

Can you prove that God exists?

- Scientific thought and proof for the existence of God



Winfried Borlinghaus

Modesty in reasoning

First it is important to realize what or who is the object of our reasoning. The biblical message describes God as a specific person with specific character traits and abilities that far excel human capacity. This God, despite his omnipotence, turns to people with the intention to love and justify them. God is not an imagination of the human mind, nor a means of describing the inexplicable. He is God, and as God he had the wish and the power to create man. God gave men the potential to be able to trust and love him, and he is very much interested in communication with his creation. God "cannot be proved" by scientific experiments or mere philosophic considerations. People are depended upon his revelation. According to the Christian view this revelation is accessible to people through the books of the Bible. These books reveal God to the extent that he wants to be known by them. Therefore the presupposition for an individual experience with God is an acknowledgment of sin, trust in God's love, the confession to live as a creature in responsibility towards God, and an acknowledgement to be dependent upon God. That leads to a belief that places God first and fulfills the biblical command to love God with all one's heart, soul and strength. This requires humility of mind in a positive sense as well as a willingness for self-restraint. These are things which are not sought after nowadays. This might be one of the reasons for the widespread disdain for Christian values especially in Germany. Another reason for the skepticism towards Christian values is certainly their abuse throughout history.

Acknowledgment of proof

In opposition to this the atheistic, material view maintains that God does not exist as a real person. He seems to be a figure of human imagination. This view denies every non-immanent power or person and tries to explain our existence purely in terms of this world. Supposedly, arising from the religious imagination of people, various (virtually evolutionistic) concepts of God developed over the course of the millennia. Accordingly, God could be a term to describe human imagination. God is the imaginary product of the human brain. Therefore, people are to be understood, not as a creation of God that receive their value from the creative act of the Creator, but rather as a product of chance produced in an evolutionistic struggle for survival. The online dictionary Wikipedia (German edition) remarks laconically in answer to the search criterion "God": There is no generally recognized proof for the existence of such a being which would be accessible to rational thought. The formulation "generally recognized" is significant. Any proof that requires recognition in order to be accepted as proof is, strictly speaking, no proof at all. This is altogether the weakness of the quest for proof. Take for example, the fact that Jesus, by his bodily resurrection, has defeated death. This event was witnessed by his disciples and enemies. First-person accounts by witnesses from among both his followers and enemies, bearing witness to what they had seen and heard, prove the reality of these unimaginably spectacular events. Nevertheless, only the people who were convinced of his life, death and resurrection acknowledged the facts. The others that had seen the same events refused to identify him as the Son of God

and crucified him. Although the events surrounding the resurrection were recorded, and although evidence was given through historical witnesses, those witnesses are refused recognition, simply because it is unimaginable that these things could actually have occurred. Today, independent confirmation by witnesses cannot be produced because it is now consigned to history and the events cannot be reproduced. For the same reason no one can “prove” that Jesus is not risen. Retrospectively, such an event can at best be regarded as more or less improbable due to the fact that it contradicts the usual experience.

Another example is the so called “Miller” experiments. They concern the production of life in a primordial soup. Amino acids and other so called components of life were produced under lab conditions and in very unstable form. Many scientists considered the experiment to be successful as evidence for the supposition that life can appear by chance and without a creator. Other scientist did not concur with this argumentation, because there was definitively no creation of life. Even now we can safely say: “In any event, scientists have not been able to produce synthetic life. Thus, the development of cells back about 3.7 billion years ago remains obscure.”¹

In the case of the resurrection, an event is not conceded in spite of the witnesses because the events appear to be incredible. In the case of the “Miller” experiments the proof is conceded only by those who would like to see it as proof, because it could not even be observed that life appears in the lab, much less under natural conditions. Therefore, the question after God and its evidence is dependent on the readiness of mankind to accept the Bible narrative. God is superior to nature! The reason that proofs, for the existence of God cannot be produced is that God of necessity transcends nature.

Despite all skepticism there truly are scientific and social indications which concur with fundamental statements of the Bible about God and man. The Bible teaches that man is sinful by nature. In consequence he is not even able to do

¹<http://www.zum.de/Faecher/Materialien/beck/13/bs13-50.htm>, September 2011.

consistently what he himself thinks is right and good. He has a problem with his own guilt and injustice and cannot solve this problem by his own strength. Nobody can simply decide not to think or do something that is bad and actually carry through on it, even if he decides to do so, on the basis of his own conviction. Jesus illustrated this dilemma very well in his famous Sermon on the Mount: “*For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven*”.

Matthew 5: 20. Paul also explains the necessity of the mercy of God in this regard: “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus*” Romans 3, 23:24.

Restrictions in our thinking

What objections can be raised against an atheistic view? First the fundamental question must be asked whether people are actually able with their thinking capacity in combination with the knowledge available to them, to maintain a correct and complete picture of reality. This question must be answered with no! The sum of knowledge meanwhile accumulated by mankind cannot be grasped in its entirety by any single person. Therefore, nobody can claim to have thought through all the possible fundamental questions concerning life and the existence of it. Under these circumstances human reasoning itself can never lead to an objectively correct and all “encompassing” answer. This fact is important, because it leads to the realization of the modern science theory “that every branch of science depends on metaphysic postulates and must of necessity be dependent upon them. A separation of belief and knowledge is generally not possible”²

Therefore, it is a wrong assumption to think that there could be such a thing as objective scientific research that is completely free of values. The very objective of research is already from the very outset dependent on the opinions of the

²Reinhard Junker, *Leben durch Sterben? Schöpfung, Heilsgeschichte und Evolution*, 2nd Edition 1994, Page 67.

researcher and his pre-understanding of the world. If this is true, scientists actually ought to be aware of the limited degree to which they can speak with authority about life and its origin, and in professional circles this is the case.

Belief is not hostile towards science

Unfortunately, these limitations are as a rule not mentioned in popular scientific media presentations on creation/evolution. One inglorious example of this occurred just before Christmas in 2005 in the ZDF-broadcast "Evolution the Religious War." In this broadcast moderated by Joachim Bublath researchers critical of evolution were, in an aggressive tone and with biting mockery, accused of not doing valid scientific work. Completely without objectivity and using blanket statements anyone that takes the Bible seriously was accused of going about to "establish a simplistic view of life contrary to scientific knowledge". Dozens of celebrated scientists of the past and present discredit this assumption. Supposedly Christians themselves are responsible for establishing anti-scientific faith in the minds of people."The fact that this is a totally absurd assertion can be demonstrated from statements from the film itself that draw attention to scientists with Christian convictions. And yet Bublath talks presumptuously at this point in terms of "pseudoscience." To put it clearly, anyone that pursues scientific research nowadays and yet dares to challenge the established evolutionistic theory or any of its postulates, can be assured that his work will not receive recognition or be considered of value, but will even be distained. This tendency is remarkable because modern science itself claims to allow for criticism and counterarguments. If, however those counterarguments are put forth by the "wrong" people, they are attacked aggressively. These people scarcely have a chance to present their valid arguments in a fair and objective way – certainly not in the mass media. The uproar over so-called intelligent design or creationism is nothing new; it simply has increased recently in its fierceness and polemics. Unfortunately, this new wave of the criticism was unleashed, one could say not entirely without justification, due to the fact that defenders

of the theory of evolution, especially in the USA, were finding themselves attacked frequently in a rather inept way. The backlash, however has not been any less polemic or any more objective. Characteristic of this sort of thing is the revilement of the Christian biology professor Siegfried Scherer who is active at the University of Freising. On the one hand his scientific competence is placed in doubt by the media, because he does not support the usual interpretations of the creation of life on the other hand he performs outstanding scientific work which was acknowledged by a major science prize. The media nevertheless succeeded in passing off a negative image of him to the public even though he presents his view in a factual way which speaks for and not against Scherer's scientific competence. The current attacks against the representatives of creation demonstrate that in the final analysis the actual problem is not the scientific discussion itself. It is a discussion which is both desired and demanded by serious-minded scientists on both sides of the debate. What is at stake is a defense of what is being passed off as a freethinking, natural philosophic (non-supernatural) interpretation against what appears to be "dangerous" Christian opponents, who want nothing more than to bring people back to God and to point up their responsibility to God, and who wish to do so on the basis of scientific study.³

Objectivity and openness of the thinking

To avoid having to discuss whether God exists, God is arbitrarily stripped of his true existence as creator and is relegated to the realm of myths, legends and subjective impressions. To be fair, however, at the very least one would have to admit the possibility God could exist. On the one hand, creationistic scientists are accused of unscientific prejudice; on the other hand, those who are making the accusations are guilty of the same practice. They rule out the possibility of a creator without being able to present scientific proof for the validity of their foregone conclusions.

³Cf. preamble of the German constitution.

The question of whether God exists will not be solved by simply shutting one's eyes and ears. There are arguments for the existence of God that should be taken seriously. Contrary to popular opinion, the complexity of nature, especially the complexity of life is a serious indicator, pointing to God as Creator. What Paul wrote to the Romans is important to consider, especially in light of the fantastic possibilities of scientific research and observation today: *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."* Romans 1:20

Creation without a creator?

To the degree to which our technical possibilities for observing nature increase, to the same degree our knowledge is also increasing with reference to the fact that living organisms, in the most minute details, possess excellently constructive equipment within their organs. As the complexity of life progressively unfolds to us, so it is becoming increasingly difficult to attribute organisms to what amount to the results of aimless evolution. The area of Bionics illustrates this inconsistency very clearly. Engineers marvel, speaking in glowing terms about the technical concepts that are already in place in nature, and that tower over anything human technology has produced. Moreover, contrary to what one would expect from the evolutionistic standpoint, there is no hint of development/progression in the constructions within nature. Every living being must be regarded as a perfectly functioning organism – the same applies to every fossil – otherwise it would never have lived.

Facts and their interpretation

Not infrequently, it is suggested that Christian scientists promote the concept of rigidity among the species that were originally created. Yet there is no question but that changes in organisms can occur under certain environmental conditions. These changes are not denied by Christians that believer in creation, nor yet is such a denial required by the wording of the

biblical text. What should however, be called into question is the extent to which variation in living organisms is possible. The fact is that organisms can change within and in keeping with the fixed limits of their genetic complexity. It is also observable that through mutations changes in the genetic information can appear. However, it is also true that such changes are as a rule destructive in nature and must be considered to be defective. The prevalence of constructive improvements on the basis of a process of random mutation is by comparison insignificant and serves merely to demonstrate the fact that no completely new, fully functioning organ has ever been produced through generations of self-organization. This is in contrast to evolution, which postulates that the feathers could develop from reptilian scales or lungs from gills. It is indisputable that there are similarities between organisms and that change among organisms is possible. A theory of evolution as an alternative to creation is, however, not a fact, but an interpretation of the facts. One must not be mistaken for the other.

As far as the similarity between living organisms is concerned, there is room for interpretation. Similarity could be an indication of a lengthy process of self-development; it could, however, also be evidence for a common constructor, which points to a different kind of origin. The usual and observable natural process of the life is that biological information is lost and species die out, not their continued development. These findings speak for an original creation that was later delivered over to decay and destruction, just as the Bible tells.

God's dimensional superiority

Considering both theories objectively side-by-side, both appear to stand on equal footing. Both begin with assumptions that lie outside the ability of natural science to prove them that is through repeated experimentations. A big bang from an undeterminable original state of energy and matter does not require less belief, than a creative act of God does. An endless chain sequence of mutations leading from a prehistoric cell to man is not more plausible than a creative act of God that is superior to mankind in size,

and whose creative power therefore is beyond the ability of natural science to inspect, except that it can observe what has resulted from that power. This God in his creative power defies scientific proof because he is beyond human comprehension but can be recognized in his creation. This superiority underscores the point that the quest to discover God is something that cannot, nor may it be answered entirely from the standpoint of the natural sciences.

Other indications that there is a God

Outside the realm of science, but within humankind there is a longing for God accompanied by the effort to compensate for this longing by being religious, which in itself points to God's existence. Ethical principles found world-wide in similar form could also be an indication that they originate in the law (a sort of operation system) which the Creator has given his creation. People's striving after autonomy and their inclination to manufacture a God of their own imagination may have led to the point that only a few remnants yet remain of what once were the good thoughts of God for the co-existence of humankind.

The Bible itself is a strong indication that God exist. How it came into existence over the course of hundreds of years, while at the same time retaining its internally coherency, is in itself a strong argument for the existence of a real spiritual deity that moved upon all of the authors equally, compelling them to write. The linkage of the spiritually important events with the historic events of that time demonstrate at the very least, a clear connection between the biblical texts and historical reality. Equally astonishing is the fact that numerous prophetic statements were confirmed through their fulfillment in history. Here the Bible clearly sets itself apart from other holy books of other religions. Also, the fact that – apart from Jesus Christ – there are virtually no heroes in the Bible – that is to say, people are depicted unsparingly in their human weakness – is a further indication of the authenticity of the biblical texts.

There are other arguments that could be added to these, such as the personal experience that people have had with God, the inner peace that result from true faith, and the joyful outlook on life that results from the knowledge of forgiven guilt through the substitutionary offering of Jesus on the cross.

Trust

In the final analysis, it all comes back down to the basic problem that people, on the basis of logic alone, are incapable of deriving knowledge of God that transcends them. They must invest trust and faith in order to find access to Him. He must reckon with the possibility that God could reveal His presence through, His dealings through history, through contemporary witnesses, and even through one's own personal experience. It is somewhat like when a person is in love. It is the indications, not the scientific proofs that point to His reality.

© Deutscher Christlicher Techniker-Bund e.V.,
Korntal, 2011