

# Intermission & Clues

The Reason For God

Timothy Keller

# Intermission: Where We Have Been

Recall, Keller's thesis states that "underlying all doubts about Christianity are alternate beliefs, unprovable assumptions about the nature of things." Our first seven lessons examined the beliefs beneath the seven biggest objections or doubts people in our culture have about the Christian faith:

- Lesson 1: "There can't be just *one* religion."
- Lesson 2: "How could a good God allow suffering?"
- Lesson 3: "Christianity is a straightjacket"
- Lesson 4: "The church is responsible for so much injustice"
- Lesson 5: "How can a loving God send people to hell?"
- Lesson 6: "Science has disproved Christianity"
- Lesson 7: "You can't take the Bible literally"

## Intermission: Where We Are Going

**Intermission means literally to be between journeys or missions. That is where we are now.**

Our next seven lessons will argue that there are sufficient reasons for believing in Christianity:

- Lesson 8: The clues of God
- Lesson 9: The knowledge of God
- Lesson 10: The problem of sin
- Lesson 11: Religion and the Gospel
- Lesson 12: The (true) story of the Cross
- Lesson 13: The reality of the resurrection
- Lesson 14: The dance of God

# Proof

- Despite all the books calling for Christians to provide proofs for their beliefs, you won't see philosophers doing so, not even the most atheistic.
  - "Strong rationalism" is nearly impossible to defend – it cannot live up to its own standards
    - How could you empirically prove that no one should believe something without empirical proof?
    - You can't, and that reveals it to be, ultimately, a belief.
  - "Strong rationalism" assumes "the view from nowhere", a position of complete objectivity
    - Virtually all philosophers today agree that is impossible

Scientists are very reluctant to say a theory is proven – rather it is 'hypothesized'

- A theory is considered 'empirically verified' if it organizes the evidence and explains phenomena better than any conceivable alternative theory.
  - That is, if through testing, it leads us to expect with accuracy many and varied events better than any other rival account of the same data, then it is accepted, though not (in the 'strong rationalist' sense) "proved"

The belief in God can be tested and justified ('empirically verified', but not 'proven') in the same way.

- The view that there is a God leads us to expect the things we observe – that there is a universe at all, that scientific laws operate within it, that it contains human beings with consciousness and with an indelible moral sense.
- The view that there is no God does not lead us to expect any of these things

# God the Playwright

## God the Playwright (pp.121-123)

- If there is a God, he wouldn't be another object in the universe that could be put in a lab and analyzed with empirical methods. He would relate to us the way a playwright relates to the characters in his play
- We (characters) might be able to know quite a lot about the playwright, but only to the degree the author chooses to put information about himself in the play.
- We won't be able to find God like we would find a passive object with the powers of empirical investigation
- We must find the clues to his reality that he has written into the universe, including into us
- We would expect to find that he appeals to our rational faculties
- If we were made "in his image" as rational, personal beings, there should be some resonance between his mind and ours. It also means that reason alone won't be enough.

# Clues As Divine “Fingerprints”

**How can we believe in Christianity if we don't even know whether God exists?**

- Though there cannot be irrefutable proof for the existence of God, many people have found strong clues for his reality – divine fingerprints – in many places.
- The philosopher Alvin Plantinga believes that there are no proofs of God that will convince all rational persons. However, he believes that there are at least two to three dozen very good arguments for the existence of God.

# The Mysterious Bang

## The Mysterious Bang

- Why is there something rather than nothing?
- Everything we know in this world is “contingent”, has a cause outside of itself. Therefore the universe, which is just a huge pile of such contingent entities, would itself have to be dependant on some cause outside of itself. Something had to make the Big Bang happen – but what? What could that be but something outside of nature, a supernatural , noncontingent being that exists from itself.
- If we are looking at this as an argument proving the existence of a personal God, it doesn't get us all the way there.
- However, if we are looking for a clue – a clue that there is something besides the natural world – it is very provocative for many people.

# Cosmic Welcome Mat

## The Cosmic Welcome Mat

- For organic life to exist, the fundamental regularities and constants of physics – the speed of light, the gravitational constant, the strength of weak and strong nuclear forces – must all have values that together fall into an extremely narrow range. The probability of this perfect calibration happening by chance is so tiny as to be statistically negligible.
- *“The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications...It would be very difficult to explain why the universe would have begun in just this way except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us.” --Stephen Hawking*
- This has been called the “Fine-Tuning Argument” of the “Anthropic Principle”, namely that the universe was prepared for human beings.
- It is technically possible that of trillions of universes we just happened to be in the one universe in which organic life occurred. Though you could not prove that the fine-tuning of the universe was due to some sort of design, it would be unreasonable to draw the conclusion that it wasn't.



# The Regularity of Nature

## The Regularity of Nature

- All scientific, inductive reasoning is based on the assumption of the regularity (the “laws”) of nature, that water will boil tomorrow under the identical conditions of today.
- The method of induction requires generalizing from observed cases to all cases of the same kind. Without inductive reasoning we couldn’t learn from experience, we couldn’t use language, we couldn’t rely on our memories.
- The fact is, we haven’t got the slightest idea of why nature-regularity is happening now, and we haven’t got the slightest rational justification for assuming it will continue tomorrow.
- As a proof for the existence of God, the regularity of nature is escapable. You can always say “We don’t know why things are as they are”. As a clue for God, however, it is helpful.

# The Clue of Beauty

## The Clue of Beauty

- If there is no God, and everything in this world is the product of “an accidental collocation of atoms”, then there is no actual purpose for which we were made – we are accidents.
- If we are the product of accidental natural forces, then what we call “beauty” is nothing but a neurological hardwired response to particular data.
- We may therefore be secular materialists who believe truth and justice, good and evil, are complete illusions. But in the presence of art or even great natural beauty our hearts tell us another story...regardless of the beliefs of our mind about the random meaninglessness of life, before the face of beauty we know better.
- What is evoked in these experiences is appetite or desire. We not only feel the reality but also the absence of what we long for.
- Unfulfillable desires are clues to the reality of God.
- Isn't it true that innate desires correspond to real objects that can satisfy them, such as physical appetite (corresponding to food), tiredness (corresponding to sleep), and relational desires (corresponding to friendship)?
- Doesn't the unfulfillable longing evoked by beauty qualify as an innate desire? We have a longing for joy, love and beauty that no amount or quality of food, friendship, or success can satisfy.
- We want something that nothing in this world can fulfill. Isn't that at least a clue that this “something” that we want exists?
- This unfulfillable longing qualifies as a deep, innate human desire, and that makes it a major clue that God is there.

# The “Clue-Killer”

## The Clue-Killer

- Evolutionary biology claims to have the answers to all of these clues, it claims everything about us can be explained as a function of natural selection.
- If we have religious feelings it is only because those traits once helped certain people survive their environment in greater numbers and therefore passed that genetic code on to us.
- Evolutionary theorists believe that our capacity to believe in God is hardwired into our physiology because it was directly or indirectly associated with traits that helped our ancestors adapt to their environment.
- It is ultimately irrational to accept evolutionary “naturalism”, the theory that everything in us is caused only by natural selection. If it were true, we couldn’t trust the methods by which we arrived at it or any scientific theory at all.
- The power of reason is owed to the independence of reason...evolutionary biology cannot invoke the power of reason even as it destroys it.
- If, as the evolutionary scientists say, what our brains tells us about morality, love, and beauty is not real – if it is merely a set of chemical reactions designed to pass on our genetic code – then so is what their brains tell them about the world. Then why should they trust them?

# The “Clue-Killer” is Actually A Clue

## The Clue-Killer is Really a Clue

- If we can't trust our belief forming faculties in one area, we should not trust them in any area. If there is no God, we should not trust our cognitive faculties at all. BUT WE DO. And that's the final clue...
- If we believe God exists, then our view of the universe gives us a basis for believing that cognitive faculties work, since God could make us able to form true beliefs and knowledge.

**The theory that there is a God who made the world accounts for the evidence we see better than the theory that there is no God.**