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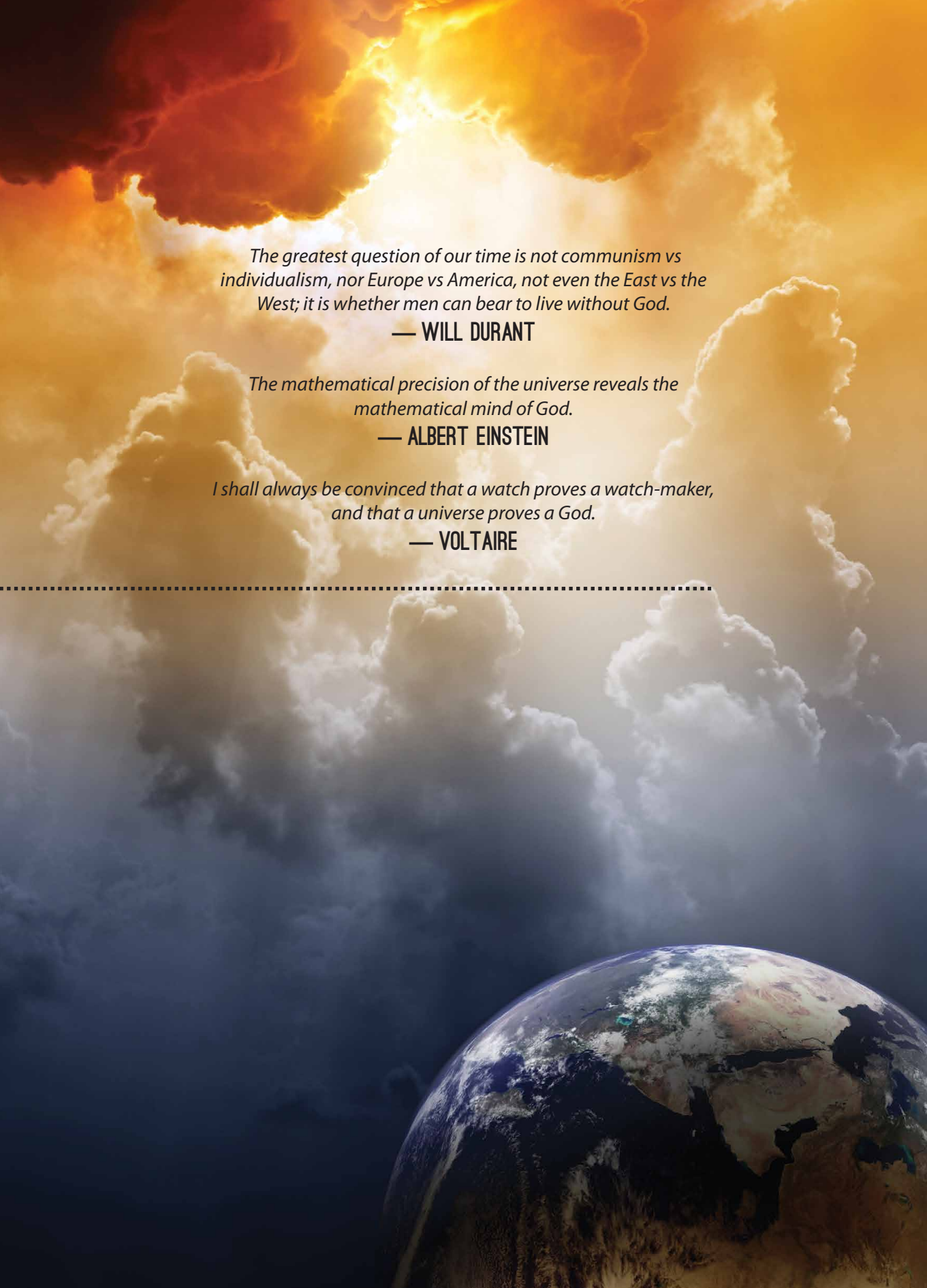
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*The greatest question of our time is not communism vs individualism, nor Europe vs America, not even the East vs the West; it is whether men can bear to live without God.*

— WILL DURANT

*The mathematical precision of the universe reveals the mathematical mind of God.*

— ALBERT EINSTEIN

*I shall always be convinced that a watch proves a watch-maker, and that a universe proves a God.*

— VOLTAIRE

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# I

## DOES GOD EXIST?

Is it reasonable to believe in God? Can God's existence be logically proven without appealing to religious experience or a leap of faith? Is God merely a psychological projection, a primitive myth? How could anyone be sure there is a God? What evidence supports God's existence?

Our secular culture may dismiss God as irrelevant to our existence and give the seductive impression that God is on a long vacation. This popular concept may provide some humans with a sense of freedom and autonomy, but it has not delivered us from boredom, anxiety, suicide, stress, drugs, crime, addiction to entertainment, and other neuroses.<sup>1</sup> After diagnosing the human predicament, psychiatrist Victor Frankl (1905–1997) observes, “More people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.”<sup>2</sup> According to Erich Fromm, one of the leading specialists in human behaviour, the majority of those who visit psychiatrists suffer from “an inner deadness. They live in the midst of plenty and are joyless.”<sup>3</sup>

In the light of our social and spiritual crisis, it is not beyond reason to propose that the missing ingredient in our recipe for existence is the reality of God.<sup>4</sup> History has repeatedly confirmed the tragic truth that when people ignore the Transcendent they descend into the abyss of nihilism. Where God is abandoned human life becomes, in the words of English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and

1. Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics indicate that since 1960 there has been a 560% increase in violent crime in the U.S.A. The National Center for Health Statistics indicates divorce rates have tripled and the number of children living with single parents has also tripled. The teenage suicide rate has tripled.
2. Frankl, V., *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, Simon & Schuster, New York, pp. 20–21, 1978.
3. Fromm, E., *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, Harper & Row, New York, pp. 85–86, 1960.
4. For some excellent discussions of the concept of God, see Henry, C.F.H., *God, Revelation and Authority*, Word, Waco, TX, 1976, Mascal, E.L., *Existence and Analogy*, Longmans Green, London, 1949, Morris, T.V., *Our Idea of God*, InterVarsity, Downers Grove, 1991, Nash, R., *The Concept of God*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1983, Owen, H.P., *Christian Theism*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1984, Plantinga, A., *God and Other Minds*, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1967, Ward, K., *Rational Theology and the Creativity of God*, Pilgrim, New York, 1982, Yandell, K.E., *Christianity and Philosophy*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1984.



short”.<sup>5</sup> There is no song of hope but only the cry of despair.<sup>6</sup>

## I. THE RELEVANCE OF GOD

The subject of God’s existence has serious consequences for human existence. No other issue touches our lives as deeply as this. It has a profound philosophical implication in all matters of reality. “The greatest question of our time”, notes American historian Will Durant (1885–1981) “is whether men can bear to live without God.”<sup>7</sup> Chicago philosopher and director of the Institute for Philosophical Research Mortimer Adler (1902–2001) agreed, “More consequences for thought and action follow the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other basic question.”<sup>8</sup>

It is vital to recognise the relevance of God before we demonstrate the reality of God. The fact of God’s existence is profoundly significant for all our lives. Superficially, many choose not to acknowledge this, but upon deeper reflection are forced to admit that it is so.

Some time ago a New York police officer observed a man standing on a bridge, apparently thinking of committing suicide. The policeman approached him and said, “Let me make a deal with you. Give me ten minutes to tell you why I think life is worth living, then you take ten minutes and tell me why you think life is not worth living. If I am unable to convince you, I will let you jump.” According to the story, after twenty minutes they joined hands and both jumped off the bridge.

The story poses serious questions. Is life really worth living? If there is no God, then what is the reason for our being? What is the logical ground for our values, morality, rationality, dignity and personality? If there is no God we are, in the words of philosopher William James, “Like dogs in a library observing the volumes but unable to read the print.” Are we just an accidental by-product of matter which evolved mindlessly on a tiny speck of dust called planet Earth, basically just rearranged pond scum? How could we find meaning in a meaningless universe? Reason in an irrational world? Value in a material universe and purpose in a random existence? If there is no God, then should we not conclude with Shakespeare’s

5. Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, ch. 13, 1651.

6. The writings of famous atheists like Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, Sartre, Albert Camus and Hemingway confirm this truth.

7. Quoted in Baxter, B.B., *I Believe Because...*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 29, 1978.

8. Adler, M., *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol. II, ed. Robert M. Hutchins, p. 561.

Macbeth that “Life is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing?”<sup>9</sup> How could we possibly escape the nihilism of Friedrich Nietzsche, the meaninglessness of Jean-Paul Sartre, the despair of Bertrand Russell, the nothingness of Martin Heidegger or the fatalism of Albert Camus? The absence of God in reality is the absence of goodness, truth, value, meaning, reason, life and joy. Many brilliant minds have understood this truth only too well. The rejection of God logically implies the rejection of all reality that is fundamental to God.<sup>10</sup> (See also Chapter 3(VI): The Agony of Atheism, p. 89.)

Although the subject of God may appear to be simple on the surface it is, in fact, extremely profound. God is not a secondary issue but an ultimate factor. The very nature of God demands an approach that transcends the normal and the contingent. One should not attempt to prove God the way we try to prove apples and atoms. The reality of God is in a category that is radically trans-natural. It is beyond and above nature. God is transcendent.<sup>11</sup> One must not commit the categorical mistake of equating God with the phenomena which He has made.<sup>12</sup>

If God is the cause of the universe, then He must be beyond and greater than the physical dimension. Therefore we may discover the effects or evidence of God in the universe but not necessarily observe the essence of God within the universe, for the profound reason that He transcends space, time and matter. The skeptic who says “Show me your God!” and demands scientific proof, is being extremely simplistic.

The story of the man who went fishing illustrates an important truth. Every time he caught a big fish he kept throwing it back into the lake and each time he caught a small one, he kept it. A mystified bystander, observing his peculiar process of selection, asked him what on earth he was doing. With a smile the man replied, “I only have an eight-inch frying pan and so the larger fish won’t fit.” The trouble is that many skeptics reject God because they can’t fit Him into their naturalistic frying pan. The truth is there are realities that go beyond our limited paradigm but to reject them because they do not fit our limited scientific categories is to become a poor metaphysical fisherman. Our philosophical frying pan is not big enough to include all of reality.<sup>13</sup>

9. Shakespeare, W., *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5.

10. See Küng, H., *Does God Exist?* translated by Edward Quinn, Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1980.

11. See Frame, J.M., *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, Presbyterian & Reformed, Phillipsburg, NJ, 1987.

12. The category fallacy made prominent by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976) is committed when things or facts of one category are regarded as having similar properties of another (e.g. colour to sound, truth to questions, space to time). It would be a category mistake to ask: What does yellow taste like? Can you show me the sound of music? Who made God?

13. Many important philosophers and scientists conclude that the scientific method is not capable of handling all realities. See Clark, G.H., *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*, Craig Press, Nutley, NJ, 1964, Hooykass, R., *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1972, Jaki, S., *The Road of Science and the Ways to God*, University of Chicago Press, 1978, Kuhn, T.S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, 1970, Mascall, E.L., *Christian Theology and Natural Science*, Longmans Green, London, 1956. The statement “science can handle all realities” is also self-refuting, since that statement itself is not part of science!



The question of God's existence is a perennial one, which presses upon all of us and demands a rational response. For one to go through life without examining ultimate questions is to miss the central point of human existence. The meaning of life is to find the meaning for life and the purpose of existence is to discover the purpose worth living for. A sensible existence is only possible when we try to make sense of our lives and the universe. As Socrates so wisely proposed, "The unexamined life is not worth living."<sup>14</sup> Reflection can lead us to resolution. American Quaker theologian Elton Trueblood (1900–1994), in addressing this issue suggests, "If we refuse to discuss the existence of God we are simply avoiding the central issue, which is the issue of delusion."<sup>15</sup> Even the Australian-born Oxford atheistic philosopher J.L. Mackie (1917–1981) agrees that the issue of God's existence is worth reflecting on. He insists, "The question whether there is or is not a god can and should be rewarding, in that it can yield definite results."<sup>16</sup> In the final analysis, as Thomistic<sup>17</sup> philosopher Edward Sillem affirms, "The conclusion we reach in our reflection on this question has the most momentous consequences in the orientation of our thinking and of our daily living."<sup>18</sup> If there is a God, knowing Him will be the ultimate key to our existence. This truth will be the greatest truth for mankind. Unlike any other question, the question of God has cosmic significance, for it touches every realm of our existence and provides the basic reason for our being.

Since the concept of God is the greatest issue confronting humanity it deserves our most thoughtful attention. Evangelical philosopher C. Stephen Evans affirms, "Belief in God is

14. Plato, *Apology*, 38.

15. Trueblood, D.E., *General Philosophy*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 209, 1963.

16. Mackie, J.L., *The Miracle of Theism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, p. 1, 1982.

17. Following the approach of the hugely influential medieval philosopher and priest Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

18. Sillem, E., *Ways of Thinking About God*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, p. 1, 1961.



