are many scientific facts recorded in the Bible, which were written before they were known by modern man. In the Bible, we find a Superior wisdom that even anticipates the erroneous teaching of man. There are external evidences as well, such as the empty tomb, archeological discoveries, testimony from enemies of Christianity, and many others.

VI. LAWS OF SCIENCE: The First Law of Thermodynamics (or Law of Conservation of Energy) says that matter/energy can be altered, but it cannot be created (out of nothingness) and it cannot be destroyed (reduced to nothingness). This agrees with the Holy Bible, **“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made”** (Gen.2:1-2). Again, Solomon writes, **“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him”** (Eccl.3:14).

The Second Law of Thermodynamics (or Law of Entropy) says – **“...that left to itself any isolated system will go toward greater**

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entropy, which also means toward greater randomization and greater likelihood.” Energy, for example, is being depleted not destroyed (not usable, such as in the case of wood burning in a fireplace where the ashes cannot be reused for heat). Entropy (which means disorder) always increases or remains constant in a closed system. **Evolution is change outward and upward – Entropy is change inward and downward.** In other words, things are winding down: the size of the sun, the earth’s magnetic field is decreasing in strength, gases in the atmosphere are decreasing in strength, metals are rusting, and many other examples. This, absolutely, agrees with the Holy Bible: **“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end”** (Psa.102:25-27, Cf. Isa.51:6; Rom. 8:20,22; 1 Pet. 1:24; Ecc.3:20;.Mat. 24:35)

Biology Law of Reproduction says that every species produces after its own kind and there is no crossbreeding between species, which is exactly what God says in His Word, **“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”** ... **“And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good”** ... **“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good”** (Gen.1:11-12, 21, 24-25).

VII. MAN CANNOT PROVE THAT GOD DOES NOT EXIST – The Atheist affirms a negative proposition, which is incapable of proof. No one is cable of being everywhere, except God, **“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good”** (Psa.14:1).

CAN THE ATHEIST’S ARGUMENT (THE “PROBLEM” OF EVIL AND SUFFERING) BE ANSWERED? – WHY DOES GOD, THE ALL

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POWERFUL CREATOR, WHO IS LOVE (1 JOHN 4:8), ALLOW EVIL AND SUFFERING TO EXIST?

The Greek philosopher Epicurus (342-270 BC) is credited with stating this argument: "If God wishes to prevent evil, but cannot, then He is not all powerful. If He can prevent evil, but will not, then He is not good. If He has both the power and the will too eliminate evil, then why is evil in the world?"

This argument, which atheists continue using, does not, in itself, prove that the good, just, loving, and all-powerful God of the Bible does not exist. Simply because Epicurus had a problem in his mind about God and thought his argument could not be answered satisfactorily, only suggests that there might be a contradiction, and that is all. What positive proof can an atheist give to **prove** that the God of the Bible does not exist? Atheists are not able to know all things and neither can they see all things. Since atheists cannot offer any positive proof that God does not exist, they have no choice but to continue to use this same old negative argument. Trying to prove that God does not exist by declaring what one thinks to be impossible, is not objective proof, but merely an assumed problem. However, if this question/argument can be answered by applying logical reasoning, then the so-called "problem of evil and suffering" is not really a problem at all. It is only a problem in the minds of those who have raised this question concerning a good and all-powerful God who allows evil and suffering to exist in our lives.

The Bible tells us to, "**Prove all things; hold fast that which is good**" (1 The.5:21). This includes proving the existence of God. Therefore, God expects man to use reason and logic and not to rely on his feelings alone. "**There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death**" (Pro. 16:25). All of us, at one time or another, have felt very strongly in our mind, that we were right about something, but later learned that we were wrong. Therefore, we should not rely on our feelings alone, but be sure of our position by using logical reasoning in proving that our conclusion is true. Let us study with an open mind this question: can the atheist's argument, that a good and all-powerful God would not allow evil and suffering to exist, be answered? Here is the atheist's argument put into a logical syllogism:

Major Premise: If a good and all-powerful God exists, He would not allow evil and suffering to exist.

Minor Premise: Evil and suffering exist.

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Conclusion: A good and all-powerful God does not exist.

If both premises are true, then the conclusion must also be true, according to the demands of logic. However, if one of the above premises is shown to be false, then the conclusion would also be false. The Major Premise in the above argument can be shown to be false by using logical reasoning. It is not difficult to understand if one is willing to honestly consider what would happen if God prevented all the suffering and evil in the world. At first one might think how wonderful it would be, for all the suffering and evil to cease all over the world. Well, if God did intervene and prevent every accident and every possible sickness from happening, we could all jump off a high cliff or run in front of a speeding car without suffering any harm.

Although this may sound wonderful at first thought, we need to understand all the implications of God intervening with man's choices. In fact, this is crucial to our understanding of what our very life and being consists. When man loses his ability to make choices, he loses his life as a free moral agent. God allows man to choose – either to do His Will or not do His Will. But what happens when man chooses to disobey God? The obvious results are evil and suffering. For example, God reveals that drunkenness and murder are sinful acts (Gal. 5:19-21) and that He hates the shedding of innocent blood (Pro. 6:16-19). Therefore, a husband, who comes home drunk and beats his wife to death, has violated God's will. But, if God intervened and stopped this horrible sinful act, this man would not have the ability to live as a free moral agent, but would be as a puppet controlled by strings. According to the God's word, a husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. When we understand that Christ died for the church, we can better appreciate how God would have a husband love and treat his wife (Eph. 5:25-29).

What is meant by the phrase, "free moral agent"? Since God is love (1 John 4:8) He allows man the freedom to choose, rather than forcing us to submit to His Will. **Having no choice in making a decision in life really means having no life!** Imagine being in the position of a slave without any freedom. Everything that you do is controlled by your Master. Your Master decides that he wants to be worshiped as a god. If you do not worship him, then he has you tortured until you submit to his will. How could you love such a master? Suppose you were freed from this slavery – how important would your freedom be to you? However, let's consider a different master who gives you the choice of serving him or not serving him. Could it not be possible for

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you to love this Master? Well, of course you could, if you make the choice to love him. Man is to love God, not because he has no choice in the matter, but rather because he chooses to love God.

Let us imagine for a minute that we can choose between (1) a life with feelings, which means suffering could occur in your life; or (2) a life without feelings, which means there would be no suffering. A life without feelings would be a life without love, joy, a sense of accomplishment, excitement, or any other type of feelings which comes with the ability to make choices in life. Would not most of us choose a life with feelings even though it includes suffering? To ask is but to answer. Please dear reader, consider with an open mind the following logical arguments which prove that God can allow evil and suffering to be present in the world and still be good, just, loving, and all powerful:

Major Premise: God is love (1 John 4:8).

Minor Premise: Love demands freedom of choice for mankind.

Conclusion: God gave mankind freedom of choice.

Major Premise: To have life as a free moral agent, mankind must have the ability to make choices.

Minor Premise: Man's ability to choose enables him/her to do that which is evil.

Conclusion: God must allow evil to exist in the world to allow man to be a free moral agent.

Major Premise: God wants man to obey Him but gives him the choice (Titus 2:11-14).

Minor Premise: Satan uses deception to get man to choose to disobey God (Gen. 3:1-6).

Conclusion: Man should reject Satan's deception and choose to do the will of God.

NOTE HOW JESUS OVERCAME TEMPTATION (Mat. 4:1-11).

Major Premise: God hates sin/evil (Prov.6:16-19).

Minor Premise: God forgives sins when sinners contact the blood of Christ (Eph.1:3-7).

Conclusion: God loves us/sinners even though we sinned against God (John 3:16).

WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE REJECT THE WITNESS OF GOD?

Perhaps, the answer can be summed up with Deception, Desire, and Distinction: **DECEPTION:** The adversary – Satan has deceived them:

- “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor.4:4).

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- Ignorance is not “bliss” because not having understanding of God or His Will shows a heart that is blind to Truth. Paul wrote, **“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”** (Eph.4:18).
- **“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”** (Gal.6:7-8).

DESIRE: Many deny God’s existence, because they do not want to submit to His Will, desiring rather to walk in their own ways:

- **“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat”** (Gen.3:6).
- **“And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go”** (Exo.5:2).
- **“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others”** (Eph.2:2-3).

DISTINCTION: Because many people do not want others to think that they are uneducated, they accept man’s philosophy, especially when highly educated scientists deny God:

- **“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue”** (John 12:42).
- **“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”** (Gal.1:10).
- **“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”** (Col.2:8).

WHAT HAPPENS, WHEN MAN IS NOT THANKFUL TO GOD – FOR LIFE AND ALL THE BLESSINGS THAT HE HAS BESTOWED UPON MAN?

He becomes vain in his imagination and his heart is darkened:

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- “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom.1:21).
- “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph.4:17-18).

He is unable to know God and to have true peace of mind:

- “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor.10:5).
- “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col.3:15).

HOW SHOULD MAN RESPOND TO GOD?

He should use his mind to reason that an all-powerful being exists (1 The.5:21; Eph. 5:10). He should know – obey – serve – trust God (John 17:3; Heb.5:8-9; Pro. 3:3-7; Jer.10:23). He should love God with all his heart, soul, and might (1 John 4:19-21; Mat.22:37; John 14:15). He should be thankful to his Creator (Col.3:17; 1 Tim.2:1-5). He should have such a strong desire to be with God for eternity in Heaven that he looks forward to the second coming of Christ and does not fear death (Phi.1:21-23; 2 Tim.4:8).

CONCLUSION:

God has given man the best possible evidence for His existence. Therefore, man is without excuse! How do we respond to God? How thankful to our Creator are we? Do we want to be with God or Satan for eternity? What does your life say about your choice?

Works Cited

(All scriptures is from the King James Version)

The evidences presented came from class notes taken in Curtis Cates’ class on Christian evidences in the Memphis school of Preaching; Apologetics Press material; And DVD’s produced by Illustra Media. The material on the atheists’ argument came from a tract by this writer, which was printed into the Russian language, entitled: “The Problem Of Evil And Suffering, Is It Really A Problem?” – Robert A. Hawkins

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West Side Church of Christ Invites You...

July 29-31---Brad Harrub, "Evolution"

***September 17---Ladies' Day, Speaker:
Cynthia Guy***

***October 7-9---Joe Wells, "Absolute
Truth"***

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WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27

2. BELIEVE THE WORD OF GOD

Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16

3. REPENT OF YOUR SINS

Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3

4. CONFESS THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF
GOD Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36

5. BE BAPTIZED FOR THE REMISSION OF
YOUR SINS Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Romans
6:3-4

6. LIVE FAITHFULLY UNTO DEATH

Revelation 2:10