

LOOKING AT THE EXISTENCE OF GOD WITH NEW EYES

PROPHECY'S ANSWER TO PHILOSOPHY'S CONFUSION

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CHAPTER 1

DOES GOD REALLY EXIST?

The North American moose is the largest species in the deer family. It is strong, majestic, and yet it is a mysterious animal. Growing up, I didn't live in an area where you find moose. I wanted to see one but never did.

I often went camping with my parents, and we camped in places where moose should have been, but I never saw one. Later in life, when I married my wife, she shared stories of seeing moose, which increased my desire to see this animal all the more.

So I set out on a quest to see a moose in the wild. I camped in one spot where I had been promised that I would see moose. I went to places where there should have been moose, but to no avail. I traveled to another place with the guarantee that I would see a moose, but nothing. Along the way, I saw statues, pictures, and even videos of moose but never a moose in the wild. I even saw a statue of a moose that was pink and purple and had wings, but I never saw a moose in the wild.

As I considered this situation, I began to doubt whether or not moose even existed. I said in my mind, *This is a fabricated story. The pictures have been created with Photoshop, and the videos manipulated. Moose don't exist.*

Now, I know it sounds absurd, but that is what I thought. I wasn't able to see the animal, so it must not be real. People are even distorting the picture with pink and purple flying moose.

The course of my belief changed when I traveled to Algonquin Provincial Park (southeastern Ontario), where I was virtually guaranteed a moose sighting. We came into the park through the

west entrance and drove east. The weather wasn't perfect—it was raining. But I would see this animal that had continually escaped me. We drove almost all the way to the east entrance and didn't see anything, and then my wife said, "Wait, turn around!" I turned the car around, and there it was. It was a moose in real life.

I shot some pictures and posted them on Twitter. Even though I had settled the question of the moose's existence in my mind, a friend said it was a tiny moose and, therefore, barely a moose.

One year later, in Newfoundland, I saw two bull moose, leaving no doubt in my mind that moose are real.

My experience with moose reminds me of the struggle that some people have in knowing whether or not God exists. And maybe it is a good question for us to ask: Does God really exist? It is perhaps a strange question for us to ask, yet the question of God's existence constitutes the underlying reason for many individuals who reject Christianity.

The field of science, since the time of Charles Darwin, has led many to believe that this world is not the result of special creation by a divine being. Instead, it suggests that the world is the result of a chance mixture of the right amino acids and atmosphere, which eventually evolved into what we see today through natural processes over millions, if not billions, of years. Because of this, many scientists believe that random chance processes completely rule out creation and design by a divine being as an explanation for the origin of our world and universe. This type of thinking has created a seemingly unbridgeable chasm between science on one hand and religion on the other. And such thinking has led many to question the very existence of God.

It is interesting to note that many of the pioneers of modern science such as Kepler, Galileo, Boyle, Pascal, Linné, and Newton all included the concept of God in their scientific outlook. And as author Ariel Roth points out in his book *Science Discovers God*, "They often spoke of Him, and they considered their scientific investigations as the continuing discovery of the laws that He had

created. Those intellectual giants demonstrated how science and an awareness of God can work together as we study nature.”¹ And so for those pioneers of science, the existence of God and scientific methods were not mutually exclusive but rather complementary.

In light of the chasm that developed between modern science and religion, it’s even more interesting to note the percentage of scientists who believe in God, not only as a supreme being who creates and sustains nature but also as a personal God to whom one may pray. The prestigious journal *Nature* published a survey of one thousand individuals picked from the list of scientists in the *American Men and Women of Science*, a biographical directory of significant living scientists. The survey revealed that “about 40 percent [of the random sample of scientists] said they believed in the type of God that answers their prayers,” while “45 percent did not. . . . Interestingly, this survey conducted in 1996, was the same as one done 80 years earlier with essentially the same results.”²

Yet many people around the world are still asking that question: Does God really exist? In this book, we will explore what some say is the ultimate question of life.

How can we be sure that God does, in fact, exist? Do many who believe simply operate under the assumption of God’s existence? Does the evidence lend itself only to those who belong to some religion, or are there some criteria that one can apply regardless of whether one ascribes to religion or not?

In order to try to find an answer to these questions and the big question of God’s existence, we need to construct a test. This would be a test that only God Himself could pass. It must be a test that anyone can administer, regardless of whether they are religious or not.

Before we begin, we need to establish one important ground rule, and that is the importance of maintaining a suitable attitude in answering this question. According to Dr. Subodh Pandit, each of us has a blend of three attitudes within us that we can switch to at any given moment. Each of us is inherently either a believer, a skeptic, or an inquirer. Here are the major differences between them:

- “A skeptic decides against a claim prior to a thorough investigation; a believer, on the other hand, decides to accept a claim prior to a thorough investigation; and an inquirer withholds a verdict until the investigation is done.
- “A skeptic focuses on the question, to the exclusion of the evidence; a believer focuses on the evidence, to the exclusion of the question; and an inquirer focuses on the weight of evidence.
- “A skeptic disbelieves in the face of reasonable evidence; a believer believes in the face of big questions; and an inquirer accepts reasonable evidence, even if some questions remain.”³

And so, I must ask, which of these attitudes is the most critical to demonstrate in any given investigation? To begin with, the attitude of the skeptic will lead us to skewed results. But also, if I start from the position of the believer, I will undoubtedly make flawed decisions. So the answer is the attitude of an inquirer. That way, I will reach the best possible results from looking at the evidence and establishing a well-balanced and grounded belief system.

We now need to describe the method we are going to use to analyze the question of God's existence. As we said, we need to construct a test that only God Himself could pass. The method we use must be able to examine two things: First, what is knowledge? And second, how can we determine whether our knowledge is certain and reliable? From these two questions, we will construct the test and then apply it to the question of God's existence.

So what then is knowledge? This is another question for the ages. It is one that philosophers have analyzed and scientists have assumed in their hypotheses. We will first evaluate several sources of knowledge to determine whether or not we can use any of them to construct our method.

The first source of knowledge is what we derive from our senses. It's true that we can learn a lot by simply observing how things

work. Yet, there are two problems with knowledge derived from our senses. The first is that our knowledge of what there is to observe is limited. Take, for instance, our knowledge of the stars. Recently, scientists pointed the Hubble telescope in the direction of a tiny dark spot in the constellation Fornax. This dark spot, which for years has been assumed to be empty space, is so small that looking at it is like staring at a dime from seventy-five feet away. The camera of the Hubble telescope took eight hundred photos between September 23, 2003, and January 16, 2004, giving a total exposure time of 11.3 days.⁴ The pictures of this dark, supposedly empty spot revealed ten thousand galaxies that we didn't even know existed. The dark spot seemed for a long time to reveal nothingness, and yet eventually, it revealed vast expanses of new discoveries. This kind of discovery demonstrates our limited ability to obtain knowledge only through our senses.

Here we discover that human observation is inadequate as the basis of an argument for the nonexistence of God. In order for the statement "God does not exist" to be proven true by sensory observation, one must know every part of the universe and the knowledge that is available in it *at the same time*, which is impossible for us. After all, if God does exist, then He must be somewhere, and He must have the ability to move from one place to another. We would have to be able to see everywhere and everything at the same time to know He is not there.

The second problem with knowledge derived from our senses is that senses can mislead us. For a long time, many of our earth's inhabitants believed the earth was the center of the universe. They based that belief on their everyday observations. However, they had to abandon that belief when Copernicus found substantial evidence that led him to conclude that the earth revolves around the sun and not the other way around. We cannot rely on knowledge derived from our senses to construct our test of God's existence because we don't know when it is true and when it is not.

The second source of knowledge is reason. The ancient Greek

philosophers Socrates and Plato used the process of reason in order to establish truth and certainty in their debates with the Sophists, who did not believe that truth was absolute. These thinkers understood, as we just discovered, that knowledge derived from the senses produces opinion and not the truth. So, according to Socrates, a beautiful woman is not beautiful because of the information that comes from our senses. She is beautiful because she partakes of the concept of beauty. By this, he meant that the concept of beauty has an existence that is separate from the woman. Thus, the woman is beautiful because she is a manifestation of the concept of beauty.

Now don't be confused by that. Here is a more straightforward example. Look at a white piece of paper. According to Plato, it is not white because of what our senses are telling us. It is white because the paper is a duplication of the concept of whiteness that allegedly has actual existence in a "world" where there is no time or space. In other words, a white piece of paper was white before I ever saw it, and it will continue to be white after I see it. The paper is white because it is white, and I don't need to sense it in my brain for it to be white. The problem here is that neither reason nor sensory perception has been able to determine whether Plato's "heavenly" world exists.

However, it is possible to use reason in such a way that it appears logical and yet we know that it's false. In a simple example, someone might say that lots of people are buying a particular movie or music album, and therefore it is good. Of course, this is false reasoning. It sounds reasonable until you examine the outcome. You may find that the movie is bad in spite of its popularity with many people. Therefore, the use of reason, which has its basis in logic and therefore relies on concepts for which there is no empirical evidence, cannot be used to construct the test.

Other sources of knowledge are intuition and feeling. These are known to be very personal and ever-changing. They certainly can be true, yet it is almost impossible to establish them as objective criteria for God's existence.

The fifth source of knowledge is experience. One can learn

many things through the experiences of life, whether one's own or someone else's experience. However, as with intuition and feeling, the evidence produced by the experience of one person can be diametrically opposite to that of the experience of another, which renders experience an insufficient source of knowledge for our test.

A similar problem exists when it comes to history. Notice Louis Gottschalk's perceptive observation. He states,

Only a part of what was observed in the past was remembered by those who observed it; only a part of what was remembered was recorded; only a part of what was recorded has survived; only a part of what has survived has come to the attention of the historian; only a part of what has come to his attention is credible; only a part of what is credible has been grasped; and only a part of what has been grasped can be expounded or narrated by the historian.⁵

Another source of knowledge for us is experts. The knowledge may come from philosophers, scientists, technicians, doctors, lawyers, or teachers, just to name a few. Although we have gained a lot through experts, there is one major problem: knowledge is increasing at an astounding rate. For example, the information in the small and exciting field of nanotechnology is doubling every two years, and clinical medical knowledge is doubling every eighteen months. Another example is the World Wide Web. The first website was created in 1991, and at the time of this publication, there are more than a billion websites. The growth of knowledge in this century is staggering.

This growth means that whatever an expert claims to know about any given subject right now is surely going to change very soon. In some cases, this new knowledge is simply adding more details, but in many other cases, what we thought we knew must be completely revised. Here's an example. In the late 1800s, doctors would prescribe the smoking of cigarettes to cure bronchitis, arsenic

as a health supplement, and mercury as a cure for many diseases. In the twentieth century, all of these substances were found to be toxic to human beings. Knowledge changes constantly, and it forces us to revise our beliefs and our decisions. Although all of these sources of knowledge have their place, there is a high probability of error if we try to use them as tools to determine whether God really exists.

We conclude, then, that reason, sensory perception, intuition, feeling, experience, history, and the experts are not sufficient sources of knowledge to construct the test to apply to the existence of God.

So what will work?

God, Himself, makes a bold statement in the book of Isaiah. He says,

“Remember the former things of old,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done”
(Isaiah 46:9, 10).

God says that He is God and there is no other. He states that He knows the end from the beginning. He knows things that are not yet done—in other words, the future. God has made Himself completely testable. This is why the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “Test all things; hold fast what is good.” God has opened Himself up to be tested. That is why we began this journey of discovery.

1. Ariel Adrean Roth, *Science Discovers God: Seven Convincing Lines of Evidence for His Existence* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2008), 8, 9.

2. Roth, *Science Discovers God*, 24.

3. Subodh K. Pandit, *Come Search With Me: Let's Look for God* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), xii.

4. S. Beckwith, “Hubble Ultra Deep Field Image Reveals Galaxies Galore,” Hubblesite, March 9, 2004, <http://hubblesite.org/image/1457/gallery>.

5. Louis Reichenbach, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950).