What proof is there for the existence of God? The simple answer to this is that there is none. Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University John Lennox says that you can only really have ‘proof’ in Maths itself. In all other fields the way we find out whether something is true or not is through the weight of evidence. The following arguments are some that have been used to present some of this evidence. Most of these are arguments from Philosophy.

**Cosmological Argument**

This argument was developed strongly by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. It is based on the premise that everything we observe has a cause. For example: When I ride my bike to school I can ask the question, ‘Where did my bike come from?’ I can see that it was bought from a bike shop. I know that the bike shop bought it from a company who built it in a factory in Taiwan. Before it was assembled it was largely raw metal. I know that this metal was dug out of the ground. The metal got into the ground through meteorites and through cosmological explosions at the formation of our world. The bodies and processes in space were in turned caused by the universe itself coming into being. The universe came into being because of…

At this point things get difficult to answer. If Aquinas were around today he would be well aware that ‘The Big Bang’ is normally our answer at this point. He would then ask, ‘What caused the Big Bang?’ At this point we are left with three possibilities:

1. We push the cause further back. In recent years physicists have developed a theory of the multiverse, i.e. multiple universes. But this kicks the can down the road. What caused the multiverse? We could keep going back forever.
2. We argue that the universe came from nothing for no reason. We would also have to admit that holding to these does not really follow logic (even if we still hold to it).
3. We argue that the universe is eternal and has always been.
4. We argue that there is an ‘uncaused cause’ or in Aquinas’ words, ‘an unmoved mover’. Commonly this is known as God who, monotheists claim, has always existed and has no beginning. At this point you might think, ‘But who made God?’ Doesn’t the same problem follow that something (God) came from nothing? Not exactly. Aquinas points out that when we notice things in the world (e.g. my bike) we are noticing things that at some point *began* to exist. Everything we see had a *beginning*, even the universe. It’s not that everything must have a cause, it’s that everything that has a *beginning* must have a cause. So ‘being’ can’t come from ‘non-being’. But God never had a beginning. He didn’t come from non-being, because he has always existed. As the eminent scientist Sir Arthur Eddington wrote: ‘The beginning (of the universe) seems to present insuperable difficulties unless we agree to look on it as frankly supernatural.’

**Teleological Argument**

A good example of this argument comes from William Paley in the 18th century. He gives the following example: Imagine you were walking down the street and found a wristwatch. You picked it up and looked at it. No one would assume it just came into being by itself. Its design is so obviously constructed that it must have a constructor. To argue that a watch came into being by itself would be something like doing the following: you dissemble the watch into as many parts as possible. You then lay them on the sand of a beach just where the waves are breaking. Then you wait and expect the watch to assemble itself through the motion of the waves. While it might be technically possible in the right weather conditions if every possible factor were in play, it is so extremely unlikely that the only possible argument that holds is that the watch is made by someone.

He argues that the world is like this. The world exhibits an order and improbability that is so high that it is extremely unlikely that the universe came into being by itself. Philosopher William Lane Craig builds on this argument: ‘If the rate of the universe’s expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even on part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have collapsed into a fireball.’ He then quotes physicist P.C.W. Davies who argues that the odds against the first conditions being suitable for stars to form (and planets and life) is 1 followed by at least a thousand billion billion zeros. If gravity were changed by 1/10+100 zeros life wouldn’t have developed. There are about fifty constants and quantities (e.g. usable energy, mass difference between protons and neutrons, ration of forces of nature, proportion of matter to anti-matter) and all of these must be balanced to an infinitesimal degree for any life to be possible’. William Paley was trying to point out that the extreme improbability of the universe existing by itself is even more radical than a wristwatch being formed by the waves of the sea. It is more logical and likely, he argued, that God brought the universe into being.

**Moral Argument**

Author of *The Chronicles of Narnia,* C.S Lewis is the most well-known proponent of this argument. He argues that everyone has a sense of things being morally right and others being morally wrong. But if there is no God, how do we explain this? If we are the result of just blind forces, then there is no real right or wrong at all – only the choice to do whatever we want. He goes on to argue that despite some variation in moral values, nearly all cultures agree on certain constants: e.g. it is wrong to kill an innocent person. The existence of these moral agreements across all people points to there being a moral code inbuilt into our very being. Because this moral code only makes sense if morality is not invented by us, then there must be something that put that moral code into the universe. That, he claims, is God.

**Ontological Argument**

Are square circles possible? No? You just moved from a concept in your mind to a statement about reality. This argument attempts to do the same. I don’t find it compelling, but it is held to by some:

1. God is a being than which none greater can be imagined (that is, the greatest possible being that can be imagined).
2. God exists as an idea in the mind.
3. A being that exists as an idea in the mind *and* in reality is greater than a being that exists only as an idea in the mind.
4. Thus, if God exists only as an idea in the mind, then we can imagine something that is greater than God (that is, a greatest possible being that does exist).
5. But we cannot imagine something that is greater than God (for it is a contradiction to suppose that we can imagine a being greater than the greatest possible being that can be imagined.)
6. Therefore, God exists.

**Historical Argument**

Even if you accept the cosmological and teleological arguments, it doesn’t tell you much about God. All we can really discover is that something made the universe that had no beginning. This might be 20 gods. It might be a giant spaghetti monster. They do not really give evidence for God as Paley or Aquinas understood him. The historical argument is far stronger.

This argument looks to the person of Jesus Christ and the evidence for him from history. While some will claim that Jesus of Nazareth never existed, there is no serious historian in the world who holds to this. The vast majority will agree on the basic outline of Jesus’ life as recorded in the gospels and many non-Christian sources: He was a 1st century Jew who lived in Nazareth. He travelled around teaching people about God and developed a reputation for performing miracles. He was crucified by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. Shortly after his death his followers claimed he rose from the dead and appeared to them.

The real heart of the matter when it comes to Jesus is his resurrection. If it can be shown that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead, then Christianity has a great deal of merit. If it can be shown that he didn’t then Christianity is entirely pointless. This is because all of the Christian hope of eternal life, forgiveness of sin, and the supernatural power of the God that Jesus called upon depend on the resurrection. So how do we explain the claim that Jesus rose? Because it appears the tomb was empty. If it were not, the Romans or the Jews (who both hated the Christian movement) would have simply gone and displayed the body to prove that he didn’t rise. Some would argue that Jesus’ followers stole the body. But this makes little sense. There was no logical motive for this. There was no social benefit to being a Christian – in fact, it was likely to get you imprisoned or killed. There was no financial benefit either. It appears that a great number of Jesus’ immediate group were executed for speaking about Jesus’ resurrection. But why would anyone die for something they knew to be a lie?

There is also the testimony of the Apostle Paul. Historians agree that his letters are the earliest accounts of the resurrection in history – being written only a couple of decades after Jesus’ death. Paul writes of his violent opposition to Christianity and then claims that Jesus’ appeared to him. In response he becomes a leader of the early Christian movement. Even non-Christian historians agree that Paul was executed in Rome for his preaching – why would he die for a lie? Paul also speaks of 500 others who saw the risen Jesus who were still alive. This is very risky claim to make if those 500 people did not in fact exist (it would be much safer to claim that those 500 were dead).

The early church also appears to have exploded in energy shortly after Jesus’ death. Why would the torturous execution of their leader lead to this?

Historian John Dickson of Macquarie University writes:

"Even historians who don't think resurrections are possible think something very strange happened that first Easter," says Dickson, who quotes the Duke University sceptic E.P. Sanders: "That Jesus's disciples had resurrection experiences is, in my judgment, a fact. What explains these experiences, I do not know." Dickson says that's typical of the secular scholars: "They know something strange happened."

As strange as it might seem, there seems to be an argument, with some weight, that Jesus of Nazareth really did rise from the grave. If this is the case, and we know people don’t rise, then it also follows that the existence of God is fitting explanation for these Easter events.”

**Personal Experience**

It is undeniable that the vast majority of the world believes in God or gods. This has been true across human history. People claim that God makes sense of their experience of the world. That without God certain things just don’t make sense: e.g. the love of between a mother and her child. Is this just chemical processes in the brain? Or is there something real, meaningful and even spiritual here. Our sense of beauty and creativity do not really have a purpose if we are only products of the survival of the fittest. The person spending their time playing their primitive guitar would be a good target for a saber-toothed tiger. Why would beauty exist unless beauty pointed us to the God who is beautiful? Even our sense of evil, which is often used against God, only really makes sense if there is a God – otherwise it’s not evil, it’s just random biology and cosmological forces.

People see a God in the ordering of their lives. They see events turn in ways that they can only perceive as ordered and deliberate. They see meaning arise out of even from terrible events and suffering. They also find a sense of hope for the future a belief in death no longer being the end that gives them a certain satisfaction and fulfilment that seems so fitting it could only be a part of our true nature. As a result happiness research has strongly leant toward showing that religious people are happier and more satisfied than the non-religious (<http://time.com/collection/guide-to-happiness/4856978/spirituality-religion-happiness/>). Similarly those who regularly attend a worship surface have a much lower chance of dying than those who do not (<http://time.com/5159848/do-religious-people-live-longer/>)

While these ‘experience’ arguments prove nothing, they do give some weight to the idea that being religious seems to be something that is natural, healthy and normal for human beings to be. If there is no God, why would we be like this?

**?**