

Appendix 2

Included below is a transcript of the opening speech of a debate on the existence of God between Dr William Lane Craig and Dr Edwin Curley. Dr Craig also debated well known atheist radio personality Phillip Adams at Sydney University in 2002 along the same lines. Dr Craig is among the world's foremost defenders of the Christian faith at an academic level. His work is highly readable, and he has written extensively on a whole variety of topics related to the veracity of Christian claims. Much of his work (including the full transcript of the debate) is available online at <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/billcraig/menus/index.html>

The Craig-Curley Debate: The Existence of the Christian God

Dr. William Lane Craig

William Lane Craig is Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with his wife Jan and their two teenage children Charity and John. At the age of sixteen as a junior in high school, he first heard the message of the Christian gospel and yielded his life to Christ. Dr. Craig pursued his undergraduate studies at Wheaton College (B.A. 1971) and graduate studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M.A. 1974; M.A. 1975), the University of Birmingham (England) (Ph.D. 1977), and the University of Munich (Germany) (D.Theol. 1984). From 1980-86 he taught Philosophy of Religion at Trinity, during which time he and Jan started their family. In 1987 they moved to Brussels, Belgium, where Dr. Craig pursued research at the University of Louvain until 1994.

Dr. Craig's Opening Statement

1. Good Evening! I want to begin by thanking MC-Grads for inviting me to participate in tonight's debate. And I want to say what a privilege it is to be debating so eminent a scholar as Professor Curley. When I was a doctoral student writing my dissertation on the cosmological argument for God's existence, Dr. Curley's work on the famous philosopher Benedict de Spinoza was a valuable resource to me in trying to analyze Spinoza's own argument for God. So it's a genuine honor to be sharing the podium with Dr. Curley tonight.

2. Now in tonight's debate it seems that there are two basic questions that we need to ask ourselves:

(I.) Are there any good reasons to think that God does not exist?

And

(II.): Are there good reasons to think that God does exist?

3. Now with respect to the first question, I'll leave it up to Dr. Curley to present the

reasons why he thinks that God does not exist. Atheist philosophers have tried for centuries to disprove the existence of God. But no one has ever been able to come up with a convincing argument. So rather than attack straw men at this point, I'll just wait to hear Professor Curley's answer to the following question: What good reasons are there to think that God does not exist?

4. So let's move on, then, to that second question: Are there good reasons to think that God does exist? Tonight I'm going to present five reasons why I think that God exists. Whole books have been written on each one of these, so all I can present here is a brief sketch of each argument and then go into more detail as Dr. Curley responds to them.^{1} These reasons are independent of one another, so that if even one of them is sound, it furnishes good grounds for believing that God exists. Taken together, they constitute a powerful cumulative case that God exists.

5. 1: *God makes sense of the origin of the universe.* Have you ever asked yourself where the universe came from? Why everything exists instead of just nothing? Typically atheists have said that the universe is eternal, and that's all. But surely this doesn't make sense. Just think about it for a minute. If the universe never began to exist, then that means that the number of events in the past history of the universe is infinite. But mathematicians recognize that the idea of an actually infinite number of things leads to self-contradictions. For example, what is infinity minus infinity? Well, mathematically, you get self-contradictory answers. This shows that infinity is just an idea in your mind, not something that exists in reality. David Hilbert, perhaps the greatest mathematician of this century states, "The infinite is nowhere to be found in reality. It neither exists in nature nor provides a legitimate basis for rational thought. The role that remains for the infinite to play is solely that of an idea."^{2}

But that entails that since past events are not just ideas, but are real, the number of past events must be finite. Therefore, the series of past events can't just go back forever. Rather the universe must have begun to exist.

6. This conclusion has been confirmed by remarkable discoveries in astronomy and astrophysics. The astrophysical evidence indicates that the universe began to exist in a great explosion called the "Big Bang" about 15 billion years ago. Physical space and time were created in that event, as well as all the matter and energy in the universe. Therefore, as Cambridge astronomer Fred Hoyle points out, the Big Bang Theory requires the creation of the universe from nothing. This is because, as you go back in time, you reach a point in time at which, in Hoyle's words, the universe was "shrunk down to nothing at all."^{3} Thus, what the Big Bang model requires is that the universe began to exist and was created out of nothing.

7. Now this tends to be very awkward for the atheist. For as Anthony Kenny of Oxford University urges, "A proponent of the Big Bang theory, at least if he is an atheist, must believe that the universe came from nothing and by nothing."^{4}

8. But surely that doesn't make sense! Out of nothing, nothing comes. So why does

the universe exist instead of just nothing? Where did it come from? There must have been a cause which brought the universe into being. And from the very nature of the case, this cause must be an uncaused, changeless, timeless, and immaterial being which created the universe. It must be uncaused because there cannot be an infinite regress of causes. It must be timeless and therefore changeless—at least without the universe—because it created time. Because it also created space, it must transcend space as well and therefore be immaterial, not physical.

9. Moreover, I would argue, it must also be personal. For how else could a timeless cause give rise to a temporal effect like the universe? If the cause were an impersonal set of sufficient conditions, then the cause could never exist without the effect. If the sufficient conditions were timelessly present, then the effect would be timelessly present as well. The only way for the cause to be timeless but for the effect to begin in time is if the cause is a personal agent who freely chooses to create an effect in time without any prior determining conditions. And, thus, we are brought, not merely to the transcendent cause of the universe, but to its personal Creator.

10. Isn't it incredible that the Big Bang theory thus fits in with what the Christian theist has always believed: that in the beginning God created the universe? Now I put it to you, which do you think makes more sense: that the Christian theist is right or that the universe just popped into being, uncaused, out of nothing? I, at least, have no trouble assessing these alternatives.

11. **2:** *God makes sense of the complex order in the universe.* During the last 30 years, scientists have discovered that the existence of intelligent life depends upon a delicate and complex balance of initial conditions simply given in the Big Bang itself. We now know that life-prohibiting universes are vastly more probable than any life-permitting universe like ours. How much more probable?

12. Well, the answer is that the chances that the universe should be life-permitting are so infinitesimal as to be incomprehensible and incalculable. For example, Stephen Hawking has estimated that if the rate of the universe's expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have re-collapsed into a hot fireball.^{5} P.C.W. Davies has calculated that the odds against the initial conditions being suitable for star formation (without which planets could not exist) is one followed by a thousand billion billion zeroes, at least.^{6} [He also] estimates that a change in the strength of gravity or of the weak force by only one part in 10 raised to the 100th power would have prevented a life-permitting universe.^{7} There are around 50 such constants and quantities present in the Big Bang which must be fine-tuned in this way if the universe is to permit life. And it's not just each quantity which must be finely tuned; their ratios to each other must also be exquisitely finely tuned. So improbability is multiplied by improbability by improbability until our minds are reeling in incomprehensible numbers.

13. There is no physical reason why these constants and quantities should possess the

values they do. The one-time agnostic physicist P.C. W. Davies comments, "Through my scientific work I have come to believe more and more strongly that the physical universe is put together with an ingenuity so astonishing that I cannot accept it merely as a brute fact." {8} Similarly, Fred Hoyle remarks, "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics." {9} Robert Jastrow, the head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, calls this the most powerful evidence for the existence of God ever to come out of science. {10}

14. So, once again, the view that Christian theists have always held, that there is an intelligent Designer of the universe, seems to make much more sense than the atheistic interpretation that the universe, when it popped into being, uncaused, out of nothing, just happened to be, by chance, fine-tuned for intelligent life with an incomprehensible precision and delicacy.

15. **3:** *God makes sense of objective moral values in the world.* If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist. Many theists and atheists alike concur on this point. For example, the late J. L. Mackie of Oxford University, one of the most influential atheists of our time, admitted: "If...there are...objective values, they make the existence of a god more probable than it would have been without them. Thus, we have a defensible argument from morality to the existence of God." {11} But in order to avoid God's existence, Mackie therefore denied that objective moral values exist. He wrote, "It is easy to explain this moral sense as a natural product of biological and social evolution." {12}

16. Professor Michael Ruse, a philosopher of science at the University of Guelph, agrees. He explains:

Morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth. Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when somebody says, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' they think they are referring above and beyond themselves. Nevertheless, such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction...and any deeper meaning is illusory. {13}

Friedrich Nietzsche, the great atheist of the last century who proclaimed the death of God, understood that the death of God meant the destruction of all meaning and value in life.

I think that Friedrich Nietzsche was right.

17. But we've got to be very careful here. The question here is *not*: Must we believe in God in order to live moral lives? I'm not claiming that we must. *Nor* is the question: can we recognize objective moral values without believing in God? I think we can.

18. Rather the question is: If God does not exist, do objective moral values exist? Like Mackie and Ruse, I just don't see any reason to think that in the absence of God, the morality evolved by *homo sapiens* is objective. After all, if there is no God, then

what's so special about human beings? They're just accidental by-products of nature which have evolved relatively recently on an infinitesimal speck of dust lost somewhere in a hostile and mindless universe and which are doomed to perish individually and collectively in a relatively short time. On the atheistic view, some action, say, rape, may not be socially advantageous, and so in the course of human development has become taboo. But that does absolutely nothing to prove that rape is really wrong. On the atheistic view, there's nothing really *wrong* with your raping someone. Thus, without God there is no absolute right and wrong which imposes itself on our conscience.

19. But the problem is that objective moral values *do* exist, and deep down we all know it. There's no more reason to deny the objective reality of moral values than the objective reality of the physical world. Actions like rape, torture, and child abuse aren't just socially unacceptable behavior—they're moral abominations. Some things, at least, are really wrong. Similarly, love, equality, and self-sacrifice are really good. But if objective values cannot exist without God, and objective values do exist, then it follows logically and inescapably that God exists.

20. 4: *God makes sense of the historical facts concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.* The historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, was a remarkable individual. New Testament critics have reached something of a consensus that the historical Jesus came on the scene with an unprecedented sense of divine authority, the authority to stand and speak in God's place. That's why the Jewish leadership instigated his crucifixion for the charge of blasphemy. He claimed that in himself the Kingdom of God had come, and as visible demonstrations of this fact, he carried out a ministry of miracle-working and exorcisms. But the supreme confirmation of his claim was his resurrection from the dead. If Jesus did rise from the dead, then it would seem that we have a divine miracle on our hands and, thus, evidence for the existence of God.

21. Now most people would think that the resurrection of Jesus is just something you believe in by faith or not. But, in fact, there are three established facts, recognized by the majority of New Testament historians today, which I believe support the resurrection of Jesus: the empty tomb; Jesus' post-mortem appearances; and the origin of the disciples' belief in his resurrection. Let me say a word about each one of these.

22. Fact # 1: *On the Sunday following his crucifixion, Jesus' tomb was found empty by a group of his women followers.* According to Jacob Kremer, an Austrian scholar who has specialized in the study of the resurrection, "By far most scholars hold firmly to the reliability of the Biblical statements about the empty tomb."¹⁴ According to the New Testament critic, D.H. van Daalen, it is extremely difficult to object to the empty tomb on historical grounds; those who deny it do so on the basis of theological or philosophical assumptions.

23. Fact # 2: *On separate occasions different individuals and groups saw appearances of Jesus alive after his death.* According to the prominent, skeptical German New Testament

critic Gerd Ludemann, "It may be taken as historically certain that...the disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ." {15} These appearances were witnessed not only by believers, but also by unbelievers, skeptics, and even enemies.

24. Fact # 3: *The original disciples suddenly came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus despite having every predisposition to the contrary.* Jews had no belief in a dying, much less a rising, Messiah, and Jewish beliefs about the afterlife precluded anyone's rising from the dead prior to the end of the world. Luke Johnson, a New Testament scholar at Emory University, muses, "Some sort of powerful, transformative experience is required to generate the sort of movement earliest Christianity was..." {16} N. T. Wright, an eminent British scholar, concludes, "That is why, as an historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him." {17}

25. Therefore, it seems to me, the Christian is amply justified in believing that Jesus rose from the dead and was who he claimed to be. But that entails that God exists.

26 5: *God can be immediately known and experienced.* This isn't really an argument for God's existence; rather it's the claim that you can know God exists wholly apart from arguments simply by immediately experiencing Him. This was the way people in the Bible knew God, as Professor John Hick explains:
God was known to them as a dynamic will interacting with their own wills, a sheer given reality, as inescapably to be reckoned with as a destructive storm and life-giving sunshine...To them God was not...an idea adopted by the mind, but an experiential reality which gave significance to their lives. {18}

Now if this is so, then there's a danger that proofs for God could actually distract our attention from God Himself. If you're sincerely seeking God, then God will make His existence evident to you. The Bible promises, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4. 8). We mustn't so concentrate on the proofs that we fail to hear the inner voice of God speaking to our own heart. For those who listen, God becomes an immediate reality in their lives.

27. So, in conclusion, we've yet to see any arguments to show that God does not exist, and we *have* seen five reasons to think that God does exist. And, therefore, I think that theism is the more plausible world-view.

Endnotes

{1} For a popular presentation of these arguments and responses to typical objections, see my booklet "God, Are you There?" (Atlanta: RZIM, 1999).

{2} David Hilbert, "On the Infinite," in *Philosophy of Mathematics*, ed. with an Introduction by Paul Benacerraf and Hillary Putnam (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 139, 141.

{3}Fred Hoyle, *Astronomy and Cosmology* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1975), p. 658.

{4}Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 66.

{5}Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 123.

{6}P. C. W. Davies, *Other Worlds* (London: Dent, 1980), pp. 160–161, 168–169.

{7}P. C. W. Davies, "The Anthropic Principle," in *Particle and Nuclear Physics* 10 (1983): 28.

{8}Paul Davies, *The Mind of God* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 169.

{9}Fred Hoyle, "The Universe: Past and Present Reflections," *Engineering and Science* (November, 1981), p. 12.

{10}Robert Jastrow, "The Astronomer and God," in *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God*, ed. Roy Abraham Varghese (Chicago: Regener Gateway, 1984), p. 22.

{11}J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 115–116.

{12}Ibid., pp. 117–118.

{13}Michael Ruse, "Evolutionary Theory and Christian Ethics," in *The Darwinian Paradigm* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 262–269.

{14}Jacob Kremer, *Die Osterevangelien—Geschichten um Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977), pp. 49–50.

{15}Gerd Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus?*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p. 8.

{16}Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996), p. 136.

{17}N. T. Wright, "The New Unimproved Jesus," *Christianity Today* (September 13, 1993), p. 26.

{18}John Hick, Introduction, in *The Existence of God*, ed. with an Introduction by John Hick, Problems of Philosophy Series (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 13–14.

