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Apologetic Outlines

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ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The Ontological Argument

introduction:

- the ontological argument has been around for over 1,000 years, has never been destroyed, is “the most intensely philosophical proof for God’s existence” and continues to have a “high place of honor... (in) textbooks and professional journals.”¹
- “ontological” comes from the Greek word *ontos* which means being.² thus, the argument is based on what God must logically be as a being.
- the ontological argument endeavors to show from the very notion of God that God exists: “if God is conceivable then He must actually exist.”³
- there are 7 different forms of the argument (Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hartshorne, Malcolm, and Plantinga). this outline includes the first and the last.⁴ the first, by St. Anselm, because it is both the argument’s origin and perhaps the simplest form. the second, by Alvin Plantinga, because his is the argument’s most recent presentation and because his version has remained largely unrefuted since its first major publication in 1992.

I. St. Anselm’s Ontological Argument⁵: “The Proof from Prayer”⁶

- (1) God possesses all possible great-making properties.
- (2) it is more great-making to exist in reality than to exist only in the mind.
- (3) therefore, God possesses the property of existing in reality

support for premise #1 - Anselm’s words: God is “that which nothing greater can be conceived.”

- A. everyone can conceive of greatness
- B. the greatest being that can be conceived is God.
- C. if one could conceive of something greater than God, then God would be *that*.
- D. one cannot conceive of a greater being than the greatest possible being.
- E. God by definition is the greatest possible being.

¹ Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press: 1994), 69.

² Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 554.

³ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway Books, 1984), 79.

⁴ for the other forms of the argument see *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, pages 555-564.

⁵ Anselm does have a second form of his argument based on the idea of a “Necessary Being.” For this form see *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 555.

⁶ called such “because he thought of it while meditating on the idea of a perfect Being.” Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 24.

support for premise #2

- A. for something to be greater is for it to be more in significance, measure, preeminence, superiority, and/or supremacy.
- B. reality as the total state of affairs of all that actually exists, is greater than things that do not exist but can be thought of.
- C. Anselm gives an example of a painting. "Which is greater, the artist's idea of the painting or the painting itself as it really exists?"⁷ His answer is that it is obviously greater to have a painting not only in an artist's mind but also in reality.

conclusion:

- A. if God existed only in the mind, then there could be something greater than Him which can be conceived. namely, a God that exists not only in the mind and but also in reality.
- B. God must exist since He is the greatest possible being that can be conceived.

II. objections⁸

- A. suppose one denies the definition of God being the greatest possible being.
response: whatever else one desires to conceive of as God, must still deal with the notion that all can conceive of a greatest possible being. a greatest possible being is greater than anything less that one might choose to define as "God."
- B. just because one can conceive of something in their mind does not mean it exists in reality.⁹ example: if i simply claim that a greatest possible island can be conceived that does not mean that the greatest possible island exists.
response 1: it is agreed that just conceiving something in the mind does not make it exist. however, the "greatest possible" constitutes a special case.
response 2: there can only be one case of "greatest possible" which must then include existence in the mind and reality. anything less than "greatest possible" would be less great or imperfect and therefore may not exist in reality.
response 3: one cannot apply the concept of "greatest possible" to an island because an island is dependent on something else, making it less great. the concept of "greatest possible" can only apply to God since it is greater to be completely independent.

III. Alvin Plantinga's "A Contemporary Modal Version of the Ontological Argument"¹⁰

- maximal excellence: to have omnipotence, omniscience and moral perfection in some world.
- maximal greatness: to have maximal excellence in every possible world.
 - (1) there is a possible world (W) in which there is a being (X) with maximal greatness.
 - (2) but X is maximally great only if X has maximal excellence in every possible world.
 - (3) therefore, X is maximally great only if X has maximal excellence in every possible world
 - (4) in W, the proposition "There is no omnipotent, omniscience, morally perfect being" would be impossible – that is, necessarily false.
 - (5) but what is impossible does not vary from world to world.
 - (6) therefore, the proposition, "There is no omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect being" is necessarily false in this actual world, too.
 - (7) therefore, there actually exists in this world, and must exist in every possible world, an omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect being."¹¹

⁷ *Reasonable Faith*, 79.

⁸ two of the most common objections are responded to here. since my purpose is to explain the simplest form of the argument, Kant's objection is left out since it requires discussing Anselm's 2nd form of the argument in order to respond. the most sophisticated objectors should be directed toward Plantinga's form of the argument since it is the most sophisticated form and is considered to have defended the argument against Kant's criticisms (see *Reasonable Faith*, 90).

⁹ first posed by Gaunilo. see *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 555.

¹⁰ Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. *Philosophy of Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 150. also sometimes called the "Possible Worlds Version." see *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, 71.

¹¹ the presentation of Plantinga's version appears in places: Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); *Philosophy of Religion*, 150-163; and *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 563-564. the form here is

The Cosmological Argument

introduction:

- like the ontological argument the cosmological argument¹² is nearly 1,000 years old.¹³
- “cosmological” comes from the Greek word *kosmos*, which means “world” or “universe.”¹⁴ thus, the argument is based on what caused the cosmos, or the world.
- the cosmological argument endeavors to show that God must exist as the first cause of everything that has come to be.
- several people throughout history have defended various forms of this argument (al-farabi, al-Ghazali, Augustine, Anselm, Aristotle, Avicenna, Berkeley, Descartes, ibn Rushd, ibn Sina, Leibniz, Locke, Maimonides, Maimonides, Plato, Scotus, Spinoza and others [a mix of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian thinkers]. yet, it mainly has three primary versions. this outline will, in general, present the *kalam* (Arabic philosophy/theology) version because of its ability to answer most the objections to cosmological arguments in our current day.
- the other two primary versions are by Thomas Aquinas, and G.W.F. Leibniz. the principal differences seem to be that the Aquinas version is more focused on the concept of motion and the Leibniz version is more focused on simply finding a sufficient reason for things.¹⁵ there are similarities in all three forms which this outline will attempt to integrate.¹⁶

I. The Kalam Cosmological Argument¹⁷

- | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | | universe | |
| (1) whatever begins to exist has a cause | no beginning | beginning | |
| (2) the universe began to exist | not caused | caused | |
| (3) the universe was caused | | personal | not personal |
| (4) the cause of the universe was personal | | | |
| (5) therefore, God exists as the uncaused personal cause of the universe | | | |

support for premise #1

- A. “why is there something rather than nothing?”¹⁸ anything that is here (pick out anything you see in the room right now), is here because something caused it to be there.
- B. “nothing can be self-caused, because then it would have to bestow existence on itself, which is impossible.”¹⁹

support for premise #2

- A. as we follow effects and their causes backward, or “regress” back through results, we find that we cannot follow causes backward infinitely.²⁰ There must be a first cause, one caused by something that could not have been caused.²¹
- B. suppose one draws a line on a piece of paper about 2 inches long and suppose there are an infinite amount of actual points on that line.²² if one starts on a point of that line and begins transversing across the points to the left, it does not matter how many points they cross they will never get to the beginning of that line. so even if i say the line goes infinitely

from: *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, 71-72, because it seemed to present Plantinga’s version in a way slightly easier to understand.

¹² also sometimes called the argument from “contingency,” “efficient causality” (see *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, 51,61) or from “creation” (see *When Skeptics Ask*, 16).

¹³ 1,000 years old by name and official presentation of the arguments. Indeed the writers of Scripture used cosmological type of arguments such as in Ps.19; Acts 17:22-28; Rom. 1:18-23. Some have also claimed that God’s self declaration in Ex. 3:24 is a type of ontological argument (see *When Skeptics Ask*, 24).

¹⁴ J.P. Moreland. *Scaling the Secular City*, (Grand Rapids, MI: 1987), 15.

¹⁵ *Reasonable Faith*, 80-83.

¹⁶ for the purpose of presenting the argument publicly it seems that some of the language of the other forms can be quite helpful, such as Leibniz’s question “why is there something rather than nothing?”

¹⁷ the form of the argument is taken from *Reasonable Faith*, 80; and diagram is taken from *Scaling the Secular City*, 19.

¹⁸ G.W.F. Leibniz (see *Reasonable Faith*, 83). this way of starting the argument works well to get people thinking about cause and effect relationships.

¹⁹ *Reasonable Faith*, 81.

²⁰ this is also known as the “problem of infinite regression.”

²¹ Thomas Aquinas called this the “unmoved mover,” *Philosophy of Religion*, 165.

²² in mathematics the infinite amount of points on a line is only a “potential infinite.” *When Skeptics Ask*, 18.

in both directions, it makes no difference if there are an infinite amount of points on that line. thus, neither can there be an infinite amount of cause and effects that go back infinitely.²³

C. scientific big bang cosmology currently states that the universe had a beginning which is described as a big explosion.²⁴

D. the second law of thermodynamics, entropy, states that energy moves from a state of order to chaos until it reaches a state of equilibrium. we find entropy at work in the universe as a whole. examples: the red shift and the swelling of the sun. thus, "the universe cannot have existed forever, otherwise it would have reached its equilibrium end state an infinite time ago."²⁵

support for premise #3

A. the universe could not be uncaused otherwise it could not have begun to exist.

B. the beginning of the universe was an event and all events have causes.²⁶

C. nothingness is insufficient for the beginning of the universe since nothingness has no properties and since positive and negative charges, the energy that resulted from the beginning, cannot have come from nothingness unless they were caused.²⁷

support for premise #4

A. prior to the first event, the beginning, the state of affairs could only have consisted of no time, no space, no energy, and no change of any kind. "the only way for the first event to arise spontaneously from a timeless, changes, spaceless state of affairs, and at the same time be caused is...(by the result of a) free act of a person or agent."²⁸

B. persons are the only things with causal powers. example = a chair has no causal power to act by itself, to choose to do anything.

conclusion:

A. a personal being exists who could not have been caused and who chose to cause time, space, and energy to come into existence. we call this being "God."

B. the ability to create time and space by existing outside of time and space is an attribute of omnipotence and omnipresence. the ability to create energy by existing outside of energy is an attribute of omnipotence and omniscience. an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being exists called "God."

II. most common objections²⁹

A. what caused God?

response: "God" is the one and only uncaused cause, self existent and wholly independent.

B. how do we know that the cause of the universe still exists? maybe it started the universe going and then ceased to be?

response: this cause created space and time. an uncaused being not limited by space and time can never cease to be because of never coming to be.

²³ this illustration is found in *Scaling the Secular City*, 27-28; for more illustrations see pages 23-32.

²⁴ *When Skeptics Ask*, 16 and *Scaling the Secular City*, 33.

²⁵ *Scaling the Secular City*, 33.

²⁶ *When Skeptics Ask*, 17.

²⁷ *Scaling the Secular City*, 41.

²⁸ *When Skeptics Ask*, 42.

²⁹ for more sophisticated questions, particularly scientific ones, see *Scaling the Secular City*, 18-42.

The Teleological Argument

introduction:

- the teleological argument, also known as the “design argument,” is “the most popular argument for God’s existence.”³⁰
- “teleological” comes from the Greek word, *telos*, which means “purpose,” “end,” or “design.”³¹ thus the argument is based on design found in the universe.
- the teleological argument endeavors to show that God exists as the designer of the universe.
- several people throughout history have advanced this argument (Socrates, Philo, Thomas Aquinas, William Paley, Stuart C. Hackett, A.E. Taylor, and F.R. Tennant) and it is perhaps *the* foremost argument gaining attention today under the scientific breakthroughs being made known by people like Michael Behe and Philip Johnson.³²
- there are several different forms or approaches to this argument. this outline will use a form that attempts to integrate some of the more traditional notions of the argument along with some of the newer, more scientifically oriented elements of the argument.

I. The Teleological Argument

- (1) the universe displays design in a staggering amount of purpose, complexity, beauty and information.
- (2) design is the product of intelligence.
- (3) therefore, the universe is the product of an intelligent designer.

support for premise #1:

- A. the universe displays design in purpose. consider a watch, it is a intricate device with several interacting parts which work together to achieve the desired purpose of telling time. like a watch, the universe operates as an intricate organism with several interacting parts (sun, moon, vegetation, oxygen, water, animals, people, etc.) which all work together having a place and a purpose, a design.³³
- B. the universe displays design in complexity. consider a moustrap, it is an irreducibly complex machine composed of five parts (platform, spring, hammer, holding bar, and a catch) and each part is absolutely necessary for it to function. if you take away one part it will not work. like a mousetrap the human cell is an irreducibly complex machines. the cilium (a small portion of a cell) is a complex motor. it is 25 nanometers in diameter (3,000 times smaller than the diameter of a single human hair). the flagellum (part of the cilium) is a propeller that moves back and forth with speeds up to 100,000 rpm’s and can travel ten times its body length a second (same as a human running at 40mph) and it can stop moving in one direction and instantly turn around and move the other direction at the exact same speed. a cell has around 40 intregal parts that must all work at the same time for a cell to exist, without one part it will not function. the cell is a design³⁴
- C. the universe displays design in beauty. consider a painting of the ocean, the waves breaking on the beach, the sun beginning to set, and the birds flying in a V-shaped pattern just above the water. this painting, like the scene it portrays, is an object of beauty and design.
- D. the universe displays design in information. consider DNA, a human cell contains DNA, a single molecule with a mass amount of information.³⁵ if one were to unravel the double helix in one cell of a strand of DNA and hold it out in a straight line it would be about six feet long. if one then began to write down every letter of genetic information (A,T,C,G, etc.) that is on each ladder rung of the double helix, it will fill up approximently 75,000 pages of information. this highly encoded information is a detailed design.³⁶

³⁰ *Scaling the Secular City*, 43.

³¹ *Philosophy of Religion*, 198.

³² Ray Bohlin, *Creation, Evolution, and Modern Science*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 91-110.

³³ see *Scaling the Secular City*, 47 and *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 715.

³⁴ *Creation, Evolution, and Modern Science*, 103-106.

³⁵ *When Skeptics Ask*, 21.

³⁶ *Philosophy of Religion*, 207.

support for premise #2

- A. design of purpose implies a designer. consider the watch analogy. the intricacy of a watch implies that some person had the knowledge, the ability, the will, and a purpose to make such a device. in the same way the universe is an intricate organism implying that some person had the knowledge, the ability, the will, and a purpose to make such a place.
- B. design of complexity implies a designer. consider the moustrap. since all the parts of the moustrap must be present and put together at the same time in order for it to function it implies that someone had the knowledge and ability to do so. in an even greater way (5 parts of a moustrap compared to 8 parts of a cilia in 40 parts of a cell), the cilia could not function unless someone had the knowledge and ability to design it in such a way.
- C. design of beauty implies a designer. consider the painting. anyone who has ever seen a painting of an actual scene in nature knows that only an artist or designer of intelligence could have made the painting. animals and inanimate physical objects do not have creative capacities. likewise, the beauty found in nature, which the painting reflects, requires that an artist of intelligence and creative capacities made it.
- D. design in information implies intelligence.
 - 1. suppose one went to the beach and saw the letters JOHN LOVES MARY in the sand. no one would ever conclude that the letters got there by erosion rather than someone writing them because those certain letters have meaning when put together. meaningful information implies intelligence of a rational agent.³⁷
 - 2. according to *Shannon Entropy* (a standard measure of information content), the amount of information in one protein with DNA is 3.4 units, more than 3 times the amount of information in a normal english sentence (a rating of 1 unit).³⁸
 - 3. the high amount of information in the genetic material of DNA implies that a rational agent of intelligence created/designed it.

II. most common objections

- A. apparent design could merely be chance.³⁹
 - response: “the probability of assembling the genome with its high information content through random processes is infinitesimal: to produce even one molecule of iso-1-cytochrome c, with a probability of 0.95, would require 1.5×10^{44} trials. if one trial were completed each second, this would take 10^{23} years. but the universe itself is only about 1.5×10^{10} years old!”⁴⁰ this is similar to the chance of a tornado hitting a junkyard and out coming a 747 airplane (Fred Hoyle, non-believer).⁴¹
- B. comparing the universe to a human is an analogy and cannot be used since human intelligence is far different than nature.
 - response: the discovery of highly intelligent information in DNA is widely found throughout nature.⁴² “one scientist figured the odds for a one-cell animal to emerge by pure chance at 1 in 10^{40000} .”⁴³

³⁷ *Scaling the Secular City*, 51-52.

³⁸ Dr. Gary DeWeese, *Course Materials/Handout “The Design Argument from Information.”*

³⁹ David Hume is most famous for this objection, *When Skeptics Ask*, 20. the “anthropic principle” (if the universe were in any way different then it is we would not be here, *Philosophy of Religion*, 201) is essentially a 20th century restatement of Hume’s objection. but the ludicrousness of actual chance possibility really works against the anthropic principle.

⁴⁰ Dr. Gary DeWeese, *Course Materials/Handout “The Design Argument from Information.”*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 719.

⁴³ *When Skeptics Ask*, 22.

The Moral Argument

introduction:

- the moral argument is an argument for God's existence from an ethical standpoint. it endeavors to show that God exists based on the moral order of the universe.⁴⁴
- the reasoning of the moral argument can be found as far back as Plato⁴⁵ though it was made popular by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century.⁴⁶
- a couple of other people have presented forms of the moral argument: Hastings Rashdall, Thomas Aquinas, W.R. Sorely, Elton Trueblood, and C.S. Lewis.
- this outline will use the form composed by C.S. Lewis because it "gives the most complete form of the argument in the most persuasive way."⁴⁷

I. The Moral Argument

- (1) all have a sense of universal morality.
- (2) an impersonal source cannot explain universal morality
- (3) a finite personal source cannot explain universal morality.
- (4) therefore only an infinite personal source can explain universal morality

support for premise #1:

A. if there were not a universal moral law, then all moral disagreements would make no sense. example = to say "whatever one believes to be true is relative or up to that person," is attempting to assert that very statement as some sort of absolute universal moral law. it assumes it is making an objectively true statement that is true for every person, every age, and every culture. thus, the statement is really self-refuting.⁴⁸ everyone assumes that their disagreement makes sense, which is an appeal to a universal moral law.⁴⁹

B. if there were not a universal moral law all moral criticisms would be meaningless.⁵⁰ all assume that when they communicate, that they are actually talking about something. example = if there were no universal moral law, then the statement "killing babies for fun is wrong" is a completely meaningless statement. we assume that our statements have meaning.

C. if there were not a universal moral law there is no reason to keep promises or to ever act based on a sense of ought. all live according to a moral law. example = if there were no universal moral law and whatever is true or right is up to each person, then there would no reason to ever not steal or to ever not murder if one got angry in the slightest way.

D. if there were not a universal moral law we would never make excuses for breaking it. no one will say that they really have never done anything wrong in their entire life. everyone readily admits that they have done things that are wrong but proceed to make excuses or give reasons why what they did what they did, why it was okay. if there were no universal moral law then no one would ever feel the need to make an excuse or even accept that they had ever done anything wrong.⁵¹

support for premise #2:

A. this morality cannot be herd instinct, an impersonal source. to say that universal morality is not simply herd instinct is not to say that we do not have a herd instinct. we all have a herd instinct for food etc. since we do not always act selfishly, the impersonal source of our herd instinct (sometimes considered as the "survival of the fittest" instinct) cannot be the source of the universal moral law.⁵²

⁴⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁵ *Reasonable Faith*, 88.

⁴⁶ *When Skeptics Ask*, 22.

⁴⁷ *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 719.

⁴⁸ Paul Copan, *True For You But Not For Me*, (Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 17-25.

⁴⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1996), 17-18.

⁵⁰ *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 500.

⁵¹ "...no one is a consistent subjectivist." see *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, 73, under "question 1." also see *Mere Christianity*, 20

⁵² *Mere Christianity*, 19-23.

B. this morality cannot be mere convention (outside pressures, like society, school, or our parents, a social force). this is not to say that we do not sometimes learn behavior through convention, but rather that convention cannot be the ultimate source. example = though we learn mathematics in school no one would say that our teachers, or anyone else, made up mathematics. math and logic are things found and used in every society past and present, in the same way as the moral law, and neither's source can be convention. if morality just comes out of some convention, like society, then no one could not make any judgment about a society's progress, for any judgment or evaluation is an appeal to a greater source than the society itself.⁵³

C. this morality cannot be a law of nature. laws of nature are descriptive things that detail how something always works. for example, entropy (2nd law of thermodynamics) is the law of nature that states that things move from a state of order to chaos. example = if i heat up a cup of coffee, take it out of the microwave and set it on my desk it will eventually cool down to the temperature of the room. this will happen every time i do this because the heat of the coffee follows the law of entropy. a law of nature cannot be broken, it always works. morality is not a descriptive thing, like a law of nature, but is prescriptive. it prescribes what one "ought" to do, and it does not always work because people do not always do what they ought.⁵⁴

D. this morality is that morality cannot be mere imagination. morality is not something we could have created or thought up.⁵⁵ things that are imagined are things which we can choose to think about or not. morality is not something that we can get rid of even if we wanted to. i cannot choose to imagine or think up the universal moral law, it is and will always be there. i cannot get rid of its sense of ought.

conclusion:

- A. we know of no other finite personal beings besides humans.
- B. to be personal requires that one be alive.
- C. it is absurd to think that a living human being is the source of the universal moral law in the minds of every other human being on the planet.
- D. "God" may be defined as an infinite personal being who establishes universal moral law

II. objections

A. different cultures believe different things

response: the universal moral law is that which is true for all people of every time period and in every culture. example: no culture would ever say that killing babies for fun is good.

B. since people do things that are morally wrong, God must be morally flawed since He is the source of morality.

response: imperfections in the world must have a perfect standard to be understood as perfections. God, as the infinite personal source must then also be morally perfect.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 24-25.

⁵⁴ *When Skeptics Ask*, 23.

⁵⁵ *Mere Christianity*, 30.

RESPONSES TO POPULAR OBJECTIONS

Religious Pluralism: *All religious ways, equally lead to God, whatever way works for you is fine. We simply need to be tolerant of each other. Christianity is narrow-minded and exclusivistic.*

introduction:

- religious pluralism is not a new thing. ancient Babylonian, Mesopotamian, and Jewish cultures were all plagued with pluralism and syncretism.
- today, religious pluralism may very well be the most common belief of Americans.
- perhaps the first and easiest response or defense to any one of these objections to God or Christianity is simply to ask “burden of proof”⁵⁶ questions. often, just by asking questions about what people mean or why they think what they do, can either cause them to see a problem in their thinking or cause them to think for the first time. plus, this will help in knowing how to respond by better knowing where they are coming from.
- in order to best defend Christianity against the challenge of religious pluralism this outline will follow five different lines of response.

I. why are Christians so arrogant to not even consider other religions and think they are the only right people in all the world?

- A. most people who make this charge have not studied other religions either. ask.
- B. Christians are simply followers of Christ, it is not their goal to be elitist but the opposite.
- C. most people who make this charge will say that Jesus Christ was a good teacher.⁵⁷
- D. as followers of Christ, Christians simply believe what the good teacher taught. He said “I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me (Jn 14:6).”⁵⁸

II. no one way can be the right way, “there is a plurality of religions...equally salvific.”⁵⁹

example: all the world’s religions are like six blind men feeling an elephant. the first blind man, feeling the trunk thought it was a snake. the second blind man, feeling the ears thought it was a fan. the third blind man, feeling the body thought it was a wall. the fourth blind man feeling a leg thought it was a tree. the fifth blind man, feeling the tail thought it was a rope. and the sixth blind man, feeling a tusk thought it was a spear.⁶⁰ thus, no one man is right, all have a piece of the truth, or as John Hick calls it, “ultimate reality.”⁶¹

A. to say that no one way can be the right way merely presents another position of one right way. this statement says that the one right way of seeing things is that there is no one right way. thus, it is a self-refuting statement and really does not make sense.

B. three responses to the elephant example

- 1. the illustration begins already knowing that all the blind men are feeling an elephant. if all the world’s religions are the six blind men then there is no way any of them could know whether it was an elephant or not. pluralism assumes that it is not one of the blind men and already knows everyone else is feeling an elephant. yet, if this were truly so then pluralism ought to be able to prove to everyone else with evidence that there really is an elephant. but it cannot, in fact the evidence is the opposite.⁶²
- 2. since, pluralism is another theory of religion, it too must be one of the blind men and is therefore wrong.

⁵⁶ if someone makes a claim the “burden” is on them to “prove” their claim.

⁵⁷ for more on the possibility of Jesus simply being a good teacher see Josh McDowell, *More Than A Carpenter*, (Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1973), 9-35.

⁵⁸ if someone denies the authenticity of Jesus’ claims use the defensive arguments regarding the reliability of the Bible (3rd defensive argument in this outline).

⁵⁹ John Hick, *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, “A Pluralist View,” ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 47.

⁶⁰ *When Skeptics Ask*, 257.

⁶¹ *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, 39.

⁶² see the first four positive arguments of this outline.

3. if all the blind men were truly feeling an elephant then there would be a way to reconcile all their conceptions by communicating with each other, they are not mute. dialogue between world religions has proven they believe radically different things.⁶³
- C. “the religious pluralist’s insistence that God cannot have arranged for our salvation in the exclusivist way of Christianity presupposes a greater knowledge of God than radical religious pluralists are in a position to have on their own assumptions.”⁶⁴
- III. Christians just need to be open-minded and tolerant of other religions.
- A. to be open-minded is “the most closed-minded position of all because it eliminates any absolute view from consideration.”⁶⁵ a truly “open-minded” person can never make a judgment or evaluation about anything, for the instant they do they become closed-minded.
- B. if being tolerant means accepting all views as true, then that very position is being intolerant if one does not accept *it*. tolerance really means “putting up with error.”⁶⁶
- IV. each person’s religion may be true for them, just not for me
- A. if anyone ever says this then they have violated their belief because they want someone to accept their truth that is only true for them. it is like saying “nothing is universally true” and “my view is universally true” in the same breath.⁶⁷
- B. this eliminates the possibility of a person ever being wrong about anything.⁶⁸
- V. if you grew up in India, you would be a Hindu. thus, one’s religion is conditioned by culture.
- A. this is merely a descriptive statement. it says nothing about the truth any religion.
- B. just because one’s beliefs are conditioned does not make them either true or false. children are conditioned by a society to go to school and learn math there. this does prove math to be either true or false. likewise, if a child goes to school and learns about UFO’s it does not prove the existence or non-existence of UFO’s.
- VI. how similar are the world’s religions?⁶⁹
- A. the popular notion that all religions basically say the same thing is simply not true. those who have attempted to prove this often convolute, deflate, and decontextualize statements from all the various religious texts so they will fit their preunderstanding of similitude.
- B. consider a brief description of major differences: In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, salvation is an individual person’s eternal existence in heaven after death. In Hinduism and Buddhism, salvation is the emptying or obliteration of personhood which may be dying and being reincarnated several times. Christianity believes salvation is a free gift from a divine Savior. Judaism and Islam believe one must earn their salvation and in Buddhism and Hinduism salvation is realizing that suffering is only in your mind.⁷⁰

⁶³ see part V of this page.

⁶⁴ R. Douglas Geivett. *Jesus Under Fire*, “Is Jesus the Only Way?” ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J.P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 199.

⁶⁵ *When Skeptics Ask*, 259.

⁶⁶ *True For You But Not For Me*, 37. Christians are actually quite tolerant in this sense.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁸ *When Skeptics Ask*, 259.

⁶⁹ for more information on world religions see Josh McDowell, *Handbook of Today’s Religions*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983).

⁷⁰ *Handbook of Today’s Religions*, 14.

Christianity's Crimes: *Christianity and its followers have been the direct cause for some of the most brutal, heartless, and senseless atrocities known to man. Christians are not any better than non-Christians.*

- introduction: perhaps more than any other objection to Christianity, the crimes of Christianity may continue to pose one of the biggest barriers to non-Christians considering the faith.

- to best respond to these travesties, this apologetic will address the blunders of individual Christians, reply to 3 major historical Christian crimes and then look at benefits of Christianity.

I. if Christianity is so good and so right why do we always hear about "Christian" priests and preachers molesting children, committing adultery, and doing all kinds of things that is supposed to be wrong? Christians don't seem any different than non-Christians, just a bunch of hypocrites.

A. on one hand Christians wholeheartedly agree that there ought to be a difference between the way they live and the way that non-Christians live (Mt 5:16). indeed, Christians are not to do any wrong or "sin" (1 Jn 2:1). on the other hand Christians readily admit that they are wrongdoers or "sinners" (Rom 3:23; 1 Jn 1:8) and apart from total dependence on Christ can do nothing right (Jn 15:5).

B. Christianity agrees that all wrongdoing whether it is done by "Christians," done by people who say they are Christians, or done by anyone else, is atrocious and horrible.

C. though Christians are not to sin and there is no excuse for Christians sinning, Christianity does not base its claim of being good and right upon the works, deeds, or right doing of its followers but rather on the perfect person of God⁷¹ and His Son, Jesus Christ (Heb 4:15)⁷² as declared in the Christian documents.

D. consider an analogy: suppose the accountant of a construction company begins embezzeling money from the company and then one night gets drunk and decides to steal one of the company's bulldozers with the company's name on the side and goes to his ex-wife's house and flattens it. surely, those who saw the accountant do what he did in the company's bulldozer would not count the accountant's crime against the company. rather they would consider the accountant a criminal who deserved to go to jail. in the same way the evil crimes of Christians ought not be held against Christianity.⁷³

II. if Christianity is true why did Christians go on "holy crusades" killing people for Christ?

A. beginning in 1095 Pope Urban II launched a series of crusades that lasted until 1291. the Pope called Christians to go to the Holy Land and take it from the Muslims for Christ.⁷⁴

B. these Christians believing the words of the Pope to be the very words of God, were told in 1215 that if they went on the crusades they would earn their salvation.⁷⁵

C. the Bible, the book which teaches that it alone declares the very Word of God (2 Tim 3:16), also teaches that no one can ever earn their salvation (Eph 2:8).

D. "...all that goes on in the name of 'Christian' is not necessarily Christian."⁷⁶ Jesus' teachings are not at fault here but the actions of those who greatly strayed away from what He clearly taught.⁷⁷

III. if Christianity is true why did Christians kill witches in the 1600's?

A. during the Salem witch trials nineteen people were hanged for refusing to testify.⁷⁸

B. these were trials for possible murder, the question was whether these witches had committed murder by some form of witchcraft.⁷⁹

⁷¹ see moral argument.

⁷² Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishing, 1992), 415.

⁷³ Dr. Gary DeWeese, *class lecture example*, 05/13/03.

⁷⁴ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 205.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 206.

⁷⁶ Dr. Gregory A. Boyd and Edward K. Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1994), 20.

⁷⁷ *The Case for Faith*, 207.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 209.

⁷⁹ John Warwick Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, "Not Suffering Witches to Live," ed. John Warwick Montgomery, (Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 1976), 95.

- C. while it is true that there was cross-over between church and state during these trials,⁸⁰ the inconclusive and somewhat nasty methods of these trials were stopped by Christians.⁸¹
- D. the wrong actions of Christians are not representative of the Christian faith.

IV. are Christians Anti-Semitic? wasn't Hitler a Christian?

- A. Jesus Christ was a Jew and all His first followers, Christians were Jews.
- B. it is true that there have been anti-Semitic Christians throughout history.
- C. a church of Jews and Gentiles in Galatia were directly commanded to "serve one another in love (Gal 5:13)." thus God's word to Christians is to not be anti-Semitic.
- D. Hitler did attempt to associate himself with Christianity.⁸² however, consider a historical illustration by John D. Woodbridge: "Many Jewish people in 1665 and 1666 believed that a certain individual was the Messiah. But then he converted to Islam. Now, if I said to a Jewish historian today, 'Do you want to identify that man as the Messiah?' He'd say, 'Of course not. He was a fraud.'" Christians would say the same thing about Hitler.
- E. Christians during the Holocaust rescued and helped the Jews and Hitler did not only kill Jews but thousands of Christians too.⁸³

V. a global perspective of *all* the major historical "Christian" crimes compared with atheistic political movements since 1945.⁸⁴

- A. best estimates of "Christian" caused deaths: from the crusades 250,000 - 300,000; from the inquisition 10,000; and from the Salem witchcraft trials 19; altogether totaling 260,019 – 310,019 deaths.
- B. best estimates of atheistic political movement deaths since 1945: Berundu 150,000; Congo 800,000; Brazil 300,000; Soviet Union 15,000,000; Sudan 2,000,000; Nigeria 1,000,000; China 35,000,000; altogether totaling 135,000,000 deaths.

VI. a historical perspective of the good Christianity has brought about, in spite of abhorrent crimes done its name.

- A. modern education was born out of the Christian movement
 1. all the major universities first started in America were Christian institutions
 2. 86% of schooled children in Africa go to Christian schools
 3. William Wilberforce fought against slavery because of Christian convictions
 4. numerous languages have been given a written language by Bible translators
 5. United Nations declaration of human rights comes right out of the Bible
- B. many major scientific discoveries were uncovered by Christians due to their worldview
 1. germ theory of disease has saved more lives than all that have been killed. it was developed by Christians who believed that the human body was damaged by sin but that there was hope for healing because of salvation in Christ.
 2. likewise the discovery of Penicillin, other drugs, and the cure for small pox have all been the result of Christian labor and service to the sick and the needy.
 3. much of modern hygiene such as toilet paper etc. was also the discovery of Christians
- C. Jesus said in Matthew 7:20 "...by their fruits you will know them." judging by the fruit of Christianity in a global historical perspective Christianity has shown itself to be true.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 93-108.

⁸¹ "a Puritan leader named Increase Mathe spoke out," *The Case for Faith*, 210.

⁸² *ibid.*, 215.

⁸³ Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 176-177.

⁸⁴ all information in V and VI is from Dr. Gary Deweese, *class lecture*, 05/13/03.

Miracles: *Christianity seems to be a myth since it's based on a book littered with all kinds of miracles and science has proven that there is no such thing as miracles.*

introduction:

- "undoubtedly, one of the major stumbling block to becoming a Christian for many people today is that Christianity is a religion of miracles."⁸⁵
- indeed, orthodox Christians affirm that everything in the Bible is true, including all the miracles. in fact, all of Christianity rests on the weight of one specific miracle, the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Cor 15:14).
- thus, this outline will endeavor to show that miracles are in fact possible given the basic Christian worldview, the definition of a miracle, and the inability of objections to eliminate the possibility of miracles.

I. the basic Christian worldview

- A. often the rejection of miracles is based upon an assumed and unproven worldview.
- B. as shown in the ontological, cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments for the existence of God.⁸⁶ God is the greatest possible, uncaused, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good, everywhere present, eternally existing, personal being.
- C. such a being necessarily is the one who created the cosmos as a "uniformity of cause and effect in an open system."⁸⁷
 - 1. "uniformity of cause and effect" means that the universe, as a whole, is not chaotic but rather functions in an orderly way, that of causes and effects. the cause and effect scheme is in operation everywhere in the universe.
 - 2. "an open system" means that the universe is not programmed to run all by itself. its cause and effect scheme does not make it independent and self-sufficient but rather forever dependent on God to run the way it does. it cannot run on its own, closed off to God. God guarantees that the natural laws will consistently work.
- D. such a being can choose to change anything in the universe, any time desired, for any duration desired, and for any reason desired. this is a miracle.
- E. the only thing such a being could not do is the logically impossible since a being is all-knowing, which is based on logic. example: God could not make a square circle.
- F. one would have to debunk arguments for the existence of God, particularly the cosmological argument, for such a being not to be able to do these things.

II. a definition of a miracle

- A. a miracle is "an event in which God temporarily makes an exception to the natural order of things."⁸⁸
 - 1. it is temporary because immediately following the event it all results will follow the normal laws of nature.⁸⁹
 - 2. it is an exception because something changes in way things naturally operate.
 - 3. it is an event caused by God because there is no other sufficient being.
- B. a miracle is not a contradiction. example: "a man walking through a wall is a miracle. a man both walking and not walking through a wall at the same time and in the same respect is a contradiction. God can perform miracles but not contradictions – not because His power is limited but because contradictions are meaningless."⁹⁰

III. most common objections to miracles:

- A. David Hume's famous argument against miracles⁹¹

⁸⁵ *Reasonable Faith*, 127.

⁸⁶ see the first four positive arguments of this apologetics outline.

⁸⁷ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 26.

⁸⁸ Richard L. Purtil. *In Defense of Miracles*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas, (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 63.

⁸⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, (NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1960), 59-60.

⁹⁰ *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, 109.

⁹¹ David Hume's argument has two primary interpretations: a "hard" version and a "soft" version. the hard version clearly commits the logical fallacy of begging the question. thus, here we will give Hume the benefit of the doubt and respond to the more difficult "soft" version. *Defense of Miracles*, 74-82.

1. a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature
2. firm and unalterable uniform experience has established these laws
3. the evidence for the greater is always more than that for the rare
4. a wise man weighs his belief on the greater evidence
5. therefore a wise man should never believe in a miracle

response 1: how can one know that all possible experiences will confirm the laws of nature, unless one has access to all possible experiences, including those in the future?

response 2: if rational beliefs are merely determined by adding the number of evidences rather than weighing the quality of the evidences, the “greater” is just a majority vote. if majority consensus is the rubric for rational belief then people should never have stopped believing the earth was flat. consider another example: if ninety-nine kids testify that they saw a real mouse the size of a human walking around and one kid says that it was just someone dressed up in a mickey mouse costume. according to Hume’s reasoning there really was a real human sized mouse walking around since there was a much greater number of evidences. the problem is this reasoning does not take into account the quality of evidence the one kid gave. the quality of his testimony was of weightier evidence since he was five years older than all the other kids.

B. has not science disproved miracles?

response: science is based upon the natural laws of the universe. science depends on the natural laws to always be working and does not, nor cannot account for any supernatural factors interfering. in other words, science relies on principles of uniformity and regularity and therefore cannot predict any irregular cause. “scientists do not prove there are no miracles, they assume it.”⁹² for if they didn’t they could not do scientific work. thus, if God exists, which the presence of natural laws really require,⁹³ the miracles are possible.

C. how do you know the universe is not a completely closed system, totally governed by its own internal rules of science, which would eliminate any possibility of miracles?⁹⁴

response: science deals solely with things that are discernible with the five senses, sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing.⁹⁵ real things exist outside the detectability of science, outside the purely natural realm. consider four examples.

1. numbers. no one has ever touched, tasted, smelled, seen, or heard a number. numbers are abstract, supernatural, real things.
2. the mind. you cannot put someone’s brain under a microscope and see their thoughts. one’s mind is a supernatural, real thing that exists beyond the detectability of science.
3. ethics or morals. science cannot detect nor make ethical judgments. there is no way to use any one of the five senses to perceive someone’s sense that murder is wrong. you cannot touch a person’s conscience.
4. God. see the cosmological argument on page 3-4 of this outline.

⁹² *When Skeptics Ask*, 80.

⁹³ see cosmological argument.

⁹⁴ this is the worldview known as “naturalism.” see *The Universe Next Door*, 52-73.

⁹⁵ also known as that which is “empirical”

The Resurrection: *The resurrection is a fabricated myth used for religious propaganda, only effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children. "...after the crucifixion Jesus' corpse was probably laid in a shallow grave, barely covered with dirt, and subsequently eaten by wild dogs; the story of Jesus' entombment and resurrection was the result of 'wishful thinking.'"*

- John Dominic Crossan⁹⁶

introduction:

- the resurrection of Jesus Christ is perhaps the most frequently and violently attacked belief of the Christianity. yet the resurrection is the "crowning proof"⁹⁷ of the Christian faith.
- of all the religions of the world, Christianity is the best one to start investigating because Christianity places its whole foundation on the one miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and says that if it did not happen then Christianity is false (1 Cor 15:14). therefore, all one has to do is disprove this one miracle and they can go on to investigate the next religion.
- "the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic fact of history."⁹⁸
- in order to best respond to the challenges regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this outline will give three primary proofs for His resurrection and then respond to three main objections.

I. the facts of the empty tomb

- (1) Jesus was buried in a tomb
 - a. this was the Jewish custom for Jewish holy men.⁹⁹
 - b. no other burial story exists in either written or oral tradition.¹⁰⁰
- (2) the disciples began to preach Christ had risen from the tomb¹⁰¹
- (3) it would have been foolish for the disciples to preach that Christ had risen if His body really was in the tomb.
- (4) no one would have believed them if they knew the body was in the tomb, yet thousands did just shortly afterward in the same city Jesus was crucified (Acts 1-2)
- (5) if the body was in the tomb anyone could have pointed to the tomb or exhumed the body to prove that Jesus had not been raised
- (6) the disciples were filled with discouragement and timidity after Christ's death (Jn 20:19). they would not have had courage or purpose to preach a false resurrection if it weren't really true.

II. the resurrection appearances

- (1) women were the first to see Him resurrected (Lk 24:1-11). a women's testimony in first century Judaism was "virtuously worthless."¹⁰² they were generally not even considered credible enough to give a testimony in court. if Gospel writers were attempting to present false history they would not have recorded this.
- (2) Peter, James, and Paul are all specifically named as eyewitnesses (1 Cor 15:5,7,8). All the twelve saw Him resurrected and on one occasion over and then five-hundred people saw Him at the same time (1 Cor 15:3-8).
 - a. five-hundred people testifying in a courtroom would be overwhelming proof that something happened. how many of those five-hundred people would have to take the stand and testify of what they saw before any judge or jury would be convinced?
 - b. at the time when the apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he says that many of those five-hundred people "are still alive (1 Cor 15:6)." this was a way of saying, "if you don't believe me go ask them!"
- (3) one of Jesus' disciples, Thomas, heard reports that Jesus had risen but doubted them until he too saw and touched Jesus and was convinced (Jn 20:24-29).

⁹⁶ *Jesus Under Fire*, 142.

⁹⁷ *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 651.

⁹⁸ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972), 185.

⁹⁹ *Jesus Under Fire*, 148. for 7 other

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 149. John Dominic Crossan's burial story may be the first variation.

¹⁰¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 246-248.

¹⁰² *Scaling the Secular City*, 168.

III. a historical resurrection is the origin of the Christian faith

- (1) all the preaching of the early church was based on the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:23,26; 1 Cor 15).
- (2) there is no parallel in pagan religion to a physical bodily resurrection. the dying and rising gods were symbols for processes of nature but never considered as actual people.¹⁰³
- (3) the number of converts on Pentecost, three-thousand people (Acts 2:41), was likely because everyone there in Jerusalem knew and heard about the empty tomb and the numerous resurrection appearances.
- (4) no one challenged or argued with apostles over the historical facts of the resurrection in the 1st century. but instead argued with them about whether He really was the Messiah.

IV. three objections/explanations of the resurrection

A. the "resurrection" was a conspiracy or hoax devised by the disciples who stole Jesus body as the soldiers claim Matthew 28:12-15¹⁰⁴

response #1: Matthew 28:12-15 describes how the chief priest paid the soldiers off to say the disciples stole the body.

response #2: Matthew 28:13 tells how the soldiers were to say they were asleep when the body was stolen. if they were asleep how could they have known the body was stolen, or known anything that happened.

response #3: in 1879 a roman edict was found stating that it was illegal under penalty of death to rob a tomb or to move a body from one place to another. disciples knew they would be guilty of death.

response #4: if the disciples stole the body they would not have taken time to fold up the grave clothes (Jn 20:5-7).

response #5: if the disciples stole the body they would not have died for what they knew was a lie.

B. the "resurrection" was merely a resuscitation from an apparent death. "Jesus was not completely dead when He was taken down from the cross. He revived in the tomb and escaped to convince His disciples that He had risen from the dead."¹⁰⁵

response #1: physically impossible. considering the extent of Jesus' tortures. a modern medical examination of the Gospels determines that Jesus suffered from hematomas, hypovolemic shock, respiratory acidosis, pericardial and pleural effusion, and finally died of cardiac arrest.

response #2: religiously impossible. a half dead Jesus appearing to disciples would not evoke their worship to Him as Lord.

response #3: biographically impossible. goes against all we know of Jesus character.¹⁰⁶

C. it was not a bodily resurrection but spiritual/psychological resurrection¹⁰⁷

response #1: Jesus called His body "flesh and bones" (Lk 24:39)

response #2: Jesus offered His body for physical inspection (Jn 20:27)

response #3: Jesus ate food (Lk 24:41-43)

response #3: one person could have had a hallucination or delusion but not 500 people all at the same time (1 Cor 15:6).

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 181-182.

¹⁰⁴ see *Reasonable Faith*, 278-279, for a good treatment of both the conspiracy and apparent death theories.

¹⁰⁵ *Reasonable Faith*, 279. known as the "apparent death" or "swoon theory."

¹⁰⁶ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 163-207.

¹⁰⁷ this is the most popular theory today.

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