

Evidence for the Existence of God (Academic Style)

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The Bible indicates that evidence for the existence of God is found in two loci. There will be internal evidence in each man and external evidence in the material universe.

First, the Bible indicates that there is evidence for the existence of God within the soul of man: “God has placed eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).¹ Since God placed a sense of eternity within the consciousness of each person, there should be indications of the concept of God within the psychological and social sciences. The first such evidence will be called the “universal concept.”

Virtually every civilization has had an idea, desire, or a belief in God. It doesn't matter if it is a primitive or a technologically advanced culture. There is a universal concept of deity. Even in America, which is known for education, science, and technological advances, the overwhelming majority of the population believes in God. According to Norman Paul, more than 90 percent of women and 85 percent of men in America pray. Even among the 13 percent of the population who describe themselves as atheists, 50 percent report they pray occasionally.²

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is from the *New International Version* (Zondervan Publishing Company, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984).

² Norman Paul, *The Universal God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2008), p. 63.

In the world of appetites, each appetite has a corresponding reality. People hunger for food or knowledge, beauty or love, and, in fact, these things do exist. People do not have appetites for things that do not exist. What, then, is the corresponding reality to the spiritual hunger that cuts across every culture and every people group throughout all history? “God has placed eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The universal concept of God provides evidence of God’s existence.

The second piece of internal evidence is called “the law of human nature.”³ C. S. Lewis writes about this law in his book, *Mere Christianity*:

Everyone has heard people quarrelling. Sometimes it sounds funny and sometimes it sounds merely unpleasant; but however it sounds, I believe we can learn something very important from listening to the things they say. They say things like this: ‘How’d you like it if anyone did the same to you?’ - ‘That’s my seat, I was there first’ -- ‘Come on, you promise.’ People say things like that every day, educated people as well as uneducated, and children as well as grown-ups. Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying the other man’s behaviour does not please him. He is appealing to some kind of standard of behaviour which he expects the other man to know about.⁴

C. S. Lewis introduces a very interesting question: Where does this sense of justice come from? The driving force of evolution is survival of the fittest. Yet, this law, what Lewis calls “the law of human nature,” flies in the face of the survival of the fittest theory. Human beings appeal to a higher authority for the rationale to take care of the weak and infirmed. Once again this standard of morality seems to be imbedded in the human psyche.

³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1952), p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The third piece of internal evidence for the existence of God is “quality of life.” Sigmund Freud was not a fan of religion. In fact, Freud felt that faith in God was a form of mental disorder. He called it a “universal obsessional neurosis.”⁵ If God does not exist, then Sigmund Freud is right. Believing in something that is not true is to break from reality. If someone believes that outer-space beings live in the walls of his house, it will have a negative impact on his day-to-day life. Freud believed faith in God was neurotic, and the evidence would indicate the presence of neurosis. However, scientific research in psychology has proven just the opposite. David Larson, former National Institutes of Health psychiatrist, writes:

If a new health treatment were discovered that helped to reduce the rate of teenage suicide, prevent drug and alcohol abuse, improve treatment for depression, reduce recovery time from surgery, lower divorce rates and enhance a sense of well being, one would think that every physician in the country would be scrambling to try it. Yet, what if critics denounced this treatment as harmful, despite research findings that showed it to be effective more than 80 percent of the time? Which would you be more ready to believe—the assertions of the critics based on their opinions or the results of the clinical trials based upon research?⁶

The “new health treatment” Larson is talking about is religious faith. Freud believed the further a person was removed from reality, the unhealthier he became.⁷ Yet the evidence shows that a strong faith in God improves life in virtually every area for 80 percent of the population.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The Question of God* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2002), p. 38.

⁶ David Larson, *Psychology and Health: The Eternal Question of God and Psychological Well-Being* (Seattle, WA: Psychology Books, 2008), p. 245-246.

⁷ Freud, p. 38.

There is also external evidence for the existence of God. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made” (Romans 1:20). In 1927, Edwin Hubbel recorded what he called “the red shift.” He noticed through observation that the universe was expanding. This confirmed Albert Einstein’s theory of general relativity. In 1964, two Bell Laboratory scientists, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, began taking measurements of the Cosmic Radiation Background Echo. These experiments led scientists to a theory referred to as simply the “big bang.” If Einstein’s theory is correct, as the experimental evidence confirms, then the universe is not eternal. The universe had a beginning. If matter, energy, and time all had a beginning, then there must be something outside of time and immaterial from which all things came. No less an authority than Stephen Hawking said: “The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang is enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications.”⁸ The fear of astrophysicist Robert Jastrow seems to be well founded:

At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.⁹

⁸ As quoted in Paul, *The Universal God*, p. 168.

⁹ Ibid.

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